



Peabody Public Schools Review of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of English Language Learners

October 2010



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
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Overview

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking a series of reviews of school districts to determine how well district systems and practices support groups of students for whom an achievement gap exists. The reviews will focus in turn on how district systems and practices affect each of four groups of students: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), low-income students, and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2010 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to relatively high growth for limited English proficient (LEP) student performance in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the growth in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirements of Chapter 15, Section 55A, to conduct district audits in districts whose students achieve at high levels relative to districts that educate similar student populations. The review is part of ESE’s program to recognize schools as “distinguished schools” under section 1117(b) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which allows states to use Title I funds to reward schools that significantly closed the achievement gap. Districts and schools with exemplary practices identified through the review process may serve as models for and provide support to other districts and schools.

Selection of Districts

ESE identified 36 Title I schools in 14 districts where the performance of students with limited English proficiency (LEP students) exceeds expectations. All Massachusetts schools receiving Title I funds were eligible for identification, with the exception of reconfigured schools or schools that did not serve tested grades for the years under review. ESE staff analyzed MCAS data from 2008 and 2009 to identify schools that narrowed performance gaps between LEP students and all students statewide. The methodology compared the MCAS raw scores of LEP students enrolled in the schools with the predicted MCAS raw scores of LEP students statewide. The methodology also incorporated whether LEP students improved their performance from 2008 to 2009. “Gap closers” did not have to meet AYP performance or improvement targets, but did have to meet 2009 AYP targets for participation, attendance and high school graduation, as applicable. Districts with gap closers were invited to participate in a comprehensive district review to identify district and school practices associated with stronger performance for LEP students, as part of ESE’s distinguished schools program (described above), “Impact of District Programs and Support on School Improvement: Identifying and Sharing Promising School and District Practices for Limited English Proficient Students.”

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews explore five areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Student Support**. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that are most likely to be contributing to positive results, as well as those that may be impeding rapid improvement. Systems and practices that are likely to be contributing to positive results were identified from the ESE's District Standards and Indicators and from a draft report of the English Language Learners Sub-Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Committee on the Proficiency Gap¹. Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. Four to eight team members preview selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. The team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the five areas listed above, as well as English language learner education (to collect evidence across all areas).

¹ *Halting the Race to the Bottom: Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts*, December 2009

Peabody Public Schools

The site visit to the Peabody Public Schools was conducted on May 26–27, 2010 (district) and on June 1–2, 2010 (school). The site visit included two visits to the William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5), which was identified as a “gap closer” for its limited English proficient students, as described above. Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B, while information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile²

In the 2009–2010 school year, the Peabody Public Schools served 6,093 students in eight elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. All elementary schools provide full day kindergarten for children who were five years old as of September 1, 2009. Three of the elementary schools, Captain Samuel Brown, Thomas Carroll, and William A. Welch Sr., receive support through Title I. The Title I schools provide pre-kindergarten services for Peabody children.

From October 1, 2005 to October 1, 2009, the total population of students in the Peabody Public Schools decreased from a high in 2005 of 6,383 to a low in 2009 of 6,093. During this period, the average class size remained at about 20 students in grades 1 through 5 and, with the exception of the 2006–2007 school year, less than 20 students per class in kindergarten. The district is committed to maintaining class size below 20 in kindergarten. The districtwide student/FTE teacher ratio in 2009–2010 was 14.4 to 1.

In 2009–2010, there were 421.7 FTE teachers in the Peabody Public Schools. Of these teachers, 98.3% were licensed in their assigned teaching area. Teachers who were highly qualified taught 96.7% of the core academic classes in Peabody.

In 2009–2010, the proportions of first language not English and special education students in Peabody were larger than the proportions of those populations statewide. The proportion of LEP students was slightly lower than the statewide average in 2009–2010 (5.8% in Peabody compared to 6.2% statewide).

The school under review, William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School, served 295 students in grades Pre-K through 5 during the 2009–2010 school year and received support through Title I. Welch is the second smallest school in the district. All of the 22.8 FTE teachers who serve the students at Welch are licensed to teach in their assigned areas and all core classes are taught by highly qualified teachers. The student/FTE teacher ratio at Welch in 2009–2010 was 12.9 to 1. As shown in Table 1, the Welch school serves a significantly larger proportion of Hispanic, first language not English, LEP, and students from low income families than the district as a whole.

² Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

Interviews with district and school staff suggested that Welch also serves a significant population of homeless children.

Table 1 provides demographic information that describes the student population districtwide and at the William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School.

Table 1: Peabody Public Schools and William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5) Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Selected Populations 2009–2010

Selected Populations	Percent of Total District	Percent of Welch Elem	Selected Populations	Percent of Total District	Percent of Welch Elem
African-American	2.0	2.4	First Language not English	19.5	43.7
Asian	1.7	1.7	Limited English Proficient	5.8	34.6
Hispanic or Latino	12.2	30.5	Low-income	28.3	61.7
Native American	0.2	0.0	Special Education	17.9	16.6
White	81.3	61.4	Free Lunch	23.9	53.6
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	4.4	8.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	2.5	4.1	Male/Female Ratio	3,104/2,989	150/145

Note: Shaded cells highlight marked differences between the Welch School and district populations.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

As noted by the Educational Management Audit Council on p. 8 of their report *How is Your School District Performing* (for the period 2002–2005), “...the administrative staff in the Peabody Public Schools had changed significantly since the beginning of 2000. Five different individuals had served as superintendent since January 1, 2000.” There was also a significant turnover of principals during that time period that resulted in none of the principals having more than two years in their position. Since that time, one superintendent has led the district. There has, however, been turnover that affects the district’s program for ELLs. A full-time English as a second language (ESL) program director served the district from 2005 through 2009; however, the director was on leave for much of the 2008–2009 school year. During that time, the assistant superintendent coordinated the ESL programs. The ESL director left the district at the end of the 2008–2009 school year and the assistant superintendent assumed her duties. The assistant superintendent resigned in May 2010 and, based on input from the superintendent, it is unlikely that the assistant superintendent’s position will be filled due to limited funding. The superintendent stated that he will assume the duties of the assistant superintendent, including overseeing the ESL program. These facts suggest that effective leadership for the ESL program going forward is likely to be compromised.

Student Performance³

Peabody Public School’s 2009 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability status was *corrective action* for subgroups in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics based on student performance on the 2009 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment (MCAS) tests. Peabody’s district performance rating was *high* in ELA and *moderate* in mathematics, and the improvement rating was *no change* from the prior year. Between 2007 and 2009, Peabody Public Schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA at the elementary level (grades 3–5) only at the aggregate level on the 2007 test. Peabody did not make AYP in ELA at the subgroup level in any of the three years. In 2009, Peabody did not make AYP for special education, low-income, or Hispanic/Latino students.

In contrast to the district, the William A. Welch Sr. School received a 2009 NCLB accountability rating of *no status* in both ELA and mathematics. The school’s performance rating was *high* in ELA and *moderate* in mathematics, and the improvement rating was *on target* for ELA and *no change* in mathematics. Over the past two years, the Welch school made AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups in 2008 and 2009 in ELA. Although Welch students met the improvement target at the aggregate level in ELA on the 2009 MCAS test, they did not reach the state Composite Performance Index (CPI) target of 90.2, with a CPI of only 82.7. Table 2 provides data on the 2009 AYP statuses of both the district and the Welch school.

Table 2: Peabody Public Schools and William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5) 2009 District and School AYP Status

District/School	ELA					Math				
	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub
Peabody	CA-S	87.4	0.9	Yes	No	CA-S	76.6	0.7	Yes	No
Welch Elementary (Pre-K–5)	No Status	82.7	2.7	Yes	Yes	No Status	76.7	-0.5	No	No

Note: A or Agg = Aggregate; CA = Corrective Action; CPI = Composite Performance Index; II1 = Identified for Improvement year 1; II2 = Identified for Improvement year 2; RST1 = Restructuring year 1; RST2 = Restructuring year 2; S or Sub = Subgroup

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

LEP students at Welch fell short of the state CPI performance target for ELA by a larger margin than did Welch students in the aggregate on the 2009 MCAS test (with a CPI of 76.7 for LEP students); however, they met the improvement target by showing a substantial increase in performance from 2008 to 2009. Table 3 describes the performance of all tested LEP/FLEP

³ Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

students at Welch on the past three tests (2007–2009). Although performance fell slightly on the 2008 test, there was substantial improvement from 2007 to 2009. When considering this data, it is important to note that the data does not describe the longitudinal performance of a same-student cohort.

**Table 3: William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5)
MCAS ELA Performance of LEP/FLEP Students Reported in CPI Points**

Welch Elementary (Grades 3–5)	2007	2008	2009
English Language Arts	71.2	68.1	76.7

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website (AYP Data report for each year).

Growth, particularly for low-performing subgroups, is often difficult to determine when using static yearly measures such as performance levels or CPI. The student growth percentile (SGP) provides a wider picture of overall student performance by measuring growth in performance between years. Specifically, SGP compares changes from year to year in a student’s MCAS test scores to changes in the MCAS test scores of other students statewide with similar score histories. Table 4 displays the student growth distribution for LEP and non-LEP students in grades 4 and above at Welch, as SGP is only calculated for students with previous MCAS testing. Note that data is only provided for 10 LEP students in grades 4 and 5 (in 2009) at Welch; therefore, this limited population must be taken into consideration when making inferences from this data. That being said, it is interesting that 40 percent of these LEP students had low growth between 2008 and 2009, while 51 percent of non-LEP students showed less than moderate growth. Fifty percent of LEP students showed greater than moderate growth, while only 35 percent of non-LEP students showed high or very high growth. Finally, although a higher proportion of non-LEP students reached proficiency in 2009 (61 percent) than that of LEP students (20 percent), the data, though limited, suggest that LEP students in grades 4 and 5 showed higher rates of growth between 2008 and 2009 than their non-LEP peers.

**Table 4: William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5)
ELA Student Growth Distribution by LEP Status 2008 to 2009**

LEP Status		Very Low		Low		Moderate		High		Very High		Proficient
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
LEP Students	10	0	0	4	40	1	10	5	50	0	0	20
Non-LEP Students	82	15	18	27	33	11	13	11	13	18	22	61

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Findings

Leadership and Governance

The principal at the Welch school places a high priority on meeting the educational, social, and emotional needs of all ELLs and provides the leadership and organizational structures necessary to meet those needs.

The principal of the Welch school has served in that capacity since 2006, arriving in Peabody as an experienced curriculum instructional teacher from a high-incidence ELL school in Lynn, Massachusetts. She inherited an experienced staff committed to learning for all students, and possesses a special passion for ELLs and an understanding of the challenges that they face. Two previous principals had very brief tenures. Interviews with the Welch faculty members suggested that these principals did not take full advantage of the faculty's special dedication to ELLs. With high expectations for ELLs and a vision for how to meet their needs, the current principal organized the school and secured resources and supports to enable the staff to achieve that goal.

During interviews with the review team, administrators attributed the success at the Welch school to several factors, including strong leadership from the principal, a competent and dedicated staff, resources for learning, school schedule, collaboration, data-informed decision making, and the culture of the school. Several interviewees stressed that the principal orchestrated all elements of the school to maximize success.

The principal's special passion for ELLs is rooted in her own personal experience as an ELL. As an educator and school leader, this empathy has framed her commitment to this population. She has high expectations for her students' success and for her school and school system to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of all ELLs.

Located in an area where housing is affordable for immigrants, the Welch school has served ELLs for many years. Over those years, the staff members who stayed on at the school were those who enjoyed working with this population. For a period of time, this was also true of one principal who had a long tenure at the school. As mentioned previously, when that principal retired, the next two principals did not fully take advantage of the faculty's special dedication to ELLs, and their tenure lasted a total of two years. The current principal brings a vision for how to organize such a school for student success.

The principal demonstrates strong leadership through her efforts to make this vision a reality. While the rest of the school district uses a more traditional model, she has implemented a data-driven, inclusionary model. With the support of the superintendent in maintaining small class sizes, she has taken advantage of Title I, special education, and other resources to bring more adults into the classroom to achieve an even lower ratio of students to staff. The principal's strong advocacy and determination to implement this vision has had a number of outcomes. The school benefits from having six classroom teachers trained in all four categories of ESL instruction and an excellent ESL teacher who embraces the same vision. Collaboration among staff is high and data-driven decision making is progressing. The principal has made exceptional efforts to seek out and use both people and financial resources, and the school has thus benefitted

from a lengthy list of grants. The principal has collaborated with other school leaders in the district to promote improved ESL programming, a system-wide approach to ESL instruction, and full compliance with ESL regulations. Further, the principal has advocated for the district to provide more resources for the ESL program both in her school and across the district.

The district leadership structure has limited capacity to effectively lead the K–12 ESL program.

Leadership of the district’s K–12 program for ELLs has been provided through several organizational structures over the past thirteen years. Reporting to the curriculum director, an ESL liaison was the first leadership position responsible for addressing the needs of ELLs. The ESL liaison coordinated the program for seven years through 2003-2004. A part-time ESL director served during the 2004-2005 school year and the position became full-time in 2005-2006. The director served as a full member of the district’s Leadership Team beginning in September, 2006. The ESL director left the district at the end of the 2008-2009 school year, and the position was subsequently eliminated. The responsibility for leading the ESL program was assigned to the assistant superintendent in 2009–2010. Further budget challenges have led to the elimination of the assistant superintendent position for 2010–2011 and the superintendent has stated that he will now assume that role.

Through interviews with administrators and staff members, the review team learned that the changes in leadership have resulted in the inconsistent implementation of procedures across the district, a diminished emphasis on professional development, and school-level staff who try to fill the district-level void in leadership.

With the loss of the assistant superintendent position, interviewees expressed concern for the future. They see a need for a district voice to bring consistency to intake systems, advocate for more resources (e.g., budget, trained personnel), organize sustained professional development, and promote equity and access for ELLs. They feel that an over-burdened superintendent will be unable to meet this need.

A review of available documents provided evidence of inconsistency in the district and school improvement planning process. Each school had a current school improvement plan, but of the schools with an ELL population, only the Welch school specifically addressed the needs of these students based on assessment data. No current district improvement plan exists. The most recent district improvement plan was completed for 2007–2008, and the superintendent confirmed that current school plans flow from a long-range strategic plan that was developed in 2005.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has a literacy model that supports all students in learning to read and write. The articulated balanced literacy model and related professional development provides a foundation for literacy learning for all students, including ELLs.

For the past five years, elementary literacy instruction across the district has been organized and delivered using the Tufts Balanced Literacy model. All elementary teachers are trained in using a guided reading approach in which students receive targeted instruction in small groups at their instructional reading level. Students also receive explicit comprehension instruction. Additionally, schools and classrooms are supplied with leveled books. A private education foundation has provided valuable funding to support balanced literacy and teacher professional development.

Students in grades K–3 are assessed three times per year using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skill (DIBELS), an early literacy assessment that provides timely feedback to inform instruction. Rigby reading assessments are also administered in grades K–5. These assessments provide the data for targeted reading instruction in small groups. Each school also has at least one reading specialist who provides direct services to struggling readers.

The Welch school’s small size and its Title I resources have been leveraged by the principal to promote a strong literacy program for ELLs.

The Welch School is one of two elementary schools in Peabody (Welch and Carroll) eligible for school-wide Title I services. The Brown school receives only Title I targeted assistance. Welch and Carroll have certified ESL teachers funded by the district. Because of its Title I status, Welch has additional personnel who provide in-class and pull-out support: four ELA tutors, an additional certified reading teacher, and an ESL tutor. All ESL tutors at Welch are certified ESL teachers.

The *Facts on Title I* page of the Peabody Public Schools website provides this description of the district Title I model: “ELL K–5—or a (K–2 and 3–5) model—will be used where more than one ELL licensed professional is available to instruct using the inclusion model approach in the regular education classroom. The Title I ELL teacher ensures appropriate scaffolding and integration of academic concepts, subject content and language using scientifically research-based methods and strategies which enhance comprehension and language/content learning. Specific attention is paid to developing phonemic awareness, accelerating vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension, sharpening writing skills, and acquiring/reinforcing mathematical skills.”

The principal of Welch school has leveraged the resources described above and has created an inclusionary model for delivery of reading instruction within the balanced literacy program. This model utilizes additional personnel to provide targeted services for small groups and individual students both in and out of the classroom. There are just two classes at each grade level, allowing for multiple personnel to deliver instruction in the same classroom during the literacy block. In

the Academic Achievement Grant application, the increased achievement of students with limited English proficiency was attributed to several practices related to the reading model. Among these practices were data-driven instruction based on continuous assessment, and designed and planned peer-modeling of English speaking skills. Tiered intervention models are in place in the Title I schools (Welch and Carroll), where Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Reading Recovery are used as Tier II interventions.

Several members of the Peabody administrative team who were interviewed attributed the success of ELLs at the Welch school to the model of literacy instruction; the dedication and expertise of the personnel delivering the instruction; and the leadership of the principal in creating the unique triangular model of instruction that uses all available personnel during the literacy block to provide differentiated balanced literacy instruction. Classroom observations conducted by the review team confirmed the use of the triangular model of instruction at the Welch school with ELA tutors and reading specialists contributing to in-class instruction. Beginning ELLs are pulled out during this time for instruction with the ESL teacher.

Literacy is further supported by several Title I initiatives. The summer school program, based at the student's home school, provides literacy and mathematics instruction through thematic units which include research projects and guided reading. A guided reading program for ELLs, Journeys, is used in the summer school program. Title I schools also provide after-school MCAS support. Additionally through Title I, eligible students may attend a Pre-K program. Some goals of the Pre-K program include guiding children towards a healthy and positive self-image, while building social skills and developing early literacy skills. Knowledge gained in the Pre-K classrooms about each student's successes and challenges is shared with the kindergarten teacher, thus increasing the effectiveness of kindergarten instruction.

A combination of additional resources for Title I schools; the vision and leadership of the school principal in leveraging resources and refining the district literacy model; and the work of dedicated, trained teachers contributed to the literacy growth of ELLs at the Welch school.

The district has taken steps to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum, but more work needs to be done. As part of this continuing effort, the principal at the Welch school is leading a curriculum alignment group to address the needs of ELLs within the context of the state curriculum frameworks and the Peabody general curriculum.

One of the objectives in Peabody's strategic plan is "to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum." Draft curriculum documents created in 2008 by cadres of teachers and administrators are published on the district website. The Peabody District Curriculum Objectives provide "an overview of the curriculum including guiding points for parents, and are aligned with the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education." According to the introduction, "these documents tell what children should know and be able to do at a point in time, are observable and measurable, and specify a threshold for proficiency." The draft documents provide well-articulated standards and grade level benchmarks for grades K-8. According to the Carroll school principal, "teachers use the frameworks" and new teachers are introduced to them.

During the interview with the review team, the superintendent stated that school improvement plans include literacy and mathematics goals, as well as professional development goals related to curriculum. He expressed concern that curriculum work had stalled, but said that money has been allocated to continue the work in summer 2010. During interviews, other members of the administrative team expressed concern that the lack of key administrators, including an ESL coordinator, curriculum coordinators, and potentially the assistant superintendent in 2010–2011, will impede the alignment process. The Welch school principal led a group of teachers in the summer of 2009 whose purpose was to write an ESL curriculum aligned with the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*, Peabody benchmarks, and the ELBPO. The group planned to complete the work during the summer of 2010. In addition, the adoption of a new K–5 comprehensive literacy program that specifically addresses the needs of ELLs is part of the ongoing effort to align curriculum and instruction.

Assessment

Title I schools have established data teams to facilitate the use of data, but they need additional support and training to effectively establish a culture of data use in their schools.

Each of the Title I schools in Peabody has created and trained a data team with support from an outside consultant who was funded through a regional Title I grant. Several of the non-Title I schools have embryonic teams. The Title I school data teams will continue their training with the data specialist of the regional District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) in 2010–2011.

The data team at the Welch school collects and analyzes assessment data and disseminates this information to appropriate staff. As part of this process, the data team maintains a data wall in the school library to support its work and to make data accessible to the staff. Interview data collected from the principal and teachers suggested that the data team needs to refine the process of engaging the faculty in the collaborative interpretation of the data the team provides. The principal and superintendent indicated that the data team and staff have not been trained in the use of the Massachusetts ESE Education Data Warehouse (EDW). Use of the EDW to access student data could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the team. Neither the document review nor staff interviews conducted by the review team produced evidence that the data teams or administrators are using data to evaluate the effectiveness of programs such as those that service ELLs.

Teachers at the Welch school use formative data to drive classroom instruction. Formative data is used for grouping and individualization decisions, and to guide the work of teachers and specialists as they interact with students.

All Welch teachers are given “red binders,” which hold confidential information about each of their ELLs. These binders are updated as the students are assessed and service delivery is changed. The cumulative data collected in the red binders is used to identify areas for improvement and establish the optimal time for exiting the ESL program. Data from the red binders, as well as additional formative classroom assessment data, is used to inform

instructional decisions for all students. Formative assessments include: DIBELS, Rigby reading assessments, chapter and unit quizzes and tests, and writing portfolios. The district may want to explore the expansion of formative assessment information by adding additional assessments that will help drive instruction of students with limited English proficiency. Although data is used to inform instruction at the Welch school, there was no evidence that data is systematically used throughout the district to evaluate the ESL program.

Data is used for ELL intake, placement, and assessment of progress and is made available to staff at the Welch school.

The document review showed that the Peabody Public Schools has districtwide *English Language Education Program Procedures and Guidelines* that are consistent with state regulations and which outline the data to be used in the intake and monitoring process. In June 2008, the Welch school principal developed additional guidelines that complement the district guidelines. In addition to the Home Language Survey, parent/student interviews, and past educational records, diagnostic and achievement assessments are used to measure the initial status and progress of ELLs. The Language Assessment Scales-Oral (LAS-O) and Language Assessment Scales-Reading/Writing (LAS R/W) are used for initial screening. The DIBELS, Rigby, Massachusetts English Language Assessment-O (MELA-O), Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), and MCAS tests are used to measure achievement and progress. The Welch school has a system in place to record initial and progress data electronically for each ELL. Hard copies of the electronic data are provided to teachers. There was no evidence that a similar system exists at other schools or at the district level.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The Welch school principal communicates the expectation that all Welch school staff will build their capacity to support ELLs by successfully completing all four “Category Trainings.”

The Welch school principal encourages her staff to participate in the four professional development courses or “Category Trainings” that are designed to build their capacity to provide appropriate instruction for their ELLs. She identifies and supports opportunities for her staff to enroll in “Category Trainings” both within and outside the district. Six teachers at the Welch school are trained in all four categories. These teachers indicated that this training has greatly improved their classroom instruction. A number of other teachers have completed some of the four “Category Trainings” within or outside the district. The superintendent indicated that he will support the “Category Training” for all staff districtwide in the 2010–2011 academic year. He plans to involve all staff by providing substitutes to cover participants’ classes during the school day. Title II-A funds will be used to support this project.

The principal at the Welch school effectively uses staff to meet the needs of ELLs by structuring the school schedule to maximize the number of adults who can provide differentiated instruction during the literacy block at each grade level.

The Welch school principal is invested in hiring staff that have worked with ELLs in the past, or who have formal preparation to work with this population. The district funds one certified ESL teacher at the Welch School and one certified ESL teacher at the Carroll School. These are the only elementary level ESL teachers in the district. The principal at the Welch school has addressed this situation by hiring three ESL-certified teachers to serve as tutors. Additional efforts have been made to hire bilingual or trilingual staff to meet the linguistic and translation/interpretation needs of students and their families, since no provision has been made at the district level to provide translation or interpretation for the schools. Currently various staff members provide these services on a voluntary basis.

At the principal's direction, staff at the Welch school differentiate instruction in literacy using the triangular model. The triangular model for literacy instruction enables the classroom teacher, a reading specialist, and a Title I tutor (and sometimes an ESL tutor when students or a classroom have been identified to be at risk) to differentiate instruction based on student assessment data within the literacy block. This suggested a creative use of staff that enables differentiation and sharing of resources.

Student Support

The Welch school promotes differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students, including ELLs who, with the exception of beginning language learners, receive instruction in mainstream settings.

The principal at the Welch school makes her vision, passion, and support for ELLs clear in the school's class schedule, which has been carefully designed to accommodate the needs of ELLs. All ELLs at the Welch school are fully integrated in mainstream programs, such as balanced literacy, lab classrooms, summer school, and reader's/writer's workshop. In addition, for the past two years, Welch students have been served by an explicit strategies lab, pioneered in the district by Welch teachers. Also unique to the Welch school is the triangular model of instruction during the literacy block, which uses additional staff to differentiate instruction for all students. ELLs, except beginners, remain in the classroom at this time so that they may benefit from the smaller adult to student ratio. ELLs who are at the beginner level are pulled out to receive direct language instruction.

The Title I tutor model at the Welch school has contributed significantly to the success of ELLs. This model, much like the triangular model, places more adults in the classroom to provide support for all students. There are a total of seven tutors who are available to students in addition to their classroom teachers. ELLs who are also in special education receive the coordinated assistance of ESL tutors, special education teachers, and special education paraprofessionals to enable them to be mainstreamed to the greatest extent possible.

ELLs at the Welch school become part of the “Welch family” upon arrival and are included in all aspects of school and classroom life.

Upon arriving at the Welch school, ELLs and their families are welcomed by a trilingual (English, Spanish, and Portuguese) secretary and the lead ESL teacher who is a native speaker of Albanian, which is the third most frequently spoken language by ELLs in Peabody. The intake process for these new students includes a student assessment (LAS-O and LAS R/W) and the Home Language Survey (completed by the parent or guardian). After the assessment process, families are given a tour of the school.

To determine the most appropriate placement, prior school records, if available, are reviewed by the principal and the lead ESL teacher to construct an accurate picture of the student’s educational profile. Once the intake data has been collected and reviewed, the principal conferences with teachers to verify her initial assessment and places the student in the appropriate classroom. Additional supports are later identified and provided as each student’s situation dictates.

ELLs at the Welch school have access to all programs that are available to their mainstream peers. The principal’s vision promotes the inclusion rather than the isolation of ELLs in all aspects of school and classroom life. ELLs are also invited to Title I-funded before- and after-school programs, as well as a summer school program that is designed to prevent summer learning loss. ELLs who arrive with low literacy skills are provided additional support, through computer and vocabulary development programs. ELLs who are found to require additional support are pulled out and serviced by the lead ESL teacher, so that she may target their specific areas of need. Once their needs are identified, every effort is expended to support his or her academic and socio-emotional requirements.

The Welch school is a welcoming environment for ELLs and their families.

The Welch school “family” provides a home away from home for ELLs. A crisis team is available for any socio-emotional issues that may arise. Further, the principal is consistently mindful of trauma, and other socio-emotional issues that her students may have experienced, and ensures that her staff is aware of this information as well. Students at the Welch school participate in the Second Step character education program, which fosters community, respect, high self-esteem, and good will within the student population. The ideals put forth in this program are continually reinforced by staff, who are invested in character education. This program contributes to the welcoming culture present at the Welch school. The review team noted that the environment could be made even more welcoming by providing signage in multiple languages and artifacts that celebrate the cultures of students’ home countries.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The district should consider appointing a leader for the ESL program who is ESL certified and will be a member of the superintendent’s leadership team.

Documentation and interview evidence indicated that the district-level leadership structure provided for programs that serve ELLs has varied over the past 10 years. For a variety of reasons, particularly financial, an administrator whose primary responsibility is the leadership of the ESL program has not been consistently provided by the district. The changes in leadership have created issues regarding consistency in ESL services across the district and have been an impediment to the ESL program having an effective voice within the leadership team. The superintendent indicated that he will provide this leadership in the future. It is the review team’s judgment that an over-burdened superintendent cannot provide this leadership. A district level leader for the ESL program will provide the direction, coordination, and credibility that the program needs to guarantee equity, access, and academic progress for the growing population of ELLs in Peabody.

The district should review the district and school improvement planning process and take the steps necessary to ensure that school plans flow from the district plan and that all plans explicitly address programs to support the progress of ELLs.

Clearly articulated and well coordinated plans that address significant data-identified issues are essential for the continuous improvement of the Peabody Public Schools. Evidence gathered by the review team indicated that a District Improvement Plan has not been published since the 2007–2008 school year. The evidence also suggested that the school level improvement plans are not sufficiently data-driven, nor are the plans coordinated across schools or between the district and the individual schools. Further, inspection of elementary school improvement plans showed that Welch was the only school that explicitly addressed the needs of ELLs. This omission may be due, in part, to the lack of effective district-level leadership of the ESL program. Continuous improvement is dependent upon planning that is coordinated both vertically and horizontally. Each school’s improvement plan should flow from the district improvement plan and plans should be coordinated across all schools in the district. This coordinated approach to planned improvement will build the district’s capacity to support learning for ELLs and all students in the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should investigate the feasibility of expanding the Welch school's literacy model to all district elementary schools.

The Welch school uses a thoughtfully structured model of balanced literacy instruction that makes strategic use of available personnel. This model is based on scheduling the literacy blocks so that multiple professionals are available to provide instruction for small groups and individuals in each primary classroom. District administrators, and the Welch school principal, cited this model as a major contributor to the success of ELLs in the school. Having multiple professionals to deliver targeted instruction within a flexible grouping structure is a practice which supports good Tier I instruction. This model allows ELLs to stay in their classrooms, receive instruction at their level, and benefit from English-speaking peer models. This model provides a supportive environment for growth in both literacy and language, and could thus serve all students in the district well.

The district should consider ways to provide a district level leadership structure that will support teaching and learning, particularly in English language arts, mathematics, and English as a second language.

Document review and interview information indicated that district level curriculum leaders are not specifically provided for the English language arts, mathematics, or English as a second language programs. In interviews, current administrators alluded to the difficulty of maintaining consistent oversight of the curriculum in general, and the ESL curriculum specifically. Curriculum documents drafted in 2008 may not have been completed due, in part, to the absence of district-level program leaders to facilitate the process. Curriculum development has fallen to administrators with multiple roles. Hence, the district has not fully developed a range of materials and instructional strategies aligned with the curriculum. Providing a district level leadership structure that will promote effective curriculum development, alignment, implementation, and evaluation, particularly for ESL curriculum, will decrease the district's dependence on leadership from building principals to complete these district level tasks and will enhance the capacity of the district to support learning for all students.

The district should continue to develop curriculum standards, benchmarks, and assessments, and provide instructional materials aligned with the district curriculum.

The district has articulated grade-level benchmarks based on the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*. However, these benchmarks are not fully supported with aligned instructional materials (i.e., text or developed units). Although assessments, particularly literacy assessments, are used to inform instruction, there is no evidence that assessments are used to develop or revise curricula. A fully developed curriculum includes authentic assessments to measure standards and provide timely feedback that informs instruction. The clear articulation of learning expectations, supporting materials, instructional strategies, and assessment provides a foundation for the development of ESL curricula that promote the growth of ELLs in both language and academic learning.

The district should maintain and expand efforts to meet the needs of ELLs in all areas of the curriculum and instructional practices.

The district has recently adopted a new K–5 reading program, in part because it has specific components that support literacy learning for ELLs. Additionally, the Welch school principal has taken the lead in developing a fully articulated ESL curriculum aligned with district benchmarks, the state frameworks, and the ELPBO. This effort should be supported at the district level so that it can be brought to completion. Furthermore, once completed, district and school leaders should ensure its implementation in all schools for all ELLs. It is important that ELLs across the district, regardless of their school placement, are guaranteed the same high-quality, standards-based curriculum. Targeted curriculum and instructional practices will increase the district’s capacity to meet the ELLs’ dual challenge of acquiring language and achieving academic proficiency.

Assessment

The district should consider training the data teams, administrators, and ultimately all faculty members, in the use of the ESE Education Data Warehouse (EDW).

Interview evidence indicated that, at the present time, no one in the district is trained in the use of the EDW. The EDW holds large amounts of relevant assessment and demographic data that can support decision making at the classroom, school, and district levels. Access to the EDW and training in its use will enhance the effectiveness of the data teams. The data teams will then be capable of training administrators and school staff in the use of the EDW to improve student achievement.

The district should develop and implement a coordinated plan for the use of data to improve student achievement and evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

While there is some evidence that data is used to inform instruction, the review team did not find evidence that data is being used effectively to monitor student achievement or to evaluate programs. The district should develop a plan for effectively using data to drive student achievement and assess the effectiveness of programs and instruction. This plan should include establishing a districtwide data team, as well as a data team at each school. It should also include a data dissemination schedule and clear expectations on how the data will be collaboratively used at the district, school, and program level to improve student achievement. The plan should also provide for the creation of a local database capable of two-way sharing of data with the EDW. The database should include, among other things, all pertinent data on students with limited English proficiency. This information should be readily available to staff to inform their instructional decisions. The LEP student data should also be used to monitor the effectiveness of the ESL program in each school and districtwide. An effective data use plan will increase the capacity of the district to use data to develop and evaluate programs and inform instructional decisions for ELLs and all students in the district.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should establish mechanisms to ensure that high quality translation and interpretation services are available across the district.

There is no evidence that there are specific personnel designated to provide translation and interpretation services within the district. Interviewees reported that the Welch school secretary, ESL teachers, and other non-district personnel are currently providing these services.

These are positive steps to meet the needs of ELLs, but do not adequately provide the breadth of services needed and are beyond the normal responsibilities of the “volunteer” translators. The district should consider acquiring interpretation/translation services through a recognized, reliable, and competent contractor to ensure that ELLs and their families are provided with information comparable to that received by the overall student population. It is critical that the contractor adhere to district, state, and federal confidentiality requirements. Providing these services will increase the district’s capacity to ensure access and equity for all ELLs.

The district should take steps to ensure that all faculty members and administrators successfully complete all four “Category Trainings.”

Currently, the district does not have many personnel who have completed all four “Category Trainings.” The exception is the Welch school, which has six teachers trained in all four categories. There are other teachers in the district who have completed at least one of the “Category Trainings.” The superintendent has made it clear that he supports efforts to ensure that all teachers in the district are trained in all four categories. This type of districtwide staff training in content instruction will enhance the existing educational program for all students, especially ELLs. These steps will ensure the progress of ELLs in developing aural comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing of the English language and in meeting academic standards in English.

Student Support

The district should build upon the strategies already in place at the Welch school that foster an inviting environment for ELLs by providing multilingual information for students and their families.

Such information could include flyers about ESL classes for parents and guardians, as well as notices of upcoming community events that may be of interest to them. This effort would be a welcoming gesture to the parents and family members of ELLs, and one that might help them to better integrate into the school and the larger Peabody community. Furthermore, it is often the case that the parents of ELLs want to learn English, but are unaware of how to access classes. The Welch school could provide information that would help parents reach this goal.

The Welch school environment would also be made more inviting and supportive by the presence of artifacts (e.g., posters, photography, artwork) that reflect the cultures, races, and

ethnicities of the student population. When children see themselves represented on the walls of their school, it sends a powerful reminder that they are important and included, which fosters engagement with learning. It also reinforces the idea that although English is the target language for all learners, there is appreciation and support for students who hail from other countries and bring along rich cultural and linguistic traditions that can eventually become a permanent part of the Welch school's culture.

In the interest of promoting access and equity, the districtwide procedure for the intake of ELLs should be closely followed in all schools and monitored at the district level. The district should consider augmenting its existing intake procedures by the additional, complementary procedures developed at the Welch school.

Although the district has a procedure manual that is consistent with state regulations, the review team learned from several interviewees that intake procedures are not seamless and differ across schools. In the absence of a parent information center (often used in other districts for ELL intake), Welch personnel are often called upon to assist with intake procedures in other schools. Due to the rigorous attention that the Welch school principal has devoted to creating and implementing an effective intake model, this may serve as a districtwide model that would ensure that no matter where ELLs are enrolled, they will be accurately tested and placed. By making knowledge of the intake process widespread and monitoring the effectiveness of its implementation, the district will increase its capacity to ensure access and equity for ELLs.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Peabody Public Schools was conducted on May 26–27, 2010 (district) and on June 1–2, 2010 (school), by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Sharon DeCarlo	Curriculum and Instruction
James Hayes	Leadership and Governance
Esta Montano	Student Support
Maryann Perry	Assessment
Karla Pressman	Human Resources and Professional Development
Stephen Smith	Team Coordinator

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

The following activities were conducted as part of the review of the Peabody Public Schools.

- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Peabody Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, special education, Title I, and human resources directors, kindergarten coordinator, and grants administrator. The team also interviewed the principal and the ELL teacher from the Carroll school and the principal of the Welch school during the district interview process regarding district level programs and procedures that have an impact on ELLs.
- The review team visited the William A. Welch Sr. Elementary School (Pre-K–5) in the Peabody Public Schools.
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with the school principal, assistant principal, school secretary, ESL teacher and tutors, ESL grant team, special education resource teacher, reading specialist, and a parent representative.
 - The review team conducted seven classroom visits at different grade levels and subjects across the Welch School.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Latest available Coordinated Program Review Report and follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - District Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)
 - Teacher contracts
 - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
 - Long-term enrollment trends
 - End-of-year financial report for the district for 2009
 - List of the district's federal and state grants
 - Municipal profile

- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels provided by the district or school:
 - Organization chart
 - District Improvement Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - Curriculum guide
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments
 - Professional Development Plan and program/schedule/courses
 - Job descriptions (for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
 - Procedures and assessments to identify LEP students and assess their level of English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the review of the Peabody Public Schools conducted on May 26–27, 2010 and on June 1–2, 2010.

Wednesday	Thursday	Tuesday	Wednesday
May 26	May 27	June 1	June 2
District Office Visit	District Office Visit	Welch School Visit	Welch School Visit
Orientation meeting with district leaders	Team meeting and document review	Interview with principal	Interview with ELL teacher
Interview with district ELL teacher	Interview with grants administrator	Interview with school secretary/classroom observations	Observation of inclusionary practice classroom
Interview with superintendent	Interview with Title I director	Interview with assistant principal/classroom observations	Observation of pull-out practices
Lunch/team meeting	Interview with superintendent	Grade 4 classroom observation	Resource room observation
Interview with human resources director	Lunch/team meeting	Lunch	Exit meeting with principal
Interview with special education director	Interview with Carroll school principal	Interview with special education teacher	Closing meeting with district leaders
Team meeting	Document review	Interview with grade 4 teachers/classroom observations	
	Team meeting	Focus group with ESL team (K–5)	
		Interview with a parent whose child is an ELL	