



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

November 2010

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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, 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 will explore five areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Student Support**. The reviews will 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 will 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 will consist 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

Watertown Public Schools

The site visit to the Watertown Public Schools was conducted from June 1 to June 4, 2010. The site visit included a visit to the Watertown Middle School (grades 6-8), 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; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile²

The Watertown Public School district had an enrollment of 2,613 students during the 2009-2010 school year. These students attended one of the district’s five schools including: Cunniff (K-5, 263 students); Hosmer (K-5, 659 students); James Russell Lowell (K-5, 385); Watertown Middle School (6-8, 580); and Watertown High School (9-12, 728). In the 2008–2009 school year, the district employed approximately 222 teachers; 99 percent of whom were highly qualified in their subject areas. The student/teacher ratio was 11.7 to 1. The district had four-year graduation rate of 82 percent for the 2009-2010 school year.

For the last year, the district has been managed by a superintendent who has developed a leadership team that includes an assistant superintendent; a director of business; a director of student services; and a director of personnel.

Table 1: Watertown Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations 2009-10

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Percent of Total
African-American	4.1	First Language not English	29.2
Asian	8.1	Limited English Proficient	10.3
Hispanic or Latino	10.1	Low-income	26.7
Native American	0.7	Special Education	17.5
White	74.0	Free Lunch	20.9
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.1	Reduced-price lunch	5.8
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	2.9		

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

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

Student Performance³

Watertown has a 2009 NCLB performance rating of high in ELA and moderate in mathematics, and has no accountability status in either subject. According to the 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results in grades 3 through 5, the district made AYP in the aggregate in ELA and mathematics, but the special education subgroup did not make AYP in either subject, and the limited English proficient (LEP) subgroup did not make AYP in mathematics. In grades 6 through 8, the district made AYP in the aggregate in ELA, but the special education, low income and Hispanic subgroups did not make AYP. The district did not make AYP in the aggregate and for any subgroup at these grades in mathematics. In grades 9 through 12, the district made AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups in ELA, and in the aggregate, but not for the low income subgroup, in mathematics.

Watertown made AYP in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for all subgroups in 2006 through 2008. In 2009, the district made AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups in ELA, and in the aggregate, but not for all subgroups, in mathematics. In 2009, the district met the improvement target for ELA in the aggregate and for all subgroups except the special education subgroup. The district did not meet the performance target in ELA. The district met neither the performance target nor the improvement target in mathematics.

Table 2: 2009 District and School AYP Status

District/School	ELA					Mathematics				
	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub
Watertown	None	88.1	1.6	Yes	Yes	None	79.1	-1.0	Yes	No
Watertown MS	CA S	92.2	0.6	Yes	No	RST2 S	76.7	-2.5	No	No

Note: A or Agg = Aggregate; CA = Corrective Action; CPI = Composite Performance Index; I1 = Identified for Improvement year 1; I2 = Identified for Improvement year 2; RST1 = Restructuring year 1; RST2 = Restructuring year 2; S or Sub = Subgroup

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 3 below shows that the number of Watertown students assessed with the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) increased by 46 percent, from 35 in 2008 to 51 in 2009. The distribution of student performance levels also appears to have shifted upwards. A

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

direct comparison of the two administrations of the test is not possible because the number of reporting categories increased from four in 2008 to five in 2009.

Table 3: Spring 2008 and 2009 Watertown MEPA Results

Level	2008 (n=35)		Level	2009 (n=51)	
1.Beginning	7	20%	1	5	10%
2.Early Intermediate	3	9%	2	4	8%
3.Intermediate	10	29%	3	12	24%
4.Transitioning	15	43%	4	12	24%
			5	18	35%

Source: MEPA data on the ESE website

Table 4 below shows the comparative percentages of limited English proficient (LEP) and formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students in Watertown Middle School, the district, and the state who scored Proficient or Advanced on the 2009 MCAS. Except in grade 4 in ELA and mathematics and grade 8 in mathematics, higher percentages of district LEP/FLEP students scored in these categories than of LEP/FLEP students statewide. On all tests but the grade 8 science test, higher percentages of Watertown Middle School LEP/FLEP students scored in these categories than LEP/FLEP students statewide; in several cases, more than twice as great a percentage of Watertown Middle School LEP/FLEP students scored in these categories as of their LEP/FLEP peers statewide.

Table 4: 2009 Watertown Middle School, Watertown, and State Proficiency Rates for LEP/FLEP Students

Grade	ELA			Mathematics			Science/Technology		
	Water-town Middle	Water-town	State	Water-town Middle	Water-town	State	Water-town Middle	Water-town	State
3	---	32(37)	29	--	68(37)	36	---	*	*
4	---	20(35)	25	---	17(35)	26	---	*	*
5	---	38(34)	29	---	47(34)	29	---	32(34)	18
6	77(22)	77(22)	33	68(22)	65(23)	30	*	*	*
7	67(24)	68(25)	30	33(24)	29(27)	20	*	*	*
8	43(23)	44(25)	36	21(24)	23(26)	18	4(24)	8(26)	7
10	---	50(12)	31	---	36(14)	38	---	** (9)	18

Numbers of LEP/FLEP students (n) taking the test given in parentheses for Watertown Middle School and Watertown.
 *Test not given for this grade.
 **Data not available.
 --- School does not include this grade.
 Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Findings

Leadership and Governance

District wide infrastructures needed to support effective instruction are fragmented and in the development stage.

The district has adopted three broad district strategic goals: support high academic student achievement; promote global and local citizenship; and foster self-actualization. These goals are the framework for the district's initiatives. The broadness of the goals allows for the development and implementation of multiple initiatives across the schools. It also leaves room for interpretations that may not be in accordance with the district 2010-2013 vision statement on the district's website, which states: "The Watertown Public Schools promote high achievement through inquiry, problem solving, collaboration, creativity, and hard work. We provide students with a robust education so they will acquire, apply, and practice the knowledge and skills needed for self-actualization and life-long learning. All programs support diverse learning styles, civic interaction, global awareness, and personal success."

The district developed improvement plans by subject area and grade level. These plans do not contain strategies, targets, implementation steps, and timelines. Currently there is not a system to support these goals, with specific outcomes and processes. Rather than individual School Improvement Plans (SIPS), the schools use a common template to produce elementary and secondary improvement plans aligned with the district strategic goals. The link between the broad district goals and the instructional practices needed to support higher achievement is not clear either in the individual content area District Improvement Plans (DIPs) or in the elementary and secondary improvement plans.

In interviews with team members principals indicated that the system's broad goals are not necessarily reflected in their improvement efforts. Without specific direction, principals address the district goals in individual ways. Some have annual foci for instruction such as differentiation of instruction; others adopt as their school goals aspects of the work of the task forces described in the first curriculum and instruction finding below. As a result, there is little consistency across the system in addressing annual goals. Elementary principals have begun to work cooperatively to develop common school goals and instructional improvements, but the lack of a system wide approach to goal development creates a variance among the schools in addressing the district goals and therefore a variance in increasing student achievement. Increases in achievement are not system wide and vary significantly at the elementary level, particularly in mathematics. Student achievement varied significantly in 2009 (by more than 10 percentage points, across the district's elementary schools, in both reading and math.) The percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient at the James Russell Lowell School in ELA was 12 percentage points higher than the percentage scoring in those categories at the Hosmer School, and there was a difference of 19 percentage points in the percentages reaching proficiency in mathematics at those schools. Without a fully developed set of processes to reach specific outcomes the schools' efforts appear disjointed and fall short of meeting the conceptual framework.

The team found, through examination of the work by the curriculum task forces, that there was some evidence of distributed leadership in the district. The ESL coordinator is a member of the central office leadership team, which also includes principals and other districtwide administrators. The district also has a 15-member Teaching and Learning Council led by the assistant superintendent, whose membership includes the ESL coordinator and the curriculum coordinators and which plans and implements curriculum and instruction initiatives in the district.

The Watertown Middle School leadership has used its resources to create an effective program for its ELL students.⁴

On the visit to the middle school the team interviewed the principal, several teachers, and conducted many observations of the program. They found the Watertown Middle School has a grade level team organizational structure; this structure, together with the school's philosophy, schedule, and resources, creates an effective ELL program. The philosophy of fully including all students in the life of the school permeates the ELL program. The principal is dedicated to maintaining the team structure within the school. There are two teams at each of the three grade levels. The teams serve approximately 200 students in each grade in grades 6 through 8. Each team comprises teachers of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. One team at each grade level is designated as an ELL team, and the ESL teacher assigned to this team functions as a full team member. As team members, ESL teachers are integral to the curricular and instructional decisions made at the grade level. They also provide real-time professional development for other teachers in teaching strategies for ELL students.

As a result of teacher interviews and classroom observations the team found that ELL students are integrated into the regular education program and, for the most part, are not isolated from their peers for core academic instruction. They are immersed in regular classrooms for grade level content learning. Only students in beginner classes receive pull-out instruction in separate settings. ESL teachers co-teach with cluster subject area teachers. In this way, ELL students master the content as well as the language. Classroom teachers stated in interviews that the academic attainments of ELL students are not compromised by their levels of English language proficiency.

Content support classes are built into the school schedule. These classes provide reteaching and enrichment for all students. Teachers told the review team that approximately 60 percent of students receive daily enrichment. The content support classes provide a variety of instruction to ELL students. In grade 6, the purpose of the content support is to acclimate ELL students socially and culturally, while in grades 7 and 8 the purpose is strictly to improve academic achievement. In interviews, teachers and the principal credited these classes with providing the support that enables ELL students to perform well on the MCAS tests.

⁴ The terms "limited English proficient student" ("LEP student") and "English language learner student" ("ELL student") are interchangeable. "ELL student" will be used hereafter in this report because Watertown uses this term.

After conducting interviews, observing classes and reviewing teacher schedules the team found that ESL teachers also provide small group instruction in reading and language development. Students are assigned to language development classes according to their skill levels in English, rather than by grade level. Since the classes are divided among the ESL teachers, ESL teachers usually have responsibility for a range of students. As well as instructing groups of students in their grade level clusters, they teach one or more small groups of ELL students in language development classes.

The principals and ESL teachers reported that the program has evolved over several years as the number and needs of ELL students have increased. ESL teachers were encouraged by the principal to develop a comprehensive ELL program that would fully integrate students into the life of the school. The impetus for immersing ELL students in instruction by grade level teams with ESL co-teachers came from the ESL teachers. The principal supports these efforts by allocating resources and maintaining the team structure. The team structure ensures that students master content and are able to maintain academic standing as they prepare for high school. With the encouragement and support of the school administration, ESL teachers have developed a multifaceted program that brings ELL students to content mastery as well as greater language proficiency, as demonstrated on the MCAS tests.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum development is at various stages throughout the district. There is limited evidence within the district's curriculum documents of an articulated K through 12 curriculum that is aligned to state standards and vertically and horizontally aligned.

A number of curriculum-related initiatives are underway in Watertown, but they are occurring in pockets, rather than district wide, and are not directed by district policies or procedures. In 2008-2009, the district expanded the area of responsibility of the curriculum coordinators from grades 9 through 12 to grades 6 through 12 to improve curriculum coordination between the middle and high schools in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. The coordinators told the review team that they began by developing curriculum maps in their subject areas, and that these maps were in different stages of completion. The ELA and social studies maps were incomplete and at an early stage, but the coordinators were working closely together. The review team also learned in interviews that the district still lacks kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum coordination and articulation.

The review team examined some curriculum maps for grades 7 through 12 for science and mathematics. Other curriculum maps were requested by the team, but were not provided by the district. The mathematics maps consisted of lists of chapters from textbooks. Some assessments, primarily tests and quizzes, were included. Some maps identified skills, and others did not. Standards from the state frameworks were not noted on any of the mathematics maps examined by the review team. The science maps appeared to be more complete, including standards, some

essential questions, skills, and authentic assessments. The format for the maps was not common across the subject areas.

Through interviews with grade level cluster teams, the team found that there were no curriculum coordinators for kindergarten through grade 5. Curriculum coordinators were in place in ELA, mathematics, social studies and science and technology in grades 6 through 12. Elementary principals told the review team that the district had K through grade 5 curricula, but the review team was not provided with requested documentation. A review of the district website revealed a description of the K through 5 mathematics curriculum as Think Math and FASTT Math. A general description was included on the website of the focus of the K through 3 Reading program, and grade 3 through 5 science strands were also described.

There was limited evidence of curriculum coordination between the elementary and middle school. Teachers in cluster meeting interviews said that while no organized mechanism is in place for curriculum coordination, some coordination is performed in grade level teams, or on an ad hoc basis among teachers. The district does have in place a 15-member Teaching and Learning Council led by the assistant superintendent, which plans and implements curriculum and instruction initiatives in the district.

Curriculum coordinators in interviews explained that the district uses task forces to address curricular issues, but no formal curriculum review cycle is currently in place. There are three task forces addressing curriculum areas, specifically: K through 5 mathematics, K through 3 reading, and grade 4 through 6 science. The task forces periodically revise the curriculum. Principals chair the task forces, which are composed of classroom teachers and specialists. Some of these efforts appear fragmented, as they address particular grade spans rather than all of the grades at an organizational level. For example, reading is undergoing revision in K through 3, while the organizational span is pre-K through 5, and science is undergoing revision in grades 4 through 6, overlapping the elementary and middle levels, but not including all of the grades at either level.

Curriculum documents in areas of mathematics and science at certain grade levels showed some alignment with state standards, and some processes for horizontal alignment are in place, accomplished through informal cluster meetings. In interviews, teachers stated that they have common planning time and that they meet by clusters three or four times a week, and by content areas once or twice a week. Teachers stated that curriculum articulation is improving in grades 6 through 12, although they added there is limited coordination or oversight. The review team was told that a teacher new to the district would go to a colleague teaching the same subject or grade level to determine what to teach.

The review team was provided with a binder entitled “ELL Beginner Reading and Writing Guide for Grades 6 through 8,” consisting of five main strands: vocabulary; phonics and spelling; reading; writing; and grammar, with fluency and pronunciation integrated. The strands are aligned to state standards. ESL teachers said that students access the general curriculum through their classroom teachers with ELL support. The ESL teachers have begun working together on

the ELL curriculum, and have taken steps to map it and align it with the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO) standards.

From a review of curriculum documents and interviews with key staff, the review team found little evidence that the standard components of a curriculum are in place. District staff did not demonstrate an understanding that curriculum is made up of standards, objectives, a scope and sequence, timelines or pacing guides, aligned benchmark assessments, instructional strategies, and materials and resources. The team found little evidence of a kindergarten through grade 12 approach to curriculum development and implementation in the district. Lack of coordination in this area has led to a fragmented approach to curriculum development, implementation, and review. Without a systematic approach to curriculum development, classroom instruction may be inconsistent and may not address all of the state standards.

ELL inclusion classes observed at Watertown Middle School showed a much greater incidence of strong instructional practices than regular education classes observed there.

During the site visit, the review team observed 28 middle school classes: 6 grade six classes; 9 grade seven classes, 7 grade eight classes, and 6 ELL co-taught inclusion classes of mixed grade levels that included ELL and regular education students. The review team observed 9 ELA classes; 6 mathematics classes; 4 science classes; 3 social studies classes; and 6 ELL classes. The review team used the instructional inventory developed by ESE, consisting of two major categories: organization of the classroom and instructional design and delivery. Each category contains characteristics that were rated by the observers using the ratings “no evidence,” “partial evidence,” or “solid evidence.” (Please see Table 4 below.) Classroom visits were random and approximately 20 minutes in length.

The category of organization of the classroom includes classroom climate, the presence of learning objectives, and maximization and use of classroom time by teachers. The highest combined percentage of partial and solid evidence in this category was 96 percent of all classes for the characteristic of classroom climate, as determined by respectful behavior, tone, and discourse. However, in this category only 43 percent of all classes visited had an objective posted to inform students about the day’s lesson.

The category of instructional design and delivery includes a range of teaching techniques such as linking academic concepts to students’ prior knowledge, checking for understanding, higher order questioning, and the application of knowledge in the classroom. The team found partial or solid evidence of teachers checking for understanding to inform instruction in 50 percent of all the classes observed, and partial or solid evidence of opportunities for students to apply new knowledge in 57 percent of all the classes observed. There was partial or solid evidence of higher order questioning in 75 percent of observed classes. The highest percentage of evidence in this category was 96 percent for the linking of instruction to students’ prior knowledge and experience. The lowest percentage was 18 percent for partial or solid evidence perceived during the classroom visit of formative written assessment provided to students.

The percentage of all classrooms visited in which partial or solid evidence of the 12 characteristics in the instructional design and delivery category was observed ranged from a high of 96 percent to a low of 18 percent. As may be seen from Table 4 below, the percentage of the ELL classrooms visited in which such evidence was observed ranged from a high of 100 percent to a low of 17 percent. Although the range was similar, the prevalence of some of the individual characteristics varied, with more evidence of them being seen in the ELL classrooms visited. The review team observed partial or solid evidence for 9 of the 12 characteristics in this category in 100 percent of the ELL classrooms visited.

There is evidence from classroom observations that instructional design and delivery may be stronger in ELL inclusion classrooms than in general education classrooms. Table 4 below shows that during the classroom observations the instructional quality in ELL classrooms exceeded the instructional quality in regular education classroom in all but two characteristics. ELL inclusion classes observed showed a much greater incidence of strong instructional practices than classrooms with no ELL team teaching. Notably, partial or solid evidence of opportunities for students to apply new knowledge and content was observed in more than twice as great a proportion of ELL classrooms as of non-ELL inclusion classrooms.

Table 4: Instructional Inventory—Instruction in Non-ELL Classes Observed as Compared to ELL Inclusion Classes Observed

Characteristic	Non-ELL (n=22)		ELL Inclusion Classrooms (n=6)		Difference
	No Evidence	Partial or Solid Evidence	No Evidence	Partial or Solid Evidence	
Organization of the Classroom					
Classroom Climate	5%	95%	0%	100%	+5
Learning Objective	64%	36%	31%	69%	+33
Class Time is Maximized for Learning	14%	86%	17%	83%	-3
Instructional Design and Delivery					
Links to Prior Knowledge and Experience	5%	95%	0%	100%	+5
Supplemental Materials are Aligned to Level of English proficiency	23%	77%	0%	100%	+23
Content is Within the Students English Proficiency Level	18%	82%	0%	100%	+18
Depth of Content Knowledge	27%	73%	0%	100%	+27
Range of Instructional Techniques	36%	64%	0%	100%	+36
Questioning Requires Application, Analysis, and Evaluation	32%	68%	0%	100%	+32
Pacing for Engagement	23%	77%	0%	100%	+23
Students Articulate Thinking	32%	68%	0%	100%	+32
Students Inquire and Explore Together in Groups or Pairs	27%	73%	17%	83%	+10
Opportunities to Apply new Knowledge and Content	55%	45%	0%	100%	+55
Formative Assessments Check for Understanding	55%	45%	33%	67%	+22
Formative Written Feedback to Students	82%	18%	83%	17%	-1

Source: Review team observations

Assessment

The middle school and the district are in the elementary stages of identifying and developing assessments and analyzing and using data. Interim assessments are being piloted in some subject areas at some grade levels within the school, but no comprehensive assessment system is currently in place.

There is no district or school wide assessment program. In interviews, the administrators stated that the use of data is in its early stages and needs work. The MCAS test is the primary summative assessment in use in Watertown. The district administers a home language survey; however, staff have not been trained in the administration of this survey.

According to the superintendent and assistant superintendent in interviews with team members, the middle school has some formative assessments aligned to the school curriculum and state standards. The development and use of these assessments have not been driven by district or even school policy, however, since they were developed and implemented primarily by individual teachers or small teams of teachers. Most commonly, these are unit assessments and mid-year and final examinations.

The superintendent also related that there are plans for the gradual implementation of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments of ELA and mathematics across the district. According to the superintendent, at the time of the review the district was in the second year of using MAP at the elementary level and the first year at the secondary level. According to the publisher, the MAP assessment is aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and provides benchmarks of student progress against the standards. The district and middle school do not have a scope and sequence or pacing guides for most subjects and the MAP assessment is not aligned to classroom instruction. Because of this lack of alignment the MAP assessment will not provide direct information on the effectiveness of instruction even when fully implemented. Because of the lack of formative student assessment data there is no process in place to use it to modify instructional practice or to inform professional development. In interviews, district leaders stated that principals work with staff to “look at data and find weaknesses.” District leaders stated that they disaggregate MCAS test data, but not MAP or common assessment data. According to interviews with district leadership, beyond disaggregation of ELL data at the school level, there are no district efforts to review ELL data to inform school or district policies. The middle school principal stated that some data analysis of this kind occurs within the middle school ELL department.

Assessment programs beyond the MCAS tests are not in place in Watertown, except for some initiatives such as localized, targeted implementation of the MAP assessment within a few departments in individual schools. Systemic efforts targeted at improvement of student outcomes are not in place. Without the implementation of a comprehensive formative assessment program, the district is operating without the meaningful data that such programs provide for use in improving instruction and student outcomes.

Although Watertown has developed the infrastructure to house student data through the Education Data Warehouse and the iPass System, student data has been only partially uploaded and student assessment data beyond MCAS and targeted ELA assessment data is not included in the databases.

The superintendent stated that district has been proactive in seeking out access to technology to support data storage, data analysis, and stakeholder access to student data through the Education Data Warehouse and the iPass System. The programs have been introduced within the system and a number of district and school personnel have been trained to use the Education Data Warehouse. District leaders reported that the next steps are to train teachers in the use of these tools.

Although the programs are available within the district and some personnel have been trained in their use, the superintendent stated that student assessment data beyond the MCAS test data has not been uploaded to either system. The iPass system is primarily used for routine school activities such as recording of student attendance data and grades.

The teaching staff does not currently have access to formative student data to use to modify instruction within the classrooms. The majority of the teaching staff have not been trained in the use of the Education Data Warehouse and the iPass System. Without well-populated databases for student assessment data and training in the use of the data systems, teachers are without needed information for modifying instruction and adapting instruction to various student needs.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district's evaluation procedures for teacher performance are not rigorous or comprehensive enough to improve student performance. Professional status teachers are formally evaluated only once in a four-year cycle, instead of in alternating years as required by state regulation.

According to interviews with district and school leaders, the district has been involved in prolonged negotiations with the teachers' association to improve the teacher evaluation program. Interviewees stated that the negotiations appeared "stalled," expressed frustration at the lack of meaningful progress over the two years preceding the site visit, and acknowledged that specific improvements in evaluation policies, practices, and instruments were needed. As identified by the review team, the primary deficiencies of the district's evaluative program include: (a) lack of formal training for all administrators and curriculum coordinators in the principles of effective supervision and evaluation; (b) minimal formal linkage of teacher evaluations to districtwide and school-based professional development initiatives, specific programmatic goals, and student performance and achievement data; and most significantly, (c) a four-year evaluation cycle for professional status teachers that does not conform with the two-year cycle required by state regulation (603 CMR 35.06).

The review team found that the district lacks a sufficiently rigorous and comprehensive teacher evaluation program to improve student performance. It should be noted, however, that the district places high priority on the supervision of ESL teachers. According to interviews with both school and district administrators and ESL teachers, the ESL coordinator has the expertise to monitor and support the ESL staff in meeting relevant instructional needs and programmatic expectations, and is primarily responsible for the supervision and evaluation of ESL teachers at all grade levels in all Watertown schools.

In the review team's judgment, the district is making insufficient use of supervision and evaluation systems as essential tools to monitor, assess, and improve both teaching and learning. Consequently, the district's current evaluative processes and practices are not adequate to fully serve the needs of either teachers or students.

The district's professional development program is directed by a committee of administrators and teachers and is provided with appropriate levels of funding and scheduled in-service time. In general, however, professional development appears overly broad in scope, fragmented, and insufficiently linked to well-defined core district objectives.

The review team found that the district's professional development program has many positive features. District documentation indicated and interviews with teachers and administrators confirmed that a council of teachers and administrators plans professional development services and activities collaboratively. Surveys of staff are conducted annually to identify professional development needs. The district provides adequate professional development funding and in-service time. Opportunities for teachers to work together on grade, subject, school level, or district topics are incorporated in the professional development program during the five full days and two half days dedicated to it in the district calendar. In addition, the district's induction and mentoring program fully complies with the state requirements at 603 CMR 7.12 for supporting beginning teachers. Interviewees told the review team that the provisions for experienced teachers new to the district are not comparable.

Based on interviews with administrators and teachers, as well as an analysis of Watertown's 2009-2010 Professional Development Handbook, the review team found that with the exception of training in instructional technology, the district's professional development programming is not formally linked to district needs. The review team found limited evidence that professional development is systematically informed and supported by curriculum development and revision goals, student, teacher, and administrator needs, and student achievement data. For example, although many administrators and faculty stated the importance of data analysis and use, the professional development program places little emphasis on the sustained development of data collection and analysis skills, or the use of item analysis and disaggregated data to identify student learning needs. Although the district provides all four categories of sheltered English immersion (SEI) training, it lacks a process for increasing the number of regular education classroom teachers in each school with the SEI training required to effectively support the

learning needs of ELL students. The number of SEI trained teachers, at the middle school at least, has actually declined significantly over the past several years. School and district leaders explained that because there are so many other competing professional development choices and options for teachers, the opportunity for the district to ensure that it has a sufficient number of teachers with category training is greatly impeded.

The review team found that although the district professional development program has adequate resources and capacity, it falls short of the goal stated in Watertown's professional development handbook, to "improve educational practice and student achievement." Its broad scope, evident from the team's review of its offerings, overextends the available resources, and ultimately the program accomplishes too little. In the judgment of the review team, a lack of formal, systematic alignment between the programmatic and instructional needs and expectations identified by the professional development council, and the focused and prioritized core needs of the district significantly diminishes the capacity of the professional development program to serve and support teachers and learners. Consequently, the professional development program does not sufficiently inform, develop, or improve the competencies of the district's professional staff to advance student academic achievement.

Student Support

The culture and scheduling at Watertown Middle School enhance the effectiveness of instruction for ELL students. A combination of content-driven instruction and exposure to regular classroom instruction facilitates English language acquisition for ELL students.

The review team learned in interviews that the middle school principal used a portion of the staff budget to hire three qualified ESL teachers. An ESL teacher is assigned to one of the two clusters at each grade level. Beginning, intermediate, and some transitioning students are assigned to the cluster with the ESL teacher. The second cluster may contain a few transitioning or transitioned students. ESL teachers instruct the language acquisition courses for students at every grade level. These courses include ESL, Beginning Reading, Intermediate Reading, and Beginning Writing. If transitioning students need additional help, the teachers may add a special reading or writing course for them.

Each teacher is a cluster member and participates in cluster meetings. Teachers and administrators told the review team that the assignment of staff contributes to the acceptance of both ELL students and ESL teachers at the school. Each ESL teacher co-teaches a mathematics and a science course. The ESL teacher functions as a second teacher, freely clarifying concepts and vocabulary as needed. This use of ESL teachers facilitates the integration of ELL students in regular education classes where they learn the full curriculum with all other members of the student body.

The ESL teachers stated in interviews that they participate in the planning of lessons and projects and help classroom teachers modify tests and worksheets. ESL teachers also help regular

education teachers scaffold instruction, pre-teach vocabulary, and accommodate diverse learners. Team members in observations noted that these practices are now more prevalent in regular education classrooms. The sharing of expertise is invaluable since the number of teachers with SEI training is limited. ESL teachers also provide pre-teaching, post-teaching, and support for ELL students during academic support periods. The school schedule consists of alternating A and B days. Students who have academic support on both A and B days receive support daily. As their English language skills increase and their need for services decreases, students may take an enrichment or special subject on the alternate day. The cluster team teachers told the review team that they push ELL students to work at the most challenging level. The regular subject area and ESL teachers jointly determine the level for each ELL student.

According to ELL and other cluster teachers, through enrollment in content area classes ELL students perceive the need to learn English in order to comprehend content and acquire content knowledge, and to master what their classmates are learning. In addition, teachers stated that when ELL students become an integral part of the class, they are comfortable asking their friends the meaning of unknown words. Their friends also benefit from the sense of accomplishment that comes from sharing their knowledge. ELL students receive extra help after school during homework club and participate in other extracurricular activities open to the whole student body.

The ELL staff was determined by the team to be sufficient to provide English language development instruction for all ELL students. Beginners receive nearly three hours of instruction daily; intermediate students approximately one and one-half hours; and transitioning students 45 minutes. ESL teachers on the team help to mainstream ELL students and model instructional methodology for the other team members. This structure provides a language-rich environment, stimulating the use of language to acquire content knowledge and converse with peers in the social group. For example, recently, classmates elected an ELL student as a class officer. The middle school program works well as ELL students receive the benefits of language support, exposure to the curriculum, and social integration while gradually learning sufficient English to transition out of the ESL program.

Student support services, particularly special education services, have increased in the district. A task force of principals, guidance counselors, special educators, and district administrators created a *Supporting Diverse Learners Handbook* to articulate strategies for student accommodations and interventions.

Teachers and administrators described the expansion of special education services and changes in the role of special education teachers that resulted from ESE's 2007 Comprehensive Program Review (CPR). Based on the CPR findings, the district added services for students with language-based learning disabilities, students with social/emotional disorders at the secondary level, and students on the autism spectrum. The role changes resulting from the CPR are that special education teachers now co-teach social studies and science classes and serve as case managers, as well as providing specially designed instruction, leading academic support classes, administering assessments, and writing individualized educational plans (IEPs).

According to an administrator, at the middle school, students with social/emotional disorders are instructed in self-contained classrooms in a cluster not including ELL students. The first class including students from this program was about to enter Watertown High School in September 2010, and plans were in place at the time of the site visit to provide services for them at this level. There is also a separate summer program for students with social/emotional disorders. The new programs allowed the district to bring students back from contracted out-of-district placements, resulting in a savings of \$300,000 in 2008-2009. Special education staff members told the review team about transitional procedures for special education students moving from one level to another. The parents of entering 9th graders are invited to a coffee hour to learn about options at the high school. Sending teachers give receiving teachers information about entering students. High school teachers visit special education classrooms to observe students, and special education students have the opportunity to visit their new classroom at the high school.

As explained in the document, a task force of principals, guidance counselors, special educators, and district administrators, developed a handbook entitled “Strategies for Diverse Learners.” This handbook serves in effect as the district curriculum accommodation plan, containing descriptions of the characteristics and problems of ELL students and students with disabilities and providing lists of suggested instructional strategies to accommodate learning differences.

According to teachers in interviews, although special education and ELL students benefit in large numbers from the academic support program at Watertown Middle School, the program is open to all students. Those who receive mostly C’s on their report cards, and those with a D are also scheduled for some time in academic support. This program runs parallel to enrichment activities such as band, chorus, advanced art, robotics, and newspaper. Students can participate in both programs by enrolling in support and enrichment on alternate days.

In addition, an administrator stated that Watertown offers a summer school program open to all students run jointly by the community and special education department. Teachers suggest fun ideas as themes for each session such as “Wild and Wet Watertown.” Planned for children in kindergarten through grade five, these sessions include reading and mathematics and incorporate activities that are fun and engaging for young children. Summer school for middle school students focuses on project-based learning.

In the judgment of the team, there is a continuum of programs and services to address the needs of various populations in the district. Children who require additional support, especially at the middle school, benefit from support classes while still having access to enrichment activities. Summer school programs reach out to children in kindergarten through middle school. Watertown’s regular education students benefit from several special programs. In addition, staff were deployed and their roles designed to meet the needs of special education students previously educated through contracted external programs. The new programs maintain students in the least restrictive environment, their neighborhood schools, by providing support, case management, and transitional assistance in a professional and caring environment. The

programmatic and staff changes to address the CPR findings mark an improvement in the way special education students are educated in Watertown.

The district is experiencing difficulty in transitioning students from the middle to the high school level.

In interviews, teachers and administrators told the review team that many students are not comfortable making the transition from the middle school to the more challenging high school environment. The review team examined written school goals identifying the need to improve the transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. Teachers told the review team that the problems with the latter transition are greater. During the review team's visit, two high school science teachers visited science classes at the middle school accompanied by their curriculum coordinator to acquaint students with the high school science program. Curriculum coordinators agreed that students find the transition to the high school difficult. They cited the more challenging learning expectations at the high school and the need for students to take responsibility for their work. The teachers added that grade 8 students have never been invited to visit the high school as a group to become acquainted with the facility and programs.

The high school holds a yearly curriculum meeting to introduce middle school parents to the high school curriculum and to secondary school options. In the past, the high school principal and certain staff have visited the middle school to help orient 8th grade students. This practice is not routine and did not occur in 2009-2010.

Some departments have attempted to bridge the gap. The special education department procedures in this area were described in the previous finding. To smooth the transition for ESL students, the eighth grade ESL teacher observes high school classes in order to inform placement decisions, and the high school ESL teacher visits the middle school to look at student work. Information about students' language proficiency, strengths, and weaknesses is shared with the receiving teachers.

In the judgment of the review team, although some teachers and administrators at the middle and high schools have made efforts to facilitate the transition, the absence of a transition plan and sufficient cooperation between the two schools has created some uncertainty and anxiety in the entering 9th grade class.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The Watertown Public Schools should develop a comprehensive DIP that includes specific, measurable student outcomes and clear processes and structures to achieve the district's goals.

The Watertown district goals are broad and overarching. However, the district's plan to attain them is not developed and a traditional DIP is not available. In order to target the system's resources efficiently and effectively the district needs to provide direction to schools. Watertown should consider the following steps:

- Condensing the big picture district goals into a few measurable district and school goals which can be easily communicated to staff and implemented in a cohesive manner
- Developing a system and time-frame for reviewing progress towards school and district goals
- Developing a common district framework for implementation across the district
- Using the current system of task forces as a model for developing a district plan that places a high value on distributed leadership

A defined framework will serve to identify the direction and the scope of the work needed to achieve the broad goals. It will also provide a blueprint for continuous improvement of achievement for all students, including ELL students.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should expand its current curriculum initiatives by developing a kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum that is clearly articulated and aligned to state standards, both vertically and horizontally.

The district has some curriculum-related initiatives in place; however, they are fragmented and not implemented district wide. Some curriculum mapping has begun, but there is not a consistent format or process being used either school wide or district wide. The curriculum is conveyed to new teachers through the institutional memory of individual teachers, rather than through a documented curriculum. The district should move forward by:

- Instituting a unified approach to curriculum development and review that involves all stakeholders

- Providing professional development for staff on curriculum development that is targeted at pulling together the diverse understandings among school and district staff of what a curriculum is and how to design one
- Developing a written curriculum that is accessible to all stakeholders and contains the following elements: scope and sequence, pacing guides, skills, alignment to state standards, instructional strategies and materials, inclusion of ELL strategies, and vertical and horizontal alignment, both within each school and across the district

The district should continue work already begun on mapping the ELL curriculum and aligning it with the ELPBO.

With the district focus on technology, the district may want to consider providing online access for staff to the curriculum documents as they are developed. Implementing these steps will lead to a cohesive instructional program that will provide the foundation for common assessment development, ensure that students are being prepared for transitions between schools, and allow for a common understanding of key topics of instruction as well as providing a resource to guide new teachers as they construct their instructional programs.

Assessment

The district should consider implementing the MAP assessment fully, ensure that there is alignment between curriculum and assessments, and provide access to student assessment data to teachers and school leaders.

The MAP assessment should be fully implemented. The implementation should include:

- District wide training for staff on data access, analysis, and use of data in modifying classroom instruction. This training should encompass all assessments, including the MCAS test and MAP as well as more targeted assessments supporting early literacy and special populations.
- Development of goals for student growth based on the MAP assessment and used to guide school and district instructional planning
- Professional development time following assessments for staff to use to analyze student data and collaboratively revise instruction to better meet student needs and eliminate learning gaps
- Selection of professional development topics at least partially on the basis of student assessment results

The district should consider the use of technology in making a variety of student data readily available to teaching staff and leaders. This use of technology may include completion of the data upload into either iPASS or the Education Data Warehouse. By implementing an assessment

system of this kind, the district will be providing a bank of student data for use in guiding program selection and development, as well as for use in the classroom to modify instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should revise its teacher evaluation program to promote individual professional growth, improve overall staff effectiveness, and enhance learning outcomes for all students.

The district is strongly encouraged to renew its efforts to revise its present evaluation program so that it is aligned with the overall goals, as well as the procedural requirements, of state regulations under the Education Reform Act of 1993. The purpose of 603 CMR 35.00 is to ensure that every school committee has a system in place that will enhance the professionalism and accountability of teachers and that will enable them to assist all students to perform at high levels. School districts are required to establish a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation process for teachers consistent with the Principles of Effective Teaching adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition, in contrast to the district's current four-year cycle, the state requires the evaluation of teachers with professional status at least once every two years; it also requires the formal training of all evaluators in the principles of supervision and evaluation.

By revising its evaluation program as recommended, the district will be better able to assist and support both teachers, enhance their competencies, and hold them appropriately accountable for student achievement. Such an evaluative program will do much to promote effective teaching and academic programs in the Watertown Public Schools.

The district should narrow the scope of professional development so that programs, activities, and resources directly support district and school priorities, objectives, and needs, including the need for SEI category training for all teachers who teach ELL students in SEI classrooms.

The district maintains a commitment to providing learning opportunities for staff, but makes inadequate use of student achievement data, assessments of programs and instructional practice, and information about prioritized district needs to inform the professional development program. Because of this, the professional development program does not adequately support teachers in enhancing their content expertise and instructional practice and does not promote district core priorities. The professional development program now offers an overly broad array of generally unrelated options and activities for staff, including workshops, conferences, mini-courses, task forces, curriculum planning, collaborative action research, lesson study, mentoring, ELL education, and new teacher induction.

For example, although SEI category training is available through the professional development program and administrators indicated the need for additional staff with these skills, the number

of SEI trained teachers, at the middle school at least, has actually declined significantly over the past several years. School and district leaders explained that because there are so many other competing professional development choices and options for teachers, the opportunity for the district to ensure that it has a sufficient number of teachers with category training is greatly impeded.

The review team recommends that Watertown redesign its professional development program so that it is more directly tied to a well-defined set of core goals, and specifically aligned and integrated with whatever is driving change within the district, such as the District Improvement or Strategic Plan. One of the district's goals should be to ensure that teachers who teach ELL students in SEI classrooms have the category training required under state guidance. By concentrating attention, activities, and resources on fewer, more clearly defined common initiatives that are closely and continuously linked with and supportive of the district's prioritized goals, the district will create an integrated and comprehensive professional development system that better serves the needs of students, teachers, and administrators across the school system.

Student Support

The district should consider expanding the middle school model for ELL instruction to other levels.

The integration of ELL students and teachers into the mainstream has been an effective policy for the middle school. The most effective practices have been the following:

- ELL students are exposed to the whole curriculum taught by licensed teachers in the various subject areas and are exposed to a language-rich environment by studying in mainstream classes.
- ELL students are part of the fabric of school life at the middle school and are accepted by the student body.
- ELL students receive an adequate amount of ELD instruction daily and weekly. This instruction is enhanced by the academic support classes that permit intervention in any of the curriculum areas.

The teaching staff has had limited SEI training and benefits from sharing planning time weekly with ESL teachers who are also part of the cluster. The ESL teachers share sheltering practices and provide insight on scaffolding instruction and assessments. The integration of ELL students and teachers within the middle school clusters and the provision of additional support classes provide an effective model of instruction. Both ELL and regular education students benefit from the integration and from the enhanced teacher planning. The district should foster this worthwhile scheduling model by introducing it in other schools.

The district should follow through on its goals to improve student transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school.

The team found that students have trouble transitioning effectively between school levels. Limited transitioning support creates anxiety, school phobia, and time lost while the students acclimate to new surroundings and expectations. Transitions are smoothest when students and parents are welcomed and receive information about the new school from those working there, including administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors. It is important for students and parents to have the opportunity to explore the building and the new options available. Records of student progress should be carefully transferred from one school to the next in a timely manner. The schools should also work together so that curriculum, pedagogy, and routines are sequenced, leading students seamlessly from one level to the next. Watertown should work to accomplish a smooth transition for all students.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Watertown Public Schools was conducted from June 1 to June 4, 2010, by the following team of educators from Class Measures, an independent consultancy engaged by the ESE and CDSA to conduct this site visit.

Dr. Magdalene Giffune, Leadership and Governance

Melanie Gallo, Curriculum and Instruction

Jeanne Simons, Assessment

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. Katherine Lopez-Natale, Student Support and ELL Support

Jeanne Simons served as review team coordinator.

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Watertown Public Schools: superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of student support services, director of human resources, elementary principals, and secondary curriculum coordinators.

The review team visited Watertown Middle School (grades 6-8).

During the school visit, the review team conducted interviews with the school principal, and teachers.

The review team conducted 28 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the one school visited.

The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:

District profile data

District and School Data Review

Latest Coordinated Program Review Report or follow-up Mid-cycle Report

Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years

Staff 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 schools):

Organization chart

District Improvement Plans for grade and subject areas

Elementary and secondary improvement plans

School committee policy manual

Curriculum guides

Calendar of formative and summative assessments
Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
Descriptions of student support programs
Program evaluations
Student and Family Handbooks
Faculty Handbook
“Strategies for Diverse Learners”
Professional Development Plan and program/schedule/courses
Teacher planning time/meeting schedules
Teacher evaluation tool
Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools
Job descriptions (for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
Principal evaluations
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 Watertown Public Schools conducted from June 1 to June 4, 2010.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
June 1 Orientation meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents	June 2 Interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents	June 3 School visit (Watertown Middle School): interviews with school principal; classroom observations; teacher cluster meetings; teacher and parent focus groups	June 4 School visit (Watertown Middle School): interviews with ESL teachers; classroom observations; teacher cluster meetings; teacher focus groups; follow-up interviews; team meeting; closing meeting with district leaders