



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Clinton Public Schools

Review of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of Low-Income Students

Review conducted February 7-10, 2011

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370
www.doe.mass.edu



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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

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Overview of Differentiated Needs Reviews: Low-Income Students

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 there is a significant proficiency gap. (“Proficiency gap” is defined as a measure of the shortfall in academic performance by an identifiable population group relative to an appropriate standard held for all.)¹ The reviews 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 (defined as students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2011 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to improvement in achievement for students living in poverty (low-income students) in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the improvement in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirement of Chapter 15, Section 55A to conduct district reviews and 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 are narrowing proficiency gaps. Exemplary district and school practices identified through the reviews will be described in a report summarizing this set of reviews.

Selection of Districts

ESE identified 28 Title I schools in 18 districts where the performance of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has recently improved. These districts had Title I schools which substantially narrowed proficiency gaps for these low-income students over a two-year period: schools where the performance of low-income students improved from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 in English language arts or mathematics both in terms of low-income students’ Composite Performance Index (increased CPI in the same subject both years and a gain over the two years of at least 5 points) and in terms of the percentage of low-income students scoring Proficient or Advanced (at least one percentage point gained in the same subject each year).² As

¹The term “proficiency gap,” originally coined by Jeff Howard, a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, was adopted in 2010 by the Board’s Proficiency Gap Task Force. BESE Proficiency Gap Taskforce. April 2010. *A Roadmap to Closing the Proficiency Gap*.

²To be considered, a school had to be a Title I school and had to have been recognized as a 2010-2011 Commendation School (for narrowing proficiency gaps, high growth, or exiting NCLB accountability status). In addition to having an increase in CPI and proficiency rate in English language arts or mathematics both years, the school could not have experienced a decline in CPI or proficiency rate either year in either subject; had to meet the

a result of having these “gap-closer” schools, districts from this group were invited to participate in this set of reviews aimed at identifying district and school practices associated with stronger performance for low-income students.

Key Questions

Two key questions guide the work of the review team.

Key Question 1. To what extent are the following conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. School Leadership (CSE #2): *Each school takes action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, in part by leveraging resources. Each school leadership team a) ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school’s mission and strategies, b) supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, c) uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development, and d) focuses staff time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations and use of data for improvement planning and management.*

2. Consistent Delivery of an Aligned Curriculum (CSE #3): *Each school’s taught curricula a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions, and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course).*

3. Effective Instruction (CSE #4): *Instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs. It also ensures that instruction focuses on clear objectives, uses appropriate educational materials, and includes a) a range of strategies, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students’ developmental levels and learning needs; b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning. Each school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice.*

4. Tiered Instruction and Adequate Learning Time (CSE #8): *Each school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the district ensures that each school provides*

2010 AYP participation rate and attendance or graduation rate requirements; and had to have had at least 40 low-income students tested each year from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010.

additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.

5. Social and Emotional Support (CSE #9): Each school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.³ Students' needs are met in part through a) the provision of coordinated student support services and universal breakfast (if eligible); b) the implementation of a systems approach to establishing a productive social culture that minimizes problem behavior for all students; and c) the use of consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management techniques that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning.

Key Question 2. How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews explore six areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**. 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. Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. A four-to-six-member review team, usually six-member, previews selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit in the district, spending about two to three days in the central office and one to two days conducting school visits. The team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the six areas listed above.

³ The behavioral health and public schools framework was developed by the Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools pursuant to c. 321, s. 19, of the Massachusetts Acts of 2008.

Clinton Public Schools

The site visit to the Clinton Public Schools was conducted from February 7–10, 2011, and included visits to all three of the district’s schools: Clinton Elementary School (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), Clinton Middle School (grades 4–8), and Clinton High School (grades 9–12). The Clinton Elementary School was identified as a “gap closer” for its low-income 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. Appendix C contains information about student performance for 2008–2010. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team’s suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

District Profile⁴

The town of Clinton lies approximately 40 miles west of Boston in the hills of northern Worcester County. Clinton was originally Lancaster’s mill district. With unprecedented growth in population driven by its burgeoning textile industry, Clinton was incorporated as a separate town in 1850 under the leadership of brothers Erastus and Horatio Bigelow. The Bigelow Brothers, entrepreneurs and innovators in the textile industry, invented the power loom for weaving textiles and the carpet loom that manufactured Bigelow Carpets in Clinton until the mid-twentieth century. Bigelow carpets adorned the White House, New York’s Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, and many other public and private buildings. To supply drinking water to Boston, a large portion of Clinton was flooded in 1897 to construct the Wachusett Dam, forming the Wachusett Reservoir.

Clinton’s textile industry began to slip away during the Great Depression and eventually relocated south. However, modern entrepreneurs discovered the numerous empty mill buildings in the late-twentieth century and converted them into several successful businesses. Notable among them is Nypro, a world leader in plastic injection molding. Nypro’s founder recently established the Museum of Russian Icons in the town center to house his collection of Russian Orthodox religious art assembled over 30 years of travel to Nypro’s factory in Russia. Other famous Clinton residents who have contributed to American culture and industry include author Sydney Schanberg (*The Killing Fields*), Arctic explorer Miriam Look MacMillan, biotechnology pioneer Robert Lanza, and actress Agnes Moorehead. Clinton also boasts America’s oldest

⁴ Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources. Information about Clinton’s history derived from www.clintonma.gov; A.J. Bastarache, *An Extraordinary Town*, 2005; and Terry Ingano, *The History of Clinton*, 1993.

continuously used baseball diamond and its first public park. At the 1953 high school graduation ceremonies, speaker John F. Kennedy noted: “A community of only 13,000, which could produce so many and such eminent figures in politics, the arts, education and religion must have an educational system of exceptional standards and must have citizens of exceptional character.” When President Jimmy Carter came to Clinton in 1977 for a town hall meeting, he, too, highlighted the history and character of this small New England town.

Today, the town has a board of selectmen of five members, an open Town Meeting, and a five-member school committee. The current superintendent has been in the position since 2009; the superintendent and the director of special education are the only administrators on the central office staff.

The Clinton Public Schools educate nearly 2000 pupils in three schools. When the Clinton Elementary School opened in 2003, the district returned grade 4 to the elementary school from the Clinton Middle School, where it had been located for several years because of space limitations in the old elementary building. In September 2010, grade 4 students were once again relocated to the middle school because of space limitations at the new elementary school. The Clinton Elementary School now serves students in pre-kindergarten to grade 3.

Table 1 below profiles district enrollment by race/ethnicity and selected populations. The largest subgroup consists of children from low-income homes who make up 45.6 percent of the student population. One in five children, 19.9 percent, is a special education student. Nearly the same proportion, 19.4 percent, are Hispanic/Latino and an almost equivalent proportion, 19.0 percent, come from homes where English is not the first language (FLNE). Seven percent of students are classified as limited English proficient (LEP).

Table 1: 2010-2011 Clinton Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	81	4.1	First Language not English	371	19.0
Asian	28	1.4	Limited English Proficient	137	7.0
Hispanic or Latino	379	19.4	Low-income	891	45.6
Native American	3	0.2	Special Education	393	19.9
White	1448	74.1	Free Lunch	714	36.5
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	177	9.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	16	0.8	Total enrollment	1955	100.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 2 below shows selected populations in the district, in each school, and in the state. The Clinton Elementary School, the focus of this report, has a higher proportion of students from low-income homes than the state (42.6 percent vs. 34.2 percent) and the middle school has the highest in the district at 48.7 percent. The elementary school's subgroup populations as proportions of the whole population exceed the state's proportions for all subgroups: eligible for free lunch, 34.1 percent vs. 29.1 percent; eligible for reduced lunch, 8.5 percent vs. 5.1 percent; LEP, 9.1 percent vs. 7.1 percent; and special education students, 21.9 percent vs. 17.0 percent. These subgroup populations present unique challenges to educators in terms of matching instructional programs and pedagogies to students' diverse learning needs.

Table 2: Comparison of State, District, and All District Schools by Selected Populations: 2010-2011 (in Percentages except for Total Enrollment)

	Total Enrollment	Low-Income Students			Limited English Proficient Students	Special Education Students
		All	Eligible for Free Lunch	Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch		
State	955,563	34.2	29.1	5.1	7.1	17.0
Clinton Public Schools	1,955	45.6	36.5	9.1	7.0	19.9
Clinton Elementary	707	42.6	34.1	8.5	9.1	21.9
Clinton Middle School	721	48.7	38.7	10.0	6.5	18.0
Clinton High School	527	45.4	36.8	8.5	4.9	16.1

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The local appropriation to the Clinton Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$17,383,480, down very slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$17,408,983. School-related expenditures by the Town of Clinton were estimated at \$5,550,994 for fiscal year 2011, down slightly from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$5,638,132. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$17,417,217), expenditures by the Town of Clinton (\$5,242,308), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$4,299,826), was \$26,959,351. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was \$19,638,072, \$124,591 less than required net school spending, resulting in a carryover to fiscal year 2011.

The report that follows describes an elementary school that steadfastly set an agenda for improvement and with some support from the district, was able to put the school on an improvement path through good leadership, a strong belief system, sound and coherent academic programs in ELA and mathematics, strong data-driven decision making, and energetic, collaborative support. There are areas that the school needs to address to reach its goals and the review team believes that it has the capacity to do so, provided that the district can step forward with needed support.

Findings

Key Question 1: To what extent are the following conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of students from low-income families has substantially improved?

**school leadership;
curriculum;
instruction;
tiered instruction and adequate learning time; and
social/emotional support**

School leadership is well developed at the Clinton Elementary School.

Evidence from documents, interviews, and focus groups indicates that the leadership team at Clinton Elementary School (CES) has developed a shared vision with the faculty and staff in which the achievement of every student is a common goal. To that end, the leadership team has leveraged its human and financial resources to create a spectrum of programming to meet the needs of all students. Funding for ELLs and special education students is used to provide an instructional model for all the students at CES. Over the past few years the school leadership has also used its local financial resources and grants to adopt instructional materials in both ELA and mathematics to create programs that are well articulated throughout the grades.

To support teachers, the school leadership team has built a schedule that provides substantial weekly planning time. Teachers use a daily preparation period, which is consistent throughout the grade levels, to have regularly scheduled grade-level meetings with the principal once a week and with department heads once a month. At these meetings they discuss student achievement, grade level planning and other concerns about instruction. According to the principal and the ELA and mathematics department heads, a “data wall” in the school’s conference room helps teachers review student achievement. The leadership team has developed a method of displaying and tracking student achievement on common assessments that allows teachers to systematically assess and revise their instruction.

Staff are deployed in classrooms as well as in small group settings to employ a range of instructional strategies targeted at raising student achievement in ELA and math. To refine the differentiation of ELA instruction the school leadership team recently instituted “Walk to Read.” Student support staff stated that during this 45-minute block of regular ELA instruction students are regrouped into five levels according to their most recent Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) scores. Although the same grade level materials are used by all groups, instruction is tailored to the varying skill development levels represented by the groups.

The school benefits from a robust volunteer program coordinated by a parent volunteer. According to the principal and student support staff more than 200 volunteers help teachers by

copying instructional materials and assisting with science projects on VIC (Volunteers in the Classroom) Day.

In the judgment of the review team, the high energy and creative problem solving of the school leadership team have contributed to students in the low-income subgroup improving their performance in both ELA and math from 2008 to 2010 (see Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C). Furthermore, the many improvements and supports that have been put in place at CES have contributed to an overall increase in student achievement (again, see Tables C3 and C4) as well as for students from low-income homes.

Leaders and teachers at the Clinton Elementary School have improved curriculum and instruction in English language arts and mathematics through a whole-school improvement initiative targeting internal as well as external systems and practices.

At the time of the 2005 report of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), the newly built (2003) Clinton Elementary School (CES) had “no written curricula aligned to state curriculum frameworks in the MCAS subject areas” and had “not updated much of its curriculum since the mid-1990s.”⁵ The school also “did not have curriculum leaders” and had no process to evaluate, review, and renew curriculum. By the next school year, interviewees told the review team, the school had gained the school committee’s support to research, identify, and purchase new programs (i.e., textbooks) in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics for implementation in the 2007–2008 school year. At that time, the professional staff, led by its principal, undertook a multiyear comprehensive and collaborative whole-school initiative to improve teaching and learning in pre-kindergarten through grade 4⁶ in ELA and mathematics. The initiative simultaneously targeted internal practices and systems such as curriculum and instruction leadership, school culture, school structure, instructional models, professional development, and resource allocation. The staff also harnessed external assistance for the school from parents, community groups, private foundations, and the business community to support their initiative.

In interviews with the principal and the ELA and mathematics department heads, the review team learned that with the adoption of Scott Foresman’s *Reading Street – Elementary Reading Comprehension Program* as its ELA textbook series as well as its Addison-Wesley elementary *Mathematics*, the taught curricula became more aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework. Also, when the new programs were introduced, the Title I director took on added responsibilities as ELA department head at CES. And a full-time kindergarten teacher was appointed mathematics department head at CES. Now, mainly through weekly grade-level meetings and guidance from department heads and the principal, both ELA instruction and

⁵ See p. 9 of the report, available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/reports/general/05_0064.pdf.

⁶ When the Clinton Elementary School opened in 2003, the district returned grade 4 to the elementary school from the Clinton Middle School where it had been located for several years because of space limitations in the old elementary building. In September 2010, grade 4 students were once again relocated to the middle school because of space limitations at the new elementary school. The Clinton Elementary School now serves students in pre-kindergarten to grade 3.

mathematics instruction are held to high standards for horizontal alignment across same-grade classrooms in the school. Vertical alignment between grades is ensured because curriculum pacing is tightly monitored and consistently adhered to at each grade level.

Although each curriculum was documented shortly after the introduction of the new programs, only the mathematics curriculum demonstrates most components of a well-structured curriculum. Grade-level mathematics curriculum guides are organized around “Big Ideas,” (for example, “Number Sense and Operations” in grade 1) that cite state standards and include benchmarks/progress indicators, guiding questions, and references to textbook lessons. These guides also include monthly lesson plans that outline state standards, vocabulary, key lessons (chapters), and assessments for each grade level. Mathematics curriculum and instruction at the school are tightly framed and monitored in terms of pacing.

ELA curriculum documents are more loosely framed and formatted. They do not explicitly link Massachusetts Curriculum Framework standards to specific lessons, do not include accompanying vocabulary, resources, or assessments by standard, and do not prescribe a time frame in which topics or lessons are covered. Interviewees explained that the program was not fully documented because the publisher designed it to correlate with Massachusetts standards. Without links between lessons and standards it may be difficult for all teachers to understand which standards are taught and when they are taught. ELA teachers can refer to a “Student Learning Outcomes” document that identifies grade-level skills to master each year in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. In addition, when planning and implementing lessons teachers can refer to an ELA assessment document, “Assessments for Reading/English Language Arts Grades K-4,” that lists baseline group tests, informal classroom-based assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments for the year.

The review team learned in interviews that work had already begun to align ELA and mathematics curricula to the common core standards. However, the elementary school does not have written curriculum or monitored expectations for the teaching of science and social studies, according to interviewees. Science and social studies are taught as separate subjects on an occasional basis at the teacher’s discretion using teacher-designed materials and projects. In addition, science and social studies topics are included in both the ELA and mathematics texts. For example, as a follow up to a literacy lesson students in an observed small group in grade 1 were drawing pictures on a worksheet to show how to plant a flower garden. They were learning concepts and vocabulary such as soil, flowers, seeds, compost, sun, and water. While the inclusion of science and/social studies topics in literacy texts can be considered to reinforce knowledge and skills, it does not substitute for meaningful knowledge and skill development in each of these disciplines. In instituting the new ELA and mathematics programs, the school signaled a cultural shift in instructional practice. Interviewees and documents described the expectation to make data-driven curricular and instructional decisions based on formative assessments that identify students’ learning needs. The Assessment finding below describes these assessments.

The school also introduced new structural components to the school day. ELA is taught in a daily two-hour block and mathematics in a daily one-hour block. Supported by Title I funding, teachers use an instructional model described in interviews and outlined in a document provided by the principal to the review team. According to the document, “In Tier I, students learn in the classroom with the classroom teacher. In Tier II, students who fail to make adequate progress receive support from the Title I staff (for grades K-3 in ELA and grades 2–3 in mathematics) as part of the extended 120-minute instructional blocks. Students who fail to make adequate progress at Tier II become eligible for Tier III interventions for an additional 30 to 50 minutes daily using materials targeted to each student’s needs.”

In another structural modification, teachers have daily common planning time (CPT) to use either as a prep period or as time to meet as a grade-level team. According to interviewees, they do meet often to discuss student progress, curriculum refinements, assessment results, and other related topics. Additionally, once a week during CPT, teachers meet in a scheduled grade-level team meeting with the principal to review progress and discuss specific grade-level teaching and learning priorities. Once a month, the ELA and mathematics department heads join each grade level team meeting with the principal. Thus the school encourages multiple layers of conversations about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student progress at the grade and classroom levels. Review team members were told in a meeting with a grade-level team how critical this meeting structure has become in providing a forum for teachers to collaborate to improve curriculum and instruction and to create a collegial professional learning community.

In addition, interviewees described a number of “fun” and innovative literacy and mathematics teaching strategies instituted at the school. For example, it is not unusual during literacy block to enlist Title I teachers and art, music, and physical education teachers to assist in teaching reading with small groups. This year, grade 3 classes are piloting a “Walk to Read” program organized by grouping all third grade students into six reading groups based on student needs. Reading instruction is tailored to the needs of each group and all teachers use the same curriculum. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) details schoolwide reading challenges that encourage students to aim high in the number of books they read either individually or as a grade level. For example, the school challenges the kindergarten to read 1,000 books in a year; each grade 1 student is challenged to read 60 books in a year. The school also organizes book swaps. In mathematics, the school has designed projects such as “equation of the week,” and sponsors math game night for parents and students to come to school and play games together.

However, teachers in multiple interviews and focus groups also noted that the principal and department heads rarely visit classrooms to monitor instruction except for the required observation leading to a formal evaluation. Teachers in focus groups told the review team that they would welcome more formal feedback—both positive and negative—about their classroom practice. They seek feedback not only to receive “kudos” for a job well done, but are also to elicit more critical feedback “in order to get better.”

The importance of professional development in building capacity for improved teaching is reflected in its being another component of the whole school improvement initiative at CES. The

review team noted that during the past four years, professional development at the school has been well aligned with curricular and instructional priorities expressed in the SIP and described in more detail below.

Clearly, the Clinton Elementary School has made considerable progress in selecting and implementing stronger, well-aligned, research-based programs in ELA and mathematics. Although curriculum documents are inconsistently formatted between ELA and mathematics, for the most part, they have clarified for teachers the instructional goals, learning outcomes, assessments, and, in the case of mathematics, pacing. The school has also aligned important resources such as department heads, time for planning and team meetings, new instructional models, and professional development to support improved curriculum and instruction.

There are, however, areas in curriculum and instruction that require the school's focused attention to help sustain improvement. Curricular and instructional gaps exist in the core subjects of science and social studies. Teaching science and social studies through literacy lessons raises questions about depth and breadth of meaningful learning. The school does not provide effective instructional supervision in any subject to ensure not only fidelity in implementation of the curriculum but also good instructional practice. ELA and mathematics department heads do not have the time or the status to undertake supervisory responsibilities. One works as a full-time teacher rather than an administrator and the other, also a teacher, serves also as Title I director and assists the superintendent in writing the grant that she supervises. As members of the teachers' union, they are prevented from evaluating fellow members by the collective bargaining agreement. Also, there is no systemic, sequential multi-year process in the school or the district to ensure that teachers and leaders are constantly engaged in a process to evaluate, review, and renew curriculum for the core academic subjects. The fine-tuning and adjustments currently made on a short-term basis in response to formative and summative assessments do not constitute adequate curriculum evaluation and renewal.

Nevertheless, the many positive steps the school has taken to improve teaching and learning in ELA and mathematics have helped its students, including students from low-income homes, improve their achievement from 2008 to 2010 (see Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C), with low-income students in grade 3 surpassing the achievement of low-income students statewide in 2010 (see Tables C5 and C6 in Appendix C). These are accomplishments to be celebrated, in the judgment of the review team, but there is still work to be done in the areas of curriculum and instruction.

On the whole, observed classroom instruction at Clinton Elementary School shows evidence of strength in lesson organization, student engagement, presentation of content, and use of materials, and lower incidence of practices that develop students' higher order thinking and reasoning skills.

The review team observed 20- to 25-minute segments of 72 classroom lessons: 25 at the elementary school, 33 at the middle school, and 14 at the high school. Review team members used an observation tool that describes 14 teaching characteristics and noted solid evidence,

partial evidence, or no evidence that the practice was observed in the classroom. Percentages noted below indicate solid evidence that the practice was observed. The presentation addresses classroom practice only at the elementary school. (See the second finding under Key Question 2 below for further information about the team’s observations.)

Review team members noted that in 88 percent of observed elementary classrooms, classroom climate was characterized by respectful tones and behaviors. Classroom routines were well-established—students raised their hands to speak, listened intently, followed directions, and worked well in small groups. Class time was maximized for learning in 72 percent of observed classrooms. However, in only 32 percent of classrooms did observers see or hear a clearly stated explanation of lesson objectives. The team in rare instances saw language on a board, such as “We will read about the four seasons. Many things change with each season.” This is not a teaching/learning objective. Although the documented elementary school mathematics curriculum clearly defines objectives, standards, and benchmarks and is organized around “Big Ideas” and essential questions, teachers in most cases did not translate these to daily classroom practice by communicating objectives of lessons to students.

In 72 percent of observed classrooms, supplemental materials such as posters, word walls, vocabulary lists, and graphic organizers were evident and aligned to students’ developmental level and level of English proficiency. In 80 percent of classrooms, content was presented within students’ English proficiency level. However, in only 48 percent of classrooms was depth of content knowledge evident, meaning, for example, that teachers explained concepts and ideas in multiple ways when students were confused or did not understand, or that teachers identified and corrected misconceptions through exploration and discussion with students. Several observations in this category noted excellent use of academic vocabulary by both students and teachers and teachers’ use of scaffolding to advance learning.

Differentiated instruction and tiered instruction, emphasized in the elementary school’s instructional model, were evident in 56 percent of classrooms; observers noted a range of techniques such as direct instruction combined with students working in both large and small groups tailored to their learning needs. In one example, a grade 1 teacher led seven students in a discussion of a chapter book in a small literacy group while another group of seven students, under the leadership of a student facilitator, read aloud expressively and engagingly from another chapter book. Three other students were working independently on literacy worksheets.

On-the-spot formative assessments were evident in 56 percent of observed classrooms. For example, teachers circulated to small groups to check, assist, and correct student work. One review team member noted a teacher’s use of many good questions and interactions to test understanding and give constant feedback to students.

There were fewer observations of teachers engaging students in questions requiring them to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Observers found solid evidence of this characteristic in 44 percent of classrooms observed. One strong example was a third-grade class in which students produced a rule, applied that rule, analyzed each others’ rules, and then made an original

rule. Often, however, questioning lacked rigor and focused on “what” or “what kind” rather than “why” or required a simple one- or two-word answer. In a similar trend, there was solid evidence that students were asked to articulate their thinking and reasoning in 48 percent of observed classrooms. As an example, in one grade 2 classroom, teachers asked students to discuss why they used past, present, and future tenses. In another grade 2 classroom, students used mathematical language to explain their answers to “study buddies.” In 52 percent of classrooms, students were observed working in pairs and small groups. In some instances, students were engaged with each other in sustained verbal interaction to complete carefully designed academic tasks. In others, students were sitting in groups of two, or three, or four, but were either reading independently or filling out worksheets without collaboration.

However, practices were observed to be stronger in a fourth area of higher-order thinking. In 64 percent of classrooms, students had opportunities to apply new knowledge and content. In a third grade, students were asked, “What other things could you use this for?” And, in a first grade, students used new words in a sentence and then could indicate the punctuation mark by writing it in the air with their fingers. Although many elementary classrooms were filled with colorful and engaging posters, word walls, and student work, teachers and students, for the most part, did not have technology such as SMART Boards, computers, or even overhead projectors. In one class, students did a kinesthetic exercise to music played by the teacher on a CD player. On the whole, many observed classrooms at the Clinton Elementary School demonstrated solid evidence in many of the key characteristics of effective teaching. The teaching tools, program materials, and grade-level meetings have surely contributed to the good instructional practice observed during the review. While some pockets of excellence were unmistakably evident, in the judgment of the review team the strides that students have made in achievement are due in large part to the carefully crafted whole-school improvement initiative.

Clinton Elementary School is making steady progress in its initiatives to collect, analyze and use student assessment data to prioritize goals, inform instructional practice, and improve academic programs and services for all students.

The 2005 EQA Report (p. 11) on the Clinton Public Schools stated that the schools “generally do not use data as a tool for improving (student) performance or creating policy” and “provide teachers and principals no formal training in analyzing test scores”; it concluded that “the assessment and evaluation systems are among the weakest areas of the Clinton Public Schools.” This ESE differentiated needs review, however, reveals considerable evidence of substantial improvements to the assessment policies and practices implemented at the Clinton Elementary School since the 2005 EQA Report was issued.

Extensive student performance data is continuously collected, carefully monitored, and systematically analyzed by elementary school leaders and increasingly so by teachers and staff. Reviewers were provided with multiple sources of evidence substantiating the high priority that has been given to developing a comprehensive student assessment system at the elementary school. For example, among the primary goals of the school’s 2010–2012 School Improvement Plan (SIP) were the improvement of student achievement in both ELA and mathematics.

Numerous interviews with school leaders and teaching staff, together with an examination of the SIP's "Key Action Steps," and a review of the elementary school's assessment calendar provided detailed information on the many specific actions being taken to achieve these goals. Chief among these is the comprehensive battery of performance assessments that are administered at regular intervals throughout the year to continuously collect academic data and monitor student progress. These assessments are given to all students in kindergarten through grade 3 and include: Baseline Group Tests (Sept.); DIBELS/ELA (Sept., Jan., May and bi-weekly/monthly as a progress monitor); Selection Tests (weekly); Fresh Reads for Differentiated Test Practice (weekly); Unit Benchmark Tests (end of each six-week unit); common spelling tests (weekly); GRADE/ELA (Sept. and May); and "Open Response Friday" written exercises in ELA and math (weekly). However, there is no external measure for mathematics achievement that would compare Clinton's students to a normed national sample to offer comparative data in a larger setting.

Evidence from interviews with school administration and staff and a review of the minutes of teacher meetings indicated that student assessment results, local benchmarks, and other pertinent data is collected, distributed to, and regularly reviewed and analyzed by both grade level and content area teacher teams. Structural supports, including common planning time and the active involvement of school administrators and content area specialists (ELA and math chairpersons) in weekly team meetings, have been provided to promote effective assessment analysis practices. Further, student assessment results and other pertinent data is routinely disseminated, as appropriate, to all school community constituents, including the superintendent, school committee, and staff members. DIBELS scores are mailed to the parents of every elementary school student three times each year. The results of numerous formative and summative assessments are compiled and prominently displayed on the walls of the school's conference room where grade level meetings take place; they serve to further promote and facilitate the faculty's ability to understand and analyze student progress.

Improving the capacity of elementary school teachers and staff to interpret and apply student data to guide classroom instruction and improve/initiate instructional programs, rather than relying primarily on school and curriculum leaders to do so, was cited as a goal in the elementary school's SIP. This goal has been advanced through a variety of on-going professional development programs and supports. For example, teachers reported that they have all received DIBELS training. In addition, through a grant funded collaboration with the regional District and Schools Assistance Center (DSAC), a one-week for credit summer class and four follow up workshops dealing with data collection and analysis methodologies have been made available to school staff this year. The introduction of the expanded "Literacy Block" and the Walk to Read program were also cited by teachers and school leaders as prime examples of how the elementary school is currently analyzing and using student assessment results and other relevant data to prioritize goals, drive decision-making, allocate resources, and improve overall educational programming. Although administrators and staff reported that teachers' data analysis skills are significantly improved, much of the collection, analysis, and application of data is still directed

by what was described as a data “swat team,” composed of the school principal and department heads for ELA and mathematics.

Clinton Elementary School has made greatly expanded and increasingly effective use of student performance data as a tool to improve teaching practices, educational opportunities, and learning outcomes for all learners. Administrators and staff conveyed to reviewers their growing belief that classroom instruction, academic programs and services, and, ultimately, student achievement can be significantly enhanced through the systematic collection, careful analysis, and appropriate use of data. By establishing comprehensive policies and systems for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student assessment results, the staff of the Clinton Elementary School is becoming better able to monitor and measure academic achievement, make timely and appropriate modifications to curriculum and instruction, and, most importantly, to improve academic achievement for all students.

Professional development opportunities at the Clinton Elementary School for the last several years were closely aligned with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the effectiveness of the program has contributed to improved achievement for its students from low-income homes.

Evidence from documents and interviews reveals that since the inception of the new ELA and mathematics programs, teachers have participated in meaningful professional development programs offered by the publishers in strategies to implement differentiated instruction. Teachers’ skills have also been developed in administering and using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and GRADE data to improve instruction although at the time of the review there had been no targeted professional development to improve teachers’ data analysis skills in general. In addition, according to teachers in a focus group almost all teachers have participated in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training, many in all four categories. This participation helps them work more effectively with the almost 20 percent of students who are in the Hispanic/Latino subgroup and with other students whose families’ first language is not English. Teachers describe SEI strategies as good teaching practices that are effective in working with all students. Teachers have also worked with ESE and District and Schools Assistance Centers (DSAC) personnel to learn more effective strategies for improving mathematics instruction, specifically how to teach open-response questions.

The Clinton Elementary School has had a John Silber Early Literacy Grant for the last three years. According to the superintendent, the professional development program has operated in conjunction with a district partnership with *Teachers 21* to make the teaching of literacy more consistent from grade to grade as well as within the same grade. It helped the professional staff teach reading and comprehension skills to their students and emphasized the best way to teach students how to tackle open-response questions in both ELA and mathematics. The school even has “Open Response Fridays” for students to gain experience answering open-response questions.

Another grant that was extended for several years was the SEI training sessions. The district's goal was to have every teacher trained in a least one ELL category and within two years that goal was realized. Today every teacher at the elementary school, in fact, every teacher in the district except first year teachers, has been trained in at least one category and 75 percent of the staff has been trained in at least two categories. The statistics the district provided the team revealed that of the 242 teachers in the district, 54, or 22 percent of the entire professional staff, has been trained in all four categories. Other examples of the district's commitment to professional development are the recent opportunities that emphasized differentiated instruction in all classrooms, dealing with autistic children, bullying prevention, and the literacy and comprehension sessions given in conjunction with the DSAC. The district's principals pointed out in an interview that 22 elementary teachers had taken part in ESE's three-day mathematics workshop last summer. This workshop focused on promoting more rigorous instruction to help students solve word problems.

There is little doubt that the district is committed to having its professional staff trained in teaching reading and writing to children with limited English proficiency; the training they have received has also assisted all the school's students, including the targeted population of this review—children from low-income homes. In the judgment of the review team, in the last several years the professional development program at the Clinton Elementary School has greatly improved and refined the teaching skills of the staff and has contributed to substantial improvement in the performance of its students from low-income homes.

Clinton Elementary School has designed a seven-day rotation schedule that provides ample learning time for all students in ELA and mathematics.

The students at Clinton Elementary School (CES) are taught by staff members who have adopted a whole child approach to ensure that all aspects of a child's school life are considered in the developing educational process. The schedule includes a daily two-hour literacy block in which teachers use a three-tiered instructional model (Response to Intervention [RTI]) thus giving students staged opportunities to learn the curriculum. The schedule also includes a one-hour daily math block where classes are frequently led by more than one adult. During a teacher focus group with eight representatives from the school, the review team was told that teachers hold high expectations for teaching and learning that include "pushing each child to reach maximum potential," "getting each child above proficiency on state assessments," "making the work more rigorous," "meeting them at their developmental level," "pushing them as far as they can go," and "accepting every child as ours." One teacher stated that "people have to be passionate about the work of teaching and learning to work at CES." Teachers also mentioned a value-laden belief system that nurtures a culture promoting high achievement.

During classroom visits to the elementary school, review team members witnessed teaching in the core subjects, concentrating on ELA and math. The two-hour literacy block begins with whole group instruction, Tier I, in which the regular classroom teacher instructs the whole class on the lesson of the day. Students who need remedial help or reteaching get help from a Title I staff member in Tier II. The CES School Improvement Plan states that children who fail to make

progress in Tier I and Tier II instructional levels are given additional opportunities for learning during a Tier III 30–50 minute instructional period with an adult. Teachers or paraprofessionals use intervention materials that are designed to address deficiencies in knowledge and skills. Student progress is monitored regularly. During common planning time and grade-level meetings, according to the principal and ELA and mathematics department heads, teachers look at student work, discuss students’ progress, and make decisions about next step strategies for instruction that will ensure student growth. The staff at CES uses DIBELS three times a year to monitor students’ progress in ELA. Teachers believe that the new reading series, *Reading Street*, and the new *Mathematics* program are proving to be more than adequate in meeting teaching and learning goals. Elementary school staff also believe that recent improvement in achievement at the school is linked to the wrap-around services approach of responding to students’ needs with fidelity in the three-tiered instructional model. No child is left to fall through any cracks.

A schedule that includes a two-hour literacy block and a one-hour math block, the piloting of a “Walk to Read” Program, the teamed inclusion model in most ELA and math classes, the extensive parent and community volunteer resource pool, the instructional model (RTI), new reading and mathematics textbooks, and the strong belief system that “all students can do this work,” are contributing to improved student performance and increased student achievement.

The staff at Clinton Elementary School teach a rich, standards-based curriculum and continue to foster an “all children can learn” belief system. Furthermore, they make an effort to maintain focus on learning while actively attending to students’ progress by monitoring and assessing performance. The seven-day rotation schedule can continue to serve as a model for success.

Professionals within the Clinton Elementary School and concerned citizens, businesses, and agencies from the community collaboratively address students’ social, emotional, and health needs. As a result, Clinton Elementary School has a positive, caring climate.

Although the most recent Strategic Plan for Clinton Public Schools had expired in 2009, several of its strategic goals addressed a deliberate support system that “continued to offer and evaluate a wide range of support services within each school to address student needs.”⁷ In the current District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) for Clinton Elementary School, a strategy for improvement addressed making student services available for all students. Resources included adjustment and guidance counselors, a 504 coordinator, Title I reading and math support, a comprehensive health curriculum, and responsive classroom techniques,

The peaceful, caring climate at the school has evolved largely because of the vision of the principal, other school leaders, and a stable staff. Their exuberance for their school was evident in focus groups with the review team and in a variety of ways within the school (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, Math Game night). A special display of concern for children mentioned by staff during an interview occurs at Thanksgiving time when staff at the school collect donations

⁷ As mentioned in the first finding under Key Question 2 below, at the time of the review the superintendent was undertaking a new strategic planning process.

from across the community and provide food baskets and other necessities to students and their families.

In an interview with teachers, the review team was told that teachers see themselves as proactive rather than reactive on behalf of students. They stated that they build rapport with students and reach out to parents, encouraging them to be partners in their children's education. The school's staff seems to realize the importance of nurturing strong relationships with other members of the "village" who are also responsible for the care and education of the town's children. They also work to maintain a climate of inclusion, where teachers "rely heavily on each other for support." The principal indicated that well over 200 volunteers in the district, most are in the elementary school, carry out a myriad of helpful tasks including testing vision and hearing and copying worksheets and other instructional materials for teachers. Each grade has a parent who coordinates with teachers and other parents to assist in communication efforts. Many interviewees were forthcoming in naming other people and organizations who contribute in some way to the teaching and learning process. For example, some second and third graders take advantage of after-school supplemental education services provided by Action Learning. In addition, Partnerships for Children offers a playschool program that supports early childhood growth and development.

With the creation of the Building Educational Support Team (BEST), teachers can refer students who are falling behind because of poor academic achievement, excessive absences, and inappropriate behavior that can have a negative impact on student focus and classroom learning. This support team, described by focus groups with staff, meets as necessary to analyze available student performance data. Interviewees stated that "no one is waiting around for kids to fail." The BEST team collaborates to find possible strategies for classroom teachers to implement (in the regular education classroom) that may combat or correct what seems problematic. On occasion, students are referred for special education assessments if the prevailing situation of low performance and low achievement continues or worsens.

In working with special education students, the CES Special Education Program Plan indicates that most students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are taught in regular education classrooms with the understanding that there are established alternative learning environments for students who need a more restrictive placement. A few special education students receive pull-out services at the school. Special education personnel indicated that numerous speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and psychologists provide consultation to behavioral and emotionally disabled students. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals are trained in behavioral techniques and have received restraint/de-escalation training to help maintain a safe school and classroom environment. Counselors often spend time with students in individual therapy and social skills groups. Students who may leave a regular education setting to receive extended services are transitioned back, when possible.

During a parent focus group, review team members were told about an effective student behavior initiative, Positive Behavior Incentives and Support (PBIS), which started during the 2009–2010 school year. This program focuses on applied behavioral analysis and rewards students' good

conduct. Students receive “honey tickets” (the elementary school’s mascot is a honeybee) to reinforce good behavior. Teachers and others see this program as an initiative to improve school climate and contribute positively to student learning.

In a parent focus group, a parent referred to the school’s staff as “phenomenal.” One parent mentioned a particular teacher who is involved in the Hispanic community and expressed the view that her outreach helps keep parents involved. Another parent indicated that the teachers at the elementary school are “damn good teachers who know their stuff. They have made an investment in the children and they make conscientious decisions to keep kids involved in productive, meaningful work.” At the elementary school, parents believed that hiring a bilingual assistant principal indicated the school’s commitment to outreach and diversity.

Internal and external support services collaborate to identify and devise strategies to best address the social, emotional, and health needs of all the children. Parents expressed their satisfaction with such collaboration and talked about how welcoming it feels to witness such inclusive decision making. The goal in the SIP to increase parental involvement may well be met as the school staff continues to reach out into the community and the community responds by reaching in. These links are forming lifelines between children and caring adults, who are ensuring a culturally rich educational setting.

Parents and community are involved in many ways in the teaching and learning process at Clinton Elementary School. This involvement can have a positive effect on the child’s growth and on sustaining a healthy outlook. In Clinton, teaming and collaboration are a norm for a positive, caring climate, helping students to experience many components of a good educational experience.

Clinton Elementary School administrators make appropriate long range instructional decisions across all subgroups without the benefit of data from program cost analysis.

Neither the district nor the elementary school uses a traditional cost analysis approach that applies standard cause and effect criteria about MCAS results and accordingly reallocates resources to address weaknesses in student performance. However, the elementary school administrators and staff do demonstrate a sophisticated and fundamentally acute sense of what constitutes strategic resource allocation—using program design, instructional materials, financial resources, time, and deployment of staff to meet students’ learning needs. For example, they have developed supports that include the intentional allocation of most local, state, and grant funds to boost staff levels, mostly for Title I staff, and have invested in new instructional programs to support learning for all subgroups.

The assessment interview with key elementary school staff indicated that programs at the school were clearly intended to address the academic needs of the whole student as well as the needs of all subgroups. The combination of a supportive administration, targeted staffing, and a close watch of student achievement data has contributed to improved achievement for students in both ELA and mathematics as measured by MCAS results. Additionally, a literacy committee initiated the Scott Foresman *Reading Street* program and *Mathematics* series to implement the

ELA and mathematics curricula. The Open Response Friday program also supported improved achievement in mathematics and ELA. These initiatives, along with a strong staff and volunteer support structure, appear to have also contributed to a comprehensive learning environment that positively affects all students. In a telling quote, a focus group participant said, “We’re willing to do or try anything that will work for our students.”

DART and End-of-Year Report financial data from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2010 indicate that the school and district responded to the needs of students with a marked increase in the number of paraprofessionals, with paraprofessional FTE’s staffing going from 47.4 to 60.2, with the majority of the new paraprofessionals classified in the regular education category. Over the same period instructional staff increased from 136.9 to 141.9 and student enrollment decreased from 2,029 to 1,996. The review team does not have data indicating at which schools the additional paraprofessionals and instructional staff were hired; however, in most cases, regular education paraprofessionals are assigned to the earlier grades.

As discussed under Key Question 2 below, the district does not have adequate capacity to provide analysis of finances and staffing for its schools. Even without that support, the combination of a thorough analysis of student achievement, staff increases, and the systematic search for grade- and subgroup-appropriate programs to address student needs has contributed to the achievement of several goals set by the elementary school leadership.

Key Question 2: How do the district’s systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of students from low-income families has substantially improved?

The district’s systems for support and intervention meet the needs of students from low-income families by responding to the requests made by the principal rather than by leading with overarching initiatives designed to raise student achievement across the district.

At the time of the review, the district did not have a plan to improve student achievement. There was no overarching educational philosophy communicated to the staff. When teachers and principals were asked by the review team, they were unable to articulate the district’s expectations for teaching and learning.

In interviews with the superintendent and members of the school committee the review team was told that the superintendent was undertaking a strategic planning process with representation from the faculty, the administrative team, parents, the school committee, and the community.

Without a district improvement plan, individual schools are left to develop their own strategies to improve student achievement. Interviews with teachers and administrators revealed that improvement initiatives at the schools varied in design and implementation. More importantly, the initiatives stemmed from divergent educational philosophies. Thus, the achievement across the district varies and overall shows little strong upward movement with the exception of the elementary school.

Interviews with administrators revealed that there are no regularly scheduled cabinet meetings. The superintendent stated that he spends time at every school every day. The purpose for these visits is not formalized. Administrators reported that the visits are typically not focused on district or school improvement.

Teachers and administrators reported that there are no strategic decisions made about the allocation of declining resources. The decline in resources has resulted in fewer professional positions across the district such as curriculum director, department heads with appropriate release time to observe classes, and department heads in social studies and science in the middle school. At the time of the review, the math department head at the Clinton Middle School was a full-time assistant principal, the ELA department head was a full-time teacher, the elementary ELA department head was the Title I director and occasional grant writer and teacher, and the elementary math department head was a full-time kindergarten teacher. In addition, interviews with teachers and administrators revealed that many positions are lost through attrition as teachers retired. The most drastic result of the reductions in staff was the loss of teaming in grades 7 and 8.

When members of the school committee were asked about its role in developing and advocating for adequate funding for the schools they responded that they do not actively participate in the development of the budget. The school committee receives a budget late in February that is built to the appropriation determined by the town administrator and board of selectmen. There is no

negotiation of the final appropriation. Members also stated that their advocacy role is limited to attending public presentations that the superintendent makes to the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. The superintendent concurred.

The absence of discussion about the funding for the public schools deprives the district of essential resources. Without strategic direction decisions are made to close the immediate gap rather than to address the long-term strategic and financial needs of the district. The absence of regular sequential instruction in both science and social studies in kindergarten through grade 6 is the prime example. The diminished resources are deployed unevenly throughout the system, leaving many students at the middle level without the supports that contributed to their success in elementary school. Interviews with teachers and administrators revealed that Title I and ELL resources are more heavily distributed at the elementary school than at the middle school.

School committee members stated that they react to information that is brought forward by the administration. Members indicated that they do not ask about student achievement. When questioned about whether or not one of the superintendent's goals specifically requires strategies and follow up reports about student achievement or the achievement of subgroups, members disclosed that most of the goals were the result of one member's input. The superintendent agreed with this characterization. Upon reflection, one member stated that perhaps a 30-minute school committee meeting was not sufficient to address the needs of the system.

Both the school committee and superintendent stated that they do not use MCAS data in making budget decisions. Further, members of the school committee stated that do not use assessment data to set goals for the district or the superintendent. Teachers and principals were unable to cite any district goals or initiatives that would systematically lead to raising achievement.

Lastly, the school committee and administrative team support the current central office staffing pattern. The superintendent, the director of special education, an administrative assistant, and one part-time and two full-time clerks made up the full central office staff at the time of the review. The superintendent was responsible for administrative functions, inclusive of business, supervision of building and grounds, grants management, curriculum, and human resources in addition to the responsibilities of the superintendency. This model is not sustainable in a district that seeks to improve student achievement.

The absence of a district plan coupled with the reticence of the school committee to initiate discussions about raising student achievement leaves the district uncertain about the strategic direction necessary to raise student achievement.

District and school leaders have not communicated a unified vision of teaching excellence in the Clinton Public Schools, resulting in inconsistent understandings and uneven practices from school to school and from teacher to teacher. These inconsistencies are reflected in observed classroom practice.

When asked in focus groups and in interviews, leaders and teachers could not clearly articulate the district's expectations for high quality instruction in the Clinton Public Schools. At the

elementary school, teachers could clearly explain their own views of good practice driven by a commonly understood belief system at the school that “every child is capable of learning.” They also noted that their job as teachers is to “differentiate instruction and help students learn.” Elementary teachers also mentioned the expectation of “meeting students where they are,” “to push each child to reach his/her maximum potential,” and “to get everybody above state standards.” While these views are important, they do not signal a deeply reflective teaching practice founded on uniformly understood qualities of excellence.

Middle-school teachers and leaders were less clear about expectations for high quality teaching in the district and in their school. Teachers’ explanations gravitated to “fully understanding MCAS results” and “ensuring that topics were covered thoroughly.” Middle-school teachers noted their responsibility to “help other teachers raise student achievement.” Leaders defined expectations for good teaching by referring to a “data-driven school that supports its [new] teachers through a mentoring program” and “team support.” Other comments described a school that tracks “student growth models and AYP” and “puts kids first.” In further descriptions, leaders noted that teachers should “engage students” and students should “learn from each other.”

The variations in vision and expectations for excellence in teaching in Clinton described in interviews with teachers and leaders translate to differences in practice at the two schools. In fact, there were noticeable differences in the percentages of solid evidence of the 14 characteristics of good teaching practice used in the classroom observation tool. The 25 classrooms observed at the elementary school and the 33 classrooms observed at the middle school revealed important distinctions in teaching between the two schools.

At the elementary school, solid evidence of either a spoken or posted objective was noted in 32 percent of observed classrooms; at the middle school, such objectives were solidly evident in only 17 percent of observed classrooms. Neither percentage represents consistent practice for this characteristic. In 72 percent of elementary classrooms visited, observers noted solid evidence that supplemental materials were aligned to students’ developmental level and level of English proficiency; they saw such evidence in 25 percent of the middle school classrooms they observed. In 80 percent of observed elementary classrooms and in 40 percent of observed middle school classrooms, teachers solidly presented content within students’ English proficiency and developmental levels. A range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, modeling and differentiation were solidly demonstrated in 56 percent of observed elementary classrooms and in 14 percent of observed middle school classrooms.

A number of characteristics demonstrate instructional strategies requiring students to use higher order thinking skills. These characteristics were not strong in the classes visited in either school, but were consistently more evident at the elementary school than at the middle school. For example, students engaged in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation was solidly noted in 44 percent of observed elementary classes and in 37 percent of observed middle school classrooms. Students articulated their thinking and reasoning in 48 percent of observed elementary classrooms and in 31 percent of observed middle school classrooms. Students were

solidly observed inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together either in pairs or in small groups in 52 percent of elementary classrooms and in 23 percent of middle school classrooms visited. Lessons embedded solid evidence of opportunities to apply new knowledge and content in 64 percent of observed elementary classrooms and in 37 percent of observed middle school classrooms. And finally, in 56 percent of observed elementary classrooms, review team members saw solid evidence of formative assessments to check for understanding and to inform instruction. This characteristic was observed in 20 percent of observed middle school classrooms.

The variation in teaching quality observed by review team members in observations indicates that leaders and teachers have not clearly defined expected qualities of excellence and aligning instructional practice to those qualities. Without teachers' sufficiently developed capacity to clearly define lesson objectives, to engage students in more collaborative lessons and activities, to build students' abilities to learn independently and collaboratively, and to set rigorous expectations for students' higher order thinking and problem-solving, students are not engaged and are not pushed to develop these abilities. Without teachers' sufficiently developed capacity to define and develop expectations for excellence in teaching, the district has not finished fulfilling its main obligation to its young people.

The district has supported improvements in curriculum and instruction at the elementary school in discrete ways; however, elementary school department heads for ELA and mathematics and other department heads at the middle school cannot effectively monitor and supervise curriculum and instruction because of an absence of release time.

Several support systems or practices originating at the district level have contributed to the improved achievement of the low-income subgroup at Clinton Elementary School. First, according to interviewees, after the district received the 2005 Report of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), the school committee's agreement to support the school's efforts to research, identify, and purchase new ELA and mathematics programs (i.e., textbooks) was a critical first step. At the time, with over 900 pupils enrolled through grade 4 at the elementary school, even with grant support this represented a meaningful financial commitment to educational materials for the district and the community.

Second, the pursuit of grants by the prior curriculum director (the current superintendent) and the grant writing assistance provided by the Title I director have brought needed resources to the school to implement its vision. For example, interviewees stated that several John Silber Early Literacy Grants supported professional development with *Teachers 21* and other activities related to implementing the new curriculum. Other successful grants have been written to local private foundations to support the school's improvement initiatives.

Third, prior to 2007, the elementary school had no curriculum leaders or department heads for ELA and mathematics. At that time, the principal assumed responsibility for curriculum and instructional leadership. In 2007, when the new ELA and mathematics programs were implemented, the district approved the redefinition of the Title I director's position to assume

part-time responsibility as ELA department head. The district also approved a department head position for mathematics, although the person in the role has always served full-time as a classroom teacher.

It is difficult to meet the responsibilities of curriculum leadership without dedicated release time to carry out those supervisory and administrative responsibilities. Although the elementary school department heads do not have the time to supervise and coach teachers in real time, each leader has managed to work closely with the principal to structure and implement an improvement process that entailed documenting the new research-based curriculum, establishing a data-driven instructional model, as well as planning for and providing professional development to support teachers as they learned to teach with new programs in the new model.

Teachers reported in interviews that none of these leaders are frequently present in classrooms except for the required observation(s) linked to performance evaluations. However, each department head has indicated that, if asked, she would make herself available to come into a classroom. Still, the principal, the assistant principal, and the two department heads do little significant monitoring and supervision of instruction on a one-to-one basis at the school. Department heads, even if they do hold administrator status, do not currently have the time to meaningfully monitor, supervise, and coach teachers—duties typically assigned to department heads. In the judgment of the review team, without realigning priorities and resources to ensure that classroom instruction can be adequately monitored, supervised, and evaluated, the district cannot reach the high standards that all members of the school system should set in curriculum, instruction, and student achievement.

The district supports newly hired teachers with a comprehensive induction program.

Interviewees stated that the Clinton Public Schools induction program has evolved into a very supportive and effective program since its inception in 1999. All newly hired teachers in the district are assigned a mentor who is a veteran teacher (with at least five years of teaching experience and at least three of those years in Clinton) and who has gone through extensive training. Interviewees related that the training is based on Scherer's *A Better Beginning* and the key element to the program's success is maintaining positive communication between the mentor and mentee throughout the year. Interviewees indicated that there are close to 30 trained mentors in the district and that they hold positions at each of the district's 3 schools. According to the superintendent principals at each of the district's schools have the responsibility to match up each new teacher with a mentor. This process most often matches the mentor and "mentee" from within the same grade level or department; importantly, time is allotted in each person's schedule to facilitate conferences between the two to promote professional growth. Another important aspect of the district's induction program is the peer-to-peer observation model. All new teachers have opportunities to observe their mentors teach; in turn, the mentors observe the new teachers teach several times during the year, all in a non-threatening, friendly learning environment.

In addition, the district's induction program requires all new teachers to attend and participate, as a group, in a full-day orientation program at the beginning of the school year and to regularly

attend scheduled in-service workshops conducted by the district’s mentoring committee. (Six such workshops were held during the 2009-2010 school year.) Topics covered in these workshops in the recent past have included classroom management skills, motivating all your students, communicating effectively with parents, and recognizing and preventing bullying.

The induction program has helped the new teachers at the Clinton Elementary School and other schools in the district improve their pedagogy and has contributed to improved achievement of all students, including those from low-income families. In the judgment of the ESE team, the induction program in the district is effective and has helped acclimatize newly hired teachers to the district’s and the school’s norms and expectations. The program has also contributed to the district’s low teacher turnover rate.⁸

The evaluation process used in the district for both teachers and administrators was not effective in promoting professional growth, and teachers voiced the need for increased supervision.

The ESE team examined the personnel folders of 32 randomly selected teachers and the folders of all administrators and found that none of the evaluations in those folders had language that held teachers or administrators appropriately accountable.

The instrument used by the principals to evaluate teachers is minimally effective. The observation form and summative evaluation form are one and the same, a checklist of indicators based on the Principles of Effective Teaching. However, the form does not allow the principal or other supervisor much opportunity to give instructive comments to inform and improve instruction.

Almost all the comments on the teacher evaluation forms were informative, in a general way—meaning that they cited instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or alignment with state curriculum frameworks. Of the 32 teacher files perused by the team only one had a comment that could be considered instructive. In the middle school and elementary school teacher focus groups, both groups of teachers agreed that the district’s evaluation system was ineffective in promoting professional growth. Both groups commented that they would welcome instructive comments from their principals so that they could improve their teaching. Interviewees also indicated that their respective principals had little contact with them in their classrooms; administrative “walkthroughs” rarely took place and when they did very little, if any, feedback was given to teachers whose classrooms had been visited. When asked whether any teachers had been put on improvement plans in the recent past, the superintendent said that he could not recollect that any teachers had been put on such plans; principals, in discussing how they dealt with struggling teachers, did not mention them.

A review of administrative personnel files revealed that the former superintendent had evaluated his principals on an every-other-year cycle but that none of those evaluations contained language

⁸ According to the District Analysis and Review Tool for Districts for Clinton, available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>, the district’s 2010 teacher turnover rate was 6 percent, as compared with 11 percent statewide.

that held the administrators accountable for their performance. The examination also revealed that the current superintendent had not evaluated any administrators during the 2009–2010 school year, as required by 603 CMR 35.06(1).⁹

In the judgment of the review team the evaluation process being used by the district at the time of the review was an ineffective system that did not hold teachers or administrators accountable for their performance. Without regular supervision, instructive comments to improve teaching and student achievement, and the use of improvement plans for struggling teachers, the district cannot effectively promote professional growth.

Professional development in the district has been largely acknowledged as effective in the recent past but has been weakened under the latest collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the district, which reduced the four professional development days previously provided to teachers.

Before the 2010–2011 school year, the district’s collective bargaining agreement provided a 185-day school year for the professional staff; four of those days were paid professional development days. The evidence presented to the review team on the professional development plan before 2010–2011 included many professional development activities generated by both the central office and the individual schools (site-based). Input from both teachers and principals at each of the three district schools helped guide what was to be offered. The central office applied for and received several professional development grants in recent years that all interviewees agreed positively affected instruction in the district’s classrooms. Many examples of this positive effect were found in the professional development folders that the review team perused and the information gleaned from interviews of teachers and administrators. The findings under Key Question 1 discuss a number of these programs and describe the positive effect they have had at the Clinton Elementary School.

The opportunities to offer these and other worthwhile professional development sessions have greatly diminished with budget reductions. During the negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement in the spring of 2009–2010, the district believed it had no other choice but to reduce the teachers’ 185-day school year to 181 days, thus eliminating the four full professional development days. This move transferred more than \$285,000 from the professional development budget of fiscal year 2010 into the teachers’ salary account for fiscal year 2011. While their working days have been reduced by four, compensation of teachers in the district remains the same, plus a \$600 across-the-board increase. The negotiated settlement for the 2010–2011 school year substituted four half-days for the four full days of professional development, one each in September, October, November, and March.

⁹As it then appeared. On June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations on Evaluation of Educators to replace the regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership adopted in 1995, at 603 CMR 35.00. The new regulations are available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html>.

The superintendent and principals agreed that the reduction from approximately 26 hours of professional development per year (four full days of 6.5 hours each day) to approximately 8 to 10 hours per year (four half-days of 2 to 2.5 hours per release day) has had a negative effect on the overall professional development program in the district. For instance, in the past, the district was able to offer an intensive 12-hour Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training during two of the four full professional development days. That opportunity is not possible with the current schedule. Administrators and supervisors would welcome the restoration of the former professional development schedule to the district to fully address the district's needs.

With the new negotiated schedule, districtwide professional development opportunities have given way to site-based activities taking place in just half the time. Consequently, in the judgment of the review team, professional development in the Clinton Public Schools cannot be as effective as it has been in the past.

The district's systems for support and intervention are not clearly defined. The principal and staff at Clinton Elementary School have found ways to support students without such clearly defined district systems.

In addition to observing classrooms at the elementary school, the review team also visited classrooms in the middle school and a few at the high school to determine sustainability for the progress being made in student achievement at the elementary level for students from low-income homes. The team learned through classroom observations, teacher focus groups, and interviews with principals and other leaders that many systems in place at the elementary school to support teaching and learning are not widespread at other grade levels. The district does not have an updated strategic plan, a current district improvement plan, and a continuum of student services that would serve as a blueprint for schools to follow at all grade levels to support improvement in student achievement.

Teachers in focus groups talked about how they see their role in teaching and learning. They believe that their administrators hold them accountable for getting the job done. However, from evidence gleaned from other focus groups and a review of teacher evaluations and personnel files, the review team did not find support for these beliefs. Several teachers mentioned seeing the progress, or absence of progress, of their students as a reflection of their teaching. They realize that the schedule should include more time for teaching science and social studies at the elementary level. Teachers meet to look at student work and to discuss next steps, but these meetings are mostly teacher-led. According to teachers, the climate in the elementary school is different from those found in the secondary schools.

For the 7 percent of students classified as English language learners (in 2010–2011), the district has not hired a supervisor to oversee the ELL program. After-school help is not an option for these students (except at the elementary school where a Homework Club is available) because most do not have transportation and the district has not developed strategies to provide it. Although many teachers have had Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training, there has been no in-class support or follow-up to ensure that teachers adequately address the needs of ELLs.

Teachers stated that they do not receive supervisory advice or feedback to inform their teaching of ELLs. When asked whether ELLs have access to advanced classes, one teacher indicated that ELLs are usually not sufficiently prepared for the rigorous challenges of advanced learning.

In a middle-school teacher focus group, teachers mentioned having fewer student support services available to them than in the elementary school because the district decided to allocate Title I funds at the elementary school level; thus these funds are unavailable to middle-school students, even to those who received Title I services in elementary school. Therefore, students who perform poorly in the middle school did not have access to the supplemental educational services usually funded through Title I. However, the middle school does have an MCAS math class to give students remedial help in mathematics. Also, middle school teachers do not have multiple opportunities to talk to each other except in their two-person team configurations (e.g., English/social studies teachers; mathematics/science teachers) using common planning time.

Beyond mandated special education and ELL programs, there is little academic support other than the MCAS math class for students who have been identified as at risk in grades 7 and 8. Students at the middle school are assigned to an enrichment period each day. During this period some students engage in symphony band and chorus activities; others are asked to read silently. One teacher commented that the enrichment period serves as a “filler”—a block of time in the middle of the day that teachers can use as they see fit; she often lets students read or do homework. Some teachers expressed a wish that the enrichment period would be eliminated. The district has no plan and makes no provision for students to receive supplemental services beyond grade 3. Parent volunteers are beginning to assist at the middle school as they do at the elementary school, but teachers reported that they mostly copy papers for teachers.

Students at the Clinton Elementary School are benefiting from the initiatives of the elementary school’s administrators and staff; the school’s successes have been achieved without specific and ongoing district support systems. At the elementary school, interviewees believed that most problems were resolved at the point of origin – the classroom, the department, or the school. In addition, elementary teachers rely on special education staff to provide specialized methods of reaching the learning needs of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The elementary school is working effectively to educate its students and attain improved proficiency rates even though the district has not had a systemwide vision or support structure.

The Clinton Public Schools’ administrative technology systems are antiquated and incompatible with town computer systems. They do not provide effective budget information, or other fiscal program data.

Interviews with the superintendent and administrators indicate they have not made it a priority to update the district’s operational systems. There is little leadership on improving administrative operations and internal systems or providing a strong financial liaison between the district and the town. District and town software systems are essentially incompatible. In separate interviews with the town accountant and the district’s administrative assistants doing financial work, the team determined that the district uses Unifund software and the town uses BMSI software. The

town would like to pursue compatible software for both entities but fiscal constraints prevent the purchase of new software. However, the current systems are obsolete and inefficient, requiring extra staff time and lacking the capabilities of more modern systems, such as more highly evolved reporting to support financial analysis and decision-making.

The current staffing structure, as well as the antiquated computer systems, does not allow the district to make strategic decisions about the budget and finances. To date the district has expended more resources on academics than on the administrative aspects of operating a school district. In the short term, this allocation of resources has had a positive effect; in the long term, it limits district leadership’s ability to make important decisions effectively and efficiently.

The superintendent, the director of special education, an administrative assistant, and one part-time and two full-time clerks make up the entire central office staff. The superintendent is responsible for administrative functions including business, supervision of building and grounds, grants management, and human resources as well as instructional leadership.

Without a financial manager, it is impossible for the superintendent’s office to do the financial analysis necessary to estimate cost effectiveness of programs or provide useful budget presentations and reports for financial management.

The code of accounts and budget format do not make financial information accessible and transparent. Much of the budget, other than expenses for staffing, consists of random data that precludes decisions being made to use resources strategically and effectively. The budget cover page consists of six unrelated categories. The “Miscellaneous” page contains 37 non-salary, non-instructional expense lines that are difficult to understand.

A non-sequential budget code structure prevents the district from relating instructional decisions to financial decisions using student achievement data to guide future decisions.

When asked whether the district assesses the pros and cons of instructional programs to determine whether a particular program is cost-effective, the superintendent replied that it is difficult to determine this. Although specific programs might appear successful, the superintendent was not able to point to specific funding decisions as having made an impact. There is no districtwide or schoolwide program cost review in the district, although the superintendent noted that a cost benefit analysis was done before the full day kindergarten program was started.

At the middle school, interviewees noted that the purchase of new programs is not driven by students’ learning needs, and that program continuation does not seem tied to achievement data but rather to the availability of funds.

The review team learned in interviews that one school committee member was “amazed at what the district does without a business manager.” This school committee member said that as a result of inadequate fiscal data, “we don’t know the effects of funding on instruction.” An example described was that the administration did not justify the need for new paraprofessionals

with clear data but rather presented a “must-have, do-or-die decision” scenario to the committee. Several school committee members indicated that the committee does not have the information to ask the right questions, and consequently, budget and financial discussions are more minimal than strategic.

Other deficiencies in planning and management include the absence of a capital planning committee to ensure that long range facility needs are met, and the absence of a policy establishing an agreed-upon level of expense for school repairs or replacement. Finally, there is no written agreement between the town and schools regarding town expenses on behalf of the schools. State regulation, contained in 603 CMR 10.00, details methods of apportionment and outlines computations of indirect costs incurred by a municipality in support of its schools.

Given its small size and lack of expertise, the central administration staff is overtaxed and ill-equipped to provide guidance about the fiscal impact of school programs and improvement initiatives. The district is consequently vulnerable when fiscal constraints make effective allocation of resources a necessity.

Recommendations

The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.

The school committee and superintendent should take steps to reallocate resources to support adequate administrative oversight and strategic planning.

The lack of sufficient central office management staff at the time of the review meant that the schools operated with short term rather than strategic goals, while an early draft of the 2012-2016 strategic plan being developed at the time of the review contained few administrative improvements. Such absence of planning provides schools with minimal support. For example, the district needs to analyze gains and losses in student achievement as they pertain to current and proposed program initiatives to address student needs. Without analysis, a district can only speculate and make inferences regarding whether or not a particular program is associated with increased or decreased student achievement.

The administration of a school district has many components: general district leadership and administration, finance, personnel, curriculum and instruction, and professional development. Each component is a specialty area with a knowledge base, skill set, and governing laws and regulations. At the time of the review, the central office consisted of the superintendent and 3.5 support staff in addition to the director of special education. It was not possible for them to fulfill all of these functions. In particular, the Clinton Public Schools needed more financial expertise and management than the superintendent could provide, especially while fulfilling all the other responsibilities of the superintendency. The anticipated effect of this recommendation is for the superintendent to have a more effective overall picture of the district and be able to act accordingly.

Working with the superintendent, the school committee should take a more active role in initiating discussions about raising student achievement; in overseeing the development of the budget with student achievement goals in mind; and in advocating for the needs of the school district with the community.

The Clinton school committee reacts to information provided by the administration rather than working with the superintendent to initiate discussions about raising student achievement. This reactive stance is evident in its budget development process, in which the committee has not had a practice of using student achievement as a guide. The school committee receives a budget late in February that is built to the appropriation determined by the town administrator and board of selectmen. There is no negotiation of the final appropriation. And the committee's advocacy role is limited to attending public presentations that the superintendent makes to the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

Without adequate administrative support for the district's multiple needs and tasks, the system does not have the support needed for its individual schools to work toward a cohesive approach to teaching and learning that is articulated and coordinated at the central office. In the same way, the disparate allocation of resources across the district is linked to the absence of the analytical capacity to use expenditures to drive student success.

The school committee is the community's advocate for students as well as the body that communicates the needs of students to the community. The school committee is responsible for setting direction for the district and for advocating for the resources needed to provide an appropriate education for all students.

The Clinton School Committee should increase the direction and advocacy the committee provides. The school committee should work collaboratively with the superintendent to develop a vision and strategies to raise student achievement and to bring cohesion to the curriculum and instruction in the district. The school committee can accomplish this by using the strategic planning process already begun at the time of the review, collaborating with and guided by the superintendent. A strategic plan will provide the platform for the committee to become the strong advocates for public education within the community that students deserve.

The district is encouraged to develop and implement a collaborative process to set clear expectations for teaching excellence in the Clinton Public Schools and to develop agreed-upon supervisory procedures to support and monitor high-quality teaching.

Evidence in this report from documents, interviews, and focus groups indicates that at the time of the visit there was no clear uniform vision or expectation for excellence in teaching in the Clinton Public Schools. The district did not have a plan to improve student achievement or an overarching educational philosophy. Without clarity and agreement, the result was isolated and idiosyncratic practice based on individual teachers' knowledge, experience, and priorities and on uncoordinated cues from colleagues, department heads, principals, and others.

While it is true that each discipline may have specific teaching strategies and pedagogical characteristics to meet its specific needs, there is much that is common and shared in excellent instruction across subjects, grade levels, and school levels. The challenge for the district's educators is to identify and agree upon the key qualities and strategies that all must appropriately embed in their practice. Some of these characteristics are philosophical and value-laden (e.g., all children can learn to high levels); some are strategic (e.g., differentiation is a prime teaching strategy to meet the diverse needs of all learners); and some are tactical (e.g., all teachers and students are guided by a schoolwide writing rubric). These characteristics should be collaboratively developed through a planned process with representation from all stakeholders, over an appropriate timeline.

In addition, without consistent and agreed-upon protocols for monitoring and supervising instruction, fidelity of implementation of both the curriculum and the pedagogy is uncertain. To ensure that expected high-quality teaching characteristics are implemented, teachers and leaders are encouraged to engage in a series of consensus-building conversations to outline how

supervision of instruction will be organized and carried out to ensure that all children can reach their potential. Outlining this may include developing walkthrough protocols and identifying ways to share strengths and “what works well” among teaching colleagues. Collaboratively setting expectations for excellent teaching and agreeing on ways to monitor and supervise teachers as they improve their practice will help the district fulfill its main obligation to its young people, teaching them well.

Leaders and teachers at the Clinton Elementary School should engage in additional curriculum development, documentation, and evaluation in both core and cocurricular subjects. The district is encouraged to consider this as a pilot activity for adaptation and expansion throughout the district.

It was clear at the time of the review that the Clinton Elementary School had made considerable progress over the past several years in selecting and implementing stronger, well-aligned, research-based programs in ELA and mathematics. The mathematics curriculum had been soundly developed and was being aligned to the common core standards. The ELA curriculum, which was not as richly developed, was also being aligned to them. The core subjects of science and social studies, however, did not have documented curricula. In addition, there was no standardized, expansive curriculum format in use in the school or the district, and no systematic, sequential multi-year process in the school or the district to ensure that teachers and leaders were constantly engaged in a process to evaluate, review, and renew curriculum for the core academic subjects. The fine-tuning and adjustments being made at the time of the review on a short-term basis in response to formative and summative assessments did not constitute curriculum evaluation and renewal.

To develop and maintain a state-of-the-art curriculum in both the core academic subjects and the cocurricular subjects, the review team recommends that the school initiate a multiyear curriculum development process for all subjects. This process would entail choosing and implementing a research-based curriculum format or map that would include key components of a comprehensive curriculum. These components can be standardized across subjects at the elementary school (and, perhaps even adapted to revise and renew curricula across the district).

In addition, the school is encouraged to develop a multiyear cyclical process of curriculum evaluation and renewal. Such a process would enable cross-grade-level teams (pre-kindergarten-grade 12) to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses and effectiveness of each subject’s curriculum, identify areas for improvement, revise/develop/document the curriculum using the agreed-upon format, and then implement the newly developed curriculum.¹⁰ At that point, the cycle would begin anew with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new curriculum. With a multiyear process for each subject, all curricula are being constantly improved, and many groups of teachers are constantly engaged in the effort to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning. The school benefits from the creation of more reflective professional learning

¹⁰ During this process the school is encouraged to make use of ESE curriculum resources; see ESE’s [Resources for Implementing The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in 2012-2013](#).

communities that are engaged in a process of continuous school improvement. And if this process is adapted and expanded in the other schools, similar benefits will follow across the district.

Clinton Elementary School is encouraged to continue its promising efforts to collect, analyze, and use multiple sources of academic and demographic data to inform curriculum and instruction. Further, it is recommended that comprehensive and coordinated data policies and assessment practices be expanded to the middle and high schools.

The progress the elementary school had made since 2005 in creating a comprehensive assessment system for all its students was commendable. Student assessment policies, programs, and practices were being employed with increasing efficiency and effectiveness to monitor student learning and make appropriate data-driven improvements to instruction and academic programs and services. The school is encouraged to continue and expand its efforts to collect and use performance and other pertinent student data as a primary vehicle for systematically improving instruction, academic opportunities, and learning for all students.

Specifically, the review team makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Although administrators and staff reported that teachers' data analysis skills were significantly improved, at the time of the review much of the collection, analysis, and application of data was still directed by what was described as a data "swat team," composed of the school principal and department heads for ELA and mathematics. The school is encouraged to continue to provide sustained professional development and support for all teachers and staff in data collection and analysis techniques so that these competencies become fully embedded in teacher teams' work at all grade levels and in all content areas.
- 2) The school was using a balanced system of formative and summative assessments to measure student progress in the attainment of learning goals. Although ELA used both locally developed and standardized benchmark tests (e.g., DIBELS and GRADE) as the basis for continuous data collection, the mathematics program relied only on assessments provided by the textbook publishers and teacher-developed testing procedures and instruments. The review team recommends that the school consider adopting an external standardized assessment program (e.g., MAP tests, DIBELS/Math, Galileo) for mathematics also, to enhance the comprehensiveness, validity, and reliability of the collected student performance data.
- 3) The review team recommends that the promising assessment policies and practices that were being developed at the elementary school be expanded and further implemented at the middle and high schools. A comprehensive and coordinated system of formative and summative assessments, both standardized and local, including benchmark testing, common interim assessments, and, at the secondary level, midyear and final examinations, should be established in all content areas and at all grade levels. This system will help district and school leaders, together with faculty, more accurately measure student academic progress and make timely adjustments to instruction and appropriate modifications to curriculum.

Improved, expanded, and carefully coordinated kindergarten through grade 12 assessment policies, practices, and programs will benefit- all Clinton’s schools and pupils. The continuous and systematic collection and careful analysis of a wide range of student achievement and other pertinent data will enhance classroom instruction, improve academic programs and services, inform decision-making and goal development, and, most importantly, result in improved learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for all students. These steps, thoughtfully planned and implemented, will ensure a comprehensive and balanced accountability system that promotes continuous improvement districtwide.

As it aligns its evaluation system with the new state model for educator evaluation, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system. It should also provide for frequent supervision of teachers as they teach, with feedback after each visit.

Evaluation

At the time of the review, neither teachers nor administrators were being evaluated in a way that held them appropriately accountable. The instrument used in the teacher evaluation process at the time of the review was a checklist that gave little opportunity for evaluators to include instructive comments to inform and improve instruction; the review team found very few instructive comments in the random selection of evaluations it examined. Teachers in focus groups agreed that the district’s evaluation system was ineffective in promoting professional growth. They made it clear that they would welcome instructive comments from school leaders so that they could improve their teaching.

The new educator evaluation model provides opportunities for school districts to develop and implement

- Professional development for evaluators;
- Training to develop meaningful professional practice and student learning goals;
- Systems to ensure
 - that evaluators have the time and support to carry out the new system with fidelity and
 - that district and school goals are aligned with administrator goals
- Professional development for educators that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process.

Taking advantage of these opportunities will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team’s visit.

Supervision

Teachers in both focus groups conducted by the review team indicated that they had little contact with their principals in their classrooms. Administrative “walkthroughs” rarely occurred, and when they did teachers whose classrooms had been visited received very little feedback. ELA and mathematics department heads at the elementary and middle schools also held other responsibilities—two were full-time classroom teachers—that made it difficult for them to monitor and supervise teachers.

Frequent, unannounced observations and observations of teachers outside the classroom are both important aspects of an effective educator supervision and evaluation system, as stated in ESE’s guide entitled *Strategies and Suggestions for Observations* (available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/>). Specifically, the guide outlines the following:

- ***Frequent, unannounced observations.*** *Frequent observation of classroom practice – with feedback—is essential to improving practice, but only feasible if most observations are short, unannounced and followed by brief, focused feedback. There will be times when an evaluator is in a classroom or other work site and it becomes apparent that the visit needs to be extended, but a visit of approximately 10 minutes can yield a great deal of useful information. With short, unannounced visits, many more samples of practice can be collected, and many more powerful conversations about teaching practice can be had: when the typical observation of classroom practice is 10 minutes in duration and does not have to be preceded by a pre-observation conference or followed by a period-long post-observation conference, then evaluators can reasonably be expected to conduct 2 to 5 such observations on a typical day.*
 - *3 observations conducted each day on 150 of the 180 days in a school year translate to 450 observations each year, or 10 observations per year for each of 45 teachers. 7-10 brief observations followed by focused feedback should be a sufficient number to secure a representative picture of practice and promote the reflection and discussion needed to support improving practice.*
 - *Feedback can be provided during a conversation or in writing. Providing feedback through conversation promotes discussion of practice; providing feedback in writing creates an opportunity for the educator to more easily reflect on the feedback on an ongoing basis. Whenever possible, an evaluator should have a conversation with the educator and follow up with brief written feedback summarizing the conversation and/or offering targeted advice for improvement.*
 - *It should be noted that not all observations can or should be 5 to 15 minutes. There will be circumstances where longer observations are appropriate. Novice or struggling teachers may benefit from longer observations on occasion.*

- ***Observations outside of the classroom.*** *Observation of practice need not be limited to classroom observation. Conferences with individual teachers or teacher teams that focus on unit planning or ways the team is responding to interim assessment data can yield useful information and provide opportunities for feedback and growth. They can also be well-aligned with school and team goals. Most schools have goals that depend on effective collaboration among educators, so observation of educators in settings where they are developing their skills in collaboration can support school-wide goals. That said, care needs to be taken to ensure that observation does not interfere with the free exchange of ideas that is important in any healthy collegial environment. Therefore, collecting, reviewing and giving feedback on specific artifacts from department and team meetings can serve a purpose similar to observation of meetings. Similarly observing educators with parents and/or reviewing a team’s analysis of representative samples of home-school communications can support collaborative work, reinforce school goals, and provide opportunities for useful feedback.*

As recommended above, the district should implement an agreed-upon process for supervision, making sure it has the necessary capacity to carry it out. The central office should organize and offer to principals professional development in the most effective ways of supervising and informing instruction. Close monitoring and supervision of teacher performance is important for meaningful and effective change in the district’s classrooms.

Working with the teachers’ association, the district should consider ways to increase professional development time.

Before the 2010–2011 school year, the district’s collective bargaining agreement with teachers provided for a 185-day school year for the professional staff with four paid professional development days. According to documents presented to the review team, during that time the professional development plan included many professional development activities generated by the central office as well as site-based activities provided by the individual schools.

Input from both teachers and principals at each of the three district schools helped organize district professional development offerings. The central office applied for and received several professional development grants in recent years that all interviewees agreed positively affected teaching and learning in the district’s classrooms. Examples of recent professional development were districtwide Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) category training for all the professional staff, professional development on teaching literacy, and workshops on how best to differentiate instruction and on how best to teach students to solve word problems in both mathematics and ELA.

The superintendent and principals agreed that the significant reduction in the annual hours devoted to professional development (from 26 hours to 8 to 10 hours per year) had had a negative effect on the overall professional development program in the district.

The present professional development schedule of four half-days of 2 to 2½ hours each has essentially made the district’s professional development program a site-based or school-based

program. The central office has little opportunity to offer the kind of districtwide offerings it was able to in the past (for instance, an intensive 12-hour SEI training over two of the professional development days). The review team strongly recommends that district leaders, the school committee, and the teachers' association work together to investigate means to increase the amount of professional development time available, so as to increase the extent of district professional development.

The district should hire an experienced financial manager to improve the chart of accounts to support better cost analysis, budgeting, and financial oversight; oversee improvements to software; and support the implementation of a capital planning committee.

At the time of the review, the district did not have a financial manager. The superintendent was responsible for many central office administrative functions including business. Without a financial manager, it was impossible for the superintendent's office to do the financial analysis necessary to provide useful budget presentations and reports or estimate the cost-effectiveness of programs.

Interviews did not allude to program costs being applied to evidence of academic achievement. With program costs at the elementary school not considered in assessing academic achievement, the district has little idea of the cost benefit value of the programs. The question must be asked, "Could the school make more cost-effective decisions about resources?" At the time of the review, schools were trying to make cost-effective program decisions in isolation and without support.

Financial resources have been limited in the district. In the absence of a district strategic instructional and fiscal view it is feasible that good achievement and comprehensive systems at one school may be at the expense of achievement and systems at other schools. The district has an obligation to all parts of the school system to clarify the budget and line item descriptors and codes to give a broad view of how resources are allocated.

The schools should stay on course to form a Capital Improvement Committee (CIC) with the town. A CIC should consider "batching" capital needs with the aid of a (bank) financial advisor, bond counsel, and possibly MSBA to help structure debt. It might also be advantageous for a CIC to consider funding batches of capital projects within a consistent reasonable debt-to-operating ratio limit (2-3 percent of budget) rather than funding individual projects.

The CIC should consider an upgrade of both school and town financial software a priority. In the absence of a CIC, the district should investigate school and municipal financial software vendors' proposals to install new software and develop a chart of accounts that is compatible with both ESE and DOR. The current internal systems structure cannot be sustained long-term. Hiring an experienced financial manager, purchasing up-to-date software, and doing capital planning will improve administrative oversight and help the town and the schools determine cost-effectiveness and plan strategically.

Finally, the district should also become familiar with 603 CMR 10.0, which addresses indirect costs that towns expend for schools, and enter into an agreement with the town about these costs.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Clinton Public Schools was conducted from February 7-10, 2011, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Magdalene Giffune, Ed. D., Leadership and Governance

Linda L. Greyser, Ed. D., Curriculum and Instruction, Review Team Coordinator

Frank Sambuceti, Ed. D., Assessment

William Wassel, Human Resources and Professional Development

Willette Johnson, Student Support

Richard Scortino, MBA, CPA, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Clinton financial personnel: superintendent of schools, school payroll clerk, school secretary, town administrative assistant, finance committee member, town treasurer.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Clinton School Committee: four of five members; chairman was not included due to family emergency.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Clinton Teachers Association: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, two school representatives.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Clinton Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, Title I director, special education director.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Clinton Public Schools: Clinton Elementary School (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), Clinton Middle School (grades 4–8), and Clinton High School (grades 9-12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with principals, assistant principals, all department heads at the elementary school, one department head at the middle school, and focus groups with teachers at the elementary and middle schools.
 - During school visits, the review team also conducted 72 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - 2005 Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)
 - Collective Bargaining Agreement with teachers' association, including the teacher evaluation tool
 - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
 - End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010

- 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 Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the current year
 - Most recent approved budget
 - Kindergarten through grade 8 ELA and mathematics curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in the elementary and middle schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time minutes from the elementary school
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
 - All administrator evaluations and certifications
 - Randomly selected teacher personnel files
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the Clinton Elementary School: visited because it was identified as a “gap-closer” for low-income students:
 - School Improvement Plan
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments for the school
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in the school

- Descriptions of student support programs at the school
- Student and Family Handbooks for the school
- Teacher planning time/meeting schedules and minutes of meetings at the school

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Differentiated Needs (Low-Income) Review of the Clinton Public Schools, conducted from February 7–10, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>February 7</p> <p>Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; interviews with elementary school staff; review of documents; interview with teachers' association representatives.</p>	<p>February 8</p> <p>Interviews with district staff and principals; interviews with elementary and middle school staff; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with parents; school visits (Clinton Elementary School and Clinton Middle School).</p>	<p>February 9</p> <p>Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (Clinton Elementary School, Clinton Middle School, Clinton High School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; school committee interviews.</p>	<p>February 10</p> <p>School visits (Clinton Elementary School, Clinton Middle School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.</p>

Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008–2010

Table C1: 2008-2010 Clinton Public Schools Proficiency Rates, with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), Compared to State: by Grade ELA

Grade	2008		2009		2010	
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP
Grade 3—District	31	NA*	41	NA*	66	NA*
Grade 3—State	56	NA*	57	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 4—District	40	52	42	59	35	43
Grade 4—State	49	48	53	50	54	50
Grade 5—District	54	69.5	60	54	57	69
Grade 5—State	61	51	63	50	63	50
Grade 6—District	68	37	44	32	62	44.5
Grade 6—State	67	50	66	50	69	50
Grade 7— District	66	59	73	48.5	62	56.5
Grade 7— State	69	50	70	50	72	50
Grade 8— District	73	50	75	42.5	75	53
Grade 8— State	75	49	78	50	78	50
Grade 10— District	74	NA*	74	48	68	47.5
Grade 10— State	74	NA*	81	50	78	50
All Grades— District	58	53	58	48	60	52
All Grades—State	64	50	67	50	68	50

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs for grade 10 were not calculated until 2009.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C2: 2008-2010 Clinton Public Schools Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), Compared to State:
by Grade
Mathematics**

Grade	2008		2009		2010	
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP
Grade 3—District	60	NA*	58	NA*	74	NA*
Grade 3—State	61	NA*	60	NA*	65	NA*
Grade 4—District	48	54	43	44	40	41
Grade 4—State	49	49	48	50	48	49
Grade 5—District	44	51	60	64.5	54	54
Grade 5—State	52	51	54	50	55	50
Grade 6—District	57	46	44	33	49	33
Grade 6—State	56	50	57	50	59	50
Grade 7— District	38	44	46	43	37	43
Grade 7— State	47	50	49	50	53	50
Grade 8— District	42	48	38	47.5	40	38.5
Grade 8— State	49	51	48	50	51	51
Grade 10— District	68	NA*	74	62	72	53
Grade 10— State	72	NA*	75	50	75	50
All Grades— District	51	49	51	49	52	43
All Grades—State	55	50	55	50	59	50

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs for grade 10 were not calculated until 2009.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: Achievement Trends for Students from Low-Income Families in
Clinton Elementary School, Clinton Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
ELA**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP
State Low-Income Students	41	73.2	45.0	45	75.5	45.0	47	76.5	46.0
State All Students	64	85.2	50.0	67	86.5	50.0	68	86.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	42	74.2	52.0	45	76.0	46.0	44	75.5	46.0
District All Students	58	82.5	53.0	58	83.3	48.0	60	83.2	52.0
Clinton Elementary Low-Income Students	20	60.6	45.5	24	64.1	48.0	35	71.7	38.0
Clinton Elementary All Students	36	72.3	52.0	42	75.7	59.0	52	79.6	44.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C4: Achievement Trends for Students from Low-Income Families in
Clinton Elementary School, Clinton Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
Mathematics**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP
State Low-Income Students	33	63.1	45.0	33	64.5	44.0	37	67.1	47.0
State All Students	55	77.7	50.0	55	78.5	50.0	59	79.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	36	65.9	48.0	37	68.6	47.0	36	66.9	43.0
District All Students	51	75.7	49.0	51	77.0	49.0	52	76.4	43.0
Clinton Elementary Low-Income Students	37	67.9	52.0	38	70.3	34.0	43	73.2	31.5
Clinton Elementary All Students	54	78.7	54.0	51	78.2	44.0	57	81.3	42.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C5: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Students from Low-Income Families in Clinton Elementary School,
Clinton Public Schools, and State
ELA**

Grade	Clinton Elementary	Clinton Public Schools	State
3	54 (62)	51 (65)	43
4	19 (66)	18 (69)	31
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district. *Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

**Table C6: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Students from Low-Income Families in Clinton Elementary School,
Clinton Public Schools, and State
Mathematics**

Grade	Clinton Elementary	Clinton Public Schools	State
3	65 (62)	62 (65)	45
4	23 (66)	25 (69)	28
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district. *Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Key Question 1: To what extent are the conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. School leadership is well developed at the Clinton Elementary School.
2. Leaders and teachers at the Clinton Elementary School have improved curriculum and instruction in English language arts and mathematics through a whole-school improvement initiative targeting internal as well as external systems and practices.
3. On the whole, observed classroom instruction at Clinton Elementary School shows evidence of strength in lesson organization, student engagement, presentation of content, and use of materials, and lower incidence of practices that develop students' higher order thinking and reasoning skills.
4. Clinton Elementary School is making steady progress in its initiatives to collect, analyze and use student assessment data to prioritize goals, inform instructional practice, and improve academic programs and services for all students.
5. Professional development opportunities at the Clinton Elementary School for the last several years were closely aligned with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the effectiveness of the program has contributed to improved achievement for its students from low-income homes.
6. Clinton Elementary School has designed a seven-day rotation schedule that provides ample learning time for all students in ELA and mathematics.
7. Professionals within the Clinton Elementary School and concerned citizens, businesses, and agencies from the community collaboratively address students' social, emotional, and health needs. As a result, Clinton Elementary School has a positive, caring climate.
8. Clinton Elementary School administrators make appropriate long range instructional decisions across all subgroups without the benefit of data from program cost analysis.

Key Question 2: How do the district’s systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. The district’s systems for support and intervention meet the needs of students from low-income families by responding to the requests made by the principal rather than by leading with overarching initiatives designed to raise student achievement across the district.
2. District and school leaders have not communicated a unified vision of teaching excellence in the Clinton Public Schools, resulting in inconsistent understandings and uneven practices from school to school and from teacher to teacher. These inconsistencies are reflected in observed classroom practice.
3. The district has supported improvements in curriculum and instruction at the elementary school in discrete ways; however, elementary school department heads for ELA and mathematics and other department heads at the middle school cannot effectively monitor and supervise curriculum and instruction because of an absence of release time.
4. The district supports newly hired teachers with a comprehensive induction program.
5. The evaluation process used in the district for both teachers and administrators was not effective in promoting professional growth, and teachers voiced the need for increased supervision.
6. Professional development in the district has been largely acknowledged as effective in the recent past but has been weakened under the latest collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the district, which reduced the four professional development days previously provided to teachers.
7. The district’s systems for support and intervention are not clearly defined. The principal and staff at Clinton Elementary School have found ways to support students without such clearly defined district systems.
8. The Clinton Public Schools’ administrative technology systems are antiquated and incompatible with town computer systems. They do not provide effective budget information, or other fiscal program data.
9. The current staffing structure, as well as the antiquated computer systems, does not allow the district to make strategic decisions about the budget and finances. To date the district has expended more resources on academics than on the administrative aspects of operating a school district. In the short term, this allocation of resources has had a positive effect; in the long term, it limits district leadership’s ability to make important decisions effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation Statements:

1. The school committee and superintendent should take steps to reallocate resources to support adequate administrative oversight and strategic planning.
2. Working with the superintendent, the school committee should take a more active role in initiating discussions about raising student achievement; in overseeing the development of the budget with student achievement goals in mind; and in advocating for the needs of the school district with the community.
3. The district is encouraged to develop and implement a collaborative process to set clear expectations for teaching excellence in the Clinton Public Schools and to develop agreed-upon supervisory procedures to support and monitor high-quality teaching.
4. Leaders and teachers at the Clinton Elementary School should engage in additional curriculum development, documentation, and evaluation in both core and cocurricular subjects. The district is encouraged to consider this as a pilot activity for adaptation and expansion throughout the district.
5. Clinton Elementary School is encouraged to continue its promising efforts to collect, analyze, and use multiple sources of academic and demographic data to inform curriculum and instruction. Further, it is recommended that comprehensive and coordinated data policies and assessment practices be expanded to the middle and high schools.
6. As it aligns its evaluation system with the new state model for educator evaluation, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system. It should also provide for frequent supervision of teachers as they teach, with feedback after each visit.
7. Working with the teachers' association, the district should consider ways to increase professional development time.
8. The district should hire an experienced financial manager to improve the chart of accounts to support better cost analysis, budgeting, and financial oversight; oversee improvements to software; and support the implementation of a capital planning committee.