



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Ware Public Schools

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

Review conducted April 25-28, 2011

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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 a result of having these “gap-closer” schools, districts from this group were invited to participate

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 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.

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 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.

Ware Public Schools

The site visit to the Ware Public Schools, conducted from April 25-28, 2011, included visits to the following district schools: Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School (pre-kindergarten to grade 3), Ware Middle School (grades 4-6), and Ware Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12). The Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School (Koziol) was identified as a “gap-closer” for its students from low-income families, 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 from 2008 to 2010. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

District Profile⁴

The town of Ware has moved recently to a town manager form of government with an Open Town Meeting, and an elected Board of Selectmen. The school committee has five elected members. There are three schools in Ware: Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School, with an enrollment of 478, Ware Middle School, with an enrollment of 301, and Ware Junior/Senior High School, with 498 students.

As Tables 1 and 2 below indicate, 90.5 percent of Ware students are white, with the 4.7 percent of Hispanics being the largest subgroup population; 0.9 percent of the students are limited English proficient (LEP), and 17.3 percent are receiving special education services. Table 2 shows that 50 percent of the students are from low-income families, with 44.8 percent eligible for free lunch and 5.2 percent receiving reduced-priced lunch. These percentages vary slightly when broken down by school, with the middle school having the highest percent of students from low-income families eligible for free lunch at 48.2 percent, the elementary school next with 45.2 percent, and the junior/senior high school the lowest at 42.4 percent.

⁴ Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE source

Table 1: 2010-11 Ware Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	30	2.3	First Language not English	12	0.9
Asian	8	0.6	Limited English Proficient	12	0.9
Hispanic or Latino	60	4.7	Low-income	638	50.0
Native American	3	0.2	Special Education	223	17.3
White	1,156	90.5	Free Lunch	572	44.8
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	3	0.2	Reduced-price lunch	66	5.2
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	17	1.3	Total enrollment	1,277	100.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 2: 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
Ware	1,277	50.0	44.8	5.2	0.9	17.3
Stanley M. Koziol	478	49.6	45.2	4.4	0.4	16.1
Ware Junior/Senior High School	498	46.8	42.4	4.4	1.4	18.5
Ware Middle School	301	55.8	48.2	7.6	1.0	13.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The local appropriation to the Ware Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$10,414,883, up slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$10,238,072. School-related expenditures by the town were estimated at \$6,205,289 for fiscal year 2011, up from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$4,872,754. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures including expenditures by the district, \$10,544,962, expenditures by the town, \$6,024,082, and expenditures from other sources such as grants, \$2,180,402, was \$18,749,446. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was \$12,892,735, \$71,473 less than required net school spending, resulting in a small carryover to FY11.

The current superintendent had led the district for four years at the time of the review. She has two functioning leadership teams. The “small” team, which is composed of the principals, the special education director and the accountability director, addresses academic and policy issues. The “big” team, which includes assistant principals, gets information to all members of the school system and shares articles and ideas.

The middle school principal was in his second year, and with the retirement of the junior/senior high school principal in June 2011, the principal of the commended elementary school was to leave that school and move on to a new series of challenges at the junior/senior high school.

Since 2007 enrollment in the district has gone up or down each year by between 25 and 50 students; since 2008 the stability rate has remained between 86 and 89 percent, compared to a state stability rate between 95 percent and 95.3 percent. This stability rate, the percentage of students enrolled in the district in October who were still enrolled in March and at the end of the school year, presents clear challenges to the district.

Findings

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?

With the direction and support of the principal and a strong school leadership team focusing on what is best for students, the Koziol staff have worked collaboratively to improve the achievement of all students, including students from low-income families.

In 2010-2011, 49.6 percent of the students enrolled in the pre-kindergarten through grade 3 Koziol School were students from low-income families. The Koziol principal had served as principal in a low-achieving district with similar demographics and clearly understood the population she would be working within Ware. She told the review team that her primary goals when she first came to Koziol were to examine the culture and create relationships. She stated that she needed to gain the trust and cooperation of the faculty and make it clear to them that students come first. She added that once teachers saw that she meant and lived by this belief, their trust began to grow and they also put students first.

According to both the leadership team and individual teachers, the principal made the final decisions and was clearly in charge. They explained, however, that the principal was collaborative and consulted with them. When teachers disagreed with her, the principal sometimes asked them to trust her and simply try something out. On other occasions, she told them what to do. The development of the school's successful Walk to Read program provides a good example of the principal's leadership style. In Walk to Read, students are heterogeneously grouped for core instruction and divided into small groups for individualized instruction according to Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS) progress monitoring results. The program was instituted in grade 3 in the year before the principal's arrival. Based on the principal's previous experience with Walk to Read, she extended the program to grade 2 in her first year at Koziol. The grade 2 staff included a new teacher who was familiar with the program.

The leadership team decided to extend the program to grade 1 in the following year. The grade 1 teachers expressed skepticism, and were allowed to try it with the condition that it would begin later in the fall, once the students had learned classroom routines. After a successful year based on student achievement results, the program became permanent in grade 1, also.

In interviews, the leadership team attributed the gains in student achievement (see Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C) both in the aggregate and for students from low-income families to supportive, strong leadership. When asked to describe the characteristics of the principal's leadership style they said that she was involved in all aspects of the school. For example, she attended all of the weekly grade-level meetings. They went on to say that she focused consistently on doing the best for students and that her strong collaborative relationship with the reading specialist had been critical to the improvement of the school's ELA scores. The leadership team added that the principal understood and was involved in all elements of

curriculum and instruction. From her perspective, the principal told the review team that the faculty was learning to trust her and each other and that their willingness to cooperate had contributed to gains in student achievement. The principal said that she often did not have to ask people to do things because they now assumed ownership and asked her what they could do.

The leadership team at Koziol is strong and works well together. Information flows freely from the leadership team to the grade-level teams and from the grade level teams to the leadership team. The leadership team is composed of the principal, the assistant principal, the reading specialist, the administrative assistant for data distribution, a grade 2 teacher, a grade 3 teacher, a special education teacher, and the adjustment counselor. The principal shares information with grade-level teams that do not have a representative on the leadership team. Teachers on the leadership team bring team concerns to the leadership team. In this way, the grade-level teams have input in the decisions made by the leadership team. It is clear that the school is going through a change process that the principal and the leadership team are carefully orchestrating and that discussions with teachers are critical to this process.

In interviews, leadership team members told the review team that their monthly meetings provide a vertical perspective for exploring issues with an emphasis on improving the quality of instruction. For example, the leadership team extended the Walk to Read program to grade 1, initiated the Walk to Math program, and made writing a school-wide focus through both discussion in professional learning communities (PLCs) and professional development for all staff. They also analyze the MCAS test results and monthly DIBELS results. In 2010-2011, the leadership team set a goal to learn more about using rubrics.

The principal and the assistant principal are the school leaders. In addition to the leadership team meetings described previously, grade-level teams meet weekly and PLCs meet twice monthly. The principal has used the grade-level teams and PLCs to bring change about in the school and to get teachers working together. She prepared teachers for PLCs by having them read *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*, DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, editors.

In focus groups teachers said that they discuss student achievement in their grade-level meetings. In these 30 to 45 minute weekly meetings, they form fluid instructional groups for the Walk to Read and Walk to Math programs and share and discuss student work, particularly student writing. In order to determine the teachers' commitment to what the leadership team is trying to accomplish, the principal stated that she observes and listens while the teachers conduct these discussions. Teachers also share ideas and things they are working on, discuss field trips they will take, and do logistical organization, such as deciding the rotation of science kits or sharing of manipulatives for mathematics.

At the twice-monthly PLCs, teachers develop rubrics, examine student work, and analyze the MCAS, DIBELS, and Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) results. They recently had a refresher on scoring the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The leadership team described this time as mostly professional development "to help people see out of the same lens." Most recently, they have been discussing the Common Core State Standards and comparing them to the district curriculum.

The principal has demonstrated strong leadership through her vision, visibility, concern for individual students, and willingness to collaborate and facilitate the collaboration of others for the purpose of helping all students achieve. Her strong belief that students always come first has become a powerful rallying cry for teachers. Through the process described above and the strong leadership of the principal, Koziol staff has begun to narrow the achievement gap for low-income students.

The leadership of the principal, the grade-level team meetings, and the teachers ensure the implementation of the written, framework-aligned English language arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula and their horizontal alignment at Koziol. There is no process for vertical alignment of the curriculum.

The district has extensive ELA and mathematics curricula for kindergarten through grade 4 containing themes, essential questions, skills, assessments, resources, and specific references to addressed framework curriculum standards. At the same time, the district does not have a curriculum director to oversee the implementation and further development of these curricula. However, several factors at Koziol ensure the fidelity of implementation of the curriculum.

The Koziol principal and teachers told the review team that she was frequently in classrooms observing lessons. She participates actively in all grade-level meetings in which teachers said they have the opportunity to discuss curriculum. The school's reading teacher also attends the grade-level meetings; this is key to the implementation of the ELA curriculum. The reading teacher participated in the development of the curriculum and plays an active role in monitoring its implementation. Teachers refer to her fondly as the "glue" that keeps the ELA program together. Koziol does not have a counterpart to this coach to support teachers in implementing the mathematics curriculum.

Grade-level team meetings function as forums for curriculum discussion. Every grade at the school meets before school on one morning each week. These meetings are voluntary, but teachers attend almost all of the time. The principal said that no one person is in charge. At these meetings, teachers discuss students' performance, the Walk to Read and Walk to Math intervention programs, and curriculum. The principal and teachers stated that during a grade-level team meeting they might discuss where they are in the curriculum or how others are addressing a particular skill. These discussions keep teachers focused on making sure that the written curriculum is established.

The final important piece of curriculum implementation is the role that teachers play with regard to the curriculum. During review team interviews, teachers were repeatedly asked who in the district is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum is implemented. And the clear answer was simply, "It's the teachers' responsibility." They describe informal discussions with colleagues about what has to be covered. But, most importantly, they express their assumption of the responsibility for making the curriculum happen.

The curriculum as written is aligned with the state framework. General oversight by the Koziol principal and the reading teacher for ELA brings some monitoring of its implementation. Without a mathematics coach, this oversight is less well-developed in mathematics. Additionally,

grade-level team meetings and teacher leadership bring horizontal alignment across classrooms. However, teachers at a grade level cannot address or ensure the vertical alignment of what they cover at that grade level with the curriculum at the preceding and following grades. This alignment requires either the perspective of a curriculum coordinator or regular cross-grade-level meetings among teachers to examine the continuity of the curriculum through the grades. Neither is currently available in the district. This situation leads to some unavoidable repetitions or gaps in what students learn.

The principal, the grade-level meetings, and the classroom teachers at the elementary school ensure the implementation of a curriculum aligned with the state framework and aligned horizontally across grade-level classrooms. Vertical alignment needs further attention.

Instruction at Koziol presents both strengths and challenges.

The review team completed observations of nine Koziol classrooms using the Instructional Inventory Record. This inventory lists 14 characteristics of effective instruction, and review team observers noted the prevalence of each characteristic.

Observers found evidence of four instructional characteristics in 100 percent of the observed classes, specifically, a classroom climate characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse; available class time maximized for learning; instruction linking academic concepts to students' prior knowledge and experience; and presentation of content within the students' English proficiency and developmental level.

Observers found that in 89 percent of the classrooms observed a learning objective for the day's lesson was evident; instructional materials were aligned with students' developmental level; the depth of the teacher's content knowledge was evident throughout the lesson; the lesson was paced to ensure student active engagement; and there were opportunities for students to apply new knowledge and content.

Observers found evidence of on-the-spot formative assessments to check for understanding in 78 percent of the classes observed; questions requiring students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in 78 percent of the classes observed; and students articulating their thinking and reasoning in 67 percent of classes observed.

Two characteristics were less evident: instruction including a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling was evident in 56 percent of the classes observed; and students inquiring, exploring, or solving problems together, in pairs or in small group was evident in 45 percent of the classes observed.

Nine of the 14 instructional characteristics were evident in 89 to 100 percent of the classes observed. This is a very positive result. In sum, classroom behavior was respectful; time for learning was maximized; pacing ensured student engagement; and students had opportunities to apply new knowledge.

However, since students learn in a variety of ways, teachers need a wide repertoire of instructional strategies to address a range of student learning styles. Many of the classrooms observed were teacher centered. Also, significantly lower percentages of students were observed

to be working together in small groups or pairs. Working in pairs or small groups allows students to enhance their own learning through interaction with their peers. And such opportunities enable students to move to a higher level of learning.

There are numerous positive examples of instructional characteristics in Koziol classrooms. At the same time, the instructional inventory reveals areas that, if addressed, would help students to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Koziol addresses the individual needs of students through the Walk to Read and Walk to Math programs.

Every day, students in grades 1, 2, and 3 receive tiered ELA instruction by walking to one of seven locations for small-group instruction geared to their specific learning needs. Koziol students have similar opportunities in mathematics in grade 3 and to a lesser extent in grade 2. These interventions started in grade 3 ELA three years before the arrival of the new principal and were extended to additional grades later.

The school displays on a graphic model the interventions available to students. These interventions include programs such as Read Naturally, Lexia, and Great Leaps. Teachers said that during grade-level team meetings they discuss the progress of individual students and that students move up or down from group to group as a result of these discussions. ESE data indicate that between 2008 and 2010, the percentage of all Koziol students proficient in ELA increased from 41 percent in 2008, to 48 percent in 2009, and to 57 percent in 2010. However, the proficiency rates in math between 2008 and 2010 did not show the same progress: they went from 50 percent in 2008 to 54 percent in 2009 to 47 percent proficient in 2010. Like the overall student population, Koziol's students from low-income families showed proficiency gains in ELA during this period: from 35 percent proficient in 2008 to 36 percent in 2009 to 54 percent in 2010, while proficiency rates in mathematics remained quite flat at 41 percent in 2008, 38 percent in 2009, and 43 percent in 2010. See Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C.⁵ The principal, the reading teacher, and classroom teachers all attribute the improvement in the performance of the school's low-income subgroup at least in part to these data-driven interventions during Walk to Read and Walk to Math. This conclusion seems inescapable, although the focus by the principal on what is best for students and the grade-level team meetings have also contributed in some measure to this improvement.

Koziol has begun to develop an assessment system that regularly collects student performance data, disseminates it to staff, and uses it to identify, place, and support students in need of academic interventions.

Koziol is making improved use of student performance data to place students in appropriate educational settings, inform curriculum, modify instruction, and for at-risk students in particular, monitor academic progress. In addition to a careful analysis of the MCAS test results, school leaders and staff told the review team that that they are increasingly using data generated from standardized assessments such as GRADE, Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic

⁵ It should be noted here that Koziol included a 4th grade through 2008, but since then grade 3 has been the highest grade and only grade tested by MCAS.

Evaluation (GMADE), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and DIBELS. With the exception of DIBELS, however, most standardized assessments at Koziol are administered only twice each year, in the fall and spring. The DRA is given only once, in the spring of each school year. Thus, the data generated is largely summative in nature. It is used primarily to identify underperforming students for grouping purposes in the school's multi-leveled Walk to Read and Walk to Math programs and as a broad measure of overall curricular effectiveness. DIBELS is administered three times each year to all kindergarten through grade 3 students and at four-week intervals throughout the year to students at risk. Although DIBELS is not directly aligned with the state curriculum framework, it is used to monitor the progress of students identified as underperforming. These students are subsequently provided daily interventions in ELA. No comparable assessment or support system currently exists for mathematics. Also, no other standardized or locally developed benchmark testing is used at Koziol and other district schools. Interviewees said that schoolwide writing rubrics, portfolios (reading, mathematics, and content area), publishers' unit tests in ELA and mathematics, and teacher classroom observations are relied upon to provide supplemental student performance data.

At Koziol, all teachers meet weekly in grade-level teams. The principal, literacy coach, and other specialists are regular and active participants in these meetings to ensure that student needs are addressed, academic progress is continually monitored, and relevant and available assessment data is appropriately considered. Interviewees said that the grade-level teams also provide Koziol staff and the leadership team an opportunity to share best practices and instructional strategies, make collaborative decisions about curriculum modifications and educational programs, and ensure that student learning needs are being met.

Although the current student assessment program at Koziol is not a finished product, the review team recognizes the progress that the school has made. School leaders and staff acknowledge the need to continue to improve and expand their assessment policies and practices so that the academic needs of all learners can be identified and addressed in a more comprehensive and timely manner. These assessment goals and objectives are clearly articulated and reinforced in Koziol's 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan (SIP). School leaders and staff have also indicated, however, that these efforts were hindered by inadequate funding.

The review team believes that, if properly supported by the district, Koziol's continuing efforts to develop a comprehensive and fully coordinated system of formative and summative assessment will enable school leaders and staff to better monitor the academic progress of every student and make more timely and appropriate adjustments to curriculum and classroom instruction. Furthermore, the continuous collection and systematic analysis of a wide range of student achievement and other pertinent data will promote improvements to educational programs and services, reliably inform decision-making and goal development, and most importantly, result in improved learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for all students.

Koziol provides systematic, coordinated school-wide student support services and partnerships that address the social and emotional well-being of its students.

Koziol administration and staff work together on the Student Assessment Team (SAT) to address the social and emotional needs of students. The SAT meets to identify students' academic, social, and emotional needs and develop strategies for meeting these needs. According to the director of special education, the adjustment counselor, and school administrators, students identified as having unmet social and emotional needs that result in high absenteeism and a significant drop in academic performance are referred to the SAT through a written referral. Any staff member can identify and refer students, including the classroom teacher, assistant principal, reading specialist, and adjustment counselor.

At Koziol, the SAT is led by the assistant principal, and includes the adjustment counselor, the student's classroom teacher, and a counselor from Valley Human Services, as well as other staff when relevant and necessary. The team meets to discuss the referral concerns. It then makes suggestions that are implemented over a period of weeks. Depending on the effectiveness of the intervention, next steps may be taken including placing the student in a facilitated peer-to-peer social experience such as lunch bunch, or in some instances referring the student for evaluation under the special education law. The adjustment counselor facilitates the SAT meetings while the assistant principal receives the referrals. This student- support service is a coordinated effort.

In addition, several partnerships have been established between Koziol and outside agencies to support students' needs. According to school administrators, such services include on-site dental care services such as cleanings, fluoride treatments, and fillings and counseling by Valley Human Services under insurance provisions

School administrators and the adjustment counselor stated that the adjustment counselor provides various support services to students across the grade levels. These services are made available to students facing challenges such as poor attendance, disruptive behaviors, and a heightened need for positive social interactions with peers. The adjustment counselor also provides Second Step classes in various classrooms and facilitates six "lunch social groups" where identified students discuss matters including self-esteem, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. These efforts reach across grade levels and school settings and rely heavily on the communication and coordinated efforts of school staff.

In addition, a DiLeo Dragon assembly is held at the beginning of the year to share the six pillars associated with student success and to motivate students to adopt the character traits that they represent. These desired behaviors are celebrated school wide. According to the elementary student handbook, school administrators, and staff, 24 students who exemplify these positive character traits correlated with achievement are selected and recognized monthly. These students receive armbands that signify this recognition and each is awarded a McDonald's gift certificate.

Finally, administration, teachers, and other school staff told the review team that the Structured Learning Center (SLC), a classroom within the school that is staffed by a special education teacher and paraprofessionals, is available to regular and special education students. A teacher

might send students to the SLC when they need to pull themselves together. Students return to their classrooms when ready to focus and not be disruptive.

According to 2011 data from ESE's District Analysis, Review and Assistance Tool (DART), Koziol's retention rate was a mere 0.3 percent. Out-of-school suspensions have dropped from 25 students in 2006 (4.6 percent) to 13 in 2008 (2.4 percent) and four in 2010 (0.8 percent). For the most part, attendance rates have remained the same, with a slight drop from a rate of 94.7 in 2008 to a rate of 94.0 in 2010. The rates of in-school suspensions have been low, at 0.5 in 2008, 1.1 in 2009, and 0.6 in 2010.

Koziol staff collaborates in order to coordinate efforts, skills, and resources to address the social and emotional needs of all students and have had an effect on the factors that predispose students to absenteeism and behavior that interferes with learning. While there is no evidence of a system to measure the effectiveness of these interventions, they were developed to create a supportive, safe environment that promotes student learning.

Notwithstanding significant funding losses since fiscal year 2008, the Koziol principal and staff have made and put into practice a series of deliberate and thoughtful curriculum decisions that benefit students from low-income families as well as the entire student body at minimal fiscal impact.

Since the curriculum director's position was eliminated in 2007-2008, the principal has helped to initiate several program and management practices transcending the premise that good instruction must be expensive. In an interview, the principal told the review team that since her arrival teachers work harder and are learning to work smarter. She added that a key instructional strategy she supported, namely Walk to Read and Walk to Math, only made sense to staff after teachers started to initiate their own discussions. Teachers gradually became empowered and took ownership of the programs. The principal said that she has empowered staff by building trust, and allowing them to take risks.

Interviews with teachers confirmed good management practices. Staff noted that leadership is strong because the principal is supportive, involved, and has a clear vision for the school. Additionally, she plays an active role in curriculum and instruction and promotes staff collegiality. According to interviewees, the principal had creatively extended the Walk to Read intervention program from grade 3 to grade 2 and grade 1, without incurring expense.

Staff and administrators realize that all is not in perfect order. Interviewees indicated there are several areas, particularly assessment, professional development, and development of internal systems that need to be addressed. Additionally, were funding available, the assistance of a mathematics coach would be helpful to bring mathematics achievement to a higher level.

The previously described leadership and staff qualities improve instruction for all students and negate the idea that good education always needs be a function of spending. Creative and resourceful leadership in the school has staff thinking in the same educational direction. They also have developed an effective instructional curriculum and consistent practices at a low cost. It is clear that the school is vibrant and fiscally lean.

Koziol has experienced a high degree of success with minimal resources. The staff is cohesive and has a clear vision and a “can do” attitude.

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?

The superintendent has created a climate of trust in the district.

In interviews teachers, union leaders, administrators, parents, and town officials all said that the superintendent had brought trust and transparency to the district.

In an interview the superintendent stated that the most important things she does include finding resources for schools; modeling huge expectations, especially the belief that students come first; answering parent and school committee questions; being a public relations specialist; and being a cheerleader for what gets done in the schools. One of her expectations is for all administrators to return phone calls within 12 hours because she wants the community to know that she and her team are responsive.

She stated that it took her a while to build trust with the four unions including the teachers’ association. She said that she keeps in touch with them and is respectful of them. There have only been four grievances in five years: None went to school committee and none went to arbitration. She stated that there are conversations rather than grievances. She is proud that the last teachers’ collective bargaining agreement in 2008 was settled in just a few meetings with the association.

The association officers said that in the past negotiations in the district about the collective bargaining agreement were long and difficult. Under the current superintendent, they stated that they resolved the bargaining agreement in only five meetings and that the negotiations went well. They said that the current superintendent respects them and works to find solutions to issues. They told the review team that there have not been many grievances that have gone to the superintendent’s level and that she encourages principals to resolve grievances at the school level.

In an interview the town accountant, town manager, and chair of the board of selectmen said that the superintendent was collaborative and that she had been good for the town. They added that she had a focus on children and that would help the town to grow. They said that the superintendent had changed attitudes in the town and now people believe that the schools can be successful. They appreciated her efforts to keep to a minimum budget cuts that affect students. They said that the superintendent truly believes in students and leads by example.

Middle school teachers described the superintendent as very approachable and said that she tried to accommodate teachers. High school teachers said that they trusted the superintendent. They expressed the view that she was trying to do the right thing. In a focus group, parents stated that one of the strengths of the district was the superintendent. She was beginning to turn the school district around; there was more accountability; and she was highly visible and had presence.

School committee members stated that the superintendent had put key people in key positions and that the district leadership team was talented, organized, and always available. They also appreciated that there had recently been less administrative turnover.

Throughout the town and the district, people were unified in their support for the climate of trust and transparency that the superintendent has brought to the district and for her belief in all students. This ensures that all members of the school system trust that the school system is working for the good of the students and that they can and will work collaboratively to address the challenges that the district faces.

There are few established centralized systems that provide a strong academic direction for the district.

In interviews with the review team, school committee members, principals, and teachers, said that school principals and teachers performed most of the academic work in the district. Although the district has few established centralized systems, two centralized practices permeate the district. The first is the superintendent's insistence that every teacher start each class with the "what and the why" of the lesson. Although this was not evident to the review team in all of the observed classes, in interviews teachers expressed an understanding of this expectation. The second established practice is that every purchase order or transfer had to have written on it how it would support students. The business consultant stated that if this information was missing or if the reason given was unacceptable to the superintendent she would reject the request.

Although there is a written curriculum, implementation in the district varies from school to school. Each school seems to choose its own books, programs, and materials. Principals do speak with one another and any alignment of resources, programs, or methods comes out of those discussions rather than from a systematic approach to investigating materials and programs followed by district implementation. This is particularly important because the grade configurations in the district of pre-kindergarten to grade 3; grade 4 to grade 6; and grade 7 to grade 12 are uncommon and require a systemic approach. In 2007, a full time curriculum director was hired in response to a New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) evaluation that expressed concern that there was no written kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum. The curriculum was completed two years later. As a result of annual reflection and reconsiderations corresponding with the budget development process, the position was eliminated the following year. There is now no one person in the district coordinating curriculum or professional development. A teacher facilitates professional development, but has limited time and little authority. Teachers and administrators told the review team that this teacher distributes surveys and relays to principals information about professional development that may be of interest to teachers. Principals have the authority to determine what specific professional development they will offer their teachers.

The superintendent said that she gave principals autonomy to run their schools. All principals confirmed this. They said that the superintendent asked probing questions to make sure they think through their decisions, but, generally, principals made decisions at the school level.

As for the major planning documents in the district, the superintendent said that the district prepares a District Improvement Plan (DIP) because the state requires it, but explained that the schools determined the district direction. In short, school goals drove the DIP rather than the reverse. Consequently, the DIP was not considered to be a valuable planning tool.

One of the goals in the DIP is to lower the dropout rate. The accomplishment of this goal was left to the high school principal. There did not seem to be a systemwide approach to understanding and working on the dropout issue. Also, the district mission statement is not visible in the district. The only place that the review team saw the mission statement was in the DIP. Apparently, the mission statement is not a driver of how education is focused at all schools in the district.

When asked how the district evaluates new initiatives, the principals told the review team that evaluation was done at the school level. There does not seem to be a systematic approach in the district to evaluating new initiatives, nor is there one person responsible for this task. For example, at the elementary level, evaluation of initiatives was done through discussions at grade-level team meetings, discussions at PLCs, and looking at student work and the writing portfolios that travel with the student to the middle school. At the middle school, teachers talk about student work at meetings and the principal said that they are looking to the elementary school to get a grasp of how to use formative assessments. Also, the middle school principal stated that the school's climate committee had helped middle school teachers look at the whole child. At the high school, the principal said that the faculty discusses best practices. They examine the MCAS test results and the principal does walkthroughs to evaluate initiatives.

The teachers' association officers confirmed the absence of systems in the district. They stated that while a professional development committee was instituted under the collective bargaining agreement, teachers had stopped volunteering to serve on the committee because there was not enough money to fund the desired professional development. Currently a full-time teacher facilitates professional development and individual principals manage it.

Interviews confirmed that there are few established systems throughout the district. The district relies on administrators and teachers who have the vision and the work ethic to get good things done for students. Principals are making decisions that may or may not flow from one school to the next. There is no visible mission statement that focuses everything that is done, nor a professional development plan to support that mission. As a result of the absence of systems, there is a fragmentation of focus and procedures from school to school.

There is little evidence that the school committee uses a broad range of analytic data to be effective advocates of strong student achievement.

The Ware School Committee supports the superintendent and her administration and the direction that they are taking; however, it does not condition its support on data confirming for the public that the school district is making appropriate academic progress. The district does not have a system for bringing data to the school committee throughout the year, although it does employ a director of accountability who has access to many different kinds of data.

According to interviews and a review of school committee minutes, the school committee receives limited data. In the fall of 2010-2011, the school committee spent the better part of only one meeting reviewing the MCAS test data that was presented to them. Although they rewrote the policy book over the last year and a half, there was no evidence that data informed their policy decisions.

Some school committee members said they are aware of the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) because the school councils come to school committee meetings three times annually. However, school committee members said that they do not engage in a discussion of how data has driven each SIP. Although school committee members said that they were asked to approve the DIP, they were not familiar with the data that drove its construction. When asked what kind of data the school committee reviews, members told the review team that they receive program information, sports information from the school councils, MCAS test results and monthly budget data. They added that they are seeking more data on why students are using school choice to leave the district. They were not aware of the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) and the many forms of data contained in it. They stated that they are just beginning to learn about the concept of growth data. They did say that they try to match the budget to the MCAS test results, especially when reductions must be made. When asked about their role in supporting higher student achievement, school committee members responded in unison that they were trying to get more Advanced Placement (AP) classes into the high school program out of concern that students might be exercising their right to leave the district under the school choice law because the district does not have enough of these classes. The school committee sets annual goals for itself. In 2010-2011 the goals included collaborating with other school committees to brainstorm or share knowledge; researching the Virtual Academy option as a special project; developing a marketing plan for the district; and each member attending at least one continuing education workshop or choosing a research project.

The review team asked committee members how they used data in the development of the marketing plan. Their response was that they had not developed a written marketing plan and that this was an ongoing project. Members said that in their view, what the marketing plan should cover includes ensuring that no errors go out on documents, investigating why students are using school choice to leave the district, and developing good relationships with the press. When asked whether they would use the marketing plan to ask for additional funds for the schools, members pointed out that there are tag sales, banner sales, and many other ways that people raise money for the schools. They said that overrides had failed for three consecutive years. School committee members stated that this failure sent them a message that they should not go for another override. Academic needs did not appear to play a role in whether the school committee would lobby the town for more money. There was little evidence that student achievement data played a role in their structuring of a marketing plan.

The school committee is receiving little student performance data for decisions. Without sufficient data the school committee does not have a rich source of information both for decision-making and for marketing the school district to the town. There is no systematic approach by the school committee to review many sources of data and use these data to inform policy and budget issues. Consequently, issues such as whether to lobby residents for an override become a political decision rather than one based upon the needs of students

A review of classroom observations shows mixed results across the district with relatively little evidence of students using higher-order thinking, particularly at the middle- and high-school levels.

The review team observed 40 classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12. A number of the instructional characteristics on the inventory were evident in at least 80 percent of the classes observed including positive classroom climate; class time maximized for learning; instruction linking students' prior knowledge to academic experiences; and content within students' English proficiency and developmental level. These are positive results. Some basic requirements for learning have been established. The behavior in the classrooms was respectful, students were on task, and teachers linked new concepts to what students already knew.

Seven instructional characteristics were evident in 60 to 79 percent of the classes observed including a learning objective for the lesson (67.5 percent); instructional materials aligned with students' developmental and English proficiency levels (72.5 percent); depth of content knowledge (77.5 percent); pacing of the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged (67.5 percent); use of on-the-spot assessments to check for understanding (62.5 percent); questions requiring students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (60.0 percent); and opportunities to apply new knowledge and content (72.5 percent). Greater prevalence of these important characteristics would likely increase student learning.

Instruction that requires students to use higher-order thinking in classrooms indicates high expectations for student learning. A teacher who posts or states the lesson's learning objective frames and focuses classroom instruction. A teacher who checks briefly to determine students' understanding can adjust instruction to improve the level of understanding. And a well-paced lesson encourages greater student engagement.

Three instructional characteristics were evident in fewer than 60 percent of the classes observed by the review team: a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling (45.0 percent); students articulating their thinking and reasoning (52.5 percent); and students inquiring, exploring, or solving problems together, in pairs, or in small groups (42.5 percent).

Teachers who offer students opportunities to learn through a variety of instructional techniques address the complex needs of students, since they learn in a variety of ways. Teachers who expect students to make their thinking explicit require active student participation in learning. Students have the responsibility for learning placed squarely on their shoulders. Finally, students working with partners or in small groups engage more fully in the learning process by sharing their own ideas and being exposed to those of others.

Classroom observations indicate numerous areas of instructional strength in the district. These areas include: a positive classroom climate, class time maximized for learning, instruction that links students' prior knowledge to academic experiences, and content within students' English proficiency and developmental level. Several other important instructional characteristics, if more prevalent, would enhance student learning. These include: questions requiring students to engage in higher-order thinking, use of on-the-spot assessments to check for understanding, and

spacing of the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged. Finally, there are several instructional characteristics that, if they were stronger, would represent significantly improved student learning opportunities. These include: a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling; and students inquiring, exploring, or solving problems together, in pairs, or in small groups. Instruction in the district presents a mixed picture with decided strengths and some clear challenges.

The district provides little systematic direction and support for curriculum development, implementation, and monitoring.

In 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the district had a full-time curriculum coordinator and teachers at all levels and in all content areas produced a district written curriculum for the first time. All teachers have paper copies of their curriculum and can access it on the district website as well. Following the elimination of the curriculum coordinator position, principals, teachers, and the district's few instructional support staff assumed responsibility for curricular implementation, monitoring, and review. At the high school, the principal sometimes devotes one of her two monthly faculty meetings to department meetings where the curriculum may be the topic of discussion. Direction for these meetings comes from the principal. Since there are no department heads, directing department work is the responsibility of the department as a whole. Any products from these meetings are directed back to the principal. The result of this loose organization is that responsibility for implementing the curriculum falls directly onto the teachers' shoulders. Many teachers indicate willingness to accept this responsibility. However, since the high school in particular has little capacity to monitor teachers' curriculum implementation, it has to trust teachers to implement the curriculum faithfully without much verification.

At the middle school, the principal told the review team that he supervises implementation of the curriculum through weekly grade-level meetings with teachers. Teachers, however, indicated that these meetings are short and focus for the most part on students and their needs and seldom on curriculum. However, middle school teachers also accept the reality that responsibility for implementing their curriculum rests with them. They described regular interactions with team members who teach the same curriculum. At the middle school, a Title I mathematics specialist provides teachers with some support, but the position is under consideration for elimination in 2011-2012 after the specialist's retirement.

At the elementary level, the principal plays an active role in curriculum implementation. The reading teacher also contributes to this effort. She participated in the development of the ELA curriculum, and she functions as a coach by providing teachers with support and guidance. The Walk to Read and Walk to Math curricula consist of growing lists of options for interventions coordinated by the principal, reading teacher, and classroom teachers.

Curriculum oversight is most tightly coordinated at the elementary level. At the middle school and the junior/senior high school levels where implementation and monitoring are more informal, assumptions have to be made that teachers reliably implement their curricula. This may indeed be so, but there are few controls to verify that it is so. There are no common mid-year and final exams at junior/senior high school level to demonstrate student mastery of a certain body of

content. The elementary and middle schools do not have benchmark assessments beyond the DIBELS to establish where students are on the continuum of what is to be learned. As a result, there are no solid data to show whether students have been taught what is in the curriculum, or that they have learned what they have been taught. .

A final matter of concern is that since curriculum is addressed mostly at the level of the individual course or grade, there is too little focus on vertical alignment. Administrators and teachers agree that they have little knowledge of whether what is taught builds on what preceded it and leads into what will be taught at the grade or course that follows. That kind of perspective comes only from a district-level coordinator who sees the curriculum as a whole. The curriculum would benefit from central coordination and direction.

The district is in the very early stages of developing a comprehensive and centrally coordinated assessment system that defines, oversees, and supports implementation of aligned assessment programs and uniform practices in all its schools. Consequently, policies and priorities for the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data are largely left to each school.

Although key district documents, including the 2010-2012 DIP prominently mention specific plans to develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated data management system for the district, at the time of the review the responsibility for the collection and use of student performance data was largely delegated to individual schools. With the exception of technical assistance and support for the collection and distribution of assessment data provided by the director of accountability, interviewees provided little evidence of any centralized process or system, or any person(s), representative team, or committee with direct responsibility or sufficient resources for the development, implementation, and oversight of an integrated kindergarten through grade 12 assessment system or comprehensive plan. The result of this essentially site-based approach is a fragmented and disconnected set of policies, practices, and priorities that have developed within each of the district's three schools. According to a review of the SIPs, and interviews with principals and teachers in the three schools, there are significant differences in the quantity, quality, and frequency of student data collected, the purposes to which it is put, the level of expertise and training in data analysis of school leaders and staff, and the extent to which data informs curriculum, classroom instruction, academic supports, and goal-setting in each school.

An important district document, the "District Literacy Action Plan," March 2011, acknowledges the current absence of a comprehensive assessment system within the district. It includes clear plans and specific action steps to address this deficiency. Chief among them is the creation of a district literacy team, with direct oversight over corresponding individual teams in each school. According to the plan, the purpose of this team is to "establish and promote continuity among grade levels K-12" with respect to the collection, analysis, and sharing of student performance data with all members of the school system, teachers, and staff so that "the district will be better able to identify areas of needed intervention and monitor student progress." The plan further states "as student progress is monitored, teams will evaluate intervention methods," "adjustments

to curriculum and instruction will be carried out as necessary,” and finally “crucial to success is the sharing of data and practices among buildings.”

In the judgment of the review team, Koziol is currently farther along in the use of student performance data than either the middle or junior/senior high school. Although it does not have a properly balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments that would provide a more continuous and comprehensive source of timely and reliable assessment results, Koziol has created an effective tiered model of instruction that makes good use of available student data. Additionally, it has developed effective internal systems, including weekly grade-level team meetings and a PLC-based organizational model, that facilitate and support the dissemination and careful, continuous analysis of relevant performance data to monitor student progress, particularly that of at-risk learners.

There is clearly a need for the district to assume greater leadership and direct responsibility for the creation of unified districtwide policies and practices, as well as to provide the necessary resources to acquire the programs and provide the training and infrastructure essential to properly support such an initiative. Across the district at present, student assessment results and other pertinent data are not collected, analyzed, or used in a manner that is consistent, systematic, or comprehensive. Consequently, the review team concluded that academic achievement data are not regularly or widely used to drive district or school-level decision-making, prioritize goals, influence the allocation of resources, or to introduce, modify, or discontinue educational programs or services. The absence of a comprehensive, unified, centrally coordinated assessment system in kindergarten through grade 12 substantially limits the district’s ability to collect and appropriately use student academic and demographic data to effectively evaluate and improve curriculum, instruction, learning opportunities, and outcomes for all students.

At the time of the review, the teacher evaluation process did not provide sufficient feedback or professional development recommendations to teachers with professional status. The use of two very different summative year evaluation forms during the four-year cycle of evaluation for professional status teachers resulted in the collection of different evidence about their instructional competence.

The district has a four-year cycle of teacher evaluation for professional status teachers (PST) and an annual cycle for non-professional status teachers (NPS). The process is described in a lengthy amendment to the collective bargaining agreement in Appendix E. There is a confusing array of forms for the evaluation process. The annual year cycle relies upon a single form (Form C-1) while the four-year cycle includes five possible forms. The four-year cycle meets the 603 CMR 35.00 mandatory summative time requirement for PST teachers, although two different forms (Form C-2 and Form A) are used for biennial summative evaluations, with different evaluative content. Form C-2, used at the beginning of the four-year cycle, follows the “Principles of Effective Teaching” of 603 CMR 35.00⁶ while the third-year summative form (Form A) is

⁶As in force at the time of the review. In June 2011 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace the previous regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership at 603 CMR 35.00.

observational with no apparent relationship to 603 CMR 35.00. These forms drive the kind of instructional and classroom competencies that evaluators look for during classroom observations. Without reference to the “Principles of Effective Teaching,” the evaluator does not have the required frame of reference. Because of the differences between the two forms, there is wide variation in what they call for in terms of description of teaching behaviors.

Form B is used for a mid-year review and Form D is used for the professional development year for NPS teachers during the intervening summative years. A sixth form is for corrective action. When asked about the effect of corrective action plans on the quality of instruction in the district, interviewees said that several teachers on corrective action plans had resigned in recent years and there also had been a number of non-renewals of teachers without professional status. The district is very short of administrative staff in the curriculum and instruction areas, however, which may have an impact on the amount of information and support teachers on corrective action plans are provided.

The review team examined a random sample of 17 teacher personnel files and found that some annual evaluations had been completed in the early fall, months before the end of the teaching year: for some teachers in the sample, evaluation was not the intended year-long process. The early completion of an evaluation is contrary to the intent of the collective bargaining agreement’s “Purposes of Evaluation.” Most evaluations reviewed were timely, with two exceptions, and all teachers whose files were reviewed by the team were appropriately licensed.

No teacher evaluation referred to professional development for improving instruction, although that purpose is included in the collective bargaining agreement as a rationale for the four-year evaluation cycle. Form B is used to record a proposed, independent professional development plan as part of the four-year evaluation cycle, but its relevance to improving the teacher’s instructional performance was not recorded in any of the personnel files examined by the review team. It was a stand-alone document describing a teacher’s participation in a professional development event or events during the four-year cycle. No Form B reviewed by the team mentioned the “Principles of Effective Teaching.”

No files reviewed contained any measurements of the effects of observed instruction on student achievement, although one of the purposes of the evaluation process, as stated in the collective bargaining agreement, is to ensure “accountability.” Interviewees told the review team in interviews that the evaluation process was not universally helpful to teachers. It was described as an “event” rather than a process.

According to the data contained in a sample of personnel files, the district’s comprehensive teacher evaluation system is not delivering the results described as its purposes in the collective bargaining agreement, such as accountability, improvement of instruction by means of professional development, or examination of the effects of teaching on student achievement. The evaluation forms, as well as being inconsistent, call for a narrow and superficial range of data rather than the fuller range of data points available to evaluators. The current evaluation process does not have the capacity to collect sufficiently regular and substantive data about teaching. Continued use of this system as it has been implemented will not provide the kind of systematic data required to improve student achievement.

Although the 2010-2012 DIP has several sections requiring a district professional development plan none has been developed.

The review team examined the following district documents about professional development: the DIP, professional development schedules from a local collaborative; results of a teachers' survey; a textbook on induction of new teachers; two 2010-2011 district professional development training schedules; and relevant sections of the collective bargaining agreement. The review team attempted to connect the plans, documents and processes to determine how professional development is executed in the district. The review team found that teachers often subscribe the courses they need for licensure according to their individual professional development plans. The four-year evaluation cycle has one "Professional Growth" year, suggesting that this is adequate for the professional growth of teachers. The district reimburses teachers for partial tuition costs up to a line item limit of \$ 20,000 annually. There are controls in collective bargaining agreement requiring that a teacher hold a masters' degree before being placed on any salary column beyond the masters level, but interviewees told the review team that there is no uniform district requirement that the advanced degrees that move a teacher over to a new salary column be in that teacher's assigned subject.

Some principals outline their professional development goals in the annual goals that they include in their evaluation documents. There is a great deal of job-embedded professional development in the district that is not cataloged in district files.

The district provides the formal training component of its state-required mentoring program through the Massachusetts Teacher Association's (MTA) annual "Just for New Teachers" conference. In addition, the district provides in-district mentors a comprehensive handbook with concrete suggestions about teacher induction. Interviewees stated that while the handbook is comprehensive and instructive, there is no written district guidance on how to use it with new teachers. According to district records, teachers chose to attend different workshops at the MTA sponsored conference and there was no evidence in district files that the mentor assigned to a new teacher had any say about what workshops the new teacher should attend.

The review team found that teachers are left to their own interpretations of what and how to teach without a link to best practices because the district did not have a unifying professional development plan. There is a professional development committee, as required by the collective bargaining agreement and the 2010-2012 DIP, but no administrator is assigned to oversee its functioning. Because annual budget shortfalls have limited administrative position, the responsibility for professional development was assigned to a full-time teacher as an additional duty.

According to interviewees, there is no comprehensive district professional development plan. Professional development on mandatory topics such as bullying is conducted at the beginning of the school year and episodic offerings are scattered throughout the year, both self-initiated and planned by schools and individuals. In addition, teachers take courses and a collaborative has a set of offerings. However, there is no common scaffolding to structure professional development for teachers or administrators.

According to interviewees, the district has many long-term staff with allegiance and loyalty to the district. Because these teachers “go the extra mile,” have much daily interaction with each other about teaching, and seek professional development on their own, some interviewees expressed the view that a comprehensive plan is unnecessary. There is however no common spine of professional development guidance in the district. Teacher interest surveys are administered twice annually, but since there is no annual professional development plan, it is uncertain how or if these surveys influence any professional development offerings. Professional development often occurs spontaneously, becomes available through the collaborative, or is centrally scheduled for the two professional development days authorized under the collective bargaining agreement.

The highly successful Walk to Read and Walk to Math interventions that bring focused attention to the learning needs of students at Koziol have gotten the attention of administrators at the middle school. As a result, middle school teachers have been in conversation with Koziol teachers and developed a plan to provide continuity of Koziol’s intervention programs at the middle school. This organizational focus on ensuring continuity of attention to students’ needs is a promising development in professional practice and student learning at Koziol and at the Ware Middle School. This new vertical link requires a systematic professional development plan to ensure that the best practices of Koziol continue in grades 4 through 6.

Since the district has no professional development plan to direct resources toward priorities, important links that connect expertise with need may or may not take place. Failure to explicitly align the changing organizational and competency needs of the staff to a comprehensive, multi-year, written professional development plan will weaken the district’s efforts to bring to scale its successes with student learning.

The district has had a positive impact on the social and emotional needs of its students through the establishment of Structured Learning Centers (SLCs).

The district has a Structured Learning Center (SLC) in each of its three schools. The SLC provides supplementary services that allow regular and special education students to participate in the mainstream while also having their social and emotional needs addressed. Every school has a designated room for the SLC, and school leaders at all three schools have assigned one special education teacher to supervise the center. The SLC is made available to and serves as a temporary placement for special and regular education students having difficulty functioning in the general classroom or completing projects and assignments. According to school administrators and staff, the impact of the SLC on student performance is positive because after spending time in the SLC, students are able to return to the general classroom with an increased readiness to learn.

Maintaining the SLC has become a school and district effort. According to administrators, teachers, and the special education director, this is partly due to buy-in from school staff at each school. In the 2010-2012 DIP, the district established a goal of assessing the impact of the SLC on decreasing internal and external suspension rates in all three schools and on improving student attendance.

It was apparent from interviews that student attendance was a concern to both administrators and teachers in Ware. The 2010 attendance rate of 93.4 percent was lower than the state rate of 94.6 percent. It was more of a concern that 18.7 percent of Ware's students were chronically absent in 2010 (compared to 13 percent of students statewide), with a 38.2 percent chronic absence rate for grade 9 (compared to a 20.0 chronic absence rate for state 9th graders). The annual dropout rate in Ware decreased significantly from 10.2 percent in 2008 to 3.6 percent in 2009 and 4.2 percent in 2010. In the same period the four-year cohort graduation rate fell from 66.3 percent in 2008 to 48.9 percent in 2009 and then rose to 70.4 percent in 2010. Student support programs routinely include strong family support components, in hopes of counteracting some of the chronic contributing factors to the district's attendance and graduation rates. Regular involvement with community agencies is routinely encouraged and facilitated where possible.

Although there is some variation in how the SLCs function in the schools, there are similarities that suggest a districtwide reliance on the SLCs as well as a districtwide approach to managing them. For example, each school leader has been able to assign a special education teacher to its SLC. Each SLC is made available for regular and special education students. Each SLC uses interventions (i.e., individual behavior plans, extra time to complete a task, academic assistance, and needed down time) that allow regular and special education students to function better in the general mainstream. Each SLC is also available to support students struggling with basics in the academic curriculum. At each school students are placed in the SLC through an informed method that includes communication between the special education teacher operating the program and the general education teachers and SAT team sending the identified students to the SLC.

The schools use the following district-funded positions to support the SLC: adjustment counselors (one at each school), assistant principals, and special education teachers. The individuals in each of these roles have been able to support the social and emotional needs of students at the school level through the coordinated efforts of school staff in identifying and sending students to the SLC.

While no evidence was provided to show that the district has a systematic approach to monitor the effectiveness of SLCs in addressing students' social and emotional needs or affecting student attendance, the district has funded key staff to allow each school to properly manage and support its SLC. As a result, regular and special education students alike have access to an intervention that enables them to return to the general classroom with an increased readiness to learn and cope better in the mainstream.

The district's outsourced financial management system and services are comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective in addressing the functional administrative and fiscal needs of the Ware schools.

The district's outsourced financial management system seems to work well, given that the district is small and functions under tight budget constraints. Interviewees did not report significant negative impact from the outsourcing. The review team found that the financial systems were sound and budget information was readily available.

Outsourcing fiscal duties by school districts is feasible under several conditions: a district is small or moderate in size; it operates under tight funding constraints, and some of the more time-consuming administrative functions can be done by local clerical or other related administrative staff. Outsourcing may be more of a challenge where there are requirements to attend frequent evening meetings and to satisfy instant demands for research information, typical of regional and larger LEAs. The need for close management of other administrative areas such as building maintenance or construction may preclude outsourcing as well. The Ware district meets the conditions for the feasibility of outsourcing, and management of its basic financial information can be done by networking and remote access.

The consultant routinely maintains updated monthly financial data and makes it available to administrators and others online. Full online access for all parties from initial budget data to follow-up data through the end of the school year is available. Data fields in the accounting software are coded using ESE categories for reporting purposes. Interviewees confirmed that when the business manager is not onsite, he returns and answers all email and telephone questions from administration and staff in a short period.

About his role in interpreting program requirements into associated budget costs, the business consultant stated that instructional programs and budgeting are driven by MCAS data. The business consultant indicated that the district is not able to assign direct program budget cost based on student achievement and assessment of MCAS data. However, he is able to estimate an allocated portion of program expense based in part on a low-income student percentage (free and reduced lunch.)

The business administrator noted that he provides similar administrative services to at least four other nearby districts and is able to identify district needs that could be met collaboratively. An example is his recommendation that one district share a professional development grant with a neighboring district. The town has recently purchased new accounting software from Budgetsense though it did not purchase the school accounting module made for this software. The district uses IFIPS which is not compatible with Budgetsense, but does cleanly export data into the business manager's software (TMS) for online use and access. Warrant totals are posted manually into the town's software for tracking and control purposes.

Financial data is used for limited purposes; though regular reports are available, the data is not used to provide more insightful comparative analysis that could guide district long-term financial planning.

The district is under tight funding constraints⁷, as confirmed by an interview with the town accountant and town manager, but the budgeting process is seen as inclusive. A principal said that budget decisions are guided by MCAS data. Administrators reported that in budget development meetings, they use a decentralized process in which instructional needs are assessed

⁷The adequacy of the budget has been a long-standing issue for the district. As far back as the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report in 2006, Ware was cited for the limitations imposed on the high school by its budget; actual net school spending for Ware had been less than the required amount in fiscal years 2003, 2004, and 2005. As noted in the District Profile section above, actual net school spending for Ware in fiscal year 2010 was again slightly less than the required amount.

and all discussion relates to the classroom. These discussions review performance data but do not directly address program cost requirements.

The summary page of the fiscal year 2012 budget document segregates district salaries and all other expenses, with four years of data. The budget summary and detail made use of three available sort fields, object (such as salary or materials), location, and function (such as curriculum or technology). However, other data analysis using sort fields embedded in the district's chart of accounts to extract budgetary and expense anomalies appears not to be routine. Methodical and insightful use of ESE and DOR data beyond the normal and apparent uses is not ongoing or an integral part of the budget preparation. This data can be mined for comparisons to other districts and insights for budgeting.

Recommendations

Note on the delay of this report and the currency of these recommendations:

The finalization of this report has been delayed long past the time the Department recognizes would have been desirable. As a result, 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 district would benefit from centralized systems that provide strong academic direction.

There are many promising practices in the Ware Public Schools. However, many of these practices appear in isolation in one of the three schools. Principals told the review team that they are given autonomy over their schools, with little coordination at the district level. Principals each have their own ways of evaluating the initiatives they establish. Without the commitment to determine which initiatives should be districtwide and without a systematic way to evaluate and document these initiatives, good programs could be lost with a change of principal or superintendent. The review team believes that it is important for the superintendent, in collaboration with her leadership team, to create a strong academic focus for the entire school district, create a vision and mission that follows the focus, and put in place a comprehensive plan of how to realize the vision.

This process would serve the school district in many ways. Teachers would understand expectations, and vertical articulation of programs and curriculum discussions would take place with specific goals in mind. Also, parents who are considering school choice would have a way to assess whether Ware can offer their child the programs they need and the school committee will have documented evidence and a future direction to include in their marketing plan to the community. The creation of centralized systems in Ware would have numerous benefits to the schools themselves and the community.

The school committee should be provided with and review a broad range of academic data to inform the policy and budget decisions that they must make.

School committee members stated that they review a limited set of data such as the results of the MCAS tests, information on sports programs, and monthly budget data. The administration has just begun to introduce the school committee to growth information, but has not yet introduced them to the growth data in the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART). Although the school committee told the review team that they received a very good presentation on the MCAS tests, they also said that they seldom discuss the results in terms of anything other than where they may have to reduce positions or programs.

The school employs a director of accountability who has access to many different kinds of data. Through the superintendent, a schedule should be set up so that school committee members are receiving multiple forms of data, including, but not limited to, the MCAS test results, DART data, dropout and attendance rates, and PSAT, SAT, and benchmark testing results. These multiple forms of data will help the school committee make important policy and budget

decisions and will also aid it in the development of a marketing plan, which was one of the committee's goals for 2010-2011.

The Ware Public Schools should provide systematic direction and oversight for its curriculum.

The district has a written curriculum, but without a central curriculum coordinator it had limited oversight capacity for curriculum development, implementation, monitoring, review, and revision. As a result, curricular responsibilities fell to the school principals, the elementary reading teacher, and the Title I middle school mathematics specialist—and to the classroom teachers. The elementary principal has developed an organizational structure and schedule that maximizes her opportunities to monitor implementation of the curriculum. Both she and the superintendent recognized that mathematics achievement would improve if the school had a mathematics coach who provided the same diligent support and direction for the mathematics program as the reading teacher does for ELA.

The middle school principal did not have a systematic way of overseeing curriculum implementation. Grade-level meetings in the middle school were not structured to examine curriculum. And while at the time of the site visit the middle school had a Title I mathematics specialist, it was unclear whether that position would exist in 2011-2012, in which case there would be very little guidance and support for teachers in either ELA or mathematics. The review team interviewed teachers committed to implementing their written curriculum, but the absence of a supervisory structure limited the reliability of their efforts.

Finally, at the junior/senior high school the principal addressed curriculum matters from a distance. She sometimes directed departments to meet and address certain matters. Without department heads, the principal relied on the professionalism of the group to accomplish what she wanted. Similarly, if a department made a decision to make something happen, the principal needed the good will and responsibility of the teachers in the department to carry out that decision so that it happened. In addition, without formative assessments such as the DIBELS at the elementary school, the principals did not have data to indicate whether and how effectively the curriculum was taught.

To address this absence of direction and oversight, the district should have an individual in the central office with responsibility for development, implementation, monitoring, and review and revision of curriculum. Further, teachers would benefit from the perspective of a coach who is in all classrooms and could support them and help them fine-tune the horizontal alignment of their curricula. Funds in the district are severely limited, but additional skilled personnel could lift student achievement to considerably higher levels.

The district should continue to provide its students with the solid instruction observed in its classrooms. However, teachers will benefit from professional development to help students take responsibility for their learning in three specific areas.

At both the elementary level and in the district overall, observers found that one instructional characteristic had the lowest frequency. At the elementary level, students were observed working

together in pairs or in groups in only 45 percent of the classes observed and in the district as a whole, 42.5 percent of students were observed working together in pairs or in groups.

Another instructional characteristic was also not prevalent. In only 45 percent of district classrooms was there a range of instructional techniques in evidence. This characteristic was observed in only 56 percent of elementary classrooms.

Finally, at the elementary level, students were observed articulating their thinking and reasoning in 67 percent of the classes observed; in the district as a whole, students were observed articulating their thinking and reasoning in only 52.5 percent the classes observed.

In a district where, in general, positive instructional characteristics were seen with frequency, these are low percentages. With respect to the infrequency of occurrence of both students working in groups and of students articulating their thinking and reasoning, it appears that teachers rather than students are taking responsibility for student learning. This conclusion also fits with the low frequency of instruction including a range of instructional techniques. It appears that the teacher is directing the learning from the front of the room with few opportunities for students to express their own thoughts or to exchange ideas with other students in a smaller group. However, when students are working in groups or expressing their own thinking to the class as a whole, they are playing an active role in their learning process.

To encourage this active student participation, the district should provide all its teachers with professional development to learn more about these instructional strategies and with low-risk opportunities to practice these skills in their classrooms.

The district is strongly encouraged to follow through on its plans to create a comprehensive, centrally coordinated assessment system. The system should include regular, balanced formative and benchmark assessments at all schools, the results of which are continually collected and used to improve instruction, inform supports and interventions for students, and guide leaders' decisions.

An important district document, the "District Literacy Action Plan," published in March 2011, acknowledges the absence of a comprehensive assessment system within the district. It includes clear plans and specific action steps to address this deficiency. Chief among them is the creation of a district literacy team, with direct oversight over corresponding individual teams in each school. According to the plan, the purpose of this team is to "establish and promote continuity among grade levels K-12" with respect to the collection, analysis, and sharing of student performance data among all stakeholders so that "the district will be better able to identify areas of needed intervention and monitor student progress." The plan further states that "as student progress is monitored, teams will evaluate intervention methods," "adjustments to curriculum and instruction will be carried out as necessary," and finally "crucial to success is the sharing of data and practices among buildings."

The review team strongly supports the assessment goals articulated in this plan and encourages the superintendent and district leadership team to follow through on the steps necessary to implement this plan. Although the district should determine its specific design and operational

characteristics, the review team recommends that when established, the new kindergarten through grade 12 assessment system incorporate the following components:

- Districtwide assessment policies and practices are uniformly characterized by the continuous collection, analysis, and use of multiple sources of student assessment data by both school and district leadership.
- All schools use a comprehensive, regular, and balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments, both standardized and locally developed, that can continually and accurately monitor the progress of all students toward achieving well-defined learning objectives.
- Uniform procedures and expectations ensure that district and school leadership regularly use assessment results and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional support programs and inform the implementation of appropriate student supports and interventions.
- All faculty members are provided with sufficient professional development training and ongoing support(s) in the collection, analysis, and use of performance data in order to embed these skills and competencies in all grade level and content areas. Faculty is subsequently expected to regularly use aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data to improve learning outcomes.
- All staff has ready access to school-based and districtwide reports of student academic achievement, as well as other relevant data, including the MCAS test results. All appropriate members of the school community, including the school committee, are routinely provided with the data generated by these expanded and improved assessment programs and practices.
- District and school leaders carefully monitor student achievement data throughout the school year in order to assess progress in achieving district and school goals and to make appropriate and timely modifications to programs, policies, practices, or services.
- District and school leaders incorporate student assessment results, demographic data, and other pertinent information into all aspects of decision-making, including the development of district and school improvement plans, prioritization of goals, allocation of human and financial resources, and the introduction, modification, or discontinuation of academic programs and services.

A kindergarten through grade 12 assessment system that includes key data collection and dissemination, data-based decision making, and student assessment components should result in significant and sustained improvements to instructional practices and academic programs in each of the district's schools. Such a comprehensive, unified, and centrally coordinated assessment system will create a considerably more efficient and effective operational framework that will properly support and reliably inform the district's capacity to provide enhanced academic opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for all its students.

As it aligns its evaluation system with the new Educator Evaluation Framework, 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.

A review team examination of district documents showed that the Ware teacher evaluation system in effect at the time of the review was not nimble enough to provide quick and accurate feedback to teachers. It was implemented over a four-year period and included isolated evaluation and professional development documents without ostensible connection.

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.

The district should develop a multi-year professional development plan linked to the teacher evaluation process, after a comprehensive analysis of its varying professional development activities, processes, and events.

At the time of the review, the district was considering how to replicate best practices identified in kindergarten through grade 3 in the middle school (grades 4-6). A comprehensive professional development system that is multi-year, informative, prescriptive, and easily accessed is one important element in bringing best practices to scale. The self-selected and program-dependent training in the district at the time of the review was not effectively organized and connected so as to allow all teachers to learn core instructional practices prioritized by the district. In addition, district evaluators did not make professional development recommendations in teacher evaluations, despite the year of the evaluation cycle devoted to a professional development project. Many staff members involve themselves in varying professional development activities, but the evaluation process did not guide or hold teachers accountable for their professional development activities.

When staff also all have learning opportunities through the exchange of craft knowledge in “communities of practice” among vertical and horizontal instructional assignments, the district

will gain greater insight into how certain strategic instructional patterns promote higher levels of learning for Ware students.

A districtwide professional development plan focused on identified priorities for educator practice and linked to the evaluation system, as well as increased opportunities for educators to learn best practices from one another, will assist in transforming pockets of classroom success into a more consistent pattern of success across the district.

Koziol needs to design and establish systems to monitor the success of the programs and interventions it uses to support students.

Systematized, coordinated, school-wide supports are made available to Koziol students through student support services and partnerships. These services address the social and emotional well-being of Koziol students. Unmet social and emotional needs can result in absenteeism, failing grades, and behavioral challenges, but such risks are minimized through the collaborative efforts and intervention of Koziol staff and partners. The result is a supportive, safe learning environment that positively affects student behaviors for learning.

As things are, it is impossible to know definitively how effective each of the social and emotional programs and interventions in place at Koziol is in meeting the needs of students receiving it. There was no evidence to suggest that detailed records are available that could determine the extent of each program or intervention's effectiveness. Such information, were it available, would lead to decisions about eliminating certain programs or interventions and enhancing the use of others.

Ware should design and establish systems that monitor the effectiveness of the SLCs in addressing students' social and emotional needs and improving their behavior and academic performance.

While the districts' effort to increase the number of special education teachers at each grade level can positively affect each school's ability to support the social and emotional needs of its students through the SLCs, there is also a need to monitor the success of the SLCs in addressing those needs. There was no evidence to suggest that a system for such monitoring currently exists.

The school district needs to have a data system to measure and monitor the impact of the SLCs. The database should include daily entered information such as the name, date, time, and grade of the student and the reason the student was sent to the SLC. This database should be used to determine how often the SLC is used at each school, the reasons for its use, the frequency of its use by certain students and whether or not the frequency and reasons for use are changing over time, in and across schools. Documenting students' use of the SLCs and being able to retrieve this information and identify patterns can help school administrators and teachers determine to what extent the SLC is having an impact on students' behavior and academic performance and inform the district of the level of influence the SLCs are having in decreasing internal and external suspension rates, increasing the attendance rate, and lowering the dropout rate.

The business office can be more effective by including more frequent use of object and location codes information in budget and expense reports. Additionally, the office should enhance use of ESE and DOR databases to provide a better understanding of Ware's financial position compared with similar districts.

Some charts of accounts are programmed to sort by special versus regular education costs, by program costs, grade level costs, and the like. The software now in use in the district includes a report generator. Once a report is sorted by certain codes and is subtotaled by specific data groups, the report can be named, saved, and used at any time. Such information can be valuable by allowing administration to consider alternatives.

Similarly, ESE and Department of Revenue (DOR) detailed financial information on all Massachusetts school districts is accessible and can be used to compare Ware to other, similar districts. As reflected in the school committee goals, the district has been considering a marketing plan highlighting the district's positive attributes. The district might want to consider including such comparisons in the plan as part of a thoughtful analysis of data.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Ware Public Schools was conducted from April 25–28, 2011, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. Nadine Binkley Bonda, Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction, Review Team Coordinator

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Assessment

Dr. Thomas Johnson, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. Alenor Williams, Student Support

Richard Scortino, 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 Ware Public Schools.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Ware financial personnel: town manager, town accountant, and a selectman.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Ware School Committee: chair, three members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Ware Teachers Association: president, governance chair, and three school representatives.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the central office administration of the Ware Public Schools: superintendent, special education director, director of accountability, and business consultant.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Ware Public Schools: the Stanley M Koziol Elementary School (pre-kindergarten–grade 3), the Ware Middle School (grades 4–6), and the Ware Junior/Senior High School (grades 7–12).
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with principals, the Koziol Leadership Team, and elementary, middle, and high school teacher focus groups.
 - During school visits, the review team also conducted 40 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
 - Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report
 - Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
 - Teacher’s bargaining agreement, including the teacher evaluation tool
 - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
 - Long-term enrollment trends

- 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 past year
 - Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
 - Curriculum guide overview
 - Kindergarten through grade 12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time schedules
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - Classroom observation tools not used in the teacher evaluation process
 - Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
 - Teacher attendance data
 - All administrator evaluations and certifications
 - Randomly selected teacher personnel files

- The review team reviewed the following documents at the Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School visited because it was identified as a “gap-closer” for students from low-income families:
 - 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 at the school
 - Classroom observation tools/learning walk tools used at the school

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Differentiated Needs (Low-Income) Review of the Ware Public Schools, conducted from April 25–27, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>April 25</p> <p>Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; review of personnel files; interview with teachers' association.</p>	<p>April 26</p> <p>Interviews with district staff and principals; review of personnel files; interview with town personnel; teacher focus groups; classroom observations (Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School, Ware Junior/Senior High School); interview with school leader.</p>	<p>April 27</p> <p>Interviews with district staff; Classroom observations (Ware Middle School, Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School) interview with Stanley M. Koziol leadership team; interviews with business consultant; school committee interviews; focus group with parents; interview with teachers' union.</p>	<p>April 28</p> <p>Interview with school leader; classroom observations (Ware Junior/Senior High School, Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School); team meeting; emerging themes meeting with superintendent and district leaders.</p>

Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008-2010

**Table C1: 2008-2010 Ware 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	51	NA*	49	NA*	57	NA*
Grade 3—State	56	NA*	57	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 4—District	31	19	29	26.5	34	27.5
Grade 4—State	49	48	53	50	54	50
Grade 5—District	37	29.5	58	65	57	51
Grade 5—State	61	51	63	50	63	50
Grade 6—District	69	47	48	55	61	43
Grade 6—State	67	50	66	50	69	50
Grade 7— District	63	62	73	62	65	53
Grade 7— State	69	50	70	50	72	50
Grade 8— District	73	28.5	69	36	75	29.5
Grade 8— State	75	49	78	50	78	50
Grade 10— District	65	N/A	73	19	74	25
Grade 10— State	74	N/A	81	50	78	50
All Grades— District	56	36	56	46	60	39.5
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 SGP was not calculated for grade 10 until 2008.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C2: 2008-2010 Ware Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
Mathematics**

Grade	2008		2009		2010	
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>
Grade 3—District	55	NA*	54	NA*	47	NA*
Grade 3—State	61	NA*	60	NA*	65	NA*
Grade 4—District	41	37	35	42	34	43
Grade 4—State	49	49	48	50	48	49
Grade 5—District	41	52	47	49	49	61.5
Grade 5—State	52	51	54	50	55	50
Grade 6—District	60	59	48	44	45	32
Grade 6—State	56	50	57	50	59	50
Grade 7— District	55	70	65	68	54	64
Grade 7— State	47	50	49	50	53	50
Grade 8— District	46	25	44	36	46	31
Grade 8— State	49	51	48	50	51	51
Grade 10— District	72	N/A	78	40	75	39
Grade 10— State	72	N/A	75	50	75	50
All Grades— District	53	49	52	48.5	49	47
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 SGP was not calculated for grade 10 until 2008.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School, Ware 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	43	74.2	32.0	43	74.0	41.0	49	77.6	40.0
District All Students	56	80.5	36.0	56	80.6	46.0	60	82.2	39.5
Stanley M. Koziol Low-Income Students	35	69.1	17.5	36	70.2	---	54	83.5	---
Stanley M. Koziol All Students	41	74.0	19.0	48	77.9	---	57	85.4	---

Note: Koziol is a pre-kindergarten to grade 3 school. In 2008 it also had grade 4. Median SGPs are calculated for grade 4 students but not for grade 3 students, since they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C4: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School, Ware Public Schools, and State, Compared to All Students Mathematics

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
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	39	68.8	42.0	36	67.7	44.0	40	70.5	48.0
District All Students	53	76.3	49.0	52	76.3	48.5	49	76.1	47.0
Stanley M. Koziol Low-Income Students	41	71.4	27.0	38	70.8	---	43	73.5	---
Stanley M. Koziol All Students	50	75.7	37.0	54	79.5	---	47	76.3	---

Note: Koziol is a pre-kindergarten to grade 3 school. In 2008 it also had grade 4. Median SGPs are calculated for grade 4 students but not for grade 3 students, since they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C5: Comparison of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Grade 3 Low-Income Students in Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School,
Ware Public Schools, and State
ELA**

Grade	Stanley M. Koziol Elementary	Ware	State
3	54 (65)	53 (70)	43
<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 of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Grade 3 Low-Income Students in Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School,
Ware Public Schools, and State
Mathematics**

Grade	Stanley M. Koziol Elementary	Ware	State
3	43 (65)	43 (70)	45
<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. With the direction and support of the principal and a strong school leadership team focusing on what is best for students, the Koziol staff have worked collaboratively to improve the achievement of all students, including students from low-income families.
2. The leadership of the principal, the grade-level team meetings, and the teachers ensure the implementation of the written, framework-aligned English language arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula and their horizontal alignment at Koziol. There is no process for vertical alignment of the curriculum.
3. Instruction at Koziol presents both strengths and challenges.
4. Koziol addresses the individual needs of students through the Walk to Read and Walk to Math programs.
5. Koziol has begun to develop an assessment system that regularly collects student performance data, disseminates it to staff, and uses it to identify, place, and support students in need of academic interventions.
6. Koziol provides systematic, coordinated school-wide student support services and partnerships that address the social and emotional well-being of its students.
7. Notwithstanding significant funding losses since fiscal year 2008, the Koziol principal and staff have made and put into practice a series of deliberate and thoughtful curriculum decisions that benefit students from low-income families as well as the entire student body at minimal fiscal impact.

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 superintendent has created a climate of trust in the district.
2. There are few established centralized systems that provide a strong academic direction for the district.
3. There is little evidence that the school committee uses a broad range of analytic data to be effective advocates of strong student achievement.
4. A review of classroom observations shows mixed results across the district with relatively little evidence of students using higher-order thinking, particularly at the middle- and high-school levels.
5. The district provides little systematic direction and support for curriculum development, implementation, and monitoring.
6. The district is in the very early stages of developing a comprehensive and centrally coordinated assessment system that defines, oversees, and supports implementation of aligned assessment programs and uniform practices in all its schools. Consequently, policies and priorities for the collection, analysis, and use of student performance data are largely left to each school.
7. At the time of the review, the teacher evaluation process did not provide sufficient feedback or professional development recommendations to teachers with professional status. The use of two very different summative year evaluation forms during the four-year cycle of evaluation for professional status teachers resulted in the collection of different evidence about their instructional competence.
8. Although the 2010–2012 DIP has several sections requiring a district professional development plan, none has been developed.
9. The district has had a positive impact on the social and emotional needs of its students through the establishment of Structured Learning Centers (SLCs).
10. The district’s outsourced financial management system and services are comprehensive, appropriate, and cost-effective in addressing the functional administrative and fiscal needs of the Ware schools.
11. Financial data is used for limited purposes; though regular reports are available, the data is not used to provide more insightful comparative analysis that could guide district long-term financial planning.

Recommendation Statements:

1. The district would benefit from centralized systems that provide strong academic direction.
2. The school committee should be provided with and review a broad range of academic data to inform the policy and budget decisions that they must make.
3. The Ware Public Schools should provide systematic direction and oversight for its curriculum.
4. The district should continue to provide its students with the solid instruction observed in its classrooms. However, teachers will benefit from professional development to help students take responsibility for their learning in three specific areas.
5. The district is strongly encouraged to follow through on its plans to create a comprehensive, centrally coordinated assessment system. The system should include regular, balanced formative and benchmark assessments at all schools, the results of which are continually collected and used to improve instruction, inform supports and interventions for students, and guide leaders' decisions.
6. As it aligns its evaluation system with the new Educator Evaluation Framework, 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.
7. The district should develop a multi-year professional development plan linked to the teacher evaluation process, after a comprehensive analysis of its varying professional development activities, processes, and events.
8. Koziol needs to design and establish systems to monitor the success of the programs and interventions it uses to support students.
9. Ware should design and establish systems that monitor the effectiveness of the SLCs in addressing students' social and emotional needs and improving their behavior and academic performance.
10. The business office can be more effective by including more frequent use of object and location codes information in budget and expense reports. Additionally, the office should enhance use of ESE and DOR databases to provide a better understanding of Ware's relative financial position compared with similar districts.