



Boston Public Schools
DISTRICT PLAN FOR SCHOOL INTERVENTION (DPSI)
REVIEW

September 2009

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Overview of the District Plan for School Intervention (DPSI) Review

The purpose of the eight DPSI reviews is to assess district efforts to support school intervention, including strategic decisions made to support ongoing school improvement. These reviews also seek to assess the impact of support given by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) for improvement efforts. DPSI reviews also carry out requirements for state audits of districts.¹

The review is designed around the District Plan for School Intervention (DPSI) approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in June 2008 for each of the urban school districts being reviewed. The DPSI, which serves as the guiding document to support and hold accountable Commonwealth Priority Schools (CPSs), is unique to each district and its schools. The DPSI serves as the foundation for the review, ensuring that each district's unique priorities, current improvement strategies, and key decisions are central to the review. In addition, the review considers other key documents, processes, and initiatives that have been central to the development and implementation of district intervention strategies and Department support efforts in recent years. These include, for example, the District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions, the State Review Panel report, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the district and the state.

The review places a team of contracted Department consultants in the district and its schools to collect and analyze evidence about district efforts to support school intervention, the evolution and status of school intervention and improvement strategies, and the impact of Department efforts to support the district. This evidence includes documentation provided by the district and by the Department, interviews with Department staff, and focus groups and interviews at the central office level, as well as visits to Commonwealth Priority Schools. In some districts, reviews also include visits to schools in restructuring.² While on site at schools, the review team reviews school documents, conducts focus groups, and visits classrooms.

The review places a value on engaging the district in understanding its own performance.

The DPSI review to the Boston Public Schools was conducted from April 15–16 and April 28–May 11, 2009. The DPSI review included visits to the following district schools: (K–5) Bates, (PK–5) Condon, (PK–5) Dever, (PK–5) Ellis, (PK–5) Harvard/Kent, (PK–5) Lee, (PK–5) Sumner, (9–12) Odyssey, (K–8) Eliot, (K–8) Hurley, (K–8) Mission Hill, (K–8) Tobin, (6–8) Edwards, (6–8) Frederick, (6–8) Gavin, (6–8) Irving, (6–8) King, (6–8) Lewis, (6–8) Mildred Avenue, (6–8) Wilson and (K–12) McKinley Schools.

Further information about the review and its schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

¹ See Mass. Gen. Laws c. 15, § 55A, as amended by St. 2008, c. 311, § 3, effective August 14, 2008.

² With respect to Commonwealth Priority Schools and schools in restructuring, see 603 CMR 2.00, available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html?section=all>.

Overview of Report

This report provides information on the implementation of the 2008 DPSI at both the district and school site levels. To facilitate the reader in navigating this information, the document is divided into two sections.

Section 1 contains information on the status of the district implementation of the DPSI, with information elucidated through district central office interviews, school-based interviews, classroom observations, and the review of ESE and district documentation. It contains information related to areas such as district strategic planning, analysis of student assessment and achievement data, special education and English language learner (ELL) interventions, and considers the impact of targeted assistance and other grant funding on the implementation of the DPSI.

Section 2 contains information primarily collected at the school site level from school leaders and instructional staff as well as from documents provided by the school. Information on individual schools is presented in a short report format by level (K–5, K–8, middle schools, K–12, and high schools). The team collected evidence on instructional quality from classroom observations and that evidence is included in both sections.

Section 1

Boston Public Schools – District Report

District Profile

- According to ESE data, the Boston Public School (BPS) system consists of 137 schools including 84 elementary or K-8 schools, 17 middle schools, and 36 high schools. District officials corrected that data to 143 schools during the 2008-2009 school year, changing to 137 for 2009-2010, due to closings and mergers. They did not explain the discrepancy or elaborate on at which level the number of schools reported to the Department was different. In addition, according to ESE records, BPS has six early childhood schools. Boston enrolled 55,923 students in the 2008–2009 school year. The percentage enrollment by race was as follows: 37.9 percent African American, 8.5 percent Asian, 38.1 percent Hispanic, 0.4 percent Native American, 13.3 percent White, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and 1.7 percent multi-racial, non-Hispanic.
- The tenure of the current superintendent began in late summer 2007 when the school committee ratified a five-year contract that runs through 2012.
- The superintendent implemented a number of structural, leadership, and personnel changes, beginning with replacement of the of K–12 triad structure with a categorical structure consisting of elementary schools, K–8, middle schools, high schools, and pilot schools. This change was intended to facilitate school intervention, improve the response to academic challenges, and promote teamwork. In the new organization, an academic superintendent oversees each level, often supported by an assistant academic superintendent. Five academic superintendents and four assistant academic superintendents are deployed in these new leadership roles. The superintendent also created an office of accountability and appointed a chief accountability officer responsible for school quality and monitoring and evaluating academic improvement efforts.

Demographic information on BPS from the ESE website reveals most special populations have remained relatively stable since the 2006–2007 school year with ESL, LEP and SPED populations fluctuating approximately one percent during the three-year period. At 20.5 percent, the SPED population exceeds the state rate of 17.1 percent. The percent of the population where English is not a first language of 38.1 percent exceeds the state rate of 15.4 percent for the 2008–2009 school year. The percentage of students identified as coming from low income families, or those qualifying for free or reduced lunch has been more volatile with the low income population increasing from 72.7 percent in 2006–2007 to 74.3 percent in 2008-2009, after dropping to a low of 71.4 percent in 2007–2008.

Special Populations Boston Public Schools						
	First Language Not English	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
2008–2009	38.1%	18.9%	20.5%	74.3%	65.3%	9.0%
2007–2008	37.7%	19.1%	20.1%	71.4%	61.5%	9.9%
2006–2007	38.9%	18.3%	19.7%	72.7%	64.6%	8.1%

Student Performance

In 2008, the district did not make AYP in ELA or mathematics either in the aggregate or for all subgroups. The district did make AYP in the aggregate in both ELA and mathematics in 2006 and 2007, but not for all subgroups. As a result, the district has been assigned an accountability status of “corrective action – subgroups” for both content areas.

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
			2006	2007	2008	
Boston District	ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	Corrective Action - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	Corrective Action - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	

As shown in the following table, subgroup performance was mixed on the mathematics and ELA MCAS assessments from 2006 to 2008 as measured by comparison of subgroup and aggregate CPI data .

Mathematics scores for grades 3 through 5 – All groups showed improvement from 2006 to 2008, with the White and limited English proficient (LEP) groups showing the lowest gains of around one point. Most gains were modest with the exception of the Native American groups, which showed a gain of 9.7.

ELA scores for grades 3 through 5 –The scores changed little in the aggregate and for all subgroups. The scores of the LEP subgroup increased in 2007 but decreased in 2008. The scores of the Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander subgroups improved slightly. Although a small subgroup within the district, Native Americans made the highest gains.

Mathematics scores for grades 6 through 8 – All subgroups made significant gains.

ELA scores for grades 6 through 8 – The performance of most subgroups improved slightly. The scores of the LEP, White, and Native American subgroups were relatively unchanged.

Mathematics scores for grades 9 through 12 – The scores improved significantly in the aggregate and for most subgroups. The scores of the Asian and Pacific Islander and White subgroups improved the least. The Native Americans population was too small to report.

ELA scores for grades 9 through 12 –Most subgroup scores increased significantly. The scores of the Asian and Pacific Islander and White subgroups increased the least. The Native American subgroup was too small to report.

Comparison CPI 2006 to 2008								
Grades 3– 5								
	2006	2007	2008		2006	2007	2008	
	Math	Math	Math	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008	ELA	ELA	ELA	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008
Aggregate	60.5	63.1	64.2	3.7	64.3	67.6	65.4	1.1
Lim. English Prof.	61.5	63.5	62.5	1.0	61.4	64.1	59.0	-2.4
SPED	45.8	47.3	49.2	3.4	47.5	49.0	48.0	0.5
Low Income	58.6	60.8	61.9	3.3	62.1	65.2	62.6	0.5
Afr. Am./Black	54.5	57.7	59.0	4.5	62.0	65.1	62.3	0.3
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	82.7	86.2	87.0	4.3	76.7	79.8	78.4	1.7
Hispanic	57.0	59.1	60.3	3.3	59.0	63.0	61.2	2.2
Nat. American	62.1	-	71.8	9.7	65.3	-	73.0	7.7
White	76.1	77.6	77.3	1.2	78.6	81.0	78.2	-0.4
Grades 6– 8								
	2006	2007	2008		2006	2007	2008	
	Math	Math	Math	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008	ELA	ELA	ELA	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008
Aggregate	51.3	55.9	58.7	7.4	73.3	75.2	76.0	2.7
Lim. English Prof.	41.8	45.8	47.8	6.0	56.9	57.1	57.9	1.0
SPED	33.2	36.5	38.1	4.9	51.5	53.2	54.4	2.9
Low Income	48.3	52.8	55.1	6.8	70.4	72.6	73.4	3.0
Afr. Am./Black	43.7	47.9	50.5	6.8	69.4	71.4	72.3	2.9
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	81.4	84.7	86.8	5.4	85.3	86.6	88.7	3.4
Hispanic	46.2	51.3	53.8	7.6	68.1	71.3	72.3	4.2
Nat. American	46.0	-	49.1	3.1	74.0	-	74.6	0.6
White	68.5	73.0	76.2	7.7	88.3	88.6	88.0	-0.3
Grades 9–12								
	2006	2007	2008		2006	2007	2008	
	Math	Math	Math	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008	ELA	ELA	ELA	Change in CPI 2006 to 2008
Aggregate	70.3	76.6	79.3	9.0	73.1	78.1	82.3	9.2
Lim. English Prof.	57.4	67.8	71.6	14.2	47.1	58.8	63.5	16.4
SPED	46.9	53.6	57.5	10.6	49.8	56.8	64.5	14.7
Low Income	67.9	75.4	78.2	10.3	69.7	75.9	80.7	11.0
Afr. Am./Black	62.0	70.7	72.2	10.2	68.0	73.4	78.4	10.4
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	95.4	95.4	96.4	1.0	89.4	91.0	92.0	2.6
Hispanic	64.6	73.1	77.1	12.5	66.2	74.4	79.0	12.8
Nat. American	73.4	-	-	-	77.4	-	-	-
White	86.8	86.8	90.4	3.6	88.4	89.2	92.4	4.0

Key Question 1: What capacity to support school intervention efforts has the district demonstrated to date? To what extent have these efforts impacted student achievement?

Since her hiring in 2007, the Boston superintendent implemented a major reorganization at the district and school levels, including the creation of new leadership positions, a new district leadership structure, and the merging of 12 schools to form seven K–8 schools. New programs were implemented, most significantly the superintendent’s Acceleration Agenda that outlines a series of district goals and programs to improve student academic performance.

Two primary district documents, the DPSI and the Memorandum of Understanding for Targeted Assistance (MOU), describe academic improvement intervention goals for the districts’ underperforming schools. The DPSI is a guiding document, while the MOU is an operational document outlining targeted assistance and funding from ESE for priority schools. Boston integrates the intervention strategies described in these documents with other district and whole school improvement initiatives intended to increase the achievement of all students.

DPSI

In the DPSI, the district sets forth the following four strategies for promoting high quality instruction:

1. Develop and implement a system-wide approach to providing academic interventions and safety nets in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics during and after school;
2. Increase supports for administrators with a single shared theory of action and approach to school leader development, assignment, support and evaluation;
3. Prioritize supports to teachers and administrators to strengthen their instruction and support of English language learners (ELL); and
4. Create a shared vision - and ownership of - a redesigned special education system for the Boston Public Schools.

Each of these strategies has associated action steps detailing the district’s steps towards implementation of the plan. The DPSI serves as a foundational intervention document. The DPSI also includes actions steps for the 21 schools that serve as the basis of the school reports in section 2. The district supplemented the DPSI with plans for supporting CPSs in addressing the needs of ELL and special education populations, as recommended by the May 2008 State Review Panel and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

MOU

The MOU serves as the operational intervention document and describes the “shared theory of action,” mentioned as one of the four DPSI strategies. The primary focus within the district is not solely on improving teaching and learning in the 21 CPSs included in the 2008 DPSI, but rather on improving student achievement in all schools. Boston is implementing reform strategies across the whole district because of an anticipated increase in the number of schools designated as priority schools.

After discussions regarding the content of the 2009 MOU, the district and ESE agreed on the additional Title I assistance to implement the following interventions:

1. Strengthening literacy instruction;
2. Using data for accountability and learning;
3. Improving supports for ELL;
4. Investing in the development and supervision of principals and headmasters; and
5. Restructuring elementary and middle schools to improve school quality.

The district has taken steps to implement the key priorities of the DPSI and the MOU at the district level and in the district's priority schools. Evidence from interviews and documents showed that district leaders developed strategies and initiatives to implement the priorities in the DPSI to improve learning and teaching in the 21 CPSs.

Three of the DPSI priorities informed the development of the MOU: system-wide academic interventions and safety nets in ELA and mathematics; support and leadership development for administrators; and stronger support for teachers and administrators who work with ELL students. The fourth priority, a shared vision and ownership of a redesigned special education system, was addressed by the district, but not included in the MOU. While the two documents are not perfectly aligned, the team cross-walked the DPSI and the MOU and found a number of common intervention strategies.

Findings

The superintendent created a shared vision for excellence through her Acceleration Agenda and communicated this vision to stakeholders.

The superintendent's Acceleration Agenda (September 2008) outlined eight pathways to achieve academic excellence. These pathways, represented as goals are:

- students will be able to read by the end of grade 1,
- students will be able to read to learn in grade 3,
- students will be able to write skillfully and analytically by grade 7,
- expand enrollment in Algebra I in grade 8,
- students will be proficient in MCAS and on track to graduation by the end of grade 10,
- students will achieve combined SAT I scores of 1650,
- ensure academic language mastery and fluency for English Language Learners, and
- all students college ready and success-bound by graduation.

The superintendent and the executive team set yearly benchmarks through 2012 to measure and assess progress toward meeting these goals. The eight pathways to excellence were particularly relevant to the CPSs and aligned with the priorities described in the MOU. In interviews, the team heard evidence that district and school leaders were familiar with the Acceleration Agenda.

The FY09 budget included funding to support this agenda, including \$2.8 million for the Graduation for All program, supporting dropout prevention; \$500,000 for a new pre-K through 12 literacy curriculum; and \$300,000 in support of a five-year initiative to double the number of Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings.

The district has undergone restructuring in order to better support school improvement initiatives.

BPS created a new accountability structure consisting of four levels: elementary schools, K–8 schools, middle schools, high schools, and pilot schools. The superintendent implemented this realignment to improve the district response to academic challenges and to promote and value teamwork. This new alignment of schools replaced the former K–12 triad structure, with each triad headed by a deputy superintendent. In the new structure, an academic superintendent oversees each level, often supported by an assistant academic superintendent. The district has also created an office of accountability and appointed a director responsible for developing definitions and benchmarks of school quality as well as monitoring, evaluating, and communicating about academic improvement efforts with all relevant stakeholders.

The superintendent created several new academic leadership positions and reassigned responsibilities among these and existing positions. A new chief academic officer is focused on oversight of the following: academic superintendents, professional development, ELL, curriculum & instruction, and student support services. The new director of literacy focuses on the summer literacy academy, professional development in ELA, alignment of curriculum standards, and implementation of the new K–12 literacy plan. A new ELL director was scheduled to join the leadership team before the close of the 2009 school year. In addition, the district integrated the office of professional development into the central office to better align professional development programs with school improvement efforts.

Other district-based restructuring included reorganization of the special education department, and the appointment of a new director who reports directly to the superintendent. Boston created a Newcomers Academy to support newly enrolled students whose first language is not English. In addition, the district replaced the Family and Community Engagement Office with a new Family and Student Engagement Office to strengthen links to families, family advocacy groups, and students. Interviewees stated that the district strengthened partnerships with community-based organizations, city agencies, and institutions to address students’ physical, social, and mental health needs more fully.

The district provided accessible professional development in both literacy and mathematics instruction to teachers and leaders in the 21 CPSs. The district did not consistently implement tutoring across the CPSs, and the coaching program is at risk.

General professional development – The district offered professional development aligned with its priorities to improve student achievement in ELA and mathematics. Teachers and school leaders could easily access and register for courses and workshops on the MyBPS website. Teachers across the district could also enroll in professional development courses on reading intervention strategies such as Lindamood-Bell and Wilson Reading at Wheelock College.

Tutoring – Although district leaders stated that tutoring in literacy and mathematics was a worthy intervention goal highlighted in the Essential Conditions for underperforming districts and schools, school leaders told the team that tutoring had not yet been implemented systematically in many schools. Some schools had citizen reading tutors, citizens who read with children; or volunteer readers from non-profit agencies, while others had no tutors. Interviewees indicated that schools varied in the degree of encouragement they provided to families to participate in supplemental educational services (SES) after school tutoring services.

Professional development to support ELL – The district provided professional development in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and Four Category training for teachers and school leaders to better support ELL students and to certify teachers to administer and evaluate MELA-O, MEPA and other ESL assessments. Implementation was uneven across the district and at some CPSs. Specifically, at some CPS schools most or all teachers had reached category four, while at others many teachers were still completing category two training. The district encouraged teachers who completed category four to seek ESL certification and become trainers. Boston had intended to make ESL and SEI training mandatory for all teachers who work with ELL students by September 2009, but lacked the funds to realize this goal. However, interviewees told the team that the district would use federal stimulus funds to train teachers to become ESL certified under a partnership with Boston College. Also, Massachusetts English Language Teachers (MELT) training had been provided by grants from ESE for the prior four years, resulting in 30 teachers being trained in ELL techniques per year.

Coaching –The coaching program, once a mainstay of the instructional improvement program at BPS, had not been completely implemented for school year 2008–2009, and is at risk for school year 2009–2010 due to budgetary restrictions. Coaching positions were unfilled in some CPSs while others shared coaches in mathematics and/or ELA. Interviewees stated that many coaching positions are unfunded for the 2009–2010 school year and the program may not continue. According to the Essential Conditions for reforming CPSs, each school must maintain two full-time coaches, one for mathematics and one for literacy/ELA. Boston did not meet this requirement for the 2008–2009 school year, and it appears that coaches will exist minimally, if at all, for the 2009–2010 school year.

The district’s improvement efforts did not provide significantly greater resources or support for the 21 CPSs other than priority for district-wide leadership professional development and some grant funding. District improvement efforts were oriented toward all schools.

Twenty-one CPSs were identified in the 2008 school year because they failed to meet AYP requirements in the federal No Child Left Behind law. In the 2009 school year, there were 55 Boston CPSs. Interviewees expected the number to increase to nearly 80 CPSs in the 2010 school year.

According to evidence from interviews and a review of documents, the district made a strategic decision to provide the same resources to all of its CPSs. These resources were essentially the same as those provided to all district schools with certain additions. For example, principals in the 21 CPSs had early access to the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training offered by ESE, although not all of them chose to participate. Currently, principals who participate in NISL training attend with their academic superintendents.

Boston focused categorical grants such as Silber reading, Reading First and Secondary Reading on the CPSs. In addition, the district allocated approximately \$11,800 from Title I funds included in the MOU to each of the 55 CPSs during the 2009 school year to implement interventions in the MOU; ESE officials indicated that this use of the \$11,800 was inconsistent with the terms agreed upon in the MOU. In interviews with the team, academic superintendents and school leaders stated that the schools utilized funds to provide professional development, materials, supplies, and tutors, and to balance the school budget. Some academic superintendents discussed or approved individual schools’ plans to allocate CPS funds, while others did not.

The district and ESE supported administrators in the CPSs with a number of key leadership professional development initiatives aligned with improvement priorities and designed to deepen the practice of instructional leadership.

Some CPS principals participated in the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training offered by ESE. The participating principals praised the effectiveness of NISL training in strengthening their instructional and strategic leadership.

Most of the 21 CPS principals attended an August 2008 summer professional development program on the key ideas developed by the Public Education Leadership Program (PELP) offered by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and The Harvard Business School. As a result, some CPS principals and academic superintendents began to use the PELP coherence framework to plan for continuous improvement. They initiated learning walks, called “instructional rounds,” modeled after medical rounds. The objective was to conduct a root cause analysis to better define and understand problems of practice, followed by planning a cycle of inquiry to guide improvement.

In another initiative, principals and headmasters from across the district met monthly with academic superintendents in network meetings to support school improvement. In these sessions, academic superintendents reviewed progress on school improvement efforts and explored data analysis and implementation of concepts from the PELP program such as identifying and resolving problems of practice. In addition, the principals and headmasters met monthly with the superintendent, although interviewees stated that the superintendent’s presence was often limited.

New principals in CPSs had the opportunity to work with a mentor from within or outside of the BPS system in order to help them adjust to their new role and responsibilities and to support their growth and development. In addition, the district’s research and evaluation office provided training for administrators on the analysis and use of data. This office was also available to support individual schools in the collection and use of data at the request of the school.

The district has taken some steps to implement the DPSI for ELL students, with the goal of increasing its capacity to deliver services to support ELL students’ achievement. However, the district lacks a sufficient number of certified and trained ESL teachers.

The district has put substantial effort into improving the ELL program. Boston has added an ELL director and provided professional development in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and Four Category training for teachers and school leaders in order to better support ELL students and to certify teachers to administer and evaluate the MELA-O, the MEPA, and other ESL assessments.

Since 40 percent of district ELL students opt out of its Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and Title III money was withheld until the second half of the school year, the district needed to improve the services provided to these students through the general education program. Withholding of the Title III funds was due to the submission of the application form by the district in November of 2008, and ESE approval in December 2008. Mandatory professional development for ESL and SEI teachers in the 21 CPSs was scheduled to take place by September 2008. While this goal was not fulfilled, the team found during school visits that school-based training for principals and teachers in all four categories was scheduled or underway in some of the 21 CPSs.

The district was unable to hire additional ESL teachers for 2009 for budgetary reasons, although it has made progress with its overall plan to assign more ESL certified teachers to the CPSs. During the 2008-2009 school year, 30 teachers from some of the 55 CPSs who had completed the four categories of training were receiving ESL certification through a joint program between the district and Boston College. As a result, 30 schools will have an additional certified ESL teacher for 2010, increasing the capacity of these schools to address ELL student needs. In addition, the district has scheduled a new cohort to begin similar training during the 2009–2010 school year.

Boston created a Newcomers Academy for high school students arriving during the school year who are unable to speak English. According to information provided by the district, this program was designed to serve up to 250 Boston residents between the ages of 14 and 18 who arrive in the United States during the school year. Enrollees must have limited English proficiency and academic skills in their primary language. The Newcomer Academy only had an enrollment of 20 students at the time of the site visit. In addition, the district is providing better screening for new ELL students in grades 8 through 12 at the newly established assessment center, and plans to extend these services to students in other grades. In the summer of 2008, the district offered Fast Forward, an intensive summer program, to middle school ELL students drawn from CPSs and staffed by CPS teachers. Boston has scheduled a similar program for the summer of 2009. Finally, in 2008–2009, the district assigned a language assessment team (LAT) facilitator to each school with responsibility for monitoring and supporting ELL students.

The district has implemented the DPSI for special education students, improving its capacity to provide services to special education students in CPSs and across the district through a redesigned special education delivery system.

Boston special education students have not made AYP for several years. During this time, special education services did not operate under an integrated services delivery model and special education was not an integral part of the general education program. In the 2007–2008 school year 36.9 percent of the district’s special education students graduated compared to 64 percent statewide. In the same year the dropout rate was 9.4 percent compared to a state rate of 5.5 percent, according to information on the ESE website.

The office of special education, located in Unified Student Services and Support Services, was separate from other instructional services. District-level administrators recognized that a disproportionately high number of special education students were enrolled in substantially separate classrooms or out-of-district programs. According to one leader, Boston lacked an overall regular education plan placing responsibility for the education of special education students under the general education program and requiring more accountability for student outcomes at the academic superintendent level. These weaknesses prompted the district to redesign the special education delivery system. The chief academic officer stated that the ESE was an active partner in helping the district make special education changes and worked with the district to create a shared vision.

To address the separateness of the program, the superintendent created a new office of special education whose director reported directly to the superintendent and was a member of the district’s senior leadership team. The special education director stated that because she was included on the senior leadership team collaborative planning to achieve literacy for all students, including special education students, had increased. According to interviewees, more work was

needed to implement an integrated services model. Some academic superintendents stated that, while the new leadership structure was in place, they had yet to deal with special education issues. The special education director also took action to create a special education executive board to replace the prior SPED PAC, which had dissolved. The board meets monthly with parents and worked with the Mayor's office on the Mayor's First Summit on Autism.

Boston contracted for a program audit by the Council of the Great City Schools in order to gain the broadest possible perspective for redesigning special education by incorporating the most effective practices for urban special education programs. The audit was to include recommendations, and the district based its 2009–2010 budget requests on the audit's preliminary findings.

The district has taken steps to decrease substantially separate placements.

According to the special education director, the Council of Great City Schools audit found that a disproportionately high number of Boston special education students were enrolled in substantially separate programs, and that the general education program did not have responsibility for the education of students with disabilities. Data on the ESE website showed that 42 percent of the special education students were enrolled in substantially separate classrooms in the 2007–2008 school year.

According to interviewees, the district needed to improve capacity in three areas in order to decrease the number of students enrolled in substantially separate programs. Specifically, general education teachers needed to address the learning needs of regular education students in regular education settings as a first recourse rather than making immediate referrals to special education. Teams are needed to make better decisions about special education eligibility and the placement of students determined to have special needs, and more general education teachers are needed to provide for more special education students to be included in the mainstream classrooms.

The newly appointed director of special education stated that, because schools lacked support services for struggling students in the regular education program, referrals to special education were frequently the only option for providing them services. Plans were underway to use federal stimulus funds to provide training during the summer of 2009 to increase the capacity of regular education teachers to intervene with struggling students in regular education settings and to assume responsibility for identified special education students in mainstream settings. According to interviewees, this training will be initiated first in the CPSs.

In 2008–2009, Boston provided each school with an evaluation team facilitator (ETF) to manage and monitor special education eligibility determinations. The director of special education provided training regularly for all ETFs, including the ETFs for the CPSs, on the eligibility guidelines for separate classrooms.

The district formative assessment and student information data systems are outdated. The district has submitted a proposal to the city of Boston to acquire with stimulus funds a system of formative assessments for elementary and secondary students, a new student information system, and an upgrade of the technology infrastructure.

Information provided by the district in interviews showed that the overall district data system is fragmented, lacks coherence, and is not in a condition that makes sense for contemporary use. The district has access to the ESE data warehouse and utilizes MyBPS, a local student information system that is now obsolete. MyBPS houses demographic and MCAS test data;

however, the system lacks an effective link between the district and its schools. One interviewee stated that the school data systems are idiosyncratic. Some schools have better systems because the principal is proactive or has access to personnel, parents, or a partner organization with expertise in data collection and/or analysis. Other schools have little capacity for data collection and analysis. At present, student achievement and assessment data are not easily accessible and it is difficult to disaggregate the data. Upon request, district data personnel will produce reports on student progress for schools as well as for district officials, but this was not a standardized or systematic process.

The assistant superintendent for research, assessment, and evaluation joined the district less than a year ago. This department provides data analysis and reports to the leadership team. Data are evaluated for patterns and problems and passing rates versus proficiency rates to provide a quick snapshot of student and school performance. In 2008–2009, the district used data to develop baseline goals for each school. Data analysis support and professional development are available to school leaders upon request.

Principals and teachers in focus groups told the team that formative assessments are in place in mathematics. Both the TERC Investigations program at the elementary level and the Connected Mathematics Program (CMP) at the middle school level have end of unit, mid-year, and final assessments that are administered and scored by the district. Some schools also have added additional in-house formative assessments used for grouping students and informing instruction. Teachers in focus groups described using data to identify trends and patterns in the data, to look for problems of practice and to propose strategies to address the issues. MCAS data are also used to modify curricula.

For ELA, the district created common writing prompts, and most schools have created rubrics for student writing. Many teachers reported using a variety of formative literacy assessments to group students, identify problems of practice, and to differentiate instruction. Teachers, leaders, and coaches also reported using MCAS data to adjust curricular documents.

The ELL DPSI lists the development of a formative assessment system for ELL as a goal. The acting director of ELL told the team that the MEPA and the MELA-O provided placement information, but went on to say that the district needed more detailed formative assessment information to inform instruction for ELL students. According to the ELL DPSI, the district had piloted formative assessments for ELL students in grades 6–12 during the 2008–2009 school year.

Information included in a proposal to the city of Boston for stimulus funds stated that the schools use a “fractured system of tests that cannot provide useful information to teachers in a timely manner to improve instruction.” The district proposes to use stimulus money under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to help fund an improved student assessment and information system, including formative assessments for grades K2 through 10. Administrators told the team that teachers needed training to use assessments effectively, and Boston plans to offer teachers professional development on the use of assessment data in conjunction with implementation of the new data warehouse system.

Although the district created new leadership roles and a new administrative structure, it has not yet implemented a standardized system to monitor school performance and instruction.

The BPS administrative structure was reorganized in 2008 to increase district level academic supervision of the schools. The new structure modifies the leadership structure from three deputy superintendents to five academic superintendents and four assistants. The academic superintendents stated that they meet with principals and try to maximize their time in schools, but CPS principals interviewed by the team said that school visits by academic superintendents ranged from once a month to once a year. Principals met as a group with their academic superintendent regularly, and could contact them for guidance as needed. The superintendent requires each school to have an action plan with specific targets and benchmarks. These plans are used to guide academic superintendents' meetings and activities with principals and in the schools.

The district has no formal, system-wide classroom observation protocol in place for principals and administrators to use while observing classrooms, other than those required by the formal statutory evaluation process. The ESE engaged in assistance with the district and offered the Learning Walks protocol through the MOU process. BPS did not feel that Learning Walks were a form of assistance it wished to pursue. However, individual academic superintendents do have their own protocols, and some principals in the CPSs visited by team members reported using similar protocols in their buildings. The interim ELL director told the team that the ELL department developed its own learning walk protocol, and piloted it last year. It continues to be under revision.

District leaders stated that they are working on strategies for instructional rounds with a consultant as part of the PELP process. The district is reviewing instructional coherence at the schools, and according to initial data, there is more instructional coherence and organizational efficacy at the "strongest" CPSs. Many teachers have participated in peer-to-peer learning walks and the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) process activities conducted by mathematics and ELA coaches and other colleagues. In interviews, teachers said that they found the subsequent discussions of problems of practice and effective teaching strategies helpful.

As part of the superintendent's Acceleration Agenda literacy initiative, the district implemented Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) K–2 in the 2008-2009 school year.

Lack of student assessment and achievement data for grades K–2 hindered the efforts of district and school leaders and teachers in making effective, data-based decisions about changes in the curriculum, instructional modifications, and appropriate intervention strategies. Furthermore, a review of a BPS document entitled *Boston Public Schools Charting the Course to Excellence: Problem Statements Performance History Performance Targets Revised* (January 2009), showed that there is currently no common screening instrument for entering kindergarten students and no district wide literacy assessment at grade 1.

The superintendent and other district leaders told the team that they did not want to wait until the results of the grade 3 MCAS tests were available to make decisions about changing curricula, modifying instruction or initiating interventions for students. As a result, the district instituted the use of DIBELS in CPSs and across the district in 2008–2009 as part of the superintendent's Acceleration Agenda literacy initiative.

Through interviews with principals and teachers in focus groups, the review team found that CPSs had been given priority for implementation of the grades K–2 literacy initiative. This initiative allows teachers to check student’s phonemic awareness and track their progress. In most CPSs, teachers used Palm Pilots to record data from the DIBELS and the Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) tests. This data was used to inform decisions about the grouping and instruction and to help develop intervention strategies.

The implementation of interventions and safety nets across district schools is inconsistent.

The district has a number of interventions in place; however, implementation and support for these programs varies among CPSs. Interviewees indicated that sometimes schools did not place students in appropriate intervention settings, teachers still needed training in using intervention curricula, and the schools needed additional materials to support the implementation of the interventions. Teachers at elementary schools implemented a variety of ELA intervention strategies and safety nets during and after school such as A-Z Read, Read 180, and Reading Recovery. The district has completed planning for a five-week summer literacy academy in summer 2009 for first and second graders who were not meeting grade-appropriate benchmarks. Interviewees stated that the district would provide professional development for teachers who will teach in the summer reading academy and these teachers would then become trainers in their schools. In addition, there appeared to be many more interventions and safety nets in ELA than in mathematics.

Intervention programs in mathematics were more limited than those for ELA. Programs intended to improve student performance in mathematics included the anticipated addition of more Algebra 1 classes for grade 8 students for the 2010 school year, district mathematics professional development, mathematics coaches (eliminated for 2010), and a range of curriculum based assessments as well as mid and end of year assessments. Limited district-wide mathematics student support programs are in place and the MOU does not identify any action steps intended to target mathematics performance. After school tutoring in both ELA and mathematics was provided through the SES program.

Schools did not always ease the placement of students in appropriate interventions, and teachers sometimes did not have adequate training in using interventions and safety nets. Communication with parents about opportunities available for their children was inconsistent across schools. With more consistency and availability of safety nets and interventions in ELA and mathematics, students would have the support necessary to improve their academic performance.

To improve school quality and student achievement, the district is continuing to reorganize its schools. Underperforming elementary or middle schools in need of restructuring or corrective action are merging with non – CPSs to form new K–8 schools.

The district will merge or restructure twelve CPSs to form seven K–8 schools and one new high school. The district has chosen to pursue this course to promote vertical alignment within the curriculum, minimize the number of transitions between schools for students, strengthen the relationships between families and schools to promote parental support, and increase shared ownership of student performance across the grades K through 8 continuum. The district based merger recommendations on a review of facility, program, and assessment data. To provide financial assistance for the merger process, the ESE included \$144,000 in targeted assistance in

the 2009 MOU. The district distributed \$12,000 to the schools to plan for the change in leadership and merging of staff, and to develop Whole School Improvement Plans (WSIPs) for each new K–8 school. As schools merge, and student and teacher mobility increases, it will be more difficult to track the progress of merging and closing CPSs. It will be important for the district to develop data analysis methodologies that distinguish underperforming students from underperforming schools.

Two hundred and ninety-five random observations of classrooms at the 21 schools included in the DPSI showed that partial or solid evidence of effective instructional design and delivery was evident in 69 percent of the observations at the elementary level, 61 percent of the observations at the middle school level, and 53 percent of the observations at the high school level.

During the site visit, team members observed 295 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 17 characteristics reflected in ESE SY 2008–09 Support Learning Walk Characteristics Continuum, grouped into three categories: Organization of the Classroom; Instructional Design and Delivery; and Student Ownership of Learning. Team members recorded whether evidence related to examples of practice for each characteristic was solid, partial or not observed for each standard within the three categories during their time spent in the classroom. Typically, team members observed classroom instruction for approximately 20 minutes at the beginning, middle, or end of class. Results from the observations were represented as percentages calculated by summing the number of observations receiving a partially observed or solid rating for each characteristic in each category and dividing this number by the total number of observations rated in that category, to include the three ratings levels: not observed, partially observed and solid.

Observations were conducted at the 21 schools included in the 2008 DPSI as follows: 140 at the elementary level, 127 at the middle school level, and 28 at the high school level. Team members observed 128 ELA classrooms, 117 mathematics classrooms, 29 science classrooms, 12 social studies classrooms, and 8 classrooms of other subjects.

Organization of Classroom is the category that refers to the first three characteristics including classroom climate, the presence of learning objectives, and how the teacher maximizes the use of classroom time. Team members observed the tone of the classroom as well as the behavior of students, and whether the teacher maintained order and structure. Team members also looked for verbal or written reference to learning objectives or goals for the class. Team members observed levels of student engagement and the pace of the class as well as the smoothness of transitions. Partial or solid evidence of the characteristics of an organized classroom was evident in 88 percent of the observations at the elementary level, 84 percent at the middle school level, and 63 percent at the high school level.

Instructional Design and Delivery is the category that includes 12 characteristics, numbered four through 15, oriented toward the quality of teaching and learning. Team members observed areas such as levels of teacher content knowledge, instructional techniques, depth of student questioning, pacing of the lesson, differentiation of instruction, in class assessment, and whether opportunities were provided for students to apply their knowledge. Instructional design and delivery was the largest category reviewed by team members with almost 2000 instances of partial or solid evidence observed across the 12 characteristics. Examples of when effective instructional practice is considered evident include teacher implementation of instructional

strategies that activate prior knowledge, students drawing on existing knowledge to inform their learning, teacher response to a students' ability and or individual needs, or when a teacher uses varied instructional strategies to target learning objectives. Partial or solid evidence of the characteristics of instructional design and delivery was evident in 69 percent of the observations at the elementary level, 61 percent at the middle school level, and 53 percent at the high school level.

Among the highest rated characteristics were: "Instruction includes a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling" – 80 percent of the time at the 21 schools; "The students have opportunities to apply new knowledge and content is embedded in the lesson" – 70 percent of the time in the 21 schools; and "Students articulate thinking and learning" – 64 percent of the time in the 21 schools. An example of one of the lower rated characteristics was the limited evidence of students articulating thinking and reasoning.

Student Ownership of Learning includes two characteristics, numbers 16 and 17, that refer to whether the student can explain routines, procedures, and processes that help their thinking and learning. Does the teacher lay out routines and can the student explain them? Can students describe the activity they are engaged in? Can students explain their work? Partial or solid evidence of the characteristics of student ownership of learning was evident in 34 percent of the observations at the elementary level, and 29 percent at the middle school level. Examples of the characteristics associated with student ownership of learning were not observed at the high school and were limited at the elementary and middle school level because of time constraints and limited data.

Eighteen of 21 schools in the 2008 DPSI followed through on the DPSI by implementing programs, initiatives, and practices supporting intervention efforts. However, conditions supporting student achievement vary in schools and the district lacks an effective monitoring system for measuring the success of the implementation of DPSI initiatives.

Team members visited the 21 CPSs, interviewing school leaders and teachers and conducting 295 classroom observations. Following the visits, team members wrote school reports, included in the second section of the general report. Team challenges included determining the implementation status of the DPSI action steps and evaluating whether conditions were present to improve student achievement. School reports inform that school leaders and teachers have had some success implementing action steps, but, because teams only spent one day at each school, they were unable to determine with certainty that conditions were consistently in place to support student achievement. The reports do include examples of programs, initiatives, and practices that support the implementation of action steps and expand the capacity of the school to support student achievement.

Despite some realization of action steps, the district lacks a process to measure success of the DPSI implementation at the district and school levels. Additionally, programs, initiatives, and practices supporting student achievement vary among schools. However, the district has implemented procedures, using academic administrators, to monitor execution of school-based initiatives. After determining at a summer retreat that the schools had at least 163 initiatives in place—some connected to goals some not—the superintendent met with her leadership team and principals to prioritize what was really important and would improve teaching and learning.

Many schools provided specific information of their success implementing action steps. For example, the Joseph Lee Elementary School successfully implemented an inquiry process to examine assessment data, later using the data analysis to target instruction. At the Eliot

Elementary School, support for special education and ELL students was increased. Other schools had less success. For example, at the Patrick F. Gavin Middle School, action steps were not fully implemented because they were oriented toward non-academic interventions that school leaders had limited control over, such as hiring and funding. A number of school leaders commented on problems associated with selecting teachers from the “excess” pool, which prevented them, in many cases, from hiring the best candidates. This policy appears in conflict with an Instructional Leadership (1) essential condition for priority schools that states: “Principals of Commonwealth Priority Schools have authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority.” In the *2007–2008 District Leadership Report on the Ten Conditions*, the district notes, “The principals and headmasters hire and assign each teacher in his or her building in accordance with existing collective bargaining agreements. Until this year, these provisions have allowed principals and headmasters to openly post positions and hire the best teacher available without regard to seniority. It is our hope that with improving fiscal conditions these flexibilities will be restored.”

During school visits, team members observed other conditions that might affect the ability of schools to support student achievement. For example, at the Gavin Middle School, classroom observation data showed substantial evidence of characteristics conflicting with positive learning environments. In nine of 14 classrooms visited on one day, the team found limited evidence of respectful behaviors, tone, and discourse. Additional issues that might affect conditions supporting student achievement included: inconsistent common planning times, late assignments of students and teachers (particularly at merged or closed schools), disparate collaborations and partnerships among schools, and insufficient dual language professional development for teachers at some schools transforming to dual language schools.

Key Question 2: To what extent has the work of the Department impacted and supported the district in implementing improvement initiatives?

To assess the impact of the support for improvement efforts provided by the ESE, the team interviewed ESE and district personnel responsible for assessing the need for specific assistance as well as ESE and district personnel who provided, coordinated, or evaluated specific support or were in a position to comment on the impact of the support on district improvement efforts.

The team reviewed two memoranda of understanding (MOU) from the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, which described the targeted assistance ESE would provide, including spreadsheets which displayed funding amounts, activities, deliverables, and benchmarks. To evaluate grants and targeted assistance not included in the MOU, the team reviewed a spreadsheet entitled ESE Support to Boston SY 08–09, which displayed grant and other assistance provided by the ESE in the 2008–2009 school year specifically related to the strategies included in the DPSI.

Findings

The ESE provided limited targeted assistance specifically related to intervention strategies in the DPSI. Most 2008–2009 school year assistance was in the form of supplemental Title I funding for interventions or initiatives identified in the MOU.

Information provided in interviews with ESE and district staff revealed that ESE provided limited targeted assistance to the 21 CPSs. A review of targeted assistance provided in the 2008–2009 school year showed that most support was provided through additional Title I funding of interventions or initiatives in the MOU, and not direct assistance provided to the district by ESE staff related to the DPSI. One exception was leadership training. The ESE provided professional development for school leaders through the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL). Leaders in CPSs received priority enrollment in the program, but not all leaders of CPSs participated in the training. According to the chief accountability officer, “NISL has been successful and has found a niche in the district.”

Support was not exclusive to the priority schools identified in the DPSI. For example, the ESE is funding ELL intervention materials for all priority schools, and is funding summer academic programs for ELL students from all schools. ESE funded professional development in reading and writing instruction for BPS teachers in non-CPS middle and high schools, and, as mentioned before, collaborated with the district to provide NISL training for all school leaders. Other examples of support the ESE provided in SY 2008–2009 that was available to non-CPSs included Reading First, Silber, and Secondary Reading grants, and MELA-O and MEPA training.

The MOU contained information regarding agreements and commitments that elaborated on ESE’s “open lines of communication with the BPS office of accountability, the academic superintendents, and the chief academic officer through regular on-site visits, conference calls, and e-mails.” The section also contained information that the ESE team would be available 1–2 days per week to provide targeted assistance and that a work plan for assistance would be negotiated with district leaders. Academic superintendents as well as school principals told the review team that visits to the district and schools by ESE staff did not take place this year, but they noted that during the previous year, the visits by ESE had occurred “quite often.”

There was not a coordinated process (MOU) in place between the ESE and the district prior to the beginning of the school year to develop, fund, and implement targeted assistance interventions.

The district attributed the lack of a well-coordinated process for determining appropriate and reasonable targeted assistance between the district and ESE to the fact that the district and ESE were both going through reorganizations. Because of the reorganization, the district lacked the capacity to plan, support, and implement intervention strategies included in the MOU and the DPSI. As a result, there was limited ESE support in 2009 because the district and the Department could not concur on what targeted assistance would be most useful to the district.

Most district and school leaders acknowledged in interviews that the ESE had an “attitude of wanting to be helpful.” The district acknowledged that because of budgetary and staffing restrictions, the ESE does not have the capacity to help them in the manner they require. According to the chief academic officer, the district needs “big things” and with limited ESE staff assigned to targeted assistance, these needs “cannot be met.”

In addition, the team interviewed many leaders who related that the ESE was proposing support that did not align with district reform plans and the ESE and the district were not in “sync” regarding the type of supports needed. Specific examples included district plans for assistance with reading (excluding Reading First) at the early primary level as well as addressing lack of improvement in grade 3 assessment scores, credit recovery in three schools, grade 6 transition, algebra for eighth graders, and ELL and SPED problems.

Information provided to the team by the ESE showed that the ESE and the BPS held two meetings in October 2008 to reflect on targeted assistance provided in the prior school year and to discuss support for the following year. At the time, the district expressed interest in developing inquiry-based teams, a key strategy for their school improvement work. Because the district was in the early stages of implementing the inquiry model, it queried ESE on how it could be of assistance.

The ESE did provide the district with support options, such as delivering ESE data warehouse training, supporting curriculum leaders with planning for principals, and collaborating with the district to monitor instruction at CPSs using the ESE learning walk tool. When meetings and conversations were held with the ESE to determine the interventions in the MOU for 2008–2009, the district was not in favor of continuing the learning walks, indicating that more district wide targeted assistance was needed, such as assistance with identifying curriculum strategies to improve the results of tiered intervention strategies for K–3 readers. The district did not believe that what the ESE was offering was what the district needed.

The development and implementation of the funding and support included in the MOU for the 2008–2009 school year was delayed due to a reorganization of district central office personnel, a redrafting of MOU benchmarks, and the inability of the ESE and the district, despite efforts by both, to concur on targeted assistance interventions in a timely manner.

Information provided by ESE and district interviewees indicated that agreement between the district and the ESE on the components and benchmarks of the 2009 MOU was delayed because the district was in the process of a major reorganization and did not have the capacity to focus on developing or implementing intervention plans. This led to sporadic discussions between the district and the ESE. For accountability purposes, the ESE required that the district develop

measurable MOU benchmarks before funds would be released. Because of the delay, CPSs did not receive the additional Title I funding included in the MOU until well into the second half of the school year, which delayed the implementation of targeted assistance interventions for most schools. According to a district interviewee, the ESE did not release funds until an agreement was in place.

In FY09 the ESE provided approximately \$1.4 million to the district in school improvement grants for training for staff in data driven intervention methods, the reorganization and merger of 12 CPSs with seven non-CPSs to create seven new K–8 schools and one new high school, and professional development for elementary teachers in the areas of reading and writing, identifying and implementing strategies for struggling readers that are two or more years behind, a summer acceleration academy for first and second grade students not meeting grade appropriate benchmarks, and a summer program for ELL in the middle grades.

In interviews, school principals were not able to discuss the exact amount of money their schools received, but a review of the 2009 MOU showed that \$586,300 was targeted towards training for “data-informed decisions” about intervention strategies. The district distributed \$586,300 equally among the district’s 55 CPSs with each school receiving \$11,275 for this training. The ESE also provided funding of \$144,000 to the 12 Commonwealth Priority Schools that were merging with seven non-CPSs in order to create seven new K-8 schools and one new high school. The district used the remaining \$670,000 for professional development for elementary teachers in the areas of reading and writing, identifying and implementing strategies for struggling readers that are two or more years behind, a summer acceleration academy for first and second grade students not meeting grade appropriate benchmarks, and a summer program for ELL in the middle grades.

In addition to the financial support from ESE included in the MOU, the district receives millions in external funds, including federal, state, and private grants to support major district initiatives and other school improvement programs.

In FY09, the district estimated that approximately 13 percent of the district’s budget revenue was generated from external funds, such as formula and multi-year competitive grants, according to a review of the district’s FY09 budget book. The district stated it would receive approximately \$103 million in federal grants and \$17.5 million in state grants. The district estimated it would receive less than \$30,000 in private grants.

The district has implemented a major accountability and academic improvement initiative for Title I schools with a \$32.3 million Title I grant called Whole School Improvement. Schools develop Whole School Improvement Plans (WSIP) to develop and use strategies, such as the CCL process, to address the needs of all students. According to information on the district website, Whole School Improvement refers to the continuous improvement “of the structure, processes, activities, and practices of the entire educational enterprise toward the goal of improving student achievement to proficiency.”

Information in the district budget booklet indicated that the Title I grant, for the most part, supports school improvement efforts across the district, such as literacy and math coaches, and support for ELL students. The district also receives federal grant money to support initiatives related to improving teacher quality as well as support for ELL students. The district received over \$18 million in grant funding for programs and initiatives for students with disabilities. In addition, 12 schools in need of improvement received almost \$800,000 in Reading First grants.

The district provided support through grants to the CPSs for the development and acquisition of interventions for struggling students. The district primarily targeted interventions for ELA and literacy with minimal supports identified for struggling mathematics students. The district did not implement tutoring consistently.

District Grants: The district supported ELA and mathematics teaching and learning in the CPSs through a number of initiatives. These included providing Silber Reading Grants, Reading First Grants, and Secondary Reading Grants to priority schools. These grants provided students and teachers access to better learning and teaching materials and teachers and leaders more opportunities for professional development in reading and writing instruction. In mathematics, the district targeted its Title 2B (federal) grant to support vertical alignment of the math curriculum.

Recommendations

ESE and the district should develop a plan to evaluate, coordinate, and systematically implement targeted assistance for all priority schools. The district and ESE should implement targeted assistance interventions aligned with the superintendent’s Acceleration Agenda and the Whole School Improvement process.

- Multiple targeted assistance intervention strategies and plans overlap and apply to different groups of schools.
- The ability of ESE and the district to provide, monitor, and measure the impact of targeted assistance is limited due to staffing and budget restrictions.
- Title I funding is the principal form of assistance provided by ESE.
- Alignment of targeted assistance described in the DPSI and MOU was limited.

The district should develop the capacity to plan, support, implement and monitor intervention strategies included in the MOU and the DPSI, and the ESE should review and expand its capacity to provide BPS with district wide interventions.

- The district and the ESE were in the midst of substantial organizational change during the developmental stages of the DPSI.
- The targeted assistance provided in the 2009 school year was not what the district felt would be most effective.
- The district was interested in targeted assistance that would improve student achievement for students in all schools, although it did recognize priority schools did need specific interventions.
- The ESE was able to provide only minimal technical assistance to the school in the 2009 school year.

The ESE and the district should negotiate, sign, and allocate funds for an MOU that is aligned with all district intervention plans prior to September 1 of each year.

- The MOU for targeted assistance for the 2009 school year was dated January 2009 and funding for interventions was delayed. Similarly, in the prior year, the MOU was dated February 2008—well into the school year.
- The delay in 2009 was attributed to issues related to the lack of agreement on appropriate targeted assistance and the district reorganization.
- Because of the delay in funding, schools had limited time to develop spending plans and the district distributed non-earmarked funds equally among all priority schools.
- The ESE required the district to develop measurable benchmarks for interventions in the MOU for accountability purposes.

The district should develop and implement a process for monitoring and evaluating the status of school action steps included in the DPSI. Schools should integrate intervention action steps into the Whole School Improvement process.

- Many schools partially or fully implemented the school DPSI action steps.
- The district has no process in place to monitor the implementation of the DPSI at the schools.
- The DPSI is a background intervention document and the MOU is the operational intervention document.
- Not all school initiatives are related to the WSIPs.

The district should follow through on its proposal to the city of Boston to acquire a new assessment and student information system K2–10. The district should continue its efforts to develop an accessible data system to include both formative and summative assessments for individual student, classroom, and school data. Extensive training on accessing and using data to improve instruction should be provided to ensure the success of this program.

- The district has invested in improving access to data and its use in instruction, and plans to extend this program to include district wide formative assessments to support the use of data at the classroom level.
- The district has plans to purchase a formative assessment system K–10 with stimulus funds.
- Despite its usefulness in registering for professional development offerings, MyBPS is outdated and reports are not readily accessible to school leaders and instructional staff.

The district should implement a standardized classroom observation protocol for use in the priority schools with a focus on improving instruction related to weaknesses identified by an analysis of assessment data.

- The district lacks a uniform protocol for non-evaluative classroom observations. Currently, either none are in use or multiple variations are in use by the different academic superintendents.
- Many CPSs conduct informal learning walks but the use of learning walks across the CPSs was not uniform.

The chief academic officer should implement protocols to ensure consistency in how academic superintendents and assistant academic superintendents fulfill their responsibilities and interact with their schools.

- Multiple schools reported variation in the number of meetings and contacts with academic superintendents, e.g., some only once a year, some more frequently.
- Multiple schools reported a wide variety in the kind of support provided by academic superintendents, e.g., some shared updated school improvement plans with academic superintendent, and some did not.
- Some academic superintendents demonstrated strong knowledge of issues with which their CPSs struggled; some did not.

The district should continue to support school based leaders with strong professional development. Leaders who have not participated in NISL or similar appropriate training should be required to do so.

- The PELP framework for continuous improvement is complex and school leaders will need strong and continued support from academic superintendents and assistant academic superintendents to make it work.
- Not all CPS principals have participated in NISL training.

The district should provide resources to develop and implement common interventions and safety nets in ELA and mathematics. Efforts should be made to identify research-based programs identified as effective in supporting student growth. The district should reassess its student support system in mathematics.

- Schools are individually designing many programs to support student learning, many times duplicating efforts at various sites.
- Intervention programs for struggling students vary in effectiveness, area of focus and degree of implementation.
- Support programs for mathematics are far less well developed than those for literacy and ELA.
- The 2009 MOU does not identify any specific supports for mathematics learners.

The district should implement a comprehensive tutoring program delivered by teachers licensed in the tutoring content area and make it available across the district.

- Tutoring has not been implemented systematically across the district.
- A variety of volunteer efforts provide tutoring services in some, but not all, schools.
- Some schools had no tutors for either reading or mathematics.
- Some schools currently rely on the SES program to provide tutoring services.

The district should continue to support the role of fulltime ELA and mathematics coaches in all CPSs in order to meet the terms set out in the Ten Essential Conditions: one per school in ELA and in mathematics.

- Multiple schools reported that they valued the support they received from the coaches.
- There was wide variation in the number of ELA and mathematics coaches in CPSs.
- Some vacant coaching positions were left unfilled.
- Some schools shared a coach with another school.
- Coaching positions have been eliminated in the 2010 budget.

The district should develop mechanisms and support to ensure that every CPS has made provisions for common planning time. Guidance in the effective use of common planning time should be outlined and professional development should be provided as necessary.

- Common planning time is available in some but not all CPSs.
- CCL is being used effectively in some CPSs but not all.
- Learning walks are used collaboratively in some schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The district should complete the process of redesigning the special education delivery system into an integrated services delivery model. The district should undertake an education and training process for teachers and administrators that will lead to the implementation of an integrated services model and decrease the number of substantially separate placements.

- Special education services are not provided as part of an integrated services delivery model.
- A disproportionately high number of special education students receive their education in substantially separate classrooms.
- Special education law specifies that students on an IEP receive their education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Many administrators and teachers in the district do not understand that the education of special education students is the responsibility of the general education program.
- Teachers have not been adequately trained to address the needs of struggling students in their classrooms without referring them to special education.
- Teachers have not been adequately trained to modify the instruction in their mainstream classrooms to address IEP requirements for special education students.
- Eligibility teams need training to make better determinations concerning the least restrictive environment for a student.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The district should continue to place a high priority on developing and implementing a service delivery model for ELL students. It should follow through on its proposal to the city of Boston to acquire English language development materials for ESL classrooms K2–8 and provide professional development to teachers in targeted schools.

- Approximately 40 percent of ELL students opt out of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.
- Title III money was withheld.
- Many teachers lack the training to address the needs of ELL students in their mainstream classes.
- The district has not yet arranged and implemented the mandatory ESL and SEI professional development that would equip teachers to provide ELL students with appropriate support.

Section 2

Boston Public Schools – School Reports

In this section, you will find information for each school visited during the review. The reports on the schools are grouped according to level: K–5, K–8, middle schools, K–12, and high schools. Information on the schools within is provided at the beginning of each level. This information includes: demographic information on students such as ethnicity, income status, and special populations; analysis of data from classroom observations conducted during the review; and AYP information.

Following the data summary page(s), there is a short report on each school focused on Key Questions 1 and 2. The methodology for visits to the schools is described in Section 1 of the report.

Elementary (K–5) Schools

Student Demographics Elementary (K–5) Priority Schools										
	African Amer.	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native Amer.	Multi-Race, Non Hisp.	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Total Enrollment
Bates	48.3%	2.4%	34.7%	10.8%	0.0%	3.5%	8.0%	12.8%	75.0	288
Condon	40.4%	9.3%	28.2%	19.4%	0.6%	2.1%	21.2%	23.2	86.8%	706
Dever	35.1%	8.1%	47.9%	6.0%	0.6%	2.3%	31.8%	20.5%	93.2%	484
Ellis	40.9%	0.3%	55.3%	1.3%	0.3%	1.9%	27.0%	14.5%	97.2%	318
Harvard Kent	24.1%	29.6%	34.3%	9.6%	0.9%	1.5%	35.7%	17.6%	93.9%	460
Lee	66.1%	3.6%	24.1%	2.3%	0.7%	2.9%	4.9%	28.3%	82.1%	307
Sumner	21.3%	2.0%	66.4%	8.5%	0.0%	1.8%	31.6%	25.9%	78.9%	506

The following table describes in percentages by category when evidence was observed for Organization of Classroom (Characteristics 1–3), Instructional Design and Delivery (Characteristics 4–15), and Student Ownership of Learning (Characteristics 16–17).

Classroom Observation Data – Elementary Schools			
Characteristics by Category			
School	1–3	4–15	16–17
Bates	89%	69%	36%
Condon	100%	57%	-
Dever	-	68%	-
Ellis	79%	71%	28%
Harvard-Kent	86%	80%	35%
Lee Elementary	92%	68%	57%
Sumner	93%	68%	16%

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
			2006	2007	2008	
Bates	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	No Status
		All Subgroups	-	Yes	No	
Condon	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Improvement Year 1
		All Subgroups	Yes	No	No	
Dever	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Improvement Year 1
		All Subgroups	Yes	No	No	
Ellis	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	Restructuring Year 1 - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improvement Year 1 - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	Yes	No	No	
Harvard Kent	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	No Status
		All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	No	
Lee	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	No Status
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	Yes	
Sumner	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	Improvement Year 2 - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts included in the DPSI (action steps) to date? To what extent have these efforts impacted student achievement?

During the 2008–2009 school year, the school took steps toward completing goals listed in the school’s action steps included in the DPSI.

The team gathered evidence in interviews and classroom observations, and through a review of documents indicating that the school has made progress in addressing the action steps included in the DPSI. The principal stated that this was her first year as school principal and that she had not participated in writing the action steps; however, she did review the plan with the academic superintendent and fully supported it.

- **The collection, analysis and use of data is a priority at the school:** After a consultant presented a workshop at the school in 2007–2008 demonstrating the use of Data-Wise, the staff identified the need for a school data team. When the new principal began in 2008–2009, there was no data team in place; however, every grade administers three different writing prompts each year and the principal began to collect data from these open response questions. Interviewees stated that they tracked the data and monitored progress from the mid-year open response to the next administration. They planned to increase the frequency of open response prompts for the 2009–2010 school year. Through an analysis of student responses the staff identified that students had difficulty understanding what was required to solve a problem. They developed a graphic organizer and implemented it in grades 3 through 5: The components of the organizer were Read to understand; Analyze; Prepare 4 details; and Put it all together (RAPP). Review team members observed use of this graphic organizer in the classrooms. The staff also developed a graphic organizer for mathematics that was used beginning in the first grade. The organizer consisted of Thought, Information, Problem length, Solution stated in sentence form (TIPS). In addition, teachers told the team that rubrics for reading and writing were consistent throughout the school.

In a focus group, teachers stated that they had access to all of the data, and could review three previous years of data on entering students. Both literacy and mathematics teachers synchronize their TRC assessments in grades K–3 and TERC mathematics tests to the MCLASS website. All data reviewed at ILT meetings was provided to the grade level teachers for review.

- **Development of “quick assessments in ELA and mathematics:** The school collected data on fluency and comprehension from the DIBELS and TRC assessments. Interviewees stated that use of the Palm Pilot for scoring the TRC and the GRADE reading assessments allowed the school to monitor student progress every two weeks. The school also analyzed data to group students for instruction, and to inform instruction in reading. The school used *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* unit tests and locally developed mid-module assessments to inform instruction and regroup students in

mathematics. The school planned to create a formal data team in the 2009–2010 school year.

- **Principal/coach meetings:** The principal and members of the teacher focus group told the team that the principal and coaches attended weekly grade level meetings used for instruction and professional development. Although the district was eliminating full-time coaches for the 2009–2010 school year, the principal and teachers stated that structures were in place to continue the work.
- **Interviewees described professional development for teachers on implementing a writing curriculum across grade levels:** The staff elected to use CCL time to work with the *Lucy Caulkins Writing Program*. They worked on mathematics and literacy on alternate weeks of each six-week CCL cycle. Members of the teacher focus group told the team that during the CCL time they tracked written language summarized lessons, and shared strategies. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) reviewed the data from the CCL cycles. In addition, teachers worked one hour per week outside of the school day on open responses and question and answer relationships in order to increase student comprehension.

The school has implemented strategies to improve student performance – collecting, analyzing, and using data more consistently to inform instruction and improve student achievement.

A review of AYP data showed that the Bates School performance was ‘low’ in both ELA and mathematics and its improvement rating had ‘declined’ in both. In 2008, the school did not make AYP in the aggregate or for subgroups in ELA and mathematics. Teachers told the team that students did not know what strategies to use on the MCAS test. Through professional development, teachers learned to use the same language in each grade. This consistent approach was expected to improve student achievement.

Teachers and administrators felt well supported by the district in implementing the action steps and other school improvement efforts.

In interviews, teachers gave examples of support they had received support from the district to implement the action steps of the school improvement plan. One important example was the Laptop for Teachers initiative that provided teachers laptops with Windows 2000. Their desktop computers had been running Windows 95. This updated technology improved communication with the principal, increased data collection, and facilitated the sharing of information. Teachers told the team about other district support including the Boston Teacher Resident Fellowship Program, provision of hardware such as in-focus machines and *Smart Boards*.

In the area of curricula resources, the school received *Reading A-8, the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program, and Second Step*. Professional development on *Second Step* was scheduled for the summer of 2009. *QEI*, a practice program for answering MCAS test multiple-choice questions was to be initiated in the third grade in 2009–2010.

The principal told the team that she was well supported by the district. For example, she had received a year of training and course work under another principal as part of the *Boston Principal’s Fellowship Program* and was provided a mentor and a full range of supports through

the first year principals Networking program meetings, including Just In Time (JIT) seminars, monthly principal meetings, and assistance from district coaches.

The school has developed several partnerships to support their strategies and improvement efforts.

Some school partnerships included the YMCA after school partnership, SES tutoring services for approximately 30 students after school; and one partnership organization provided a six week summer program for six kindergarten students at Dedham Country Day School and followed them through grade eight. The Jewish Coalition provided tutoring during the day; and Lesley University provided student teachers.

The principal stated that the school applied for grants related to accomplishment of the WSIP. Specifically, the school applied for grants related to school goals and strategies. Under grant funding from ESE related to the fulfillment of the DPSI, goals, the principal met with the literacy leader and others to review guided reading texts intended to improve reading comprehension.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school provides leadership to faculty and staff to support school improvement.

The evidence gathered from observations and interviews demonstrated that the school had the infrastructure and leadership to support school improvement. Under the leadership of a new principal, the staff had analyzed data, identified problems of practice and developed strategies to address them, created consistency through use of common vocabulary across the grades, and created graphic organizers to help students deal with open response questions and solve mathematics problems. Consistency of approach was the school theme in 2009–2010, and plans were in place to develop a data team, purchase guided reading texts for non-fiction, and provide additional professional development on the *Lucy Caulkins Writing Program* and in the *Step Two Program*.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school is implementing a range of initiatives to promote improved student achievement.

The principal told the team about a number of school initiatives during the 2009 school year to address the instructional needs of all its students.

- **Addressing school climate issues:** According to the principal, negative behaviors were interfering with students' ability to learn and achieve. In response, the school hired a school support coordinator to address climate issues. The coordinator facilitated school-based counseling for 80 students using outside agencies and implemented a program to improve school culture through promoting concepts such as respect, responsibility and perseverance. Because the program was in its first year, no data to support its effectiveness existed. However, administrators said that the school climate had improved.
- **Extending the success of the SPED programs to ELL:** Over one hundred of the ELL students opted out of ELL services and were in regular-education classrooms. In order to address this, the principal voiced concern to the district and was able to hire a half-time ESL teacher in February 2009. The district confirmed that this position would be full-time in the fall of 2009. The principal also managed to secure the services of a full-time ESL coach in the spring of 2008; however, during the fall of 2008, the position was allocated to another school with greater needs. The district has been responsive in supporting this program, but the program has not been in place long enough to improve student achievement.
- **Promoting student teaching at the school:** Administrators encouraged the University of Massachusetts in Boston to place student teachers at the school. This gave the school the opportunity to identify and hire promising teacher candidates. In addition, the school received support from eight young adults from the City Year Team. Following a fall training program at the school, team members, worked in third and fourth grade classrooms, mentored students, and staffed the after-school program.
- **Implementing DIBELS and promoting data use:** To increase the value of the data the DIBELS provided, teachers received district training in TRC, an assessment system that complemented the DIBELS by adding comprehension information. The teachers administered both assessments in the course of the 2009 school year and used the data to inform their teaching. After the January administration of the DIBELS and TRC, teachers realigned their reading groups. Additionally, the school used these data to identify students who were far below proficient, brought in their parents and provided them with tools they could use at home to support their children.
- **Professional development:** Interviewees stated all staff completed Category 4 training in 2008, with new teachers receiving partial training in 2009 to compensate for training they

had missed. In September 2009. The entire staff received 18 hours of training on the *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* mathematics program. In addition, during the summer, teachers had the opportunity to take a workshop on differentiated instruction, and all teachers received training on the administration of DIBELS and TRC and interpretation of the results using palm pilots. The district also provided category training on campus for all teachers in the school.

- **Implementation of a frequent classroom observation program:** Teachers were observed by an administrator at least once a week and received feedback on a short observation feedback form. Administrators rotated through all teachers' classrooms, giving them a broad perspective on the quality of the instruction in the school.
- **District leadership presence:** The principal reported that the academic superintendent visited the school three times during the 2009 school year. She said that she was supported by the district.

The school improved the achievement of its special education students.

The school began to move toward a full inclusion model five years ago and completed implementation in the 2009 school year. The principal assembled a staff of inclusion teachers with both regular and special education certification. These teachers taught small regular education classes in which all Learning Disabled (LD) students were mainstreamed for mathematics and ELA. As a result, mainstreamed students had full access to the regular education curriculum, as well as the modifications necessary to address their specific learning needs.

Two indicators documented the success of this full inclusion model. The 2008 MCAS results showed that while the school did not achieve AYP in the aggregate in either ELA or mathematics, special education students achieved AYP in both. Special education students exceeded the improvement target in ELA by 3.5 percent and the target in mathematics by 9.7 percent. In 2009, the BPS district office selected Condon Elementary school as the pilot site for Socrato, an online system for tests aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) and the MCAS assessments. The school was using the system to monitor student performance and the results showed continued improvement in special education performance. The school has demonstrated the capacity to address the learning needs of one of its subgroup populations and significantly improve their achievement.

The school was focused and deliberate in its response to the various needs of its students.

The implementation of academic achievement initiatives promoted the analysis of data to determine student needs and equipped teachers with tools to address those needs both through professional development and support provided during classroom observations. The school demonstrated the capacity to support school intervention efforts in the 2009 school year.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Conditions are in place to continue to support improvements in student achievement.

The principal has been in place for ten years, and in interviews demonstrated a clear understanding of the instructional issues the school faced. The school implemented programs to address and support student achievement.

- Improved SPED student assessment results because of the recently implemented inclusion model
- Frequent classroom observations supported implementation of school programs and best practices. Classroom observations yielded positive evidence concerning day-to-day instruction in the building. Observations in 17 classrooms documented solid evidence of the use of a range of instructional techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. In addition, in 12 out of 17 classrooms students were observed to have opportunities to apply new knowledge and content. However, in 10 out of 17 classrooms, teachers did not check for understanding.
- The school has plans to address the underachievement of ELL students, and had already made some progress. The district has responded to this issue by providing additional ESL staffing and promised more in 2009–2010. The district has also provided some limited ESL coaching support.

The school has undertaken initiatives such as generating and using additional data, providing extensive targeted professional development, monitoring classroom practice, and putting programs into effect to improve the climate in the building. This systemic approach to school improvement has led to some measureable improvements in student achievement and represents conditions that will support improved student achievement.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school did not successfully implement the action steps included in the DPSI.

In the 2008 – 2009 school year, the school did not make meaningful progress in implementing most action steps included in the DPSI.

- **Control or stabilize student assignments:** The school was unable to control or stabilize student assignments other than to reduce kindergarten class sizes to 20 students per class. With its transformation to a dual-language immersion school set to begin in September 2009, the school anticipated a more stable student body, beginning with the entering kindergarten class.
- **Close student enrollment by September 30:** The school was unable to meet this cut-off date. According to the principal, the school has a high rate of transient students, estimated at nearly 30 percent, and the enrollment fluctuated throughout the year.
- **Limit the number of special education programs/prototypes:** The school did not meet this goal and actually expanded district special education programs located at the school by one new program. In 2008–2009, the school had a LAB cluster of four classrooms with an enrollment of 35 students. There was also a “Bright Learning Disabled” class with one student enrolled. This class was to be phased out at the end of the school year. The McKinley school satellite program for grades 3, 4, and 5 was also located at the school.
- **Provide one FTE as support for the SPED-certified academic intervention teacher in regular classroom:** The school successfully met this goal. The new principal instituted a co-teaching model, to replace the “pull-out” model the school previously used. In 2008–2009, there were three co-taught inclusion classes, one each in grades 3, 4, and 5.
- **Common planning time:** The school was unable to schedule common planning time for teachers during the school day for grade-level and subject-level work.

Interviewees reported that the school was unable to accomplish the remaining action steps because it lacked the required funds

The school has introduced a co-teaching model as an innovative step to improve student achievement:

To improve the achievement of special education and ELL students, the school implemented a co-teaching model in grades 3, 4, and 5. Two teachers supported both regular and special education students in one classroom at each of these grades. A review of achievement data showed that grade 3 students in the co-taught classroom scored higher than those in classrooms with one teacher. Fourth and fifth grade students in co-taught classrooms achieved results comparable to fourth and fifth grade students in one-teacher classrooms.

To improve student achievement, the school created Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs).

The new principal created Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) for ELA, mathematics, and writing. Each subject area team was composed of one teacher from each grade level. The ILTs were charged with examining student achievement data and working collaboratively with grade-level colleagues to address learning and teaching issues.

The school implemented a Read to Succeed program in 2008–2009. Under this program, everyone in the school reads silently for 30 minutes daily. The school also provided fifth grade students two periods of science per week by eliminating science in kindergarten. In addition, the school’s mathematics coach worked intensively with fourth and fifth grade teachers.

The school began the planning process to introduce a dual-language immersion program in 2009–2010 to provide stronger literacy programs and services to students, especially ELL students.

Through the school’s root cause analysis, school leaders determined that the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program was not improving ELL students’ achievement in ELA. As a result, school leaders made the decision to add a bilingual program. The school was not scheduled to become a dual-language school, but with strong advocacy from the school’s academic assistant academic superintendents, it was given district approval in January 2008 to begin a sequential implementation of the bilingual model in 2009–2010. In September 2009, two kindergarten classrooms were scheduled to follow a dual-immersion English-Spanish program, and two kindergarten classrooms were scheduled to follow an English-only program. A grade level was to be added in each succeeding year. At the time of the review, the school was a finalist for a \$100,000 grant from EdVestors to support the development of its new dual-language immersion program.

The school has initiated a number of innovations to improve and enhance school culture.

In 2008–2009, the school created a school climate team to prepare teachers to implement the Second Step Curriculum, a 17 lesson curriculum focused on development of students’ social skills. The school provided professional development on the program for all teachers in August 2008. Through this program the school created a common vocabulary for students and teachers to use for problem solving and anger management, and a set of Dever School Community Values for all to support. As a result, there were fewer disciplinary referrals in 2008–2009. The principal told the team that according to observations, first-year teachers had increased their competence in working with students and using classroom management skills.

The school also planned one parent event each month in 2009–2010. The purpose of these events was to engage parents more fully in their children’s education. The school also implemented a Wellness Council to support a school-wide goal to promote better student and teacher health. The school planned to use some federal stimulus funds to underwrite the participation of its fourth and fifth students in the Go-Kids program at nearby UMASS Boston. The goal of this program’s was to improve the health, wellness, and overall outlook for adolescents, pre-teens and teens through personalized instruction, fitness activities and good nutrition.

The district provided professional development for both teachers and school leaders and support for a mathematics coach.

In a focus group, teachers said that professional development provided by the district contributed to school improvement, and specifically cited professional development programs on the *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* mathematics curriculum Using MyLearningSpace and MyBPS, teachers were able to select courses for professional growth.. The principal told the team that 24 teachers participated in the district-sponsored Category 4 training to increase their effectiveness with ELL students.

The principal stated that the district had provided monthly professional development for principals and academic superintendents at the district level on topics such as building mathematics capacity, teaching writing, and supporting ELL students. The principal went on to say that the New Principal Meetings helped new leaders better understand district policies and procedures and the budget and hiring processes.

The ESE has made modest contributions to support improvement initiatives at the school.

Interviewees cited several instances of support obtained from the ESE. ESE funding supported one-half of the salary of the school’s reading coach through Title I. They also told the team that ESE’s Reading First conference provided useful information for teachers and school leaders.

After consultation with staff members about the lack of technology at the school, the principal and staff decided to allocate 2008–2009 CPS funds of nearly \$12,000 for the purchase of a laptop cart with a dozen laptop computers.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

A team of school leaders that includes the principal, the vice-principal and the special lab cluster coordinator monitor instruction.

Using BPS protocols, the principal and vice-principal monitored and evaluated instruction by regular education teachers and the lab cluster coordinator monitored special educators, including LAB teachers and co-teachers. Teachers also stated that the change in the school’s leadership in 2008–2009 made a positive difference in the quality of the teacher evaluation process. In addition, they said that the principal engaged them in conversations about instructional practice, either individually or in groups.

The school’s version of the CCL was entitled the Collaborative Learning Initiative (CLI). The CLI was a teacher-to-teacher process of peer observation that engaged teachers in learning from one other. Teachers and school leaders stated that these informal and unstructured exchanges helped to improve teaching and learning. In 2008–2009, the school introduced voluntary monthly community meetings to discuss curriculum and instruction. In addition, the school’s two WEDIKO counselors led a monthly support group for new teachers to help them deal with students with behavioral and emotional problems, and students with other special needs that interfered with learning.

This year the school has been proactive in seeking grant funding and external support to improve school programs.

In addition to funding for the dual-language immersion program, the school sought or was seeking external financial and other support from several other programs including a partnership between Community Arts and the BPS for the school’s popular Performing Arts Program, and the Expeditionary Learning Program for “hands-on” experiential learning through The Barr Foundation. A WEDIKO partnership consisting of two counselors was funded for four years by EdVestors. The school also received a \$15,000 grant from EdVestors to support its work with grant writers; and a \$10,000 grant from Eastern Bank. The school participated in the Big Brothers Big and Sisters program and was affiliated with the Geiger-Gibson Community Health Clinic.

Teachers administer formative benchmark assessments and are gaining competency in analyzing assessment data to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.

Members of the teacher focus group stated that students received multiple formative assessments such as DIBELS in grades K through 3, GRADE, and TRC, *The Woodcock Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery* assessments were administered to struggling readers. In addition, students were administered multiple district benchmark assessments in the *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* mathematics program.

Teachers reviewed student achievement data and conducted item analyses to identify struggling students during grade-level meetings led by members of the ILT. In 2008–2009, these analyses were deeper and more complex as the ILTs worked with teachers to disaggregate data to identify patterns and differences among regular education special education and ELL students. Teachers in a focus group said that conversations in grade level meetings with regular and special education teachers prompted changes in instructional approach, pacing, and re-teaching.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

Evidence from documents, interviews and observations indicated that the Ellis School has made progress in achieving its goals listed in the action steps in the Ellis School's section of the DPSI.

- **Data driven planning:** Although School leaders and teachers reviewed data regularly; the data were used frequently to inform instructional practice, according to interviewees. Teachers in focus groups said they meet by grade level with coaches, regular education and LAB teachers. They reviewed data such as MCAS test results, the results of the DRA and FAST-R assessments, and readers' and writers' notebooks. The teachers discussed the impact they were making as a team and teaching strategies. The school had an established data team, consisting of the principal, the mathematics coach the LAB coordinator, and a grade three teacher. This team participated in a professional development program on data analysis offered by the district and provided support and training for the teaching staff. Teachers stated in a focus group that while they had previously struggled to analyze and use classroom and MCAS test data, their ability to use these data has improved.
- **Increased support for ELL:** Approximately 27 percent of the students were LEP and the school had six SEI classes in grades K through grade 5. School-wide professional development focused on effective teaching practices for ELL students. The school principal stated that he received funds to pay teachers to attend category 4 training held at the Ellis School in August of 2008. In addition, three SEI teachers participated in the Massachusetts English Language Teachers (MELT) program. Teachers stated that the district's language acquisition coach supported MELT teachers. The school also has a grades K through 5 ESL teacher on staff who conducted peer-teaching, tutored students, and administered assessments.

The school has implemented a team approach and used common planning time meetings to foster a shared approach to improve literacy and mathematics instruction.

In the summer of 2007, the principal, three teachers, and the mathematics coach participated in professional development based on the effective leadership skills program Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM). This program helped school leaders think systemically about the underlying causes of problems. The SAM team met monthly, to implement instructional interventions in literacy and mathematics at the school. According to the principal, the training was very good but not broad enough. For 2008–2009 the team involved more staff in analyzing the school systematically. Common planning time was provided four times per month, twice for ELA and twice for mathematics teams. Teachers stated that this time was used for purposeful planning, data analysis and looking at student work. The data team provided school wide support by analyzing data and providing reports to the mathematics leadership, ILT, SAM, and literacy

teams. Coaches supported the staff in this model and helped teachers to make instructional interventions.

The school is developing stronger practices to use data to monitor student progress and provide interventions to ensure that all students make academic progress.

The principal stated that the school did not have an organized system for assessing students and instructional effectiveness. According to the principal, the school received better quality data in mathematics than ELA. The data and mathematics teams analyzed the results of unit tests entered on the computer by teachers. This data analysis provided information on students' strengths and weaknesses to guide the mathematics coach and teachers in designing appropriate classroom interventions.

The school administered the DRA in grades K through 3 and FAST-R in grades 3, 4, 5. Both tests were scored quickly. In addition, the MCAS test results were used to inform long-term instruction. For example, when data analysis identified that students in the aggregate and subgroups continued to have trouble answering inferential questions, teachers worked with the literacy coach to determine the strategies students needed to be taught in reading workshop.

The district has supported the school in the implementation of its actions steps.

Leaders at Ellis stated that the district supported the school by funding data analysis training for the data team; a full time literacy coach in 2007; Title I support for a full time literacy coach in 2008; a full-time mathematics coach; professional development for all teachers in the four categories of instruction relevant to teaching students who speak English as a second language; support for SAM training; and support from the language acquisition coach.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Instruction is monitored and teachers are held accountable for student progress.

The principal told the review team that he has been at the school for twenty years. According to the teacher focus group, the principal was aware of all that goes on in the school. The principal checked in on new teachers and the LAB classrooms often during the week. In addition, the LAB coordinator supervised LAB staff. When the principal visited classrooms, he checked in with the students to see how they were progressing and monitored instructional practices.

Turnover in the grade 2 teaching staff was a challenge to the school. Teachers in a focus group stated that it affected planning, learning and achievement for that grade level and that as a result, students entering grade 3 lacked prerequisite skills. .

The school uses grants and partnerships to provide additional academic and some recreational activities for its students.

The school had a partnership with the Bird Street Community Center. This Center provided the school with before and after school support in literacy, mathematics and homework. The school also received funding from the district, Title I, and school budget to offer Saturday School for grades 3, 4, and 5 on six Saturdays. The district was to offer a four-week summer reading

academy for K2 and grade 1 students in the summer of 2009 through funding provided by the ESE.

Teachers administered formative assessments to track student performance and used the data to implement strategies for student improvement and adjust instructional practices.

The school used data to understand the impact of instruction on student learning. For example, the school found that students who attended the Saturday school grew in skill acquisition according to district post test results, and scored in the *Needs Improvement* category or higher on the MCAS tests. In addition, when a school wide review of MCAS test data showed that students had difficulty answering inferential questions, teachers worked with the literacy coach and added more practice in answering inferential questions in guided reading lessons. Teachers stated that they needed to work more on vertical alignment. In the fall of 2009, grades K through 2 and 3 through 5 teachers will meet in cross groups to identify gaps and redundancies in the ELA and mathematics curricula.

The school has developed a staff focused on student improvement through the cultivation of in-house leadership, teacher teams, and coaching.

The principal had team-based leadership structures and operations in place that provided sound guidance including the data team, the SAM team, the ILT, and grade level teams. Common planning time had been built into the school schedule, and ELL, SEI, and LAB teachers participated in these meetings.

Student Performance

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school was able to implement several of the specific action steps to improve student achievement,

- **Gaps in the ELA Curriculum:** The principal told the team that the gaps were filled several years ago, and this goal had been accomplished.
- **After school programming in ELA with transportation for grades 3-5, including SPED:** The principal stated that this was more a wish than a goal since accomplishment required large scale fundraising, and went on to say that he would have removed this action step item from the plan had he been able to edit the document. Although he was familiar with the DPSI, he told the team that the Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) was the guiding document for his school and provided the team a copy.
- **Control or stabilize student assignments:** The principal told the team that the student population was transient, with a high incidence of SEI, ELL, and special education students. For example, in 2007, the population of special education students in grade four increased by 50 percent. In 2008–2009, the school had nine special education classes. There were classrooms for students on the autism spectrum at the K and K-1 levels. The school also had a Chinese bilingual classroom at each grade level. Members of the school data team found that the Latino population was increasing. There were two full time ESL tutors available for grades K through 2 and 3 through 5. Another factor contributing to instability was the number of students opting to leave the school after being identified as candidates for Advanced Work Class (AWC). According to the principal, 18 percent of students in grades three and four left the school to attend AWC schools.
- **School-based summer reading program:** Students could attend a Title I funded school-based reading program in the summer of 2009
- **Home computer program for students at risk:** This program was created to allow students and their parents to participate in Study Island, a school-based MCAS preparation program.
- **ESL program for Chinese and Spanish speaking parents and parenting courses:** These courses were offered at the school. While most parents lived in the nearby housing developments, many of the Chinese students were transported to the school from areas outside of the community.

The school has implemented additional strategies not included in the DPSI to improve student achievement in literacy and mathematics.

The school added four teachers to the data team during the 2008–2009 school year to assist the data teacher, who in prior years was solely responsible for data analysis. According to the principal, the team analyzed data and helped teachers interpret and use it to plan instruction.

The computer specialist, a member of the data team, researched supplements to the school’s mathematics program during the 2008–2009 school year when the school determined that *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* was not suitable for all students. The school found programs and instructional materials such as *Singapore Math*, *Knowing Math* and MCAS mathematics questions to supplement *Investigations*. The school also began to group students flexibly by strengths and needs based on the results of end-of-unit tests.

The school has begun to implement the Responsive Classroom program. The principal explained that the program was being used to help students set goals and live by established routines. In a focus group, teachers described the components of the program and the training that had occurred. In 2006–2007, two teachers attended a two day conference and in 2008–2009 four teachers attended the training. Four regular and two LAB teachers used the program. Teachers in the focus group said that they believed it had impacted student behavior, but it was too early to determine whether it has also resulted in higher student achievement.

The school implemented a number of interventions to improve the student achievement including the Tier 3 Intervention Model; flexible small grouping in grades 3, 4 and 5; Before School Morning Math Program for students in grades 3 through 5 and an after school SES tutoring program with a Wilson Reading component for students in grades 2 through 5

Intervention staff assisted with reading and writing in grades 3, 4 and 5. The school previously had a half-time literacy coach and a half-time mathematics coach, but these positions were eliminated. The principal met with grade level teams monthly to Look at Student Work (LASW) in order to improve student writing, and make needed adjustments to the writing curriculum. The grades K through 5 writing curriculum was incomplete.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The principal monitors the quality of instruction in many classrooms using more than one strategy.

The principal monitored the quality of instruction using the LASW strategy, and met with teams to review student work. He told the review team that this collaborative strategy made him and his teachers “all accountable together.” It was also a way of gauging teachers’ expectations for the quality of student work. The principal said that he and members of the ILT had conducted learning walks. Teachers supported the learning walks in focus groups stating that that the walks were non-judgmental and intended improve their practice. Teachers also said that district leaders had conducted learning walks and held debriefings. However, they felt that the focus had changed and district learning walks were no longer a priority.

The school implements a variety of formative assessments in order to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students.

Teachers in a focus group said that they administered formative assessments including the Harcourt Reading Testing as well as DIBELS to document student progress and plan instruction. In mathematics, end of unit tests were used to determine what skills need to be strengthened. Flexible groups were then formed every nine weeks and students received 90 minutes of targeted instruction. The school also administered “quick” assessments every three to five weeks in the areas of number sense, measurement, and problem solving. The principal also mandated that students in grades 3 and 4 complete ten pieces of writing between November and March. These pieces were scored with a rubric. Teachers also met monthly to analyze student writing and share writing lessons.

The school has developed partnerships that provide students with scholarships.

The principal has developed partnerships that provided substantial financial support for student scholarships. The most prominent was the Harvard-Kent Leadership Scholarship. Each year, two students from grades 3, 4, or 5 received an award of \$1,000 to be used for their future education. This award was invested in a mutual fund and the proceeds were available to the student upon college entry. The funds for this Leadership Scholarship came from private contributors.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school has taken steps toward implementing the action steps included in the DPSI to improve student achievement.

- **Implement the inquiry process to examine data:** According to interviews with teachers and the principal, the inquiry process took place during the summer of 2008 and at the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year to determine priorities for the 2009 school year. The process identified an increasing ELL population; however, the school offered limited ELL services. As a result, the school offered professional development to teachers in the four SEI categories. An additional issue confronting the school was that about one half of the students who enroll in grade one had not attended kindergarten.
- **Use CCL cycles to examine the MCAS test data:** The school implemented this MCAS data analysis process to identify sequencing trends in the Harcourt Trophies reading program. They used the data to break the program into units, identified reading strategies by grade for mastery, and created a calendar and sequence to better prepare students. Teachers in a focus group said that they had worked with the part-time literacy coach, to find gaps in Trophies especially at grades K through 2, and to develop comprehension skills and strategies. Inquiry work on the writing curriculum was underway using the same process.

The principal and staff explained the use of the DRA, DIBELS, and TRC to benchmark student work in grades K-2. These assessments provided valuable information for discussing student progress and adjusting instruction. The staff stated 2008–2009 was the second year of administration of the GRADE reading assessment in the upper grades. The GRADE was administered three times a year. After each administration, grade level teams met to review the results and to group students for instruction.

- **Departmentalization of ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies at the 4th and 5th grade levels to improve student performance:** Departmentalization took place in December of 2008. This program was enacted to take advantage of individual teachers' expertise in different content areas.
- **Use of assessment data to target instruction:** Interviewees reported that they used data from the MCAS, the DRA, the DIBELS, and the GRADE assessment to analyze trends and patterns and to implement strategies and inform instruction in literacy. As a result of data analysis, staff determined that comprehension was a weakness, particularly comprehension of non-fiction text. By using the Palm Pilot technology to quickly gather DRA, DIBELS, and TRC data, teachers were able to regroup students for instruction more often. In mathematics, teachers stated that they analyzed data from the end of unit tests, practice tests, and the BPS mid-year assessment for grades 3, 4, and 5 and found that students had difficulty with area and volume. Teachers used MCAS preparation time and Saturday school to address these weaknesses.

The district has taken several steps to support the school in implementing the action steps and other school improvement efforts. However the district is ending support for the GRADE reading assessment.

When the school identified a lack of ELL services, the district provided professional development for teachers in the SEI categories totaling thirty-seven hours of training in category two and category three. In addition, the principal said that the grades K through 2 literacy initiative under development at the district level was a useful support. Students and teachers in the school were given priority for the summer program developed for rising grades 1 and 2 students.

Teachers in a focus group reported that the district provided assessments such as DIBELS, GRADE, TRC, and the updated DRA for grades 4 and 5. Although teachers and administrators said that it was a valuable tool, the district was discontinuing the GRADE after June 2009. In mathematics, the district provided a half-time coach and offered professional development for each unit of the mathematics program.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school used information gathered through learning walks to inform instruction.

Team members found that there was no set protocol at the district or school level for learning walks. The principal told the team that it was important for everyone to be on target with the curriculum pacing guide in to enable teachers at a grade level to shift and regroup students for instruction. She said that “time on task had an impact.” The principal also told the team that she has seen teachers change instruction based on data, especially within the Harcourt reading program where teachers revamped instruction to address sequencing issues in preparing students for the MCAS test.

The school provides services to an autistic population using part of the May Institute curriculum for behavioral programs; however, there was no other specific curriculum for autistic students.

The principal stated that students on the autism spectrum were integrated with regular education students when appropriate. The principal said that since there was no standard curriculum for autistic students and the school used part of the May Institute curriculum. Fourteen of these students took the MCAS alternative assessment in 2008, and the school submitted their portfolios for scoring. 2009. The principal added that an Aspergers’ program would be beneficial for higher functioning students.

The school received an Out of School Time grant and developed several partnerships.

Interviewees described several partnerships that supported school activities. All tutoring, with the exception of 22 slots for the morning SES program was supported through partnerships. Fix the Foundation provided funding for the Lee Elementary School summer school. The Dorchester Family School Initiative was a group that banded together to apply for grants. The school was in partnership with Lucy Stone Holm School, Emily Fifield School, Joseph Lee School, Health Center, Wheelock College and Family, Inc.

The school shares space with the Lee Academy Pilot School. While they have separate classroom space, Lee Academy Pilot School students cross through Lee Elementary School to use shared facilities. Lee Academy Pilot School has taken additional space each year as they added a grade. For the 2009–2010 they will need additional space to add grade 5.

The Lee Academy Pilot School has shared space with the Lee Elementary since its creation. In 2008–2009, the Lee Academy Pilot School housed grade K-0 through 4 (ages 3-10). The Lee school yielded additional space to the Lee Academy for the 2009–2010 school year when the Academy added grade 5 to their school. The two schools operated under different rules. Uniforms were required at the Lee school but not at the Lee Academy Pilot School. Interviewees stated that the Lee school climate had become much calmer and more stable since the introduction of uniforms, and with a stable staff with an average fifteen to eighteen years teaching experience. They were concerned that the climate could be affected as the Lee Academy Pilot School increased the use of space at the Lee school. The Lee Elementary School had proposed making the Lee Elementary a grades K through 8 school, but have not been granted permission to do so.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The Sumner school used their DPSI plan action steps to focus their priorities for the 2008–2009 school year.

From interviews and a review of documents, the team found that the school used the action steps to focus their priorities for the 2008–2009 school year. The principal and teachers stated that the school ILT developed action steps at the end of the 2007–2008 school year. During the summer of 2008, the principal and data team created the action plan and collaborated with the mathematics leadership team to examine the data. They found that open response questions were weakest area and decided to concentrate on comprehension for the 2008–2009 school year. The school implemented the use of notebooks provided by the district and spent time learning to use the *Trophies Reading Program* in conjunction with the Readers/Writers Workshop and the three tier Response to Intervention (RTI) models.

- **Launch of an academic audit to determine the faculty’s training and implementation around reciprocal teaching:** Teachers in a focus group said that the school was ‘below step one’ on reciprocal teaching. It was not being done, but they were teaching students how to ask clarifying questions during readers and writers workshop.
- **Observe teachers regularly and provide timely written feedback on instruction:** The principal told the team that she made classroom visits daily. She focused on comprehension strategies, and left the teacher a note containing positive feedback and suggestions. In interviews, Teachers confirmed that the principal observed in classrooms regularly and provided them with feedback.
- **Address individual learning needs during CCL as teachers learn to implement the *Lucy Caulkins Writing Curriculum*:** This action step was deferred to the 2009–2010 school year because of the school’s focus on comprehension in 2008–2009.
- **Data Wise** – Teachers and the principal said that *Data Wise* was used frequently, especially in mathematics. Use of the system began with the mathematics leadership team which evaluated how another school used data and conducted peer observations. They brought the model into the CCL program and introduced it at the Sumner school.

Teachers at the school decided to adopt a focus on comprehension to create a foundation to support achievement.

The literacy coordinator addressed the change in focus for the 2008–2009 school year from full implementation of the *Lucy Caulkins Writing Program* to work on comprehension. The original intention had been to spend time on the *Caulkins* program during the 2008–2009 school year because the Trophies reading program lacked a strong writing component and teachers already had the *Caulkins* materials. The literacy coach indicated this was her first year in this position, and that literacy leadership had been fragmented and inconsistent because of finances. The salary

of the mathematics coach was underwritten by a Title I grant and this continuous funding source had stabilized that position.

In addition to DIBELS, TRC, and GRADE, the school also adopted *Expressive Vocabulary* and has focused on training teachers to use these assessments, analyze and use the results to group and regroup students. Teachers in interviews stated they, "...know how to navigate and make informed decisions about instruction and do some cross grade grouping".

Interviewees stated that they were exposing students to open response questions and using them as assessments, but not as a teaching tool. To address this, the staff modified the use of the open response sequence. Skills were reinforced over time by asking students the same basic questions, and using the same approach.

High student mobility rate affects the long-term value of some improvement strategies.

The principal told the team that the assistant principal received data from the district and followed a cohort of students through grades 3 and 4. The high mobility rate at the school affected its ability to follow a cohort. Only 79 percent of the students in third grade and only 31 percent of students in the first grade were still enrolled at the end of fourth grade. Thirty-one percent of the students in grades 4 and 5 were new to the school.

Data based results show a positive impact of the Sumner School improvement strategy around using DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) data. Use of data by the ILT data team shows progress over time.

Interviewees stated that team the Sumner School had developed its own DRA for each reading level. With the implementation of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBLES) district wide in grades K through 2 and Text Reading Comprehension (TRC) in the Commonwealth Priority Schools, the school staff found that their own DRA work had been on the mark enabling them to do progress monitoring. Teachers were trained to use and were using Palm Pilots for DIBELS and TRC with the assistant principal leading the grouping of students based on the data. The GRA+DE Reading Assessment was administered at the upper grades and scored by the district; however, the district was discontinuing support for the GRA+DE at the end of 2008–2009.

According to interviewees, the ILT data team shared information at mathematics and literacy team meetings using data displays showing progress over time.

The BPS and ESE have taken steps to support the school in implementing the action steps and other school improvement efforts; however, teachers identified gaps in support.

The new academic superintendent under the reorganized structure collaborated with colleagues who present best practices, discuss data, and present notebooks. The principal said that professional development for principals was a strong support, adding that it was effective in helping principals to identify problems of practice and to share best practices. The school principal had attended both *Data Wise* and *NISL* trainings and would be starting a program with a consultant from Harvard offered to CPSs principals. In addition, the principal said that human resources support was very strong and commended the induction and mentoring programs. Support from the office of technology came in the form of laptops for teachers and technical support. School leaders stated that the NewComer Academy needed to serve more students at different grade levels. Teachers expressed frustration with lack of consistency in literacy support, especially coaching, which had been inconsistent.

ESE provided funds for tutoring and for the summer institute in both 2007–2008 and 2008–2009. The literacy coach and others attended ESE sponsored professional development conferences and training institutes and shared the content with staff.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school has developed partnerships that support the focus of the school.

Interviewees gave the following examples of partnerships that have structured their programs to support the focus of the school: Home for Little Wanderers, individual counseling for students; Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston, after school services; Children’s Hospital Neighborhood Partnership, two psychologists who provide mental health services, students group services, whole class interventions (grieving, bullying, etc.); and Lesley University’s Creative Arts in Learning Division.

The school uses data from formative and benchmark student assessments to track progress.

Interviewees told the review team that the school had used its own developmental reading assessment for each reading level and found that it had been valid and reliable in comparison to DIBELS and TRC results. They used the school’s assessment for progress monitoring. Teachers were trained to use and were using Palm Pilots for DIBELS and TRC and the assistant principal used these data to group students. The GRADE reading assessment was administered to students in the upper grades and scored by the district. The school had its own data plan to show progress in mathematics using assessments delivered and scored by the district. These data were posted on MyBPS enabling the teachers to have access to the benchmark results.

The school has the leadership to support school improvement.

The review team found through interviews and documentation that the school had strong leadership in addressing the action steps found in the DPSI. Training and support with *Data Wise* and *NISL* during the 2008 – 2009 had enhanced the review, analysis, and use of data in grade level meetings in both literacy and mathematics. In 2008–2009 a significant number of hours were spent on training teachers to use data to group students for instruction. The primary focus on comprehension concentrated the work of the leadership and staff and resulted in improvements in instruction and the provision of services.

K-8 Schools

Student Demographics K-8 Priority Schools										
	African Amer.	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native Amer.	Multi-Race, Non-Hisp.	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Total Enrollment
Eliot	16.8%	5.6%	38.1%	37.3%	0.0%	2.2%	13.7%	23.9%	49.8%	255
Hurley	16.7%	0.9%	68.1%	12.2%	0.9%	1.2%	30.7%	15.5%	77.8%	329
Mission Hill	42.3%	0.6%	29.8%	22.0%	0.0%	5.4%	1.8%	17.9%	44.0%	168
Tobin	23.5%	0.2%	71.5%	3.4%	0.2%	1.1%	34.9%	17.5%	86.3%	439

The following table describes in percentages when evidence was observed for Organization of Classroom (Characteristics 1-3), Instructional Design and Delivery (Characteristics 4-15), and Student Ownership of Learning (Characteristics 16-17).

Classroom Observation Data K-8 Schools			
Characteristics by Category			
School	1-3	4-15	16-17
Eliot	98%	74%	28%
Hurley	-	53%	-
Mission Hill	85%	85%	56%
Tobin	84%	72%	32%

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
		2006	2007	2008		
Eliot	ELA	Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	No Status
		All Subgroups	-	No	Yes	
	Math	Aggregate	-	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	-	No	Yes	
Hurley	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	No Status
		All Subgroups	No	Yes	Yes	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	-	Yes	Yes	
Mission Hill	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	No Status
		All Subgroups	-	Yes	Yes	
	Math	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	-	Yes	No	
Tobin	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Corrective Action
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	

School Profile

The principal stated that enrollment had increased to 300 students. In 2007–2008, the school was a grades K through 7 school. In 2008–2009, the school became a grades K through 8 school. Two Pre-K classrooms were established and the seventh grade students remained to become eighth grade students. This was the school’s first year as a grades K through 8 school.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

Evidence from documents, interviews and observations indicated that the school has made progress in achieving its goals listed in the action steps in the DPSI.

- **Increased support for SPED students:** The principal's first priority listed in the DPSI action steps was to acquire an additional resource room teacher for special education students. The deputy superintendent reviewed student IEP's and other documentation furnished by the school to justify the need, and in 2007–2008, the district provided additional support for the space. The principal assigned one resource teacher to work with K–4 students and the second resource teacher serviced grades 5–8.
- **Increased support for ELL students:** The school identified the need for an ESL tutor to work with ELL students in small group settings. Through Title I, the district funded an interventionist or tutor position for Readers' Intervention three days a week in grades K/1, 2/3, and 4/5. In these classrooms, the interventionist used a visual method to engage and support ELL and special education students. The review team observed the ELL tutor and found that students were engaged in the lesson. The principal told the review team that this position was unfunded in 2009–2010. The school previously identified the need for a full-time ESL coach; however, the assistant principal assumed this role. The principal said that she was building in-house capacity to meet ELL needs by having teachers participate in category 1 through 4 training and in the MELT program.
- **Improved programs for high performing grades 4 and 5 students:** The school created enrichment classes in ELA and mathematics for its high performing grade 4 and 5 students. The principal told the review team that, because of these enrichment classes, fewer students leave the school for advanced work classes.
- **Improved recruitment program to identify and hire quality teaching staff:** There was concern about the qualifications of teachers provided through the district teacher pool. The principal told the review team that the quality of some teachers in the excess pool was questionable, and when the district assigned a teacher from the pool, it often had a negative impact on the receiving school. Partially in response to this concern, the school created and trained a team of parents, teachers, and the principal for the purpose of

attending recruitment fairs and screening potential candidates to assure the hiring of highly qualified teachers who would meet the needs of the school. According to the principal, the school hired 11 new teachers in 2008–2009. The team screened new candidates for open positions. The screening process included having each candidate teach a sample lesson.

The school has implemented practices designed to improve student performance on the MCAS assessments. The school achieved AYP in all categories in 2008.

In 2008, the school made its AYP targets for ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for all subgroups. It also improved in its assessment, data analysis, and programming practices. Starting in the fall of 2008, the Eliot began using the Massachusetts Public School Performance (MPSP) formative assessments, aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The teachers interviewed in focus groups stated that they administered the MPSP in grades 5 through 8 in ELA and mathematics six times per year. The tests generated aggregate and subgroup data, which teachers used to inform instruction. Data from the assessments was provided to the school within 48 to 72 hours. In addition to MPSP, the school leaders and teachers also reviewed MCAS test DIBELS, and DRA results and used them to identify students' and curricular strengths, and weaknesses, monitor students' progress, form flexible groups in reading, and plan targeted instruction and support for struggling students.

The staff met in ELA and mathematics teams to review MPSP results identify topics to re-teach and recommend targeted tutoring for students in need. Teachers identified strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and developed action plans to address the gaps. Both enrichment and small group instruction have been implemented in response to the results of this process. The school also offered MCAS Boot Camp. Students attend on four Saturdays for targeted instruction in ELA and four Tuesdays for targeted instruction in mathematics.

The district has supported the school in the implementation of its actions steps.

School leaders stated that the district provided an additional special education resource teacher; an interventionist for ELL and special education classes, and a half-time mathematics coach. The Reading First grant funded a half-time literacy coach in grades K through 3/4, and CPS funds underwrote a half-time literacy coach for grades 5 through 8, and stipends for summer work for teachers. A combination of district and DESE funding supported the MPSP initiative. According to the principal, the budget was not adequate to sustain the coaching positions in 2009–2010.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Leadership monitors instruction.

Teachers in focus groups told the review team that the principal held them accountable for student achievement. The principal and assistant principal monitored instruction and were highly visible in the classrooms. They provided oral and written feedback to staff and checked in with the students to ensure that they were learning. Monitoring also centered on problems of practice. For example, monitoring identified the need for teachers to gradually transfer responsibility to students for their own learning by planning guided instruction and independent or group work entailing accountable talk. The ILT conducted learning walks to identify teachers' needs and the

school's problem of practice. Feedback from ILT visits was shared with all teachers at meetings and goals for the next steps were discussed.

The school used grants and developed local partnerships to support its students academically and emotionally.

The Eliot was one of several district schools that received Reading First funding. The grant provided funds for a literacy coach, professional development for staff, and reading materials for supporting the school's grades K through 3 reading program. The school provided students three levels of tiered intervention based on their assessed reading levels. Teachers provided differentiated instruction based on students' strengths and needs. Funding for the Reading First grant ended in 2008–2009 and the literacy coach position was not funded in the 2009–2010 district budget.

The school collaborated with the Italian Consulate's non-profit organization, Centro Attivita Scolastiche Italiane (CASIT). This non-profit offered grants for schools that establish Italian as a subject in the curriculum. The Eliot offered daily instruction in the Italian language at all grade levels. According to the school profile, the Eliot also had partnerships with Read Boston, the US Coast Guard, the New England Aquarium, the Berklee College of Music, Boston Cares, the Old North Church, the Paul Revere House and the North End Community Center

The school has implemented an effective formative assessment program that informs classroom instruction as well as the development of new intervention programs.

The school's formative assessment program, utilizing MPSP as well as other assessments, and process for analyzing and using data were previously described. Student academic performance had improved significantly. The Eliot met AYP in 2008 in aggregate and for all subgroups, after failing to meet AYP in aggregate and for all subgroups in 2007.

School Profile

The Hurley School was one of three Spanish-English dual language immersion schools in Boston. Beginning in the 1990's, the Hurley School offered two approaches to access the curriculum: an all-English option and a dual-language Spanish-English option. In 2006, the Boston School Committee voted to make the Hurley School exclusively bilingual by gradually extending its grade span from grades K through 5 to grades K through 8 and eliminating the all-English option. Beginning in the 2009–2010 school year, the Hurley would contain grades K through 8, and all students would be enrolled in the dual language immersion program learning all subjects in English one week with one teacher and all subjects in Spanish the next, usually with another teacher.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

During the current school year, the school has completed most action steps noted in the DPSI.

- **Increase school level control of the hiring process:** Because of the need to hire teachers familiar with bilingual programs with the proficiency to teach literacy and mathematics in English or in Spanish or in both languages, the school had more control of the hiring process.
- **Limit the number of special education programs and move to a full inclusion model:** This step was implemented and all specialists, including special education teachers were bilingual. There were still however two self-contained district special education classes for students with behavioral needs in grades K0 through 1 and K2 through 3
- **Stabilize student assignments:** This step was partially achieved because the dual language immersion curriculum attracted families committed to bilingual education. This and other factors, such as the school's small size, its active parent organization, and its improved facilities, contributed to stabilizing student assignments.
- **Retain strong teachers and identify teachers who need supervision:** School leaders had taken action to strengthen the quality of the teaching force including termination of underperforming probationary teachers within 90-days. Teachers in a focus group told the team that they received limited meaningful feedback from school leaders once they were perceived to be good teachers.
- **Hire an ESL tutor to work with English Language Learners (ELL) in small group settings:** This action step had not been implemented; however, school leaders said this was a technicality since the school instructed native Spanish speakers in two-way bilingual classes. At the time of the review, the school was awaiting an opinion on whether it met this state requirement.

- **Acquire a building substitute to facilitate teachers' participation in Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL):** The school hired a building substitute. Teachers and school leaders have visited other bilingual schools in the district and elsewhere. With financial support from its active parent group, a team of teachers and leaders from the school attended the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) Conference in 2008.

The Hurley School has implemented a number of additional instructional strategies not included in the DPSI to improve teaching and learning in both literacy and mathematics during the school day and after school.

At monthly meetings during the 2008 – 2009 school year, classroom teachers and teacher leaders developed curriculum maps in writing, mathematics, and language Arts in both English and Spanish. Teachers and teacher leaders, working with an intern from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, engaged in the process of LASW with a focus on student writing using protocols derived from Harvard's Project Zero research. Informally, teachers provided a Reading Recovery program in English classes for students in need of additional support. The school also provided instruction in mathematics after school for students in grades 3 and 4 who were at risk of scoring in the *Needs Improvement* category or below on MCAS tests.

The school had a part-time literacy coach to work with teachers from grades K through 2 on improving instruction using the CCL model. The literacy coach supported guided reading groups, assisted with curriculum mapping, and organized and facilitated literacy training for teachers. Because the school did not have a mathematics coach, the mathematics leadership team, composed of teacher leaders planned and supported instructional and curricular improvements in mathematics.

The principal has participated in leadership professional development provided by ESE.

The principal participated in the NISL training offered by ESE and said that it helped her develop instructional and strategic leadership skills. The assistant academic superintendent assigned to the school participated with the principal in this training.

In addition, both the principal and interim principal attended monthly networking meetings with the school's academic superintendent, assistant academic superintendent, and other elementary principals. The principal told the team that the academic superintendents helped her identify and address problems of practice and to use other principals within the principals' network as critical friends. The principal also participated in the district's monthly meetings with the superintendent, principals and headmasters. School leaders said that the academic superintendent was on site for a walk-through once during the 2008–2009 school year.

School leaders believed that the district did not provide adequate support to the school organizationally and programmatically as it transformed itself into a dual-language immersion school.

The principal and other school leaders expressed the need for more customized guidance and support from the district for schools seeking to develop a dual-language immersion program. Interviewees said that the district did not appreciate the difference between dual language and ELL programs and treated them as if they were the same.

According to teachers, there were opportunities for professional growth offered by the district; however, there was also insufficient district professional development for educators working in bilingual settings.

Teachers stated that there were a number of useful professional development courses and programs available to them and offered by the district. They went on to say that websites such as The Hub, MyBPS, and MyLearningPlan were useful planning tools for professional growth and development. Teachers had participated in Four Category training for ESL teachers and most were at the category three level. However, teachers participating in the teacher focus group cited lack of effective support from the district for teachers working in a dual-language immersion school. They explained that ESL offerings such as Four Category training, and MELA-O and MEPA certification training did not meet their needs.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

School leaders monitored the quality of instruction and classroom practices and the principal evaluated teachers' performance; however, teachers cited the need for additional informative and instructive feedback loops to further improve both their work and school culture.

School leaders stated that they supervised teachers in classroom visits and observations and through professional development. The principal and interim principal implemented district evaluation procedures according to the teachers' contract. School leaders also said that the principal focused supervision and evaluation on struggling teachers.

Teachers said that there were "overarching communication issues" in the school, explaining that discussions about instruction, core values, and student behavior were often dominated by school leaders. The teachers told the team that there had not been a full faculty meeting since the fall, and that the faculty needed to meet with school leaders more often to discuss topics and share ideas related to both academics and school culture. They also told the team that the school lacked an effective process and protocol to deal with "extreme behavior problems."

Although teachers have made progress in collecting and analyzing formative and summative assessment data to monitor student academic progress, guide curriculum development, and improve instruction, school leaders stated that more work was still needed for teachers to use data more effectively.

Teachers maintained classroom records of individual student achievement data including formative or benchmark data for literacy skill development in both English and Spanish, classroom assessments, MELA-O results, writing prompt grades, the DRA, the SRI, and benchmarked mid-year assessments. Teachers also maintained records of mathematics assessment data from pre- and end-of-unit classroom assessments provided by the district. These data were used at subject-level and grade-level meetings to track student progress, and identify trends. During data weeks conducted three times a year, teachers analyzed student achievement data and planned curricular and instructional modifications. Both school leaders and teachers told the team that although teachers had made considerable progress in interpreting and using student achievement data, they still needed more training.

The district has forged partnerships with a number of neighborhood and city-wide groups and institutions to improve infrastructure and school climate and enhance core values.

The school reached out to a number of groups and organizations locally and citywide. The School had partnerships with the New England Conservatory of Music; the Museum of Fine Arts; Generations, Inc; Northeastern University; Strong Women, Strong Girls; Big Brother and Big Sister; and Urban Voices. The non-profit organization “Neighborhood Parents for the Hurley” organized a fundraising effort involving The Browne Fund, The Boston Parks Department, City Year, The South End Land Trust, and The Hurley Blocks Neighborhood Association and raised \$500,000 to construct a state-of-the-art playground, plaza, amphitheater, landscaped garden and soccer field on school grounds.

There were multiple school-based opportunities for professional development to support school improvement.

In 2008–2009, the director of instruction and the literacy coach took the lead in planning and conducting monthly professional development sessions after school to develop literacy competency through more effective instructional practice. In addition to curriculum mapping, teachers engaged in sessions targeted for early elementary grades K through 2 and also for the upper grades 3 through 7. Topics in 2009–2010 included guided reading strategies, independent reading, buddy reading, word study and other vocabulary strategies, common writing assignments using BPS rubrics, and planning students’ transition from grade to grade.

School teachers and leaders noted that the ESE provided some useful opportunities and services, but more were needed.

Educators at the school agreed that a number of ESE programs and services had helped them as professionals. They cited the DESE website as a source of information about MCAS results, test items, writing samples, writing scoring rubrics, and data. They also said that ESE workshops on the MEPA and MELA-O were useful as well as a number of other workshops.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

During the current school year, the school made significant progress in implementing the action steps noted in the DPSI.

The school action plan was intended to improve student achievement in mathematics.

- **Increase mathematics instruction time to 70 minutes a day:** According to the principal and a review of class schedules, regular classroom instructional time had been increased to 60 minutes, with extra time allotted during the week for additional skill group instruction.
- **Augment Investigations and Connected Math Programs with other mathematics materials:** Teachers told the review team that the school used materials from the *Key Curriculum Press* for basic drill and practice. The *Vermont Exemplars*, aligned to state standards, was purchased in order to provide opportunities for students to develop skill in answering open-ended problems. Other supplementary programs included *Knowing Math*, which provided intervention strategies for students in grades 4 through 6. The purchase of the *Passport Program*, a computer based program, assisted teachers in assessing student needs.
- **Use student achievement data in order to implement flexible student groupings in mathematics:** Working as a team, teachers divided the school's 170 students into 15 mathematics groups based on assessment data. All of the school's teachers worked with a student group, twice weekly for 30 minutes over a 12 week period. In addition to in-school mathematics support, the school offered before school tutoring four days a week for middle school level students.
- **Professional development in mathematics is a priority:** In interviews, the review team was informed that professional development was planned in August when the staff met for five days. Professional development was also scheduled for each Tuesday during the school year from 3:45 PM until 5:15 PM, and a review of the Professional Development Calendar showed that six of these meetings were devoted to mathematics. In addition, the school had a mathematics focus team that met frequently, at various times during the year.
- **Support the partnership between school and families around mathematics instruction:** The school planned a series of family events including family conferences and family mathematics nights. The staff also included mathematics topics in the weekly newsletter distributed to all families.

The district is helpful in supporting the school’s efforts to improve student achievement.

The principal told the team that the district offered multi-tiered support. The superintendent provided opportunities for CPS school leaders to meet regularly to discuss the availability of supplemental services as well as the superintendent’s Accelerated Agenda. District assessment staff responded to requests for student assessment data and were helpful in providing subgroup data. The principal added that the chief accountability officer had been “incredibly helpful.” In addition, there was ongoing support from the Pilot School supervisor. Funding was also provided through a variety of grants. The principal said that funding for a mathematics coach and before school mathematics tutoring were most helpful.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school has implemented formal and informal ways to review and continually improve instruction.

There was a system for the formal review of teachers. Reviews were conducted by a teacher review and planning team. Under this system, teacher evaluation took place on three-year cycle. Peer review teams consisted of the teacher evaluated and two other teachers. The team planned a minimum of two observations, reviewed goals set by the teacher under evaluation, and held discussions with the teacher during the process. At the completion of the review period conducted from October through February, a rating of either satisfactory or unsatisfactory was given based on criteria that including classroom management, effective teaching, monitoring and assessment. Evaluation documents were then presented to the faculty council for review after which the team completed the BPS teacher evaluation form. All documentation was then submitted to the principal for final approval.

In focus groups, teachers stated that the school climate encouraged informal collaboration to improve instructional practices. Because of the trust fostered among teachers, they were not reluctant to ask colleagues for help in improving instructional areas of concern .Support could be in the form of a walk through by several teachers who focused on another teacher’s areas of concern. Teachers also spoke of the tradition of “just dropping into classrooms to visit” as a way to observe the teaching and learning process, and said that it improved their instructional practices. The principal was also very visible, and according to staff members visited classrooms daily. In an interview, the principal confirmed this, and said that when she identified instructional issues, she met with the teacher to discuss and resolve them.

Teachers enthusiastically described the Accomplished Practice Lab (APL) as still another way to improve instruction. APL occurred four times a year. During one of these times, teachers selected an area of instructional concern, and were videotaped in their classrooms. The teachers then met individually with and a small group of colleagues who viewed the tape and provided feedback on ways to improve instruction.

Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School has developed partnerships that contribute to its experiential education goal.

The school partnership with the Farm School, an organic dairy farm in Athol gave students an opportunity to actively participate in all areas of farming; a partnership with Tufts University mathematics teachers resulted in an Algebra camp offered to all middle school students.

The Y.M.C.A. ran after-school programs for students in grades K through 5 and Sociedad Latina provided programs after school for students in grades 6 through 8. Students also participated in community service through the School to Community Initiative (SCI), which placed them in internships in organizations around the Mission Hill community.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

Evidence from documents, interviews and observations indicated that the school has made progress in achieving its goals listed in the action steps in the DPSI.

- **Hiring and developing a staff experienced in the school’s curriculum:** All new hires had to demonstrate expertise and strength in the *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* mathematics program and the ELA balanced literacy approach. The school provided teachers access to district professional development sessions on the *Investigations* program. Hosted at the Tobin School, these training sessions were held after school and on weekends.
- **Departmentalized instruction for mathematics and ELA in grades 4 and 5:** The purpose of the departmentalization was to allow teachers to focus on specific content to improve curriculum knowledge, skills and pedagogical strategies. Departmentalization was abandoned in grade 4 in January 2009 because there had been no improvement in student performance.
- **Five-year Full Service School Plan for the Tobin:** The plan included after school and summer school mathematics intervention and support for ELL students. The organizational structure included several components: family engagement, learning assessment and evaluation, extended learning and services, mental health and health services. These and other services were provided through the school and its partner’s including Brigham and Women’s Hospital, City Year, Sociedad Latina, Children’s Hospital and others.
- **Increased support for ELL students:** The school had increased the number of ESL teachers from 1.5 FTE’s to 5.0. According to interviews with the principal, assistant principal, and director of instruction, three additional teachers participated in the MELT program and applied for dual certification. The staff also participated in category 4 training in 2009. The school had a language acquisition team. This team was responsible for ensuring the school complied with state regulations on ELL students. The team also helped teachers differentiate instruction for ELL and FLNE students.
- **Implementation of leadership structures and school-wide management policies:** The principal created capacity within the school to enact systematic change. Examples of this included the development of teacher leaders, the creation of an ILT, and the creation of mathematics leadership, language acquisition, and grade level teams. The role of teacher leaders was to facilitate grade level meetings with the director of instruction.
- **Weekly learning walks:** The principal, assistant principal, and the director of curriculum of instruction visited five classrooms each weekly. Three of the learning walks were formal and reduced to writing. Administrators spent up to fifteen minutes in a classroom and met weekly as a team to discuss their observations. The principal told the team that administrators also initiated informal peer learning walks.

The school is in the process of creating curriculum maps.

According to the principal, the school was in the second year of using teacher leaders to assist with instructional leadership in the school. These teacher leaders led the curriculum mapping process under the supervision of the director of instruction. The mapping process in grades K0 through 8 identified power standards teachers needed to address in the classroom, and gaps in the curriculum. It was also used to facilitate horizontal and vertical alignment of curricular content at each grade level. Funding support for this process was provided by ESE.

The district has supported the school in the implementation of its action steps as well as support from ESE to improve student achievement at the school.

Leaders provided the following examples of ongoing district support of the school: support from the school's academic superintendent in conducting learning walks; Category 4 training for teachers; Title I funding for a half-time ESL teacher; support for dual certification in ESL for teachers; a mathematics coach position at grades K through 5; two literacy coaches funded through the Reading First grant; and principal participation in NISL..

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Instruction is monitored in the classrooms; however, impending budget cuts may affect the level of monitoring of day-to-day instruction.

The principal told the team that she had 11 years experience as a principal and had been at the Tobin K-8 School for six years. In addition to formal observations, the administrative team piloted learning walks in 2007–2008 to get a sense of the state of instruction and learning. These learning walks continued in 2008–2009. The principal, assistant principal, and the director of curriculum and instruction each visited five classrooms weekly. Administrators stayed up to fifteen minutes and meet as a team weekly to discuss their observations. The principal told the review team that they met with the teachers and provided oral and written feedback within two to three days of the visit. Although they have tried informal peer learning walks, they do not have a protocol.

The school has used grants and several other funding sources to support its students academically, socially, and emotionally. Local hospitals, colleges and museums are rich resources for the school.

The school was one of several district schools that received Reading First funding. The grant provided funds for a literacy coach, professional development for teachers, and reading materials for supporting the school's grades K through 3 reading program. The three levels of tiered instruction based on assessed student levels allowed differentiated instruction targeting identified areas of weakness. The literacy coach provided professional development for teachers and helped them provide effective instruction by incorporating guided reading and writing practice. Teachers in the focus group stated that they participated in a Reading First summer workshop.

The school maintained partnerships with the Isabella Gardner Museum, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Wheelock College, Bell Foundation, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Sociedad Latina, City Year, Supplemental Educational Services and others. These partners provided a variety of resources and funding, including mental and health care services, enrichment and academic programs for students as well as professional development for teachers.

School leaders, coaches and teachers collect and analyze school achievement data to plan, improve and monitor student achievement.

School leaders, coaches and teachers had the skills to analyze and use student achievement data. The school used formative assessments in ELA and mathematics to track student performance. In ELA, the school used the following: DIBELS, Running Records using TRC, the GRADE, and Open Response Notebooks to assess and monitor student achievement. Teachers met with their coaches to analyze student data and discuss the impact their instruction had on student learning and to plan next steps for instructional improvement. For example, teachers developed a plan to improve students' literacy skills. This plan included weaknesses, strengths, data-based needs, next steps for the classroom teacher, next steps for the interventionist, other support services, and recommendations for parents and students for at home work.

The principal has put school leadership systems in place; however, the school will lose personnel for the 2009–2010 school year who are an integral part of the school's reform efforts due to budget cuts. These cuts will affect the school's ability to provide support to students and staff.

The principal set up systems of vertical and horizontal communication and collaboration with the staff. Team based leadership structures were in place such as the ILT, the language acquisition team, the mathematics leadership team, the Reading First team, the student support team, grade level teams, and teacher leaders. The principal also had an assistant principal, a director of curriculum and instruction, a manager of extended learning and services, a family center coordinator to assist her in the day-to-day operation of the school. The administrative team, principal, assistant principal, and director of curriculum and instruction monitored instruction and provided feedback to teachers. The assistant principal, student support coordinator, mathematics coach, literacy coach, two specialty teachers - early grade interventionist, and a resource-based interventionist were not budgeted for 2009–2010. The principal told the team that a business partner would fund the assistant principal position, but budget reductions would result in the loss of important coaching and intervention resources.

Middle Schools (6–8)

Student Demographics Middle (6–8) Priority Schools										
	African Amer.	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native Amer.	Multi-Race, Non Hisp.	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Total Enrollment
Edwards Middle	26.0%	18.6%	41.4%	11.9%	0.8%	1.3%	23.6%	32.1%	89.4%	377
Frederick Middle	52.7%	1.1%	41.4%	3.8%	0.2%	0.9%	22.0%	25.6%	85.9%	640
Gavin Middle	46.6%	8.6%	29.1%	14.6%	0.2%	0.9%	13.1%	38.2%	86.5%	431
Irving Middle	35.3%	3.5%	48.2%	11.0%	0.3%	1.7%	16.2%	27.2%	84.8%	637
King Middle	68.9%	1.7%	24.8%	2.1%	0.4%	1.7%	6.7%	31.9%	84.5%	238
Lewis Middle	58.5%	0.0%	37.7%	1.7%	1.7%	0.4%	7.2%	32.6%	90.7%	236
Mildred Ave.	79.7%	0.9%	17.0%	1.1%	0.5%	0.5%	19.0%	28.1%	80.3%	552
Wilson Middle	75.3%	1.7%	18.0%	3.4%	0.3%	1.4%	17.1%	28.1%	82.0%	356

The following table describes in percentages when evidence was observed for Organization of Classroom (Characteristics 1–3), Instructional Design and Delivery (Characteristics 4–15), and Student Ownership of Learning (Characteristics 16–17).

Classroom Observation Data – Middle Schools			
Characteristics by Category			
School	1–3	4–15	16–17
Edwards MS	100%	79%	33%
Frederick MS	88%	62%	39%
Gavin MS	36%	32%	-
Irving MS	90%	72%	42%
King MS	88%	64%	19%
Lewis MS	91%	67%	4%
Mildred Ave. MS	88%	60%	22%
Wilson MS	75%	51%	26%

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
			2006	2007	2008	
Edwards Middle	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	Yes	
	Math	Aggregate	No	Yes	Yes	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Frederick Middle	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Gavin Middle	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Irving Middle	ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
King Middle	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Lewis Middle	ELA	Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Mildred Ave.	ELA	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Corrective Action - Subgroups
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Wilson MS	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school was able to implement some of the specific action steps to improve student achievement.

- **Control over the hiring process:** In an interview with the principal appointed in 2007, the team was told that the hiring process continued to be a problem. However, some steps had been taken to alleviate the problematic teacher assignment process. The principal had actively recruited staff by requesting that individual teachers be assigned to the school. This had resulted in fewer teachers being assigned from the Excess Pool who might not be a good fit for the school.
- **Limit the number of SPED programs:** The principal stated that the school had not reduced or limited its SPED programs; adding that SPED and ELL support were inadequate. However, despite the need for additional support, the principal told the team that teachers were able to provide “high quality lessons” for all students. He told the team that the Boston Public Schools allotted the same amount per pupil for special education as for regular education students
- **Recruit and hire additional ELL teachers:** This had not been completed, although the school was making progress in this area. An interviewee stated that there were “lots of ELL students in the school” and it was important that they have teachers with both appropriate content knowledge and ELL competency. At this time, teachers had completed categories 2 and 3 of SEI training.
- **Control or stabilize student assignments:** According to the principal, the school was the “most chosen school” in Boston. However, this was not always the case. Up until a few years ago, the school did not have a good reputation because of low student performance and neighborhood safety issues. Gradually, scores improved, due in part to expanded learning time and an emphasis on improving achievement. At the time of this review, the Edwards was the highest performing middle school in the district. Many parents learned of the school’s performance, and hoped to place their children in the school. In 2008–2009, there were 243 applicants for 80 openings. During the 2008–2009 school year, students entered from 17 different elementary schools in the district. There is was no entrance cut-off date, and students could enter the school at anytime during the year.

To improve student achievement in literacy and mathematics, the school has implemented additional strategies not included in the DPSI.

The school’s expanded learning time grant provided ample time to implement a variety of strategies to improve student achievement. The regular school day ended at 1:35 p.m., but students could remain at school until 4:15 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays. The schedule

provided an additional hour of targeted instruction in either mathematics or ELA at the end of the regular school day. Students proficient in both domains were eligible for additional instruction in science.

Expanded learning time included “Math League,” a one hour math intervention period for all students, with a focus on student weaknesses identified through teacher examination of student achievement data. Additionally, a mathematics skills tutor was available. The principal referred to the mathematics skills program as “powerful.” During this time, students could also hone skills using computer programs accessible in the computer lab. Unlike math targeted instruction, ELA targeted instruction did not include all students.

After academic instruction, the remaining expanded learning time was devoted to extra-curricular activities. The visiting team observed students engaged in sports, band, sewing, step dancing, and rehearsals for the annual school musical. According to the principal, there was a director who planned all the extra curricular activities, resulting in a well-structured program, rather than one that is “catch as catch can.”

In addition to expanded learning time, the school provided academic instruction during school vacations. During the February vacation, the focus was on ELA, and during the April vacation, the focus was on mathematics. In 2008–2009, 160 students were invited to attend, and 100 students completed the program.

Teachers in a focus group discussed the role assessment played in planning for instruction. To determine student needs, mathematics assessments were administered every five weeks. Mathematics teachers broke each mathematics textbook syllabus down by standards, aligning the curriculum with the standards. In addition, there were whole school initiatives in ELA, such as using annotation as an instructional learning tool in all content areas. Teachers stressed that a high level of collaboration existed, and that best practices and strategies were shared at department meetings. To further improve instruction, there were monthly teacher demonstration lessons, with all teachers having an opportunity to participate. Professional development activities took place on Fridays after students were dismissed at 11:45 a.m. Teachers remained until 2:10 p.m. During this time, the instructional leadership team worked with teachers and the principal, providing appropriate professional development.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The use and analysis of data at the school varies in its effectiveness.

The principal’s use of data included a thorough review of MCAS and other assessment data to target instruction and improve student achievement, and a mathematics profile of each student displayed in his office. The profile card provided information about the student’s mathematics proficiency level. These profile cards were arranged in an ascending to help staff identify at a glance the students needing the most help. The principal was in the process of developing the same type of information for each of the school’s subgroups. In an interview, the principal said that getting teachers to use data was a “work in progress,” but that “teachers were taking to it.” In a focus group, teachers said that they had previously analyzed MCAS data to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses. Because the formative assessments were administered more frequently and scored more quickly they now had “real time data,” to help them plan instruction

to meet individual student needs. They told the team that they had also received training in data analysis.

The school leadership has been highly successful in developing partnerships with a variety of groups.

The school had partnerships with Partners Citizen Schools, Keane, Inc., Boston University, Lead Boston, EdVestors, Writer's Express, Boston College, EF Education, Westfield Capital Management, Harvard University, Berklee School of Music, Crossroads for Kids, Social Venture Partners, Charlestown MGH, Charlestown Boys and Girls Clubs, VHI's Bring Back the Music, and Bunker Hill CC.

The principal said that although fundraising was challenging, he has been able to involve a number of individuals and groups in providing funds. Recently, Keith Lockhart, Conductor of the Boston Pops, became involved with the school and raised \$7,000.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school has substantially accomplished the action steps outlined in the DPSI.

- **Development of partnerships with community organizations:** The principal and teachers described approximately 40 partnerships with local community organizations that provide important academic and social services to Frederick students. Significant grants included matching grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and grants from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Home for Little Wanderers, who also supported counseling (6.4 FTE) for students, some of whom had experienced major trauma. The school had about 30 Somali students, and social worker interns of Somali descent from Boston Children’s Hospital worked with them. L’Alianza Hispania provided an after school program of tutoring and recreation for 50 to 60 Latino children. The Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention (Aspire) ran an after school program of academic and homework support, recreation, and counseling for approximately 70 at risk children. Other programs were sponsored by Tenacity (tennis and literacy), Metro Lacrosse, Massachusetts College of Art, and the United Way. Additionally, there was 7:30 a.m. basketball at the school.
- **Appoint 1.5 FTE mentors to support new teachers:** The school had 12 new teachers in 2008–2009, and two part-time mentors to work with them.
- **School organizational shift:** This step has been successfully accomplished. When it opened in 2003, the school created four academies, each under its own leader. To reduce the autonomy of the academies and to create more consistency, the school replaced the academy leaders with teacher leaders in 2009, with the principal and her assistant in charge of hiring and evaluations. Teacher leaders do peer-to-peer observations, teach part-time, manage daily activities of the academies, and facilitate some content team meetings. This more centralized leadership structure has created better collaboration among staff and the development of school policies. Examples included school-wide rubrics, and school-wide sharing of best practices. An in-house classroom walk-through protocol for peer-to-peer visits was developed, and teachers said that they highly valued sharing best practices with each other. Special education teachers reported that they were better able to connect with other teachers under the new structure.

The school has implemented several formative assessments and technological instructional aids to promote differentiated instruction and collaboration on best practices.

Another proposed action step was to implement several formative assessments and technological instructional aids. These included the Literacy 2014 Plan; expanding the school’s Edtech focus; and implementing differentiated reading and mathematics support using Achieve 3000, My Access, FASTT Math (Fluency and Automaticity through Systematic Teaching with Technology), and SAM (Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model). Reviewers observed technology in

classrooms, particularly to differentiate instruction, and students appeared to be engaged and feeling successful with these activities. Some of the proposed instructional aids were not meeting the school's needs: My Access and SAM (student videos) were not used. Others have been useful, including FASTT Math, which helped students with poor computational skills; SRI on line, which provided immediate assessment results to identify students requiring intervention; and Study Island, which individualized mathematics instruction. Professional development was offered to teachers on some technology related interventions: Lexia, System 44 (similar to SRA), SRI online, and Read About, used in grade 6 reading instruction. In grades 7 and 8, teachers used Achieve 3000 to adjust assigned articles to student's reading levels, resulting in a full year's increase in SRI scores from September to December. Teachers also used Achieve to provide students with information on their current understanding of content material, to create intervention groups in grade 6, and to re-group students each week. In both ELA and mathematics, teachers developed school-wide rubrics for open responses and other modes of writing.

Other than district-wide support to all Boston schools, district and ESE activities have had a minimal effect on improving student achievement in the school.

Staff members reported that district professional development offerings were often inconvenient because of the late end to the school day, but that Saturdays worked well. The principal found that the Pilot school network and the support from the Assistant Superintendent for Pilot Schools were more helpful than district-wide professional development for administrators. She cited a need for training in all four categories of ELL for school staff. Teachers found in-house professional development and collaboration with each other particularly helpful, such as the August professional development and planning sessions, morning Literacy and Bagels, and Bagels and Laptop sharing sessions. The district's technology support was also helpful.

State grants had helped fund part-time coaches for teachers, and may be used to continue funding for the Achieve program. Overall, targeted district and state supports to improve the school have been minimal.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school has developed effective ways to monitor instruction. The principal and her assistant monitor and evaluate instruction formally. They also use teacher colleagues to monitor each other collaboratively through coaching, teacher leader and peer observations, co-teaching, and model lessons.

As noted above, the school depended on the principal and her assistant for hiring and evaluations, and encouraged peer observations and informal sharing among teachers to help improve instruction. Teacher leaders did peer observations, co-taught and modeled lessons. Teachers voiced enthusiasm for this collaborative approach, and commented on how much they learned from each other about effective practices. Teachers also received support and feedback from consultants and a part-time literacy coach.

The school makes use of technology to disaggregate data immediately, allowing teachers to reflect on their teaching and to adjust instruction in a timely manner.

Examples of technology used by the school included DIBELS online, Study Island in mathematics, and Achieve. Teachers told the team that they assigned quarterly writing prompts, and used them in sessions where teachers collaboratively looked at student work. Reviewers observed the use of MCAS mathematics and ELA open response exemplars. Teachers said that they reviewed MCAS test results in August and used them to plan instruction for the year. To review content and prepare for testing, academies instituted MCAS preparation programs called “MCAS Boot Camp” and “MCAS Spring Training.” The mathematics team developed quarterly and mid-year benchmarks.

The new leadership structure in the school is effectively supporting an improved school climate and an emphasis on student learning.

Teachers, and the principal, commented on improvements in the climate and discipline in the school. One team member, who had visited the school in 2003, confirmed the improvement in school climate. Students wore uniforms and were led by their teachers in single file through the hallways from class to class, with dismissal times staggered to reduce congestion in the corridors. The principal stated that the school opened “in a hurry” in 2003, and students were angry, staffing was unstable, and the building wasn’t ready. Now, students understood the rules and followed them, expectations were consistent, and safety was no longer a concern. Team members found engaged and serious students, mutual respect in classrooms, and orderly behavior in the hallways between classes.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school had little control over accomplishment of the action steps listed in the DPSI.

For the most part, the school's action steps represented changes the school hoped the district would authorize, and which might make the improvement of student achievement a more manageable goal. However, the school could do little to make the action steps occur.

- **Enhance staff stability through selective reduction in school size:** Administrators reported that with the increase in the grades K through 8 school configurations, middle school enrollments declined. The school had no control over these enrollment shifts within the district.
- **More control over the hiring process:** Although the school was a Commonwealth Priority School, it was subject to the same contractual agreements as all other Boston schools. Union rules required that schools select their new teachers from the pool of veteran teachers whose positions had been eliminated in other schools. No special concessions were made for schools in restructuring. This was not a situation the school could control.
- **Limit the number of SPED programs/prototypes in a given school:** The school had no success in achieving this for 2009, but it received word that the district would limit the types of special education programs assigned to the school in 2010.
- **Control or stabilize student assignments:** In previous years, some of the rising grade 6 students who listed the school as their chosen middle school were sent to other middle schools where enrollment was declining. While this happened for the 2009 school year, the superintendent indicated that students who elected to attend a specific middle school would be allowed to do so for the 2010 school year. Staff at the school took little credit for this change.
- **Increase funding for the library:** The principal reported that he directed a small amount of extra funding to the library, but his hope was that his budget would have allowed him to do significantly more.

In its action steps, the school expressed a need for district intervention to alleviate challenges. None of the action steps involved instructional interventions that administrators and teachers might have implemented to improve low student achievement. In selecting particular steps, the school demonstrated limited insight into which steps might be effective in improving student achievement.

Classroom observation data indicate problems with the quality of classroom learning at the school.

Team members made observations in 14 classrooms, six in ELA, six in mathematics, and two in science. They recorded whether there was solid evidence of a particular characteristic, partial evidence, or no evidence. Data from these observations indicate substantial evidence of an absence of activities characteristic of positive learning environments. In 9 out of the 14 classrooms, the team found no evidence of “respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse.” In 11 out of 14, there was no evidence that the teacher “paces the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged.” In 10 out of 14, they found no evidence that “students articulate their thinking and reasoning.” In 11 out of 14, the team found no evidence that teachers were using “on-the-spot formative assessments [to] check for understanding to inform instruction.”

The absence of respectful behavior, student engagement, extended student responses, and use of checks for understanding created a picture of classrooms where little learning was occurring. Without an orderly, respectful environment, many students were only marginally involved in the instructional activities. The absence of effective classroom management in a large number of classrooms constituted a barrier to the improvement of student achievement.

The school undertook several promising instructional initiatives.

In line with the superintendent’s initiative to have students college-ready by graduation, the school prepared to offer an algebra course to some grade 8 students in 2009. The district provided the future algebra teacher with professional development, and helped secure grant funding to support two related summer programs at the school, one for rising grade 8 students enrolled in algebra for the following year and one for rising grade 8 students receiving traditional mathematics instruction. There were no data yet on the success of these algebra programs. Additionally, the mathematics coach worked with teachers during the 2008 – 2009 school year to develop students’ metacognitive skills.

In the winter of 2009, the principal placed a focus on formative assessments. According to him, the district formative assessments in mathematics and ELA did not provide teachers with the information needed to improve instruction. Weekly professional development time was used by subject area teams to develop a school level set of formative assessments. With the assessments only recently under development, there were no data on resulting improved student achievement. Also, it was unclear how the school’s efforts meshed with the district’s movement toward adoption of district-wide common formative assessments.

The school demonstrated its openness to improvement by volunteering to participate in the academic superintendent’s learning walks. Thirty-five principals from across the district observed classrooms and responded to three guiding questions concerning formative assessments, which was the school’s problem of practice. At the conclusion of this exercise, the school was left with raw responses from participating principals and administrators, and members of the school’s ILT were in the midst of making sense of the data. It was too early to tell whether this activity helped the school improve student achievement.

The school undertook a number of initiatives to improve student achievement, but most were in the initial stages. As a result, there was no data concerning the success of these programs.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Few conditions are in place to continue to support student achievement.

Opportunities to learn in classrooms were significantly compromised by pervasive classroom management issues. Teachers were aware of, and frustrated by, the problem and administrators less so. At the time of the review, no school-wide programs were in place to address classroom management issues. Addressing the low-level, but consistent pattern, of distracting student behavior would require a sustained effort by both administrators and teachers.

The school had recently begun developing a system of formative assessments. This initiative has possibilities, but appeared to be a long way from completion. However, in the past, the school demonstrated little capacity to adjust instruction based on assessment data that was already available. For example, 2008 MCAS results indicated that students with disabilities failed the mathematics assessment at the rate of 92 percent in grade 6, 83 percent in grade 7, and 86 percent in grade 8. Teachers in the focus group reported that teachers did not look at subgroup achievement by race or disability when they reviewed and analyzed MCAS test results.

Finally, the school leadership put large amounts of energy into programs they later abandoned as ineffective. In September 2007, the principal and a small group of dedicated teachers created SAM (Scaffolding Apprenticeship Model), which involved informing students about areas they had not mastered, to be followed by cycles of intervention with these students. A great deal of attention was devoted to the development of supporting documents, such as student mastery logs and assessments to determine mastery. Then in January 2009, teachers decided that middle school was too late in a student's career to bring him or her up-to-date on areas he or she had not mastered; instead, the focus needed to be on what was happening in the classrooms. At this point, SAM leadership turned its focus to developing formative assessments. It was unclear how effective this new effort would be. Administration also decided that teachers involved with SAM would be more effective if they operated inside the already existing leadership structure, the ILT. However, teachers reported that the ILT was not functioning well.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school has made progress in implementing the action steps outlined in the DPSI.

- **Integrate curricula to develop student performance, stamina and other skills in the school's reading and writing program with the intention of boosting MCAS performance:** This was a proposed action step because students left many open response questions blank on the MCAS test. ELA teachers reported that classes began with 20 minutes of silent reading each day, and students wrote one or two sentences about what they have read. Teachers developed common writing assignments. All content areas had identified improved open response scores as a performance goal, with ELA classes working on this on Mondays, science on Tuesdays, social studies on Wednesdays, and mathematics on Thursdays. Teachers reported that they focused on asking students to explain their answers in mathematics, social studies, and science – a practice team members observed in classrooms. Mathematics teachers said that they assigned more open response and multi-step problems, and exemplars from previous MCAS questions to show students how they were scored.
- **Use the math coach to improve math teachers' instructional skills and to design mathematical lessons related to student experiences:** According to teachers, the math coach met with them weekly. They worked in a collegial way to demonstrate lessons, plan curriculum, do peer observations, and discuss assessments and student work. Teachers described a modified CCL process, where they chose a partner and conducted peer observations. All mathematics teachers were willing to participate. In addition, a school-wide mathematics rubric for open responses was developed.
- **Focus ELA meetings on the use of rubrics and exemplars in instruction:** According to teachers, they developed rubrics called I-REST for writing, and READ for reading. Upon implementation of these rubrics, teachers found that students were providing clearer ELA statements or theses. In meetings, teachers looked at student work and worked to use the rubrics effectively. Teachers also showed students examples of MCAS responses scored as 1, 2, 3, or 4 to help them understand what proficient and advanced work looked like. Teachers observed fewer blank open responses on the 2009 MCAS.

District and ESE support to the school has been effective, providing coaching for teachers, after school tutoring for students, and ELL training for teachers.

The principal said that his academic superintendent visited the school every other month, walked through classes with him, and also visited a LASW (Looking at Student Work) session. The district provided a part-time language acquisition coach as well as ELA and mathematics coaches. Funding for the school was adequate, with good building maintenance and additional funding becoming available as needs arose. Teachers reported that they were participating in the

Summer Bridge program to get Algebra I content into the eighth grade. Nearly all teachers received Category 1 and 2 training in ELL last year, with several previously trained at Category 3.

The school received additional funding from ESE: targeted assistance funds of \$25,000 and used it for technology in 2008. In June 2009 \$11,000 was used for professional development. The school had an after school SES program for approximately 60 students, and Title I mathematics and reading tutoring for 20 students. Teachers stated that the school received a Secondary Reading grant for grade 6 students, and that they used Read 180; however, 2008–2009 was the last year of the grant. The school also worked on an extended day proposal, although it was not funded. Finally, grade 6 and 7 teachers prepared a proposal for an exhibition night, and the principal obtained some grant funding for it.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Administrators, coaches, and peer teachers have monitored instruction in the school.

The principal and two assistant principals visited classes and performed evaluations. As noted above, the academic superintendent walked through classes during his visits to the school. The mathematics and ELA coaches conducted peer observations and provided feedback to teachers, offering suggestions for improvement. As described above, mathematics teachers participated in peer-to-peer observations, and teachers indicated an interest in extending the model to ELA next year.

Processes to utilize data are being established, and a collaborative effort around data use is in place.

Teachers and coaches used assessment data to focus discussion on teaching and to adjust the curriculum. There was little use of formative assessment data to differentiate instruction. Teachers said that they received MCAS data in cluster meetings with the principal, and discussion occurred about developing a focus on classroom instruction. Recent examples of focal points included emphasis on open responses, rubrics, exemplars, and the expectation that students should explain their work in mathematics.

The school administered the SRI and the GRADE in 2008 – 2009. The SRI was used to establish reading levels at the beginning of the year, and was administered again at the end of the year to measure student progress. The faculty did not get GRADE results until January, and were unable to use the assessment effectively or formatively. Mathematics teachers used district mid-module, module, mid-year and final assessments; the RISO data system was used to score assessments and analyze data. ELA teachers developed their own mid-year and final assessments.

Other than the SRI to identify reading levels, the staff did not describe formative assessments or technology to help differentiate instruction.

The leadership of the building has taken steps to improve instruction, but the climate in the building needs improvement.

The principal noted that several staff members have been replaced, and that the building climate has improved over the past few years. When the principal began working at the school, he found that some teachers were not teaching effectively. New staff members, however, were more flexible. The principal stated that he rarely went into a classroom now and found ineffective instruction. He and his ILT have the sense that the school was “going in the right direction,” and that teachers were invested in student learning. Teachers had prepared curriculum maps and notebook systems, which they expected would remain in place after the principal left. It was expected that the first professional development session in 2009–2010 would focus on school programs: discussing and determining what works and what does not. On the other hand, team members found little supervision in the hallways between classes, and students often took awhile to settle down at the beginning of classes.

The school has partnered with community organizations to augment its educational and social services to students.

The principal and faculty described partnerships with many community organizations, some of which offered after school programs for students. The Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention served 50 students after school. The Roslindale Community Center offered sports, art, and some tutoring. The Citizens School served 100 students with homework support and recreation. Arbor House provided 10 students with mental health services. The principal said that the school had no partnerships with local universities and no private grants.

School Profile

The school is to be reorganized in 2009, combining with the Dickerman Elementary School to become a K – 8 school.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

As outlined in the DPSI, the school has partially accomplished its action steps in 2009.

- **Adopt a new schedule to include content area common planning time:** According to the principal and ILT members, the schedule was changed, accommodating common planning time for grade level teachers; however, content meetings were held after school and during professional development time. Teachers also met with ELA and math coaches after school.
- **Team inclusion – special education teachers with regular education teachers to reduce the isolation of special education students and programs:** Interviewees reported that some grade 6 and 8 teachers participated in team classes with special education teachers, with adjustments made to accommodate union objections and personalities. Visiting team members observed some team teaching classes. Team teaching was planned for grade 7 in 2009–2010.
- **Provide training on supervision, evaluation, and the scheduling of collaborative walkthroughs:** Teachers reported that ILT members were trained in the learning walk process, and that teachers were scheduled to present what they had learned in late May 2009. Some ELA teachers participated in a CCL process with the ELA coach, where Reader’s and Writer’s Workshops were emphasized in walkthroughs. Teachers told the team that they shared practices and supported each other during this process.

The school and teachers used MCAS and other assessments to measure achievement and to modify instruction, and some scores indicated improvement. Team members did not observe the use of formative data to differentiate instruction.

Teachers told the team that they moved many students from *Failing* to *Needs Improvement* status, and that scores showed some improvement, especially in grades 5 and 6 ELA and grades 6 and 8 mathematics. Teachers used item analysis reports and special education breakdowns to determine weaknesses, and said that additional attention to school-wide writing prompts was effective. Grade 8 students were targeted to work on analyzing errors in preparation for the 2009 MCAS. After analyzing data, teachers said that they developed rubrics. Students used these rubrics to check their own and others’ work.

The school also administered the GRADE in September and May to measure student progress; however, the district would drop this assessment in 2009–2010 in favor of a new assessment

program. Regarding district benchmarks, mathematics teachers administered the unit, and mid-term and final assessments in mathematics to check student achievement.

District and ESE support to the school has generally been comparable to that given to all district schools, and has been inadequate to realize meaningful improvements in achievement.

The district provided a number of supports to its schools, including ELA and mathematics coaching, professional development offerings, and social and academic counseling for at risk students. Teachers participated in a 2008 retreat to discuss the MCAS test and to plan for the year. Teachers were particularly appreciative of these services. However, due to budgetary reasons, some services, especially coaching, were to be cut in 2009–2010.

The SES program provided after school tutoring. Title I provided services to students needing remediation during school hours. State grants helped with professional development programs, including providing a consultant to work with staff on transitioning to a grades K through 8 school. ESE Transitional Assistance to Commonwealth Priority Schools was spread thinly: approximately \$12,000 was available to the school for 2009 to be expended by the new principal of the combined school.

The principal received little support as a first year principal of a Commonwealth Priority School. She did not take part in NISL training or participate in meetings with other Commonwealth Priority Schools. The principal found support from other district meetings, and from her academic superintendent, helpful.

The school partners with 27 local organizations which provide additional academic and social support to students.

The King 10 program used 10 teachers to mentor students. The school also worked with other community partners to offer special programs: counseling outside of school, out of Harms Way, and Big Cheese Reads (featuring visiting readers). Additionally, the school worked with DSS, and violence prevention was offered as a specialty class during school hours.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school is in the developmental stage of using learning walk protocols and teaching collaborations.

As noted above, training on supervision and walkthroughs was a proposed action step in the DPSI, and the school's ILT members were trained. ELA teachers used a CCL model in which they shared, supported each other, and worked with the ELA coach. An emphasis was placed on effective instruction in Reader's and Writer's Workshops.

The leadership necessary to support improvement is dependent on the structure and administration of the reorganized K–8 school.

As stated in the profile, the school was scheduled to combine with an elementary school to form a grades K through 8 school on a different site in 2009–2010. The district was preparing for the transition period, much of it to be funded by ESE Targeted Assistance. According to the MOU, the district intended to hold summer planning retreats, and to prepare WSIPs for newly merged schools.

School Profile

In the fall of 2009, the George Lewis Middle School will merge with the Higginson Elementary School to become a K–8 school. According to the principal, teachers cross-visited during and after school. The school will become two strands, and possibly three strands in the future. The principals met weekly to discuss the transition.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

The school has made some progress in implementing its action plan steps to improve student achievement.

- **Mathematics instruction and coaching:** One of the challenges the school faced was the re-deployment of the mathematics coach to a superintendent school. The principal arranged to have a consultant from Northeastern University’s Math Power program continue as the 2008 – 2009 mathematics coach. The mathematics coach told the review team that she shared the coaching responsibilities with another Math Power consultant. They provided coaching every Tuesday to mathematics and resource teachers. Coaches spent 45 minutes to an hour in each class modeling, co-teaching and observing classroom instruction. They helped teachers implement the Connected Mathematics (CMP) units, paced mathematics instruction, and designed and administered assessments. Furthermore, they worked with teachers on how best to check student understanding in the last investigation units. Teachers used the information to re-teach the areas not well understood by students.
- **Establishment of a data team and a focus on data:** According to the principal, data analysis did not go beyond identifying strengths, weaknesses and trends. According to interviews with the mathematics coach and a teacher focus group the use of data depended on the individual teacher, with no consistent, school-wide processes in place such as improving on using accountable talk and group work. Teachers used exit slips and quick quizzes to assess student learning. Additionally, teachers were subject divided, with no counterpart in their grade level and no common planning time by subject. This reduced the ability to have discussions on data and its implications for student learning and achievement.

The district supported the school in its implementation of action steps, and received support from ESE to improve student achievement. Literacy coaching was inconsistent.

Because of decreasing enrollment at the school, the district reduced the special education population by removing two special education classes. This maintained an equitable distribution of special education students among schools. In 2008–2009, the school had four LAB classes servicing 36 students.

The school lacked a permanent literacy coach. The principal said that because he had been unable to fill the position, he used funds to pay a coach from another school. However, that support was extremely limited. The mathematics coach worked for Math Power and, according to the principal and staff, mathematics coaching was a valuable resource.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Instruction was monitored; however, feedback to staff was limited and perceived as negative.

The principal told the review team that he had 25 years experience as a principal and had been at the school for four years. He informed the team that he had worked with his deputy superintendent to write the challenges and action steps. The team observed that the principal was visible throughout the building. The teachers' focus group told the team that the principal made visits to their classrooms; however, he provided little feedback on improving teaching, and the feedback was usually negative. When asked about learning walks from the district or administrators, teachers could not provide feedback. Teachers said they rarely had staff meetings. They said that communicated well with each other, but not as well with the leadership. Communication could improve through meeting by departments. Teachers stated that current departmentalized grade level meetings were not effective. Finally, teachers told the team that coaching and support were very good.

Classroom instruction and management was variable. Instruction in some classrooms was sacrificed to maintain order.

According to the principal, the school's problem of practice was the development and implementation of rigorous, challenging, and specific instructional objectives. He told the team that the staff was working on developing lessons that asked students to respond to questions designed to promote higher level thinking. Teachers worked with the mathematics coach to improve pacing, scaffolding instruction, higher level questioning and checking for understanding of CMP units. According to interviewees, the school had a difficult population, and instruction was sometimes sacrificed to maintain order.

The school used grant funding and developed some local partnerships.

The school participated in the David Walker Program. The student support coordinator told the team that this program was for boys only. Mentors from Harvard University provided support four times a week from September through May. The program ran from 1:30–3:30 p.m., and provided instruction for students on black history and in life skills, such as college planning, drugs in the community, and dealing with the police and other authority figures. The program also provided mentoring and students participated in field trips and other activities. The school listed other partnerships such as the Bird Street Community Center, Boston Police Department, Boston Public Health Commission, Harvard Medical School, Simmons College, Suffolk County District Attorney, and the Department of Transitional Assistance.

The principal told the team that he received funds for coaching. In 2007–2008, the school had a full time literacy coach. In 2008–2009, the position was cut to half-time, and no one in the school

wanted the position. To maintain some literacy coaching, the principal paid overtime to get services.

The school has a limited capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to improve instructional practice.

The school used the CMP unit tests, mid and end of year tests, and quizzes to track student performances in mathematics. In ELA, students took the SRI, Grade +, and teacher tests. According to the principal, the lack of a data team hindered progress. School administrators, the director of instruction, coaches, and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) reviewed MCAS test data in the fall, to detect trends. They provided teachers with raw data and helped them examine it. The principal told the team that most teachers used the data to identify trends and to re-teach. The mathematics coach told the team that mathematics assessment data were used in various ways. In grade 6, students were given a computational pretest to determine student preparedness. Additionally, teachers in grades 6 through 8 gave quizzes, mid and end unit assessments, and CMP assessments. The team asked the focus group about grade 6 MCAS scores (48 percent scored in the *Warning* category) and about pretest results in mathematics. From the pretest, they knew that grade 6 students had inadequate preparation. Teachers told the team that they reviewed the data but could not pinpoint why the students did not do as well as expected.

The leadership was perceived to be negative.

From interviews, the review team found that the leadership style was perceived as negative. The teacher focus group told the team that they rarely had staff meetings. Teachers indicated that there was limited support for teaching and learning. Teachers said that they received little feedback on how to improve their teaching. When the principal visited classrooms, feedback was either negative or unrelated to the lesson observed.

Student behavior was a constant challenge. Teachers asserted that compliant students were not rewarded. Parent outreach was inconsistent, and there had been an “on and off” parent coordinator. The school lacked a student handbook with school policies and rules. According to the focus group, students came to school indifferent to listening to teachers.

School Profile

In the fall of 2009, the Mildred Avenue Middle School will combine with the Shaw Elementary School to form a new K–8 school.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

While new this year and not involved in planning the action steps for the DPSI, the principal supported the plan, taking several steps and working with staff.

- **Identify ways to increase 2009–2010 planning time to incorporate collaboration:** The principal indicated that although cluster (grade-level) meetings were only 40 minutes teachers hoped to use part of this time for content meetings since these meetings were held after school. The principal assigned staff to committees to work on changing meetings.

The first 2009 – 2010 proposed schedule was discarded due to an inadequate number of specialists and difficulties in scheduling lunches. The proposed schedule was expected to provide 80 minutes of cluster time, with 40 minutes for weekly content level meetings intended for professional development. In 2009–2010, there was one mandatory teachers’ meeting, and ELA and mathematics teachers met separately.

The principal said there was a need to create a school climate with more collegial relationships and more collaboration on academic issues, moving past discipline. Teachers in a focus group said that they had gone beyond the four-cycle inquiry process that focused on objectives, rubrics, and assessments for lesson development. The group was looking for strategies to bring students more into the decision making process, with higher levels of engagement. To that end, the principal launched a small ILT team to examine quality instruction and student engagement through research.

- **Implement the SAM (Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model):** The school implemented SAM by studying grade 6 to identify ways of moving individual students into the “sphere of success.” In the fall of 2007, three trained teachers selected a target group of 6 mathematics students. The school was studying 25 students the second year of the program.

The team frequently analyzed data, and presented professional development to the faculty. The teacher focus group said they also worked with the mathematics coach to analyze MCAS test and informal assessment data, and discovered comprehension issues. Grades 6 and 7 used FASTT Math (Fluency and Automaticity through Systematic Teaching with Technology) to work on automaticity and the PIES (Product, Information, Equation, Solution) strategy to give students confidence to take the next step in problem solving. As the school moved into the 2009–2010 school year, it was implementing A1² and discontinuing SAM. A1² was to be a team, similar to an ILT, whose functions would

include examining data and the school climate, meeting with other schools, working with a consultant on discipline and attendance, and creating modifications. A team leader was to work with clusters on content-based inquiry.

- **During the launch of each investigation, teachers will model problem solving strategies for students:** The staff developed PIES (Product, Information, Equation, Solution), a graphic organizer. PIES was used in mathematical problem solving in to increase student understanding of the questions. Many students did not understand what they were reading, and frequently omitted open response items. Using PIES, students gave feedback about learning, not just a reiteration of lessons.
- **Frame discussions around, “What is the evidence of high levels of student learning?”** During the 2007 – 2008 school year, teachers and the mathematics coach developed mid-module mathematics tests. They used the RISO data system to analyze student progress. In 2009–2010, they implemented FASTT Math, a computer based intervention program being used as a specialty course for all grade 7 and 8 students. Teachers also had an opportunity to use it with their classes. Additionally, discussions were framed around these assessments, and others.

The school created support for ELL and a more inclusive environment for special needs students.

Interviewees reported that ELL students had a close-knit cluster team of six teachers, and were held to the same expectations as all other students. ELL students met AYP in ELA for 2007 and 2008. Administrators required special needs teachers to meet with cluster teams, which had not been a past practice. Additionally, special needs classes were distributed throughout the school and three SAR teachers rotated students. The school was working on the MCAS Alternative test in 2008–2009. Staff received training in developing portfolios, and was to use them with in 2008–2009.

School faculty and staff felt supported by the district, except for coaching cuts.

Administration and teachers stated that the district supported them in implementing action steps and other school improvement efforts, with the exceptions of loss of the literacy coach in 2008–2009 and all of the coaches in 2009–2010.

The principal stated she had not had NISL training, but felt supported by the academic superintendent, who had a presence in the building and met with the principal. In addition, the district mathematics coach housed in the school helped focus the conversation on instruction. Further, the district leadership coach from the School Leadership Institute visited once a month. Teachers in a focus group reported said that they participated in the DMI (Discrete Mathematics Institute) course. The district also offered year round science courses to obtain a Master’s degree.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The school previously had learning walks, but is not presently using them.

During interviews, the review team discovered that learning walks were not being executed. After conducting one learning walk in the fall, the principal said that there were union issues, and she felt that the staff were not ready. The district has no formal protocol for learning walks; however, the principal regularly visited classrooms and observed instruction without formal written feedback. Additionally, as part of CCLs, there were collegial staff to staff visits.

The school developed some local partnerships.

Faculty and staff described several local partnerships. *Gear Up* paid stipends to teachers doing MCAS preparation after school. The *Community Learning Initiative* enrolled students in an after school program, with the library supporting instruction. The school did not offer formal after school programs of its own. The school was a *Citizenship School*, and tutoring was provided through participation in the program. The school also partnered with the New England Home for Little Wanderers.

In the fall of 2009, the school will combine with the Shaw Elementary School, creating a new K–8 school. The school appears to have the leadership to support improvement.

The school was scheduled to combine with the Shaw Elementary School to form a new grades K through 8 school at the Mildred Avenue site. The merger activities were to be funded by ESE Targeted Assistance funds. According to the MOU, the district planned to hold summer planning retreats, and to prepare Whole School Improvement Plans for newly merged schools. Some planning had already taken place and committees were formed to address combining two school cultures and climates. Committees met once a month and included Climate and Activities, Mission/Vision, Professional Development, and Communications. Leadership was working toward a seamless transition to continue improvement initiatives. At the middle school level, teachers were moving to two person teams to create smaller settings with more student engagement.

Woodrow Wilson Middle School

School Profile

The school was to be closed in September 2009, its students and faculty assigned to other schools, and the building used for a pilot school.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

During the current school year, the school achieved some of the action steps included in the DPSI.

- **School leaders and faculty did regular classroom visits and shared feedback with each other:** The school's action plan included goals to provide feedback to teachers on instruction, and to ensure that teachers transferred their learning from CCLs. The principal said that she visited classes every day to assess how well teaching aligned with the Dimensions of Effective Teaching instructional framework. She met every other week with mathematics or ELA teachers to analyze assessment results and encouraged teachers to share instructional practices and outcomes. Teachers reported that walk throughs had increased over time, and students and teachers were comfortable with them. Teachers shared feedback with their colleagues. They told the team that walk throughs and CCLs were done weekly in the beginning, but they had scrambled for feedback time, often missing classes. In 2008–2009 walk throughs were executed one teacher at a time.
- **The school staff analyzed assessment data, and, to a limited extent, used it to drive instruction:** Two action steps identified by the school related to improved uses of data to inform instruction. The principal and teachers said that they analyzed MCAS test data each year to identify areas of weakness in ELA and mathematics. The district prepared reports showing item analyses for individual students, classrooms, and schools, as well as the results in aggregate. The principal and staff told the team that they used these data in content level professional development and other meetings, and that the mathematics coach had been particularly helpful.

Other utilized assessment data included the mathematics module and mid-module tests; weekly common assessments in ELA and mathematics, including mock MCAS mathematics questions given every other week; FAST-R (Formative Assessments of Student Thinking in Reading) data for ELA (no longer funded); and the GRADE, used to identify student weaknesses and group students in ELA. According to teachers, the assessment data led to good conversations in their content meetings and some modifications in curriculum, such as teaching probability earlier in the year. However, teachers did not use data to differentiate instruction or to remediate areas of misunderstanding. Although teachers used frequent questions to check for understanding, reviewers observed little use of formative assessments.

- **Mathematics teachers developed and used a common problem solving strategy:** The principal and teachers stated that they had developed a mathematics problem solving protocol entitled RIPSES (Read, Identify the question, Plan, Solve, Evaluate). ELA teachers had a similar protocol entitled RIPWE (Read, Identify the question, Plan, Write, Evaluate). According to teachers, these protocols were used regularly in classrooms.

Few children profit from supplementary instruction in mathematics and ELA.

The school held supplementary instruction sessions on three afternoons a week. Teachers reported that 15 to 25 students attended each session. The sessions included tutoring in mathematics and ELA, as well as recreational activities. There was no Saturday program at the school.

The district provided limited assessments and reports analyzing data.

The district reports of MCAS test results were detailed, with summaries by school for each grade and subject area, and item analyses by classroom and individual student. As noted above, the principal and teachers told the team that that MCAS test results were helpful in analyzing students' strengths and weaknesses, and plans were prepared yearly to address these weaknesses. The mathematics coach was particularly helpful in leading meetings with teachers on areas where students did not perform well. ELA teachers had similar discussions.

Other assessments were limited to common ELA and mathematics assessments and the GRADE, used to identify reading levels. The FAST-R was previously used with some success in identifying student needs in reading, but the funding for this had been eliminated

The school lost several support services due to budget reductions.

According to the principal and teachers, coaching for teachers was reduced to two days per week in mathematics and none in ELA. The school previously had a student support person, a second guidance counselor, and an assistant principal; however, these positions were eliminated. Teachers reported there were many students with emotional and social needs, such as foster children and students on probation. The school had no director of instruction. Also, the school was out of ELL compliance, having no literacy teacher for 18 students who needed one.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The instability of the student body limits the capacity of the school to improve achievement.

The high mobility rate resulted in a low percentage (60%) of students completing a full school year in 2007–2008. Teachers reported that the school had many students previously expelled from other schools. This instability made the long-term impact of instructional changes effective for only a small proportion of the student body. It reduced the ability of the school to improve achievement.

School morale is very poor, and district support for teacher and student relocations has been inadequate.

In interviews, leaders and teachers stated that faculty and students felt demoralized and unprepared for the school closing and relocation to other schools. According to the principal, the district informed students in March of their relocations, but no orientations or school visits took

place. As of early May, many teachers did not know where they would be relocated and voiced frustration. Their meeting with the superintendent did not allow time to voice their concerns.

Grants and other funding were used for professional development and literacy.

For the past three years, ESE provided literacy funding to the school. It was used to train teachers to apply GRADE assessments and implement the FAST-R assessment program. After conferring with the principal whose school will absorb the Wilson community, the principal expected to use recent ESE Technical Assistance funding for a summer consultant to work with teachers identifying “power standards” that frequently appear on MCAS exams.

K-12 Schools

Student Demographics K-12 Priority Schools										
	African Amer.	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native Amer.	Multi-Race, Non Hisp.	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Total Enrollment
McKinley Schools	55.3%	0.5%	27.3%	13.5%	0.2%	2.4%	7.0%	99.3%	51.2%	451

The following table describes in percentages when evidence was observed for Organization of Classroom (Characteristics 1-3), Instructional Design and Delivery (Characteristics 4-15), and Student Ownership of Learning (Characteristics 16-17).

Classroom Observation Data K-12 Schools			
Characteristics by Category			
School	1-3	4-15	16-17
McKinley	77%	58%	-

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
			2006	2007	2008	
McKinley Schools	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
		All Subgroups	No	No	No	

School Profile

The McKinley Schools are special education day schools. They represent a cluster of four schools operating under one headmaster. Separately, they are McKinley Elementary School, McKinley Middle School, McKinley South End Academy, and McKinley Prep High School. All students have severe emotional and behavioral needs that make full access to the learning environment very challenging. In addition, an increasing number have serious cognitive needs. Ten percent are at or above grade level in reading, and 85 percent are at least a full grade level or more below their assigned grade level. Eight percent are at or above grade level in mathematics, and 79 percent are at least a full grade level or more below their assigned grade level. Tested IQ averages are 80, with 19 percent below 70.

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

A number of the schools' initiatives were drawn from the DPSI action steps to improve student achievement. The schools demonstrated the capacity to strengthen or re-energize existing programs and to continue the search for additional instructional interventions.

- **Strengthen existing professional learning communities:** The work of the instructional staff was strengthened by the introduction in 2009 of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) in reading and mathematics.
- **Instrumental Enrichment instruction:** The schools were beginning to “re-energize Instrumental Enrichment instruction to support cognitive growth.” The schools had adopted Instrumental Enrichment a number of years ago, including professional development. The program promoted intelligence as malleable. Administrators and teachers said that implementation of the program led to positive results. The principal said that because initial enthusiasm for the program was hard to sustain, the staff was provided with another Instrumental Enrichment Training Course in 2009. This course was underway with 10 teachers.
- **Alternative assessment:** Administrators and teachers identified students who should take alternative assessments. Teachers and leaders said that students were highly stressed during MCAS test administration periods, and some had required hospitalization. For the few students eligible for alternative assessment, the teachers said it as a “way to make the curriculum more compatible with what they need.” Interviews with administrators and teachers confirmed that the schools were motivated to do what was best for students, rather than to improve MCAS test scores.
- **Identification of research-based safety-net programs in both ELA and mathematics:** The principal reported efforts in this regard, but she noted that the biggest challenge was finding appropriate programs. However, she found Competency Based Measurement (CBM) was a promising tool for assessing reading fluency, and provided training for

teachers at the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year. Numerous teachers in focus groups referred to the power of the information they derived from this intervention. The principal noted that additional teachers were trained in the Wilson Reading Program and in Lindamood-Bell, and she and the teachers found value in the mathematics program, Knowing Mathematics. Finally, the principal purchased manipulatives for mathematics instruction for the 2009–2010 school year, and extensive teacher training was scheduled for the spring of 2009.

Staff members are committed long-term to the examination and improvement of instruction to advance student achievement.

The headmaster founded the schools and had been its leader for over 30 years. Most teachers have been at the schools for more than 10 years, some for over 20.

Extensive discussions with the headmaster, four focus group meetings with teachers, and a meeting with guidance advisors yielded evidence of extensive, detailed attention to the academic and emotional needs of the students. The schools' schedules reflected the headmaster's and teachers' commitment to regular and frequent opportunities to refine their craft, review student needs, and monitor classroom practice. All teachers had an hour each day for these activities. Service team meetings, in which teachers met with an assistant program director to discuss the behavioral and academic progress of certain students, occurred once a week. As well, teachers had weekly peer coaching meetings, weekly meetings involving individual teachers and their supervisors, and opportunities to observe one another through CCLs.

The headmaster provided teachers with training on strategies to improve student achievement. Her particular role was to gather and share data concerning its effectiveness of initiatives. The headmaster's decisions about continuing with, or moving away from, specific strategies were based on these data.

In addition, to address the behavior of emotionally disabled students, teachers stated that they were committed to a detailed behavior management system that enforced safe behavior in the schools. To support this effort, they told the team that they had been promised an additional staff member to enter data for the Positive Behavior System. Guidance support counselors, generally trained in social work, supported the work in the classrooms. They had regular brief or extended interactions with all students on their case loads to help them manage their behavior. They also interfaced with families, communities, and the legal system.

The district provided the schools with the support necessary to address their students' needs.

Some of the support the district provided to the schools was similar to that provided to all schools. The district adopted certain programs in ELA and mathematics, and provided teachers with an abundance of training to deliver instruction using those programs. As well, the district provided SIOP and MELA-O training for teaching ELL. Teachers told the team that they took advantage of these opportunities. In addition, the district provided teachers with laptop computers to support their work.

According to the headmaster, the district allowed the schools to hire staff through open postings because of student special needs. The district also provided the schools with the financing necessary to address the extraordinary needs of the student body. The staff stated that when they came to consensus on a program or strategy appropriate for their students, the schools had the resources for purchasing and implementation. Also, the staff to student ratio was 1:8. Teachers had small classes and ample support from instructional assistants who monitored student behavior and enabled learning to take place. The guidance staff also had sufficient numbers so they could focus intensively on individual students. In addition, the district had contractual arrangements with teachers so they were paid a stipend for an extended day.

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

The schools have the capacity to continue to improve student achievement and behavior.

The schools have systems in place to provide behavioral guidance and academic instruction to students. The headmaster and teachers compiled and analyzed data to measure the effectiveness of specific programs and interventions. Teachers checked for understanding frequently and administered formative and benchmark assessments to determine students' mastery of subjects. The guidance staff actively intervened to support students and families.

All interviewees expressed frustration that the schools were being held to NCLB standards, particularly since the schools were the only special education day schools in the Commonwealth held to those standards. The schools' graduation rates improved since federal and state accountability became a reality, and teachers and leaders wanted to maintain high expectations for all students. At the same time, they knew that holding all students to that standard had numerous, negative effects.

High Schools

Student Demographics High School Priority Schools										
	African Amer.	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native Amer.	Multi-Race, Non Hisp.	LEP	SPED	Low Income	Total Enrollment
Odyssey High School	42.4%	6.7%	27.2%	21.3%	0.3%	2.0%	6.5%	26.4%	70.8%	356

The following table describes in percentages when evidence was observed for Organization of Classroom (Characteristics 1 – 3), Instructional Design and Delivery (Characteristics 4 – 15), and Student Ownership of Learning (Characteristics 16 – 17).

Classroom Observation Data – High Schools			
Characteristics by Category			
School	1–3	4–15	16–17
Odyssey HS	56%	49%	-

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
			2006	2007	2008	
Odyssey High School	ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Corrective Action
		All Subgroups	-	No	No	
	Math	Aggregate	No	No	No	Restructuring Year 1
		All Subgroups	-	No	No	

Key Question 1: What capacity has the school demonstrated to support school intervention efforts (action steps) and other initiatives to date? How has the district supported these efforts? To what extent have these efforts made an impact on student achievement?

Findings

During the current school year, the school had limited success implementing the action steps included in the DPSI.

Although interviewees stated that the school had done as much as possible given the financial, staffing, and programmatic constraints placed on it, it has failed to achieve the action steps delineated in the 2008 DPSI. However, school leaders managed to modify some action steps to provide supplementary services to students most in need.

- **Special education class sizes were not reduced, nor was the school able to limit the number of special education programs or prototypes:** Interviewees said that the district cut staffing in 2009–2010, although a high number of special education students entered grade 9. Given its student assignment procedure and how funds were allocated, gaining resources to meet special education action steps appeared to be out of the school's control and more under the district's control.
- **Provide staffing to maintain two daily periods of ELA and mathematics for every student:** The school's Plan for Excellence targeted the goal of increasing learning time for all students in ELA and mathematics in grades 9 and 10. School leaders noted that only grade 8 and 10 students with the lowest MCAS scores, or students recommended by teachers, received two daily ELA and mathematics periods. For grade 9 students, the two ELA periods were comprised of English and a reading apprenticeship class. Therefore, for some grade 9 students, the goal of continuing reading apprenticeship classes was met.
- **Provide SAT prep classes twice a week for grade 9 students during the school day:** This was not met; however, the school did provide an MCAS remediation program for grade 9 students twice a week after school. After school activities at the school were problematic since many students had after school commitments.
- **Continue Twilight School for credit recovery:** This was not met, although the school maintained an online credit recovery program for grade 12 students during after school hours. Because of this program, the four-year graduation rate increased from 39.8 percent in 2007 to 46.6 percent in 2008.
- **Change staffing allocations to better reflect school needs; e.g., add two additional teachers, one in special education and one in mathematics:** This was not met. As the 2009 enrollment increased, the staff was cut by two teachers. According to school leaders, this was the result of a lack of resources.

Teachers and leaders spent significant after school professional development time preparing for the spring 2009 NEASC accreditation visit, as well as working to keep the school open.

In interviews, school leaders stated that the time needed to prepare for the NEASC accreditation visit “displaced most attempts to improve learning and teaching.” According to leaders, teacher groups used almost all faculty meeting time preparing for the accreditation, which the superintendent cancelled shortly before the start date. Leaders also noted that, from September through December, substantial faculty energy was expended to keep the school open after the school committee threatened to close it early in the school year.

School leaders and teachers worked to strengthen other initiatives to support the learning needs of students.

The school provided a number of programs to support student learning, including encouraging students to attend after school tutoring through Supplemental Education Services (SES). The faculty also continued to improve the Ninth Grade Academy initiated in 2007–2008. The team met regularly to discuss individual student needs and also worked with students on academic and test taking skills to prepare for the MCAS test. The Academy was a collaborative effort staffed by a team of four teachers to create a small learning community for grade 9.

The school received a competitive Perkins Grant to support implementation of a skill-based, two-year curriculum in environmental technology. The school also mounted a Career Guidance System, an online environmental career guidance program for grade 10 students. Although data were not provided, interviewees said that it had made a meaningful difference in increasing student achievement.

The school maintained a number of partnerships, particularly with higher learning institutes that provide professional development or student services that include college level courses.

Data use at the Odyssey is not effective.

School leaders and teachers told the team that in the past the ILT worked with teachers to examine student assessment data and make professional development decisions. However, preparation for the 2009–2010 re-accreditation limited professional development. The review team found limited evidence that the school examined MCAS test data through item analysis printouts. School leaders said that the only student data they received for entering grade 9 students were MCAS test results, which teachers did review.

Teachers and leaders reported that student achievement data included GRADE assessments, mid-year exams, writing samples derived from district writing prompts, district formative mathematics and reading comprehension assessments, and formative history assessments. However, they were unable to use data analysis to inform improvements or changes in instruction or curricula. When asked about ELA data, school leaders pointed to “anecdotal information,” such as “the amazing insights students had when discussing The Catcher in the Rye.” Leaders stated that the *Socrato* pilot program, a software program disaggregating student MCAS data, “got scrapped early in the year.” Additionally, leaders related that some teachers developed their own tests, and they “hoped the results were used to focus and drive instruction.” Further, leaders told the team that some tests were “useless or not testing what they should be

testing.” They asserted that “teachers needed to use more focused teaching vocabulary” in all subjects.

School leaders and teachers recognized the district’s professional development support, but noted that the district’s support to improve special education services was limited.

School leaders and teachers took advantage of many district professional development courses. They used the MyBPS and MyLearningPlan websites to find programs that contributed to their professional growth. Leaders said that district support for teaching ELL was helpful, adding that all teachers had received MELA-O and Four Category Training.

The headmaster cited NISL training, offered by the district, and ESE as the best professional development she had ever experienced. She also participated in headmaster network meetings with the academic superintendent, and attended monthly headmaster meetings with the superintendent.

ESE supported the school through its website, funding, and MCAS workshops.

Teachers and school leaders stated that ESE’s website provided useful information about the MCAS test, including sample test items, data, and scoring rubrics. Teachers went on to say that ESE’s MCAS test workshops, were useful. The state’s Secondary Reading Grant awarded to the school several years ago was instrumental in the school’s design of the Reading Apprenticeship program. Approximately \$12,000 in funds distributed to Commonwealth Priority Schools in the spring of 2009 were “mostly allocated to supplies.”

Key Question 2: Are the conditions in place to continue to support student achievement?

Findings

Instructional monitoring and collaborative learning took place at the school; however, implementation was uneven.

The headmaster stated that she monitored classroom instruction but “did not spend as much time in classrooms as she would like.” She participated in supervision and evaluation professional development conducted by Research for Better Teaching (RBT), and said that she was competent and comfortable in monitoring teachers’ performances. In addition to the headmaster, the literacy coach, the assistant headmaster, and the special education leader observed teachers.

In January, the academic superintendent’s instructional leadership team presented and modeled a learning walk protocol at the school. School leaders said that learning walks were usually conducted monthly, and nearly half of the teachers participated. Teachers told the team that learning walks were not yet systematic, and part of the school routine. Leaders and teachers also said that the voluntary process of CCL had been “given up for the 2008–2009 school year.”

Although leaders were familiar with, and attempted to implement, some components of the DPSI and other school performance and excellence plans, including the WSIP, implementation of action steps was limited.

In addition to the nine action steps delineated in the DPSI, school leaders gave the review team three other planning documents: Odyssey High School Performance Plan 2009 – 2010, Odyssey High School Plan for Excellence [no date], and Whole School Improvement Plan 2007 – 2008. The Performance Plan was a contract developed and agreed upon by the school and the school committee when the decision was made to keep the school open. The school attempted to

implement the Performance Plan this year. However, an interviewee stated that the school had not made much progress, although teachers had addressed parts of the plan. The headmaster believed the plan was “idealistic because resources were not available.” The Whole School Improvement Plan was abandoned as a planning and implementation document.

Staff communication and systems to support excellence were lacking at the school.

According to interviewees, there was a lack of communication between school leaders and teachers. They stated that not all teachers heard or knew what was happening in the school. Interviewees told the team that new teachers needed a great deal of support to master the innovative curriculum and manage the student population. Further, interviewees reported that the school did not provide adequate assistance to help new teachers meet these challenges. There was no formal mentoring program at the school for new teachers. School leaders told the team that there was an informal mentoring process through which new teachers were paired with compatible, experienced teachers for guidance and support. Induction of new teachers included the district’s orientation program before the start of school; at the school, two or three teachers reviewed information describing school procedures. To support new teachers, the principal stated she frequently observed them.

Appendix A: DPSI Review Team Members

The review of the Boston Public Schools was conducted from April 15–16 and April 28–May 11, 2009 by a team of educators from Class Measures on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Helen Apostolides, team member, Class Measures

Dolores Fitzgerald, team member, Class Measures

Dr. George Gearhart, team member, Class Measures

Joanne Grenier, team member, Class Measures

Dr. Linda Greyser, team member, Class Measures

James Hearn, team leader, Class Measures

Patricia Williams, team member, Class Measures

Appendix B: DPSI Review Activities and Schedule

DPSI Review Activities

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

- Members of the review team conducted interviews with representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Center for School and District Accountability, the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement, the Center for Targeted Assistance, and numerous literacy, mathematics, reading, and leadership personnel directly responsible for providing support to BPS in school year 2008 – 2009.
- The DPSI review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Boston Public Schools central office administration: chief accountability officer; director, federal and state programs; superintendent; chief academic officer; director, professional development; academic superintendents, elementary schools – A and B; assistant academic superintendents, elementary schools – A and B; academic superintendent, middle/K-8 schools; assistant academic superintendent, middle/K-8 schools; academic superintendent, high schools; assistant academic superintendent, high schools; academic superintendent, pilot schools; senior director, SPED; interim director, ELL; assistant superintendent, research, assessment and evaluation.
- The DPSI review to the Boston Public Schools was conducted on April 15–16 and April 28 – May 11, 2009. The DPSI review included visits to the following district schools: (K–5) Bates, (PK–5) Condon, (PK–5) Dever, (PK–5) Ellis, (PK–5) Harvard/Kent, (PK–5) Lee, (PK–5) Sumner, (9– 2) Odyssey, (K–8) Eliot, (K–8) Hurley, (K–8) Mission Hill, (K–8) Tobin, (6 – 8) Edwards, (6 – 8) Frederick, (6 – 8) Gavin, (6 – 8) Irving, (6 – 8) King, (6 – 8) Lewis, (6–8) Mildred Avenue, (6–8) Wilson and (K–12) McKinley Schools.
- During school visits, the DPSI review team conducted interviews with school principals, assistant principals, teachers, coaches, and special education and curriculum and instruction personnel.
 - The DPSI review team conducted 295 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects at the 21 CPSs.
- The DPSI review team reviewed the following documents provided by the Department
 - The DPSI
 - The FY 2008 and FY 2009 Memorandums of Understanding between the district and the Department
 - The District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions
 - The State Panel Review Report
 - Grid of ESE Support to Boston SY 08-09 and related support documents

- 2007-2008 Learning Walk data for superintendents schools
- Learning Walk Protocol SY 08-09
- SY 2008-09 Implementation support Learning Walk Characteristics Continuum
- ESE Instructional Inventory Record and Scripting Sheet
- The DPSI review team reviewed the following documents or interview information at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Description of the processes in place to monitor DPSI implementation and other intervention strategies and improvement efforts, including data reports
 - Description of the formative/benchmark assessment system, including data reports
 - Description of the process for monitoring instruction/conducting learning walks, including data reports
 - Professional development calendar, including descriptions of professional development that has taken place to support DPSI implementation
 - The Acceleration Agenda: 2008-2012 and related documents
 - Whole School Improvement Plan
 - District FY 2009 Budget Booklet (online)
 - PELP Coherence Framework
 - The district's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act proposal to the City of Boston
 - Pathways to Excellence document
 - Numerous school documents as required by the review protocol

DPSI Review Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the DPSI review of the Boston Public Schools, conducted from April 15–16 and April 28–May 11, 2009. Team members attended a Learning Walk training session at the ESE on April 21. Team members also conducted interviews or focus groups at the Department or the district or by telephone on February 13, February 20, March 5, March 25, April 28, and May 28.

DPSI Review Schedule				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
April 13	April 14	April 15 Interviews and focus groups with central office administration DPSI review team meeting	April 16 Interviews with central office administration DPSI review team meeting	April 17
April 27	April 28 Site visits to Lee Elementary, Eliot K-8, McKinley Middle and High Schools	April 29 Site visits to McKinley Elementary School, McKinley South End Academy, Harvard/Kent Elementary School and Mildred Avenue Middle School	April 30 Site visits to Hurley K-8 and the Wilson and Edwards Middle Schools	May 1 Site visits to King and Lewis Middle Schools
May 4 Site visits to Condon Elementary School and Sumner Elementary School	May 5 Site visits to Gavin Middle School and the Bates and Ellis Elementary Schools	May 6 Site visits to Dever Elementary, Mission Hill K-8 and Frederick Pilot Middle School	May 7	May 8 Site visit to Irving Middle School and Tobin K-8
May 11 Site visits to Odyssey High School				