



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

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

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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 current 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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The DPSI review to the Brockton Public Schools was conducted from May 15-May 21, 2009. The DPSI review included visits to the following district schools: Huntington Elementary School (grades K-5), B.B. Russell Alternative School (grades 6-12), and West Junior High School (grades 7-8). Further information about the review and the schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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>.

# Brockton Public Schools

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## District Profile

Leadership in the Brockton Public Schools is composed of a team of experienced educators, many of whom have long tenures of service in the district. The superintendent, deputy superintendent, and executive director of accountability, planning, and technology have announced their intentions to retire at the end of the 2009-2010 school year.

In the 2008-2009 school year, the Brockton Public Schools enrolled 15,338 students. Enrollment has declined slightly each year from 2005, when there were slightly more than 16,000 students in the district. District student demographic and subgroup information for the 2008-2009 school year is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: BPS Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Selected Populations  
2008-2009**

<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Selected Populations</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
African American	49.5%	First Language not English	31.7%
Asian	2.5%	Limited English Proficient	16.6%
Hispanic or Latino	13.6%	From low-income families	68.8%
Native American	0.7%	Special Education	14.2%
White	30.6%	Free-lunch	56.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	Reduced-price lunch	12.2%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	2.9%		

Brockton students are currently enrolled in 2 pre-primary schools (preK-K), (preK-1), 11 elementary schools (K-5 or K-6), 1 elementary/middle school (K-8), 5 middle or junior high schools, 1 high school, and 2 alternative schools (2-12 and 6-12).

There have been some changes in the configuration of the schools visited by the review team. The Huntington Elementary School received a new student population in 2005 when a low-performing elementary school was closed. The Russell Alternative program was previously housed within the district high school and has been organized as a separate school for only three years. The student population is transient because a large percentage of the students are served at the school temporarily. The previous director of the alternative program is the current principal of the Russell Alternative School.

The district has made recent administrative changes at two of the three schools visited. At West Junior High School, there are two new school-level administrators—the principal and the associate principal (who has specific responsibilities for curriculum and instruction). The principal at the Huntington Elementary School is completing her third year at the school.

## Student Performance

In 2008, the Brockton Public Schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The district has not made AYP for subgroups in any of the years from 2003 to 2008 and currently has a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) status of Corrective Action for subgroups for ELA and mathematics.

### Brockton Public Schools Adequate Yearly Progress History

		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	NCLB Accountability Status
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Math	Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	No	

In the 2008 school year, West Junior High School made AYP in ELA in the aggregate, but did not make AYP in mathematics. The Huntington Elementary School achieved AYP in 2008 in mathematics, but not in ELA. Neither West Junior High School nor the Huntington Elementary School achieved AYP for subgroups in ELA or mathematics. AYP status was not calculated for the B.B. Russell Alternative School because fewer than 20 students took the MCAS; significant gains were seen, however, in both ELA and mathematics.

### 2008 District and School AYP Status

		ELA					Math				
District/School	Enroll	Status 08	CPI 08	CPI Chg 07-08	AYP Agg	AYP Sub	Status 08	CPI 08	CPI Chg 07-08	AYP Agg	AYP Sub
<b>Brockton</b>	<b>15,338</b>	<b>CA-S</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>CA-S</b>	<b>67.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Huntington	428	RST1-A	58.4	-3.2	No	No	CA-S	64.2	4.8	Yes	No
B.B. Russell	92	*	64.1	14.1	*	*	CA-A	47.5	24.3	*	*
West Junior High	528	III-S	81.6	0.8	Yes	No	RST2-A	53.3	0.5	No	No

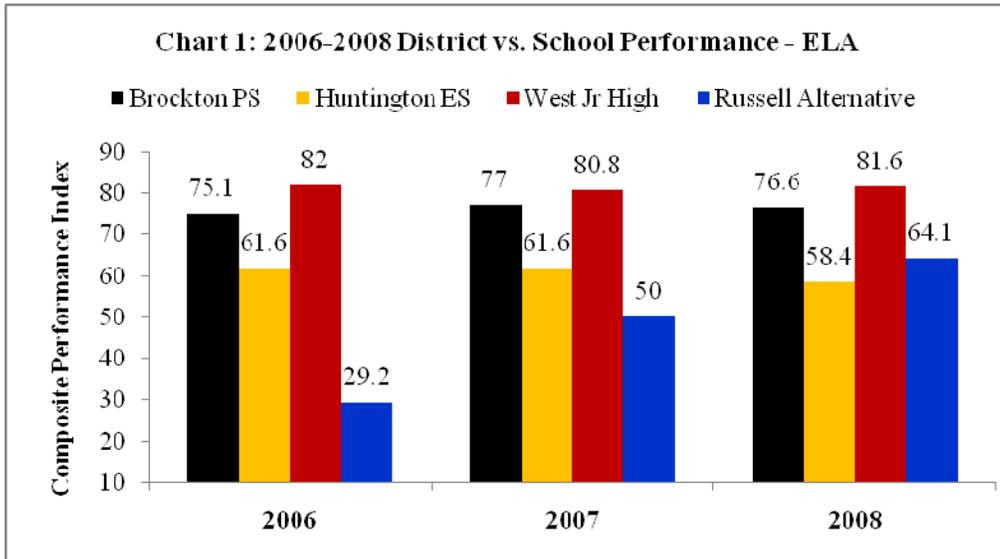
Notes:

A or Agg = Aggregate; CA = Corrective Action; CPI = Composite Performance Index;

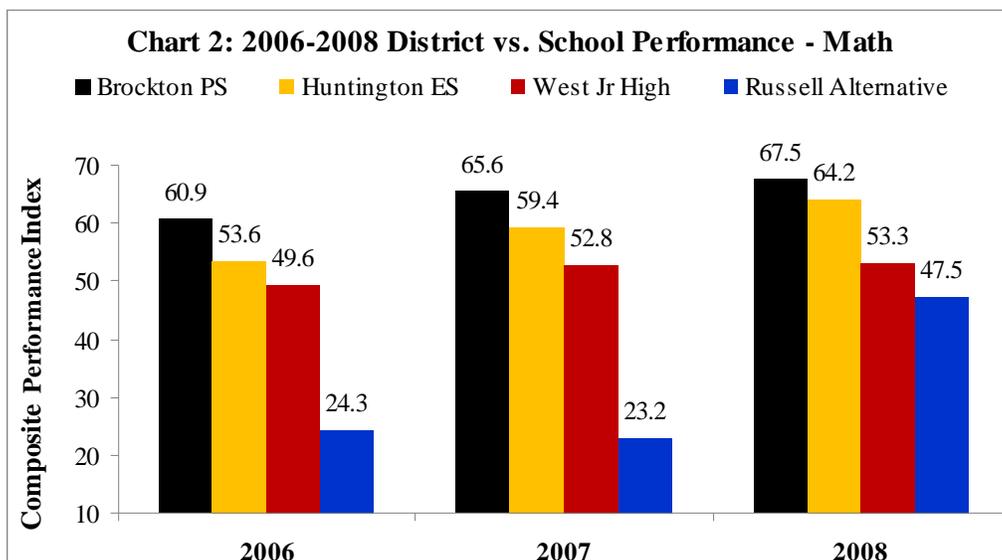
III = Identified for Improvement year 1; RST1 = Restructuring year 1; RST2 = Restructuring year 2; S or Sub = Subgroups

\*Fewer than 20 students were assessed.

The district's composite performance index (CPI) in ELA has remained stable from 2006 to 2008. ELA performance at the Huntington Elementary School remained the same from 2006 to 2007 and decreased 3.2 CPI points from 2007 to 2008. West Junior High School outperformed the district in ELA across these years. The Russell Alternative School experienced significant gains each year, increasing ELA performance at the school by 34.9 CPI points from 2006 to 2008.



In mathematics, the district has increased its CPI each year, with a total increase of 6.6 points from 2006 to 2008. Huntington Elementary School has also shown continuous improvement in mathematics from year to year, at a rate greater than the district's. Performance in mathematics at West Junior High School has shown slight improvements, but the gap between the school's performance and the district's has grown. The Russell Alternative School showed a significant gain from 2007 to 2008<sup>4</sup>, more than doubling the mathematics CPI.



**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?**

The Brockton Public Schools' improvement efforts are guided by a strategic plan—*Focus on Results: A Roadmap for Improving Teaching and Learning in the Brockton Public Schools*. The District Plan for School Intervention (DPSI) was developed in the context of the “roadmap.” To ensure impact of the strategic plan at the teacher level, a guide that defines standards for classroom instruction was rolled out in 2008-2009. The standards have provided the district with a common language to discuss teaching and learning, a framework to assess student and teacher practice, and a method for collecting data about teacher practice. These documents are at the core of Brockton’s improvement efforts.

The premise of the Brockton roadmap is that the data will drive decision-making across the district. Through the establishment of school-based data teams that meet during structured, collaborative teacher planning time, the district has made significant strides. Data meetings are also providing teachers with extensive, embedded professional development to improve practice. Other professional development offerings, however, are less clearly aligned with the district’s strategic plan. Another key initiative in the district has been building the capacity of instructional leaders in the district.

**Findings**

**The district strategic plan (roadmap) is guiding improvement efforts in the Brockton Public Schools. The DPSI is aligned with the roadmap.**

The Brockton Public Schools is completing its second year of improvement efforts guided by the strategic plan, *Focus on Results: A Roadmap for Improving Teaching and Learning in the Brockton Public Schools*. Initially developed in 2007, the plan was modified for the 2008-2009 year. The DPSI was developed in the context of the district’s strategic plan. In addition to providing an update on the district’s progress in implementing the roadmap, the DPSI identifies crosscutting priorities and strategies for the district’s three Commonwealth Priority Schools, as well as specific, aligned strategies for each of those schools.

The district’s roadmap contains five goals for improvement. These include:

- Goal 1: Set specific, measurable student performance goals at the district, school, and classroom levels.
- Goal 2: Ensure that high-quality written curriculum is in place at all grade levels, that it is aligned to state standards, and that it is regularly reviewed and refined.
- Goal 3: Ensure that best practices in standards-based instruction are being used in all classrooms.
- Goal 4: Implement a comprehensive program of formative and summative assessments at all levels and use the information from assessments to make changes in instruction.

- Goal 5: Monitor student performance and program implementation at the district, school, and classroom levels.

Each goal is further defined by a series of accompanying objectives, activities, implementation timelines, and persons responsible for implementation; the roadmap also includes a place to report progress in relation to each objective.

The DPSI, developed in March 2008, provides a report on progress toward each roadmap goal, including the progress or lack thereof toward each objective. The DPSI also identifies cross-cutting strategies for improvement across Commonwealth Priority Schools that overlay the goals in the roadmap. These include:

- Cross-cutting priority 1: To increase the leadership capacity of administrators in the Commonwealth Priority Schools;
- Cross-cutting priority 2: To increase the expertise of the staff in the Commonwealth Priority Schools to implement all the elements of standards-based instruction; and
- Cross-cutting priority 3: To ensure consistency between the Commonwealth Priority Schools and the other schools in implementing district expectations for instruction and use of data.

In addition, the Brockton DPSI identifies three specific priority strategies for each of its Commonwealth Priority Schools, which align both to the roadmap and the identified cross-cutting priorities. For example, a priority at the Huntington Elementary School is to increase the effectiveness of data meetings as a strategy to improve student performance. At West Junior High School, a priority is to use the roadmap more effectively to improve student performance in mathematics. At the Russell Alternative School, a priority is to develop a school culture that focuses on student learning and academic achievement, rather than strictly on behavior remediation.

In summary, the district roadmap is guiding improvement efforts in the Brockton Public Schools. The development of the DPSI was used to reflect on progress toward roadmap goals and to identify additional areas for improvement in the district's neediest schools.

***Standards for Classroom Instruction: A Guide for Brockton Educators* provides a supplement to the strategic plan (roadmap) to ensure implementation at the classroom level.**

While the roadmap provides overall focus for the district's improvement efforts, the district in the 2008-2009 school year has supplemented the roadmap with an additional document, *Standards for Classroom Instruction: A Guide for Brockton Educators*. The standards are designed to ensure that improvement strategies central to teaching and learning are realized at the classroom level.

*Standards for Classroom Instruction: A Guide for Brockton Educators* defines nine standards for effective teaching grouped within three categories: planning and organizing the lesson, designing and delivering instruction, and assessing learning and responding to differences. Each category is further defined by two or more standards, including: creating classroom climate, developing

learning objectives, using class time, selecting and adapting learning materials, selecting instructional approaches, making connections, fostering higher-order thinking, checking for understanding, and differentiating instruction. Each standard includes a description of best practices and is organized as a rubric, further defining levels of performance and expectations for classroom practice.

An extension of the district's roadmap, the standards are being used to address both strategic plan goals (e.g., ensure that best practices in standards-based instruction are being used in all classrooms; monitor student performance and program implementation at the district, school, and classroom levels) and cross-cutting strategies in the DPSI (to increase the expertise of the staff in the Commonwealth Priority Schools to implement all the elements of standards-based instruction, and to ensure consistency between the Commonwealth Priority Schools and the other schools in implementing district expectations for instruction and use of data). In focus groups, administrators and teachers at all three schools visited were able to clearly articulate the purpose of the standards and their relationship to the district's overarching goals.

*Standards for Classroom Instruction: A Guide for Brockton Educators*, an extension of the district's strategic plan, has been used to continue to focus improvement efforts on teaching and learning. The standards have become a lever for change at the classroom level in the Brockton Public Schools.

**The standards for classroom instruction have established a common understanding of quality instruction in the district and provide a vehicle for monitoring classroom practices.**

As previously described, *Standards for Classroom Instruction: A Guide for Brockton Educators* is used to define expectations for classroom practice and improvement across the district. The standards were established to ensure a common language, provide a framework for teachers to reflect on practice, and facilitate discussion about that practice. Expectations established through the standards have been clearly communicated to school stakeholders. The standards also provide a vehicle for the district to collect data on instruction and classroom practice.

District personnel, along with school administrators, have created a focused walkthrough guide based on the standards. Each standard includes a best practice definition and is further defined by a rubric, which identifies three levels of performance (clear evidence, limited evidence, or no evidence that the standard is being met). Implemented during the 2008-2009 school year, the walkthrough guide currently focuses on four of the nine standards (developing learning objectives, selecting instructional approaches, fostering higher-order thinking, and differentiating instruction). Data collected from the walkthroughs is made available to principals and other administrators who reported using the results to make suggestions to grade-level teams and departments. Data collected via walkthroughs is provided primarily in the form of trend data. However, administrators reported that there are mechanisms to provide feedback to individual teachers who require specific feedback. Other administrators reported conducting daily informal classroom visits, which are used to provide either oral or written feedback.

The review team conducted 29 classroom visits across the three schools, noting evidence of strong instructional practices, as well as a relationship to the standards. For example, developing learning objectives is one of the focus standards. In 83 percent of classrooms visited, learning objectives were noted. In 69 percent of classrooms visited, learning objectives were not only posted, but clearly articulated the content and skills to be taught during the lesson and the related student learning outcomes. Using class time is another of the standards—defined, for example, by clear routines and procedures and well-paced activators and summarizers. In 62 percent of classrooms, the review team observed solid evidence that use of classroom time was maximized. Partial evidence was noted in 34 percent of classrooms. Lessons observed during classroom visits were designed to keep students engaged. In only 7 percent of classrooms, the review team noted a lack of student engagement.

The review team noted solid use of formative assessment in 66 percent of the classrooms visited in the three schools. For example, teachers rotated around the classroom to small groups and individual students to monitor work and answer questions. In one classroom, students were asked to hold up their answers on white slates so the teacher could check for understanding—another standard for classroom instruction in the district. The review team also noted a range of instructional practices being used during classroom visits (e.g., direct instruction, small group discussions, independent work, student presentations, use of technology). In one classroom, groups of students were working to plan a lesson they would later teach to the class.

The review team observed some evidence of higher-order thinking. In 24 percent of the classrooms visited, the review team noted solid evidence of the teacher using higher-order questions to challenge students (i.e., questions that required students to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate). Partial evidence was noted in 41 percent of classrooms, and no evidence was noted in 34 percent of classrooms. At the student level, the review team noted solid evidence of students articulating thinking and reasoning in 24 percent of the classes. For example, students were able to describe how mathematical problems were solved, defend a position, or create a judgment about a story's character. There was partial evidence of this indicator in 31 percent of classes and no evidence in 45 percent of classrooms visited. Fostering higher-order thinking is a focus standard in the current walkthrough guide. In focus groups, district administrators reported that this area requires continued improvement.

The standards and rubrics for classroom instruction have been well received by individuals districtwide. In focus groups, school administrators reported that they liked the clarity of the expectations the document provided. One administrator reported being “very pleased with the process. It has helped me to become a better administrator.” Both teachers and coaches spoke positively of the standards, reporting that there are great benefits to everyone using the same language. In focus groups, teachers across schools indicated that they were comfortable with the walkthrough process and that they looked forward to feedback from their peers and coaches.

The district has established clear expectations for instruction that have been rolled out across schools and that have been used to provide feedback to teachers. The standards and the rubrics for classroom instruction have been well received at the school level. In addition to establishing a

common language for instruction, the standards are used to establish accountability for teaching and learning and to ensure instructional improvements across Brockton classrooms.

**Brockton Public Schools use a variety of assessment information to make decisions about instruction and classroom practices.**

There is a strong commitment to the collection and use of data in the Brockton Public Schools. The district has a range of assessment information that is used to inform teaching and learning and to make decisions in the district. Across the district and the schools visited by the review team, there is a clear understanding about the use of data in making instructional decisions.

Central to the district's data-driven system are school-developed unit assessments. Administered five to seven times a year in ELA and mathematics (grades 2-8), the unit assessments provide teachers information on student performance in relation to the district's standards-based curriculum guides. Unit assessments are required by the district because they give school-based administrators and teachers the information necessary to make decisions—for example, to group students, identify students in need of intervention, and make modifications to instruction.

The Brockton benchmark assessments, administered twice a year (fall and winter) in both ELA and mathematics, provide a summative measure of students' relative mastery of key standards. These benchmarks are developed by the district. Information from the benchmark assessments is used to drive teaching and learning at the classroom level, as well as to provide a benchmark of student performance in preparation for the MCAS.

The district uses a series of other assessments to drive instructional decisions. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is used in grades 1-3 to monitor students' progress in fluency and phonemic development. Aimsweb was implemented in the 2008-2009 school year to provide formative data on students' computational skills. MCAS-based long composition assessments are given to students in the middle and high school, as well as subject area end-of-course exams. In focus groups across schools, teachers also reported using text-based materials and other resources to create assessments and quizzes to monitor student learning.

The district's assessment management system (Edusoft) provides access to data at all levels of the district (i.e., central office, schools, classrooms) in a variety of formats—for example, average scores for a group of students, divided into performance bands; class lists; individual student reports; item analyses; and aggregated report information that provides a compilation of student performance on a number of assessments. Edusoft also provides the platform for schools to develop unit assessments and for the district to develop benchmark assessments. The district also uses Testwiz to present MCAS and DIBELS data. In focus groups, teachers across schools reported receiving training in both Edusoft and Testwiz.

In all the schools visited by the review team, it was clear that administrators and teachers are familiar with data and also use a common language to describe assessment results. In focus groups, teachers reported using data to understand student learning, to group students for instructional purposes, to identify students in need of intervention, to modify instructional approaches, and to make changes to lesson plans. Data teams composed of school leaders,

coaches, and teachers are central to instructional planning and decision making; these teams are the lynchpin of Brockton’s data-driven culture (see below).

**The use of regular, structured, and collaborative meetings ensures a data-driven focus on teaching and learning and improvement at district schools. This is providing Brockton teachers with extensive, embedded professional development.**

The purpose of the district’s roadmap is to develop a culture that supports a data-driven approach. Central to this approach is the use of embedded professional development, or inquiry groups, which are used to support improvement efforts through data analysis that is focused on the teaching and learning process. The district has established clear guidelines for the work of data teams. Schools, though, have been provided autonomy as to how the work is completed.

Data meetings take place during regularly scheduled common planning time. Across schools visited by the review team, administrators and teachers were actively engaged in a process of reviewing data, resulting in decisions that support teaching and learning. The use of common planning time is determined at the school level (e.g., grade level, department), as is the process for conducting meetings. Teachers reported that data meetings are highly valuable. In focus groups, many teachers reported that data team meetings—for both department and grade level clusters—provide the most powerful professional development they have ever received. Some of these teachers were veteran teachers. Other teachers added that they are learning more ways to improve instruction from data meetings than from any previous workshop.

Data meetings have resulted in changed practices in the district. In focus groups, teachers at Huntington Elementary School reported that data groups had improved differentiated interventions for students. They also reported creating a book group to read about differentiated instruction, discuss it in team meetings, and apply strategies in the classroom. At West Junior High School, teachers reported that examining student work led to the development of new strategies—for example, redesign of units to incorporate more visuals and integrate web-based technology. In the 2007-2008 school year, district and school staff used the analysis of assessment data to make a significant change in the delivery of services to special education students at West Junior High School. The data revealed that students who were assigned to inclusion classrooms were not making anticipated progress, while students in substantially separate classrooms were making more progress. As a result, a special needs position was added to accommodate students in need of services within a substantially separate program. This analysis to determine the effectiveness of services resulted in implementation of a steering committee to evaluate special education models as well as instructional practices used at the middle school level across the district.

The use of data meetings has been a priority in the district since the 2007-2008 school year, in accordance with the development of the strategic plan. As a result of a formative program evaluation conducted by researchers from Brown University (see Key Question 2) to assess implementation of roadmap initiatives (which cited the many positive outcomes related to the data teams), the district has structured common planning time at its schools to provide more time for collaborative planning and for analyzing data and making modifications to instruction. The

development of the below-mentioned guidelines and protocols has also been an outcome of this work.

The district has established clear expectations for the work of data teams, which comprise teachers, resource specialists, and, in some cases, school-based administrators. The district has created a series of protocols and tools entitled *Looking at Student Work: A Selection of Guidelines and Protocols*, which provides a step-by-step guide for conducting data meetings, including information on how to select student work and how to structure the meeting, as well as a series of protocols schools and teachers can select to use in running the data meeting (e.g., tuning protocol, ATLAS Learning Communities protocol, inquiry process, high-medium-low protocol). Additional tools include questions that data teams can ask in order to understand the data, data analysis templates, and timeframe reflection worksheets. The protocols and tools developed by the district serve as guidance for data teams. These can be used by emerging data teams as they become more comfortable with the process of reflecting on data and also provide scaffolding for teams as they become more advanced in their work. Schools have the flexibility to modify district-provided protocols and tools, selecting and adapting processes at the school level.

At West Junior High School, teachers participated in a Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) training in the use of the inquiry cycle. The inquiry cycle incorporates the use of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals and the continuous use of data generated from assessments and from examining student work to plan and make modifications to instruction. Student assessment data is routinely used in department (i.e., subject area) meetings to make decisions regarding lesson plans, common assessments, and teaching strategies. In grade-level cluster meetings, data is used to make decisions about student-support interventions. Departments meet twice a week, alternating with twice-a-week grade-level cluster meetings.

At the Huntington Elementary School, all teachers participate in monthly data meetings. The meetings are based on guidance provided by the district and are consistently implemented across all grades. To each meeting, teachers bring a range of data, including individual binders with student data, results from unit assessments, data boards used in the classrooms to monitor student learning, and rubric-graded student work. Meeting time is used to discuss the data, regroup students, and share instructional strategies. The result of these meetings is an action plan for the coming month, which is used to hold teachers accountable and is revisited the next month.

The Russell Alternative School has partnered with ATLAS Learning Communities to implement its comprehensive improvement model. A team of teachers were trained in the ATLAS Learning Communities model last year and use this protocol to facilitate team meetings. Teachers reported using twice-weekly planning time to present student problems to be resolved through discussion with other teachers and to develop protocols to begin to norm ways to look at student performance.

The district has established a clear system for ensuring that data permeates the teaching and learning process. While school data meetings are at various places in their evolution, all schools

and teachers are focused on the use of data to make decisions. The data-driven culture has been embedded into the daily work of teachers and is driving continuing improvement efforts.

**There is no clear plan to prioritize other professional development offerings to ensure alignment with the district's improvement initiatives.**

While the district has masterfully established a process for embedding professional development into the school day, other professional development offerings are less strategic. While opportunities for professional development (including internally-developed trainings and externally-provided workshops and conferences) are abundant, it is not clear how these training opportunities align with the district's roadmap.

Hundreds of professional development offerings are provided through a district catalogue. Funds for professional development are allocated to each school on the basis of a per-pupil formula. Any teacher can opt for trainings such as crisis intervention training, early childhood workshops, ELL training, or training in 6+1 Traits of Writing, literacy centers, or differentiated instruction. These trainings are funded by the district and used primarily to achieve the necessary professional development points (PDPs). While they provide teachers with additional opportunities to learn about topics of interest, there is no clear alignment with improvement initiatives. In addition, because specific training topics are not mandated during the district's five required professional days, the alignment of this professional development with the roadmap or with specific needs at the elementary, middle, or high school levels is not ensured.

Teachers can also put in requests to attend conferences or workshops outside the district. These requests must be approved by the principal for reimbursement, which ensures some alignment with school and district priorities. However, there is no explicit requirement of alignment.

The district offers departments, schools, and teachers the opportunity to request that specific workshops or trainings be offered by the district. Individual teachers may also propose to conduct a workshop that they have developed. Such a proposal must be submitted to the district's professional development committee. The committee meets twice a month to review training proposals submitted throughout the school year. Approved proposals result in additional training opportunities for Brockton teachers. Although alignment with district priorities is considered in the vetting process, it is not clear that the roadmap is the primary factor in determining these offerings.

There is a wide array of professional development opportunities in the Brockton Public Schools. While some systems for professional development align with district priorities, the link to the strategic plan is not explicit. In addition, systems do not ensure that the teachers who require specific professional development to master district-identified best practices are those who attend trainings. As a result, the time and money put into providing professional development may not be having the maximum impact on teaching, learning, or district improvement efforts.

**There has been a focus on increasing the capacity of instructional leadership in the district.**

One of the district's cross-cutting strategies in the DPSI is to increase the leadership capacity of administrators in Commonwealth Priority Schools. In addition to increasing the number of

personnel in leadership positions, the district has also provided training to support leadership development.

In addition to principals, both West Junior High School and the Huntington Elementary School have associate principals whose primary focus is on curriculum and instruction. The Russell Alternative School has a curriculum coordinator whose focus is on the academic program. Having personnel in these other positions allows the principal to engage in many of the day-to-day tasks associated with school management and operations while ensuring that teaching and learning remain the focus. Commonwealth Priority School principals are provided mentors who are tasked with regularly supporting leadership. Also, executive directors from the central office work directly with school leadership, consulting regularly with the deputy superintendent to monitor leadership development.

The district has several specialists and coaches who support schools. Reading Resource Specialists (RSSs) are in each elementary school and focus specifically on reading and ELA. RSSs provide professional development, offer direct individual support to teachers, and serve as resources during common planning time (e.g., analyzing data or assisting with the facilitation of data meetings). Instructional Resource Specialists (IRSs) exist across district schools and focus on providing support for instructional practices in math. The district also has districtwide mathematics coaches who provide content area support to teachers. Mathematics coaches serve various schools. Some schools have more than one mathematics coach. One coach visits West Junior High School two days a week. Another coach supports the school a different day of the week. The district has three English language acquisition coaches, as well as one full-time coach at the Huntington Elementary School, which serves a large population of English language learners (32 percent of the total student population). All specialists and coaches work in the classroom modeling lessons, co-teaching, or providing direct instruction to students in small groups.

Monthly meetings provide additional professional development for Brockton staff in leadership positions. Principals participate in meetings by level (i.e., elementary, middle, high school), as well as in districtwide K-12 administrative meetings. In focus groups, principals and district leaders reported that these meetings provide opportunities for professional development. The secondary meetings rotate among the six schools with grade 6-8 enrollment and are held in the schools' data rooms, whose walls are covered in data, modeled after the superintendent's conference room. One leader described this as "powerful." Resource specialists and coaches also meet monthly.

All of the district's principals and associate principals have either completed or are enrolled in the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training—another opportunity for administrators to improve instructional leadership skills. In focus groups, district leaders spoke highly of NISL, reporting that it was "helpful" and a "positive experience" and that NISL aligns with goals in the roadmap. At the school level, leaders reported that NISL training has had a beneficial effect on how they plan and carry out their administrative duties. The district has

become a trainer for NISL, providing training to participants from surrounding districts as well as to Brockton's own district and school administrators.

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

The Brockton Public Schools have used a range of Department resources to support improvement in the district. The district appreciates the collaborative relationship that has been established between the two parties, the tools provided by the Department, and the flexibility to modify Department tools so as to align them with district needs and improvement initiatives.

**Findings under Key Question 2**

**Department resources are being used to support improvement efforts in the Brockton Public Schools.**

Across the district, stakeholders described many Department resources that have been used to support improvement in the district. Monies provided by the 323A grant to Commissioner's Districts are being used to support implementation of improvement initiatives in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The district has also taken advantage of other Department-provided resources.

Under the terms of its MOU with the Department in the 2007-2008 school year, the Brockton Public Schools engaged in a partnership with Brown University's evaluation team to conduct a formative program evaluation to assess implementation of Brockton's roadmap, as well as efforts to improve teaching and learning and supports for school leadership and teachers. In focus groups, district administrators reported that they wanted a third-party perspective on improvement efforts—in particular, to understand why student performance data did not show the anticipated results.

Even though it was an independent entity, the Brown University team handling the evaluation engaged in many day-to-day activities while on site in the district from February to June, 2008. The Brown University team interviewed stakeholders districtwide, conducted observations of data meetings as well as classroom walkthroughs, and attended a variety of meetings. Based on the results of several reports and corresponding recommendations provided to it by the Brown University team, the district made several changes to its roadmap in the 2008-2009 school year. Roadmap goals were made more specific, and strategies and objectives made more actionable. In focus groups, district administrators reported that feedback received as a result of the review also led to improvements in data meetings, increases in common planning time, and the refinement of standards-based documents (e.g., *Standards for Classroom Instruction*, protocols, and tools to guide data meetings).

The district has continued to partner with Brown University in 2008-2009, although on a more limited basis because of decreased funding. The Brown University team has focused this year specifically on observing data team meetings. This will result in formative feedback designed to assist the district in refining data meetings and ensuring alignment of benchmark assessments to the state standards—two initiatives at the center of the district's improvement efforts.

The Huntington Elementary School has less time for common planning built into the school day than the other Commonwealth Priority Schools. Common planning time is necessary for data

team meetings, which give teachers the opportunity to work collaboratively to analyze data, discuss student work, and make modifications to instruction. In order to increase common planning time at Huntington Elementary School, 323A monies (in accordance with the MOU) have been used to provide stipends to teachers for participation in planning after school or to fund substitute teachers to allow data meetings to take place within the school day. The Huntington Elementary School has also been awarded a Silber grant that is used to support the delivery of literacy interventions.

The district has been actively involved in NISL training for several years (see the finding on instructional leadership under Key Question 1). The MOU provided for the continuation of NISL training to support the district's standards-based instructional system. Brockton provides district-based trainers to provide training internally and for administrators in other districts, which is being realized through 323A funds.

Monies provided by the 323A grant are also being used to support implementation of other improvement initiatives in accordance with the MOU. The district was able to purchase Apangea software, which is being implemented as an intervention to support students struggling in mathematics. Other funds were used to purchase, install, and provide training on Promethean boards (for some schools), interactive whiteboards intended to increase students' active engagement in the learning process—particularly in mathematics—through the use of technology. In focus groups, teachers reported that Promethean boards have been helpful in engaging students.

**The district appreciates the collaboration and flexibility provided by the Department.**

Across focus groups, district stakeholders reported a collaborative relationship between the Department and the Brockton Public Schools. Network meetings (e.g., for mathematics) organized by the Department were cited as helpful. Requests for the development of additional networks (e.g., for alternative schools) are further evidence of the support that networks have provided the district. District administrators noted a shift in the nature of the relationship between the Department and the district: the emphasis has shifted from compliance to increased support and collaboration. They also indicated that as the partnership evolves, both parties will continue to benefit.

The district voiced appreciation for the tools provided by the Department, as well as for its flexibility in allowing tools to be modified to align with district initiatives. The Department's Learning Walk Continuum was a resource used in the Brockton team's creation of the *Standards for Classroom Instruction*, which is the guide for walkthroughs now used in district schools. The district was also appreciative of the ability to use Department monies to fund improvement priorities identified by the district—for example, the independent evaluation provided by Brown University.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations provided in this report were developed by the review team. Recommendations reflect the areas that the review team determined should be priorities for the district in its future improvement efforts and are not intended to address every area requiring improvement. These recommendations are for the district to consider in future improvement efforts and for the Department to consider in determining support for improvement.

### **As the work of school data teams continues to evolve and improve, place an emphasis on the use of the inquiry cycle to further drive instructional improvement and goal-setting.**

- The district has made significant strides in the establishment of data teams to drive decision-making, to guide both teaching and learning and districtwide improvement initiatives.
- As the work of school data teams continues to evolve and improve, continue to implement the inquiry model: for example, related training, use of protocols, and establishment of SMART goals. This is likely to continue to refine the way schools look at and use data.

### **Ensure the walkthrough process provides sufficient feedback to teachers to improve the quality of individual practices and to increase the rigor of instruction.**

- The introduction of *Standards for Classroom Instruction* has established clear expectations for teaching and learning. Most data provided by use of the walkthrough guide is in the form of trends; less is used to improve individual teacher performance.
- Establishing systems to provide specific feedback to teachers on individual practice is likely to make classroom instruction more rigorous. For example, it will likely increase higher order thinking skills and the use of differentiated instruction.

### **Develop a professional development plan that is prioritized and targets teacher needs and improvement initiatives identified in the strategic plan (“roadmap”).**

- Teachers are receiving extensive embedded professional development, yet other professional development offerings are less strategic.
- The development of a plan to evaluate professional development is likely to provide information on the trainings that are having the greatest impact on teacher practice and should be continued, as well as those that are not improving practice and should be discontinued.
- The process of allocating professional development funds to schools should be examined, with the goal of targeting funds based on district-identified training priorities.

## **Appendix A: DPSI Review Team Members**

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The review of the Brockton Public Schools was conducted from May 15-May 21, 2009 by a team of educators from SchoolWorks on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Anne Lane**, SchoolWorks Project Manager

**Susan Kerrigan**, Consultant, SchoolWorks

**Patty O’Leary**, Consultant, SchoolWorks

**Dr. Fred Wetzel**, Consultant, SchoolWorks

## Appendix B: DPSI Review Activities and Schedule

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### DPSI Review Activities

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

- The DPSI review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: manager of and staff from the Urban and Commissioner’s Districts unit; manager of the Educator Leadership unit; and staff from the Math, Science, Technology & Engineering unit.
- The DPSI review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Brockton Public Schools central office administration: superintendent of schools; deputy superintendent; executive director of accountability, planning, and technology; associate director of assessment, research, and evaluation; executive director of teaching and learning pre-K-5; executive director of teaching and learning 6-8; department head of ELA 6-8; coordinator of mathematics and science pre-K-8; department head of mathematics K-8; coordinator of literacy K-5, social studies pre-K-8; director of pupil personnel services; director of special education; assistant director of special education; department head of special education 1-6; department head of special education 7-8; director of ESL/bilingual education; department head of ESL/bilingual education K-8; department head of early childhood education; database administrator.
- The DPSI review team visited the following schools in the Brockton Public Schools: Huntington Elementary School (grades K-5); B.B. Russell Alternative School (grades 7-12, West Junior High School (grades 7-8).
  - During school visits, the DPSI review team conducted interviews with school principals, associate principals, assistant principals, teachers, mathematics coaches, Instructional Resource Specialists, Reading Resource Specialists, Title I staff, and school counselors.
  - The DPSI review team conducted 29 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the three schools visited.
- The DPSI review team reviewed the following documents provided by the Department:
  - The DPSI
  - The Memorandum of Understanding between the district and the Department
  - The District Leadership Report on the Essential Conditions
  - The State Panel Review Report
  - District Priorities for ESE Assistance to Commonwealth Priority Schools FY 2009

- The DPSI review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels provided by the district:
  - District Standards for Classroom Instruction, 2008-2009
  - District Learning Walk Protocol (no date)
  - District Learning Walk Data Charts, 2008-2009
  - District Formative Assessment System, 2008-2009
  - Using Standards and Data to Improve Achievement, Progress Report, February 2008
  - Formative Progress Evaluation of Brockton Public Schools, Brown University 2008
  - District Formative Assessments, 2008-2009 (set of 14 documents)
  - District Performance Data, 2005-2008 (set of 6 documents)
  - District Professional Development Calendar, 2008-2009

## DPSI Review Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the DPSI review of the Brockton Public Schools, conducted from May 15-May 21, 2009.

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
May 11	May 12	May 13	May 14	May 15 <b>Review team initial meeting</b> <b>Initial district meeting and interview</b>
May 18 <b>Site visits:</b> <b>B.B. Russell Alternative School</b>  <b>West Junior High School</b>	May 19 <b>Review team meeting</b> <b>Interviews and focus groups with central office administration</b>  <b>Mid-point check-in with district leadership</b>	May 20 <b>Site visit: Huntington Elementary School</b>	May 21 <b>Review team final meeting</b>  <b>Final meeting and interviews with district</b>	