



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education

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## District Leadership Evaluation Report

District Name: Randolph School District

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### I. Background

Massachusetts school districts with persistently low student performance and/or improvement, based on Performance and Improvement Ratings and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Determinations, must undergo a Tier III Review by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA). The EQA School District Examination Review Report articulates findings in the domains of Assessment and Evaluation, Curriculum and Instruction, Student Academic Support Services, Leadership and Governance, and Business and Finance. If the findings warrant, EQA recommends to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education (BOE) that the district be declared underperforming. At the November 27, 2007 meeting, the BOE made the determination that the Randolph Public School District (the District) is underperforming.

A district that is determined by the BOE to be underperforming is assigned a District Leadership Evaluation review team by the Commissioner. The review team spends time in the school district to gain an understanding of the district's capacity to make improvements and change the direction of the district's education system. The review is conducted using a protocol and includes extensive interviews with district leaders, such as the Superintendent, key central office staff, principals, and the School Committee, as well as teachers, parents, municipal officials, and others. Evidence gained during these interviews is summarized in this report.

### II. Methodology

The review team reviewed documents provided by the Department of Education (DOE) in advance of the site visit; reviewed additional documents on site and after the site visit; conducted a series of interviews in the Randolph community on December 17, 18, and 19, 2007; and conducted two telephone interviews subsequent to the site visit. A list of the documents reviewed is provided in Appendix A; the on-site interview schedule is provided in Appendix B. The review team conducted the following individual and group interviews with 101 government officials and other citizens of Randolph:

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
- Executive Director of Finance and Administration
- Director of Student Services
- All four School Committee members
- Principals of the Randolph High School and the Randolph Community Middle School
- Principals of the District's four elementary schools and the Coordinator of Early Education, who served as the Principal of the Charles G. Devine Elementary School prior to its closure at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.
- Four Randolph High School teachers and one school psychologist for Kindergarten through grade 12
- 12 Randolph Community Middle School teachers
- 14 Randolph elementary school teachers
- Three representatives of the Randolph Education Association
- Four members of the Board of Selectmen (three on site, one by telephone)
- Executive Secretary
- Finance Committee Chairman
- Town Accountant
- Chief of Police (by telephone)
- Ten representatives of school Parent-Teacher Organizations
- 11 parents of District students
- 23 community representatives, including some Town Meeting members, former Town officials, and parents

After the review team's interview with the three members of the Board of Selectmen, the Executive Secretary contacted the Superintendent's office to request that the review team interview the Board Chairman, who did not attend the on-site interview. After the site visit, Senator Brian Joyce contacted the review team to request that the review team interview the Board Chairman, a fifth Board member who did not attend the on-site interview, and the Chief of Police. The Board Chairman did not respond to two telephone messages from the review team. Members of the review team subsequently conducted telephone interviews with the fifth Board member and the Chief of Police. The review team acknowledges and appreciates the participation of all individuals and groups interviewed as well as the assistance provided by the Superintendent in scheduling the on-site interviews conducted by the review team.

### **III. District Profile and Context**

The District, which is located in Norfolk County, served 3,450 students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 in the 2006-2007 school year, according to DOE data. The District serves these students in six school buildings: four elementary schools (the Margaret L. Donovan Elementary School, the Elizabeth G. Lyons Elementary School, the John F. Kennedy Elementary School, and the Margaret E. Young Elementary School), Randolph Community Middle School, and Randolph High School. The District closed the Charles G. Devine

Elementary School, which had functioned as an early childhood education center, at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

DOE data for the 2006-2007 school year show that of the District's 3,450 enrolled students, approximately 50 percent were African American, 26 percent were White, 15 percent were Asian, seven percent were Hispanic, and approximately 1.5 percent represented other race or ethnic groups. As shown in Table 1, below, the District had higher percentages of African American and Asian students and lower percentages of White and Hispanic students relative to districts statewide. Table 1 also shows that, relative to districts statewide, the District had substantially higher percentages of students whose first language was not English (37.9 percent compared to 14.9 percent) and who were categorized as Low Income (40.8 percent compared to 28.9 percent), and somewhat higher percentages of Special Education students (20.4 percent compared to 16.9 percent) and Limited English Proficient students (7.4 percent compared to 5.6 percent).

**Table 1**  
**Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Selected Populations**  
**Randolph Public School District Compared to Districts Statewide**  
**2006-2007**

	Percent of District	Percent Statewide
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
African American	50.1	8.2
Asian	14.9	4.8
Hispanic	7.1	13.3
Native American	0.4	0.3
White	26.2	71.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.2	0.2
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1.0	1.7
<b>Selected Subpopulations</b>		
First Language Not English	37.9	14.9
Limited English Proficient	7.4	5.6
Low-income	40.8	28.9
Special Education	20.4	16.9

**Source: MA Department of Education**

DOE data show that District enrollment in Kindergarten through Grade 12 has declined by 18.5 percent from 4,110 in the 2000-2001 school year, in which District enrollment reached its highest point in 20 years, to 3,349 in the 2006-2007 school year, in which District enrollment reached its lowest point in 20 years. Preliminary DOE enrollment data

for the 2007-2008 school year indicate that District enrollment has further decreased to 3,080, a decrease of 269 students representing approximately eight percent of the prior year's enrollment. If this preliminary enrollment figure is accurate, District enrollment has seen an overall decrease of 25 percent over the past eight years.

The District has also experienced changes in the demographic composition of its student population in recent years. The most dramatic changes have been seen in the District's enrollment of White students and African American students: DOE data show that White student enrollment decreased each year, from the 2001-2002 school year to the 2006-2007 school year and that enrollment of White students decreased from 1,734 students (43 percent of District enrollment) in the 2001-2002 school year to 904 students (26 of District enrollment) in the 2006-2007 school year. Over the same five-year period, African American student enrollment increased each year, from 1,463 students (36 percent of District enrollment) in the 2001-2002 school year to 1,729 students (50 percent of District enrollment) in the 2006-2007 school year. The numbers and percentages of Hispanic and Asian students have varied from year to year with no clear trend during the same period.

With respect to other District subpopulations during the same period, DOE data show a large one-year increase in the number of students categorized as Low Income from 1,147 in the 2005-2006 school year to 1,408 in the 2006-2007 school year. The numbers of Special Education and Limited English Proficient students have varied from year to year with no clear trend. The data also show that the number of students categorized as First Language Not English jumped dramatically in one year, from 546 in the 2001-2002 school year to 1,259 in the 2002-2003 school year; however, that increase may reflect a change in how these students were identified and counted rather than an actual increase in the numbers of students in the group.

In interviews with School Committee members, District administrators and teachers, municipal leaders, parents of enrolled students, and community representatives, the review team was repeatedly told that student and family demographics are significant factors contributing to the underperformance of District students. Specifically, the review team was told that the District's relatively high percentages of low-income students, students whose parents do not speak English, and transient students who enter and leave District schools during the school year have placed stress on Randolph's educational system. Many of those interviewed also regard the changing demographics of the District schools as a significant factor contributing to the decline in parent involvement with the schools and in the community in recent years. This trend was typically attributed to the declining number of enrolled students from White and/or middle-class families that had traditionally been actively engaged in the schools and civic matters and the increasing number of enrolled students from families that are far less inclined to participate in the schools and the larger community due to a variety of factors, including that many parents hold multiple jobs and are unavailable to attend school events, are not fluent in English and cannot easily communicate with teachers and administrators, are recent immigrants who are culturally unaccustomed to participating in school or other governmental activities, and/or are transient residents with little interest in participating in Randolph's civic life.

The District's underinvestment in curricula and assessments aligned with the Massachusetts State Frameworks and in professional development for teachers and

administrators over many years is another major factor that has affected the District's performance. As this report will discuss, the District, under the current Superintendent's direction, has only recently begun to develop and implement aligned curricula and assessments, improve instruction, and provide a coordinated professional development program within the limitations of the District's budget.

For the 2008 fiscal year, actual net school spending by the Town of Randolph will total \$34,214,555, according a recent DOE analysis presented in a December 3, 2007 memorandum from Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Education, to the BOE. (Appendix C to this report contains a copy of the memorandum.) In general, Chapter 70 aid has accounted for approximately one-third of the District's budget. Randolph has consistently exceeded required net school spending in each of the past ten years, according to DOE data. However, Acting Commissioner Nellhaus reported to the BOE that extra school spending in Randolph as a percentage of the District's foundation budget was lower than the statewide average. The Acting Commissioner's memorandum to the BOE noted that, based on the state's measure of municipal fiscal capacity, "the town of Randolph does not have the fiscal capacity to increase its local spending on education." He also noted that the new "aggregate wealth" formula "is actually lowering Randolph's required spending from local revenues, while providing a higher level of funding from state aid."

The financial stress experienced by the Town of Randolph in recent years has restricted the availability of funds to meet District needs. According to the Superintendent, the Town's appropriation to the School Committee did not increase between the 2003 fiscal year and the 2007 fiscal year. As a result, cost increases, including contractually required salary increases, reduced the funds available to provide and strengthen academic programs and services. The Superintendent has stated that an additional \$12 million would be required to restore the programs and services that have been cut over the past five years.

The School Committee's March 2007 budget document included three proposals, the largest of which proposed a \$5.4 million increase, for the 2008 fiscal year:

- A "Goals-Based Budget" of \$34.6 million, which represented a budget increase from the prior year of \$5.4 million, or 18.6 percent. According to the School Committee's proposal, this budget amount would enable "the restoration, creation, and expansion of programs/positions. . . ." Although noted in the School Committee's approved budget request, this proposal was subsequently withdrawn by the School Committee due to "the economic condition of the town."
- A "Level-Function Budget" of \$32.8 million, which represented a budget increase from the prior year of \$3.7 million, or 12.6 percent. According to the School Committee's proposal, this budget would include funding "to continue those programs that were in operation" and would allow for "the creation of new programs provided programs with similar costs operating in 2007 were eliminated."
- A "Level-Funded Budget" of \$29.2 million, which would require "reducing current programs/positions by \$3,672,205 from the Level-Function Budget," according to the School Committee's proposal.

The amount ultimately appropriated by the Town was \$500,000 higher than the “Level-Funded Budget.”

School and Town officials reported to the review team that past efforts to increase the District’s operating budget through Proposition 2½ override votes have consistently failed, most recently in March 2007. The fiscal pressure on the Town government, community mistrust of school leaders stemming from a past School Committee decision to “buy out” the contract of the former District Superintendent and other District decisions perceived as fiscally imprudent and insufficiently transparent, and the lack of active parent engagement in the political process have all been cited as factors contributing to the failure of these override votes. The School Committee, Superintendent, and Town officials are reportedly discussing the need for another override vote this year.

The District has taken a number of steps to prioritize spending and reduce costs in its efforts to meet student needs with limited and effectively declining resources. These budget reduction measures have included closing an elementary school, redistricting students, and reassigning teachers; eliminating regular school bus service for District students; eliminating instructional and other staff positions; and reducing or eliminating a number of programs and activities, including foreign language courses, athletic programs, vocational programs, and clubs.

DOE data provided to the review team show that the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff employed by the District declined from 512.8 in the 2003-2004 school year to 485.6 in the 2006-2007 school year; the number of core academic instructional FTE staff declined from 240.1 to 217.6 during the same period. DOE data show that as of October 1, 2007, the District had 211.6 FTE core academic instructional staff, 191.6 (91 percent) of which were licensed and met state and federal standards for Highly Qualified teachers under the No Child Left Behind Act.

DOE data also show that in the 2006-2007 school year, the District’s student-teacher ratio of 14.4 to 1 was slightly higher than the student-teacher ratio of 13.2 to 1 reported by school districts statewide. However, District teachers told the review team that many classes have close to or more than 30 students and that all are taught by single teachers without the assistance of teacher aides. District administrators and teachers frequently cited the large size of their classes as a major problem that prevents teachers from providing the individualized attention and remedial academic support that many of their students require.

#### **IV. Findings by Area**

##### **A. Superintendent**

**Over the past two years, the Superintendent has addressed the challenges confronting the Randolph schools through major initiatives in the areas of staffing, curriculum, professional development, planning, and community outreach.**

Dr. Richard Silverman has served as the Superintendent of the District since July 2005; his contract is scheduled to expire in June 2008. During the period between July 2005 and December 2007, his work on behalf of the District has included major initiatives in five major areas: staffing, curriculum, professional development, strategic planning, and community outreach. These areas are discussed below.

*Staffing.* The Superintendent has appointed individuals to key positions in the District. To address the District's need for academic leadership and improved curricula, assessments, and instruction, the Superintendent created the position of Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, which he filled July 2006. The review team found that the Assistant Superintendent is highly respected within the school community for the changes he has implemented and is continuing to implement within the District. This position and other key teaching and learning positions within the Randolph schools are discussed in more detail later in this report.

To address the District's deficient financial systems, the Superintendent created the position of Executive Director of Finance and Administration, which he filled in May 2006. After undertaking extensive work to reconcile the school's accounts in June 2006, the Executive Director created a new budget process that requires each school principal to complete a workbook as well as a budget request narrative; he provides support to each school in preparing department-based budgets. School Committee members and Town officials interviewed by the review team were unanimous in their praise for the Executive Director's expertise and budget-related accomplishments to date as well as for his communications skills and efforts to increase the transparency of the District's finances.

The Superintendent also created the position of Director of Special Services, which he filled in July 2007. The Director oversees the Special Education program, the Title I program, the English Language Learner program, and the alternative education program, among others. In addition to working to address areas in which the Randolph schools do not comply with state and federal law, the Director of Special Services has taken steps to promote inclusive education within the schools by, for example, requiring behavioral intervention plans for each Special Education student before determining whether an out-of-district placement is warranted.

*Curriculum.* Prior to the Superintendent's tenure, the Randolph schools lacked coherent curricula aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; the review team was told that the District had employed a Director of Humanities and a Director of Math, but a limited focus on grades 7-12 did not support the development of curricula and instructional practices at the elementary level. The Superintendent's leadership team has begun the process of implementing aligned English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula, accompanied by curriculum-related professional development, in the Randolph schools at all levels.

*Professional development.* Prior to the current Superintendent's tenure, the Randolph schools lacked a professional development program, according to administrators and teachers interviewed by the review team. The District has now instituted a professional development program providing a range of training programs for teachers and

administrators during the summer and during the school year, including teaching and instructional leadership seminars provided by Research for Better Teaching.

*Strategic planning.* The Superintendent has initiated a strategic planning process, involving an estimated 250 members of the Randolph community, intended to develop a long-range strategic direction for the District for the period of 2008 to 2012. The document produced by this process states the following as the mission of the strategic planning process: “The Randolph Public Schools, together with families and the community, will inspire, challenge and empower each student to acquire the knowledge, skills and values to become a responsible and caring citizen in a diverse community.” The strategic planning goals articulated in the document relate to improving student learning and achievement, increasing the percentage of parents who actively participate in their children’s education, and obtaining community support of and investment in the Randolph schools. Community representatives and others interviewed by the Team said that they regarded the initiation of a long-range planning process involving the community as a welcome effort to rebuild community trust in and support for the Randolph schools.

*Community outreach.* In addition to initiating the strategic planning process cited above, the Superintendent has engaged in a variety of other community outreach efforts. According to some community members interviewed by the review team, the Superintendent’s attendance at numerous community functions and efforts to engage a variety of community members in the schools stands in marked contrast to the former Superintendent’s isolation from the larger community.

**The Superintendent has earned respect and support within the Randolph school system and larger Randolph community. Some parents and other community representatives expressed the view that the Superintendent needs to improve his leadership skills and focus on a single set of immediate priorities.**

School administrators and teachers interviewed by the review team expressed positive views of and support for the Superintendent. They cited the accomplishments summarized above as evidence of the Superintendent’s leadership capacity; more broadly, some told the review team that the Superintendent has succeeded in establishing a vision for the District and in focusing administrators and teachers on improving student achievement. While teachers cited numerous problems, including inadequate funding and public support for the schools, limiting the Superintendent’s capacity to implement needed programs and services, the general consensus among those interviewed by the review team was that the Superintendent is doing the best job that can be done within the existing funding constraints.

Similarly, most parents and other community representatives interviewed by the review team expressed support for the Superintendent; they referenced his educational expertise, hard work, commitment to students, and efforts to reach out to parents and the larger community. However, some also expressed concern that the Superintendent may not possess the imagination and political skills needed to meet the funding and political challenges confronting him; they said that he needs to become a more aggressive leader. While acknowledging that the Superintendent has led the development of multiple improvement plans and a strategic plan for the District, some individuals observed that the

Superintendent has not clearly identified and communicated a clear set of immediate priorities for improving the schools in Randolph.

**The Superintendent lacks the unified support of the School Committee.**

The interviews conducted by the review team show that the four School Committee members hold sharply divergent views of the Superintendent's effectiveness. Two School Committee members interviewed by the review team expressed strong support for the Superintendent's educational initiatives and communications with the School Committee; they expressed the view that the Superintendent's efforts to implement the goals and objectives in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) approved by the School Committee have repeatedly been undermined by other School Committee members who do not share the Superintendent's educational philosophy and priorities.

While the other two School Committee members acknowledged the Superintendent's progress in the areas of staffing, strategic planning, and community outreach, they also criticized the Superintendent for failing to implement some policies adopted by the School Committee in a timely fashion; these policies reportedly included identification and exclusion of nonresidents from the Randolph schools, as required by state law, and safety-related dress code requirements, such as the banning of hooded sweatshirts that enable students to shield their faces from security cameras. They also cited the Superintendent's unresponsiveness to their views that more leveling within the schools and the creation of special programs for higher-achieving students would raise standards within the schools while potentially encouraging more Randolph residents to enroll their children in and support the District. The School Committee is discussed in more detail later in this report.

**The Randolph Education Association has a mixed view of the Superintendent's leadership.**

Representatives of the Randolph Education Association interviewed by the review team expressed mixed views of the Superintendent's effectiveness. While they praised the Superintendent for hiring new administrators, bringing focus to the issues of teaching and learning in the District, and working to be visible and accessible to the Randolph community, they also cited areas of concern, including the Superintendent's implementation of multiple initiatives without a clear set of priorities and direction, the District administration's inconsistent response to disciplinary issues, the low morale of District teachers, and the lack of a uniform evaluation process for District teachers.

**The Board of Selectmen disagrees with the Superintendent's educational approach and mistrusts his financial stewardship of the District. Other Town officials share the Board's concerns regarding the Superintendent's leadership.**

The review team's interviews with four of the five members of the Board of Selectmen revealed that the Board lacks confidence in the Superintendent's capacity to improve the District schools. While acknowledging that the Superintendent inherited many longstanding problems and is committed to improving the schools in Randolph, Board members told the review team that the Superintendent has not addressed citizen concerns regarding school safety and has been unwilling to raise academic standards through leveling and programs offering more challenging academic coursework, such as an elementary application school, which some Board members believe would encourage

residents whose children are now enrolled in private or charter schools to re-enroll their children in District schools and support budget overrides to increase funding for District schools. The Executive Secretary to the Board, who also serves as Town Clerk and Registrar, expressed a similar view of the need for such programs. He also stated that behavioral discipline problems in the Randolph schools are a principal factor prompting parents to withdraw their children from the school system.

Board members praised the Superintendent's hiring of the Executive Director of Finance and Administration, whom they regard as highly effective. Nevertheless, they expressed mistrust of the Superintendent's financial stewardship, pointing to the District expenditures for building renovations and retention of the former Principal of the Devine School, after closing the school as a cost-cutting measure, as examples of what they consider to be unjustified financial decisions. One Board member also noted that the Superintendent's claim that the District needs \$12 million to restore programs cut over the past five years has engendered public skepticism.

According to the Chairman of the Finance Committee, providing more funding for the Randolph schools will not solve the District's problems. Although he, like members of the Board of Selectmen interviewed by the review team, praised the work of the Executive Director of Finance and Administration, he questioned the Superintendent's ability to manage effectively within the existing budget limitations. He expressed the view that the per-student funding available to the District has increased because the District's enrollment has declined during the period that the District been level-funded.

## **B. Leadership and Support of Teaching and Learning**

### **Randolph's teaching and learning organization is in transition but has begun to improve the educational quality and climate of District schools.**

The teaching and learning organization within the Randolph schools has been in a state of flux in recent years, according to administrators and teachers interviewed by the review team. As previously discussed, the District lacked curriculum leadership until the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning was hired in July 2006. Redistricting, turnover, and layoffs have contributed to the instability of the administrative and teaching staff in the Randolph schools: for example, three of the District's six principals were hired within the last two school years.

According to the elementary, middle school, and high school principals and teachers interviewed by the review team, these personnel changes, coupled with the introduction of new curricula, assessments, and professional development programs, have increased the demands on District teachers. However, they reported that the District leadership's focus on student achievement is improving the quality of instruction as well as the educational climate within the Randolph schools. The District leadership's focus on student achievement was also reflected in the results of an anonymous survey of Randolph teachers administered by the DOE in December 2007: 77 percent of those surveyed agreed that their schools have a clear action plan for improving student achievement, and 78 percent agreed that they are held accountable for producing standards-based student

learning outcomes. According to one principal interviewed by the review team, the District is in the early stages of a positive transformation.

**Randolph’s teaching and learning organization lacks sufficient educational resources to meet the needs of Randolph students. Resource constraints have contributed to low teacher morale and high teacher turnover rates.**

According to Randolph teachers interviewed by the review team, resource constraints within the Randolph schools have significantly reduced their capacity to serve the educational needs of students at all levels. The District continues to lack curriculum specialists and coaches; at the elementary level, there are no social studies or science curricula at all. Elementary school teachers interviewed by the review team reported that their students have significant unmet needs for extra help with foundational skills, homework help, and access to computers; they also said that larger class sizes have prompted them to seek Special Education services for students whose needs could be met in smaller classes but cannot be met in a large classroom staffed by one teacher. They said that the elimination of regular school bus service has exacerbated problems of student absenteeism and tardiness. Teachers also reported that the lack of available computers has impeded their ability to use the software programs accompanying the recently implemented ELA and mathematics curricula.

Randolph Community Middle School received an additional \$500,000 in the 2006-2007 school year, enabling investment in staffing as well as new literacy and math programs. The school’s budget was subsequently cut by \$500,000 in the 2007-2008 school year, necessitating layoffs of five teachers, elimination of the school’s foreign language program, and elimination of all but two clubs at the school.

According to teachers at Randolph High School, inadequate funding has led to a series of problems affecting educational quality, including large class sizes that inhibit teacher-student interaction, a dearth of challenging courses and electives for students, lack of programs for students requiring extra help, and lack of updated technology for the use of students and teachers. Because there are insufficient teachers and courses, students are assigned to study halls during the school day; teachers told the review team that some students “wander the halls” or seek permission to sit in on classes in which they are not enrolled.

The impact of inadequate funding was also reflected in the results of the December 2007 teacher survey: 60 percent of District teachers surveyed reported that they lacked adequate classroom materials and support, and only six percent rated their schools’ safety nets for struggling learners as “very effective.”

Inadequacy resources and fiscal instability within the District are reportedly major factors contributing to the high rates of teacher turnover. According to teachers interviewed by the review team, the inadequacy of school staff, programs, and materials, coupled with the high proportion of students with significant academic deficits and/or behavioral problems, has led many teachers – especially recently hired teachers – to leave for positions in other districts that serve similar student populations but offer better teacher pay, smaller class sizes, and more extensive Special Education services.

Parents interviewed by the review team expressed strongly positive views of the teachers and principals throughout the Randolph schools. Individual parents described the current District administration as visionary, approachable, and responsive to parents. However, they also voiced a number of concerns about their children's schools, including high class sizes that prevent teachers from providing individualized attention to students; inadequate course offerings; low academic expectations in comparison to surrounding school districts; lack of community support for the schools; and low levels of parent involvement in the schools.

**Discipline and safety issues have reportedly affected the teaching and learning environment in the Randolph schools.**

The review team's interviews revealed that discipline and safety in the Randolph schools are major concerns on the part of some members of the school and town community. Some elementary school teachers interviewed by the review team reported that they are required to use substantial class preparation time to address student discipline issues and expressed concern that the District lacks a consistent discipline policy that is enforced systemwide. Representatives of the Randolph Education Association interviewed by the review team also cited the inconsistent approach to discipline issues at the District level as a problem. Some Town officials and community representatives interviewed by the review team said that school safety concerns have prompted some parents to withdraw their children from the Randolph schools.

According to the Chief of Police, who assigns school safety officers to the middle and high schools, student bullying and intimidation of other students and staff has negatively affected the learning environment in both schools. He told the review team that multiple thefts occur at the schools on a daily basis. Although the Chief of Police expressed strong support for the principals of both schools, he expressed the view that District administrators should work more closely with the Randolph Police Department to develop strategies for preventing crime and creating a safer, more productive learning environment in the schools.

**Parent participation in the District schools remains low despite school-based efforts to increase parent involvement in and support of the schools.**

According to principals and teachers interviewed by the review team, school-based efforts to encourage parent participation have not translated to active parent involvement in and support of the schools. Although most parents of elementary students attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences, only an estimated 20 percent of parents of middle school students attend parent-teacher conferences, and few parents attend other school-sponsored events; the traditional approaches to parent engagement, such as coffee hours with school officials, have reportedly not worked. Teachers and Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) representatives interviewed by the review team cited several recent measures to increase parent involvement, including translation of school notices into multiple languages, provision of interpreters at some school functions, and school events geared to specific ethnic groups. However, there is a general consensus that more radical efforts will be required to create a more active community of parents who participate in the educational and political process in Randolph.

## C. School Committee

### **The School Committee's internal policy conflicts have impaired its capacity to exercise effective leadership of the District.**

All four School Committee members interviewed by the review team expressed their commitment to improving the District schools. However, all four cited the divisive climate created by policy conflicts within the School Committee, summarized earlier in this report. Because of these policy conflicts, the School Committee has been unable to unite around a common vision for the District schools, provide the educational leadership required to mobilize community support for the schools, and provide constructive oversight of the Superintendent's work to improve the schools.

Like other School Committees, the Randolph School Committee is required to evaluate the performance of the Superintendent annually. Although the School Committee reportedly did not prepare annual evaluations of the prior Superintendent, it did institute an evaluation process for the current Superintendent: at the outset of the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, the School Committee and the Superintendent agreed upon the Superintendent's performance goals for each year, and at the end of each school year, the School Committee prepared a written evaluation of the Superintendent's performance. The goals established for the Superintendent in the 2006-2007 school year were the same as the goals listed in the 2006-2007 DIP approved by the School Committee.

For the 2006-2007 school year, these DIP goals related to meeting AYP benchmarks in all schools, at all levels, for all student subgroups; fostering effective instructional practice by providing high-quality, sustained professional development; promoting a school climate and culture supporting high student achievement and mutual respect and responsibility; and increasing community confidence in and support for the schools while reversing the trend toward lower enrollments. The School Committee prepared a written evaluation of the Superintendent's performance during the period of July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. The School Committee rated the Superintendent's performance in five areas: School Committee relationship, educational leadership, budget and general management, personnel management, and communications and public relations. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting unsatisfactory performance and 5 denoting exceptional or outstanding performance, the School Committee awarded the Superintendent an overall numerical rating of 2.93, just below the rating of 3 denoting performance that meets expectations or is satisfactory. Two of the four School Committee members told the review team that these ratings reflected the Superintendent's progress toward the agreed-upon goals and his performance in other areas, while the other two School Committee members told the review team that the ratings were not based on the Superintendent's progress toward the agreed-upon goals and did not represent a fair or meaningful evaluation of the Superintendent's performance during the 2006-2007 school year.

The narrative accompanying the ratings in the written evaluation reflected the divided opinions of School Committee members regarding the Superintendent's performance and effectiveness. Among the areas of strength cited in the evaluation were the Superintendent's communications with the School Committee, educational initiatives implemented despite five consecutive years of level funding coupled with reduced grant

funds for the District, the hiring of the new Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning and the new Executive Director of Finance and Administration, the implementation of a robust professional development program, and the Superintendent's successful efforts to restore the credibility of the school system in the larger community. The areas for improvement cited in the evaluation included a reference to several occasions on which School Committee members felt that they did not receive timely information; the Superintendent's apparent lack of willingness to develop and/or implement certain policies; his implementation of educational philosophies or strategies with which some School Committee members disagreed; concerns on the part of some School Committee members that budget cuts were recommended without all of the necessary research and supporting documentation; and the need for the District to continue current efforts to recruit, hire, train, and retain a workforce that is more representative of the student body and community at large. In the opinion of the review team, the inconsistent content of this written evaluation, coupled with the lack of alignment to the goals agreed to by the School Committee and the Superintendent at the outset of the school year, reduced its usefulness as a mechanism for providing the Superintendent with clear, constructive feedback and guidance regarding the School Committee's expectations.

**The School Committee has recently taken positive steps to increase the transparency of its deliberations, encourage parent participation, and obtain technical assistance.**

In an effort to increase public confidence, the School Committee has recently instituted changes intended to increase the transparency of its budget process and encourage public participation at its meetings, according to some School Committee members interviewed by the review team. For example the School Committee's Budget Subcommittee meetings were not open to the public in the past but are now held as open meetings, as required by the state's open meeting law. The School Committee has also moved the public comment period to the beginning of each meeting and invited public questions and comments on major agenda items.

The School Committee recently participated in a pilot project, in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts of School Superintendents, designed to further the development of leadership teams of Superintendents and School Committees. In addition, one member of the School Committee attended training at Massasoit Community College on conducting a successful override effort.

**The School Committee is regarded as ineffective by some other government officials and community representatives.**

Members of the Board of Selectmen interviewed by the review team described the School Committee as a dysfunctional group that lacks the political will to make the difficult decisions that Board members believe are required in order to improve the Randolph schools. As previously discussed, some Board members and other Town officials lack confidence in of the District's financial decisions and believe that the District should raise academic standards by implementing programs that would attract residents whose children are now being educated elsewhere.

Some PTO and Randolph community representatives expressed frustration with the School Committee's inability to "think outside the box" and devise creative approaches to school improvement rather than focusing entirely on the failure of previous school override votes. Others deplored the lack of unity among School Committee members and expressed the view that some School Committee members have often tried to thwart rather than support the Superintendent's efforts to improve the District schools. There was general agreement that the School Committee is not providing the necessary educational leadership within the Randolph community.

### **C. Municipal Leadership and Support for Education**

#### **Municipal leaders acknowledge the need to improve the Randolph schools but lack confidence in the capacity of the School Committee and the Superintendent to take effective action.**

All Town officials interviewed by the review team expressed a commitment to the Randolph community, and all expressed concerns regarding the academic and safety problems and declining enrollments in the District schools. However, as discussed above, they do not believe that the School Committee and the Superintendent are taking the necessary actions to address these problems. Town officials told the review team that many Town Meeting members and voters share their mistrust of the District leadership and believe that public safety in Randolph is a more pressing issue than education. The extent of discord between the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee is reflected in the statement by two Board members that the Commonwealth should appoint a trustee to replace the School Committee and the Superintendent.

#### **Parents and other community representatives do not believe that the Board of Selectmen is committed to improving the District schools.**

Many parents and other community representatives interviewed by the review team expressed the view that the Board of Selectmen is not supportive of the District schools. Some said that while Board members claim to support the schools, they have not attempted to marshal community support for the schools or school funding measures. The Board's handling of previous school override measures was repeatedly cited as problematic: the review team was told that the Board, which is responsible for authorizing the placement of an override question on the ballot, including the form of the question and the dollar amount of the funds to be requested for District schools, has routinely delayed this decision until immediately prior to each override vote, thereby making it difficult for supporters to advocate and build community support for the measure; they also said that the Board has chosen dollar amounts that appear capricious. Many of those interviewed by the review team expressed frustration regarding the political strife between school and Town leaders and the inability of their elected officials to collaborate with each other for the benefit of the entire Randolph community.

## **V. Conclusion**

The review team found evidence of tangible progress in the District. In particular, the District's recent initiatives in the areas of staffing, curriculum, professional development, planning, and community outreach have begun the process of rebuilding Randolph's long-neglected academic infrastructure, engaging the school community in the effort to improve student achievement, and restoring community trust in the Randolph schools.

There are substantial obstacles to continued improvement of the District schools. The District needs to continue its work to strengthen the District's curricula, assessments, and instruction. Many District students need additional academic supports and other services that are not being provided. Although the District has developed multiple plans to improve student achievement, its capacity to implement these plans is constrained in part by limited resources. To date, school and community leaders have not succeeded in obtaining voter support for override measures to increase school funding.

Although the District will require additional resources in order to meet the educational needs of Randolph students, additional resources alone will not solve the District's problems if the divisiveness among Randolph's elected and appointed officials continues. All of the school and Town leaders interviewed by the review team expressed commitment to the Randolph community; all expressed concern about the District's underperformance. However, as this report has discussed, school and Town leaders hold differing opinions on a range of school issues, including school expenditures, educational priorities and programs, and school safety. To date, Randolph leaders on all sides of these issues have not demonstrated the ability or willingness to communicate, compromise, and find common ground based upon mutual respect for and understanding of one another's views. This polarized, hostile climate must change.

Randolph officials and citizens have an obligation to meet the educational needs of all Randolph children. Notwithstanding the problems documented in this report, the review team believes that school, Town, and other community leaders share the desire to create an academically successful educational system that will restore the community's confidence and pride in its schools. Although the difficulty of engaging Randolph's diverse population in school and community issues should not be underestimated, the future of Randolph's educational system depends upon the community's capacity to pursue a common vision for the schools.

A unified Randolph community will require unified leadership on the part of school and Town officials. At this point, the challenges confronting the District are formidable, the prospects for success are uncertain, and the stakes for Randolph are very high.

## **VI. Recommendations**

The review team offers the following specific recommendations to help ensure that the District has the leadership and support that will be necessary for sustained improvement. However, these recommendations will not be effective unless Randolph's school and Town

leaders are willing and able to move beyond their conflicts and build mutually respectful, cooperative working relationships in the interest of the Randolph community.

**1. The School Committee should ensure stable, effective leadership of the Randolph Public Schools and develop the capacity to operate as a unified leadership team.**

The current Superintendent's contract will end in June 2008. Since July 2005, the Superintendent has initiated improvements to the District schools despite the difficult political and funding environment in Randolph. Continued improvement of the District schools will require stable, effective leadership capable of addressing the challenges confronting the District, many of which have been discussed in this report. The School Committee must now decide whether or not to renew the Superintendent's contract.

Beyond the appointment of a Superintendent, the School Committee must provide constructive oversight of and support to the Superintendent. The School Committee and the Superintendent should continue to work with the DOE, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents to gain a better understanding of their relative responsibilities and to develop strategies for working together more productively.

In addition, the School Committee and the Superintendent should jointly establish realistic, measurable performance targets for the Superintendent that directly relate to the accomplishment of the District goals, rather than adopting the broad District goals stated in the DIP as the Superintendent's annual performance goals. The School Committee's annual evaluations of the Superintendent should include an explicit assessment of the Superintendent's performance relative to each performance target and provide the Superintendent with clear, constructive feedback and guidance regarding the School Committee's expectations.

**2. The Superintendent and other school administrators, in collaboration with the School Committee and other stakeholders, should create a short list of immediate priorities. These priorities, together with specific action steps and cost estimates, should be adopted by the School Committee and communicated to Town officials and the larger Randolph community.**

The multiple plans for the Randolph Public Schools, including the state-mandated District Improvement Plan, the state-mandated District Plan for School Intervention at Randolph Community Middle School, and the ongoing strategic plan, appear to have created confusion and skepticism on the part of the public. By distilling the goals and objectives set forth in these plans into a short list of immediate priorities for the Randolph schools, as well as specific action steps and cost estimates for implementing each step, school leaders would be better equipped to articulate and generate public support for the District's priorities. The estimated \$12 million cost of restoring past programs and services cut over the past five years, a figure that has been cited by the Superintendent, is an irrelevant figure that has generated confusion and skepticism; it should be discarded in favor of detailed budget estimates for programs and initiatives designed to address the current needs and priorities of the District.

**3. School leaders should obtain technical assistance for principals to aid them in developing more effective approaches to engaging parents in their children's education.**

The low levels of parent participation in the Randolph schools are recognized by all stakeholders interviewed by the review team as a major impediment to improving the schools. The lack of communication and connection between the Randolph schools and the parents of students attending the schools means that teachers cannot readily enlist the support of parents in meeting student needs. Moreover, parents who are disengaged from the schools are less likely to participate in Randolph's civic life and vote in Town elections, including override elections that affect the future of the District schools.

Although the principals in Randolph recognize the need and have implemented strategies to encourage more parent participation, these strategies have met with limited success. Parents of all races, ethnicities, and income groups care deeply about their children. To help principals gain the trust and participation of parents who are currently disengaged, school leaders should seek technical assistance from the DOE, local community groups, or other sources with experience in working immigrant families and other socioeconomic groups represented by the school population.

**4. The School Committee, Superintendent, and Town officials should reach consensus regarding the future of public education in Randolph.**

School and Town leaders interviewed by the review team reported that the Superintendent and the School Committee do not interact on a regular basis with the Board of Selectmen or the Finance Commission. If Randolph leaders are to work together in a collaborative and constructive manner, they will need to meet regularly to exchange information and opinions regarding substantive issues affecting the future of public education in Randolph. For example, school leaders should provide detailed information to Town officials and the public on a regular basis regarding ongoing educational initiatives and related expenditures. Such regular communications may help to allay concerns on the part of some Town officials and citizens regarding District spending.

School leaders should also accord serious consideration to the longer-term strategy, proposed by some school and Town leaders, of developing new programs serving students of varying abilities, including higher-achieving students. While current school initiatives are aimed at improving the performance of currently enrolled students, the District has an obligation to serve all students in the community, including those who could benefit from programs offering more challenging academic opportunities. Moreover, as supporters have argued, such programs would raise academic standards and could increase school enrollment, support, and participation by Randolph families.

## **Appendix A Materials Reviewed**

*Anonymous Teacher Survey – Randolph School District, MA Department of Education, December 2007*

*Anonymous Administrator Survey – Randolph School District, MA Department of Education, December 2007*

*District Infrastructure Survey, MA Department of Education, December 2008*

*How Is Your School District Performing? A look at Randolph Public Schools 2004-2006, MA Office of Educational Quality and Accountability*

*Mid-cycle Coordinated Program Review Report, MA Department of Education, November 20, 2007*

*Randolph Public Schools District Plan for Intervention at Randolph Community Middle School, October 31, 2006*

Memorandum: Update on the Financial Situation in the Randolph Public Schools from Acting Commissioner Jeffrey Nellhaus to Members of the Board of Education, December 3, 2007

*FY08 School Committee Budget and Superintendent's Budget Message, March 1, 2007*

Presentation: *The Impact of Insufficient Funding On the Randolph Public Schools*, by Richard H. Silverman, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, to State Board of Education, October 30, 2007

*Randolph Public Schools Strategic Direction 2008-2012*

*Randolph Public Schools Academic Year 2006-2007 Vision, Goals and Action Steps*

*Randolph Public Schools Academic Year 2007-2008 Vision, Goals and Action Steps*

Presentation: *Report to the Randolph School Committee on Accomplishments, Meeting The Vision, Goals, and Action Steps for the Academic Year 2006-2007*, by Richard H. Silverman, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools (Undated.)

*Randolph Budget Cuts FY04-FY08, Randolph Public Schools, Office of the Superintendent (Undated)*

*Randolph Public Schools Improvement Initiatives 2005-2007, Randolph Public Schools, Office of the Superintendent (Undated)*

*Randolph Public Schools Department Budget Request Workbook - 2008-2009 Budget Request*

Randolph Public Schools Professional Development Program, June 2007-May 2008

*Report of the Visiting Committee for Randolph High School, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Public Secondary Education, March 11-14 (2007) and letter from Pamela Gray-Bennett, Ed.D., Director, Commission on Public Secondary Schools to William T. Conard, Principal, Randolph High School, October 24, 2007*

**Appendix B**  
**Leadership Evaluation Interview Schedule**  
**December 17 – 19, 2007**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Interviewer</b>		
<b>Monday, December 17, 2007</b>					
12:30-2:30	Team document review and interview preparation				
2:30-3:15	Richard Silverman	Superintendent	MG	DA	PB
3:15-4:00	Jonathan Landman	Asst. Supt. for Teaching & Learning	MG	DA	PB
4:00-4:45	Steve Moore	Dir. of Finance & Administration	MG	DA	PB
4:45-5:30	Karen Clasby	Director of Student Services	MG	DA	PB
BREAK					
6:30-7:15	Tamara Pitts	School Committee member	MG	DA	PB
7:15-8:00	Larry Azer	Chair, School Committee	MG	DA	PB
<b>Tuesday, December 18, 2007</b>					
9:00-9:45	Paul Meoni	School Committee member	MG	DA	PB
9:45-10:30	Marybeth Nearen	Vice Chair, School Committee	MG	DA	PB
10:30-11:30	Jim Burgess, Richard Wells, William Alexopoulos	Board of Selectmen	MG	DA	PB
Lunch					
1:30-2:15	Brian Howard	Executive Secretary	MG	DA	PB
2:15-3:00	Stephen Toomey	Town Accountant		DA	PB
2:30-3:15	Teacher Focus Group	RCMS	MG		
3:00-3:45	Teacher Focus Group	High School		DA	PB
3:45-4:30	Teacher Focus Group	Elementary	MG	DA	PB
4:30-5:15	Arthur Goldstein	Chair, Finance Committee	MG	DA	PB
BREAK					
6:30-7:15	Parent Focus Group	Elementary/Middle/High School	MG		PB
<b>Wednesday, December 19, 2007</b>					
9:00-9:45	Karen Manning, Dianne Gillin, Steve LeClair	REA Leadership	MG		
	PTO Council/other parents			DA	PB
9:45-10:30	John Sheehan & Bill Conard	MS/HS Principals	MG	DA	PB
10:30-11:15	Annette Bailey/Sam Bertolino/Nancy Connelly/Leo Flanagan	Elementary School Principals	MG	DA	PB
11:15-12:00		Bus.Comm./Clergy/Community	MG	DA	PB
12:00-12:45	Richard Silverman	Superintendent	MG	DA	PB

**Appendix C  
Randolph Memo  
December 3, 2007**



Jeffrey Nellhaus  
Acting Commissioner of  
Education

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education

350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023

Telephone: (781) 338-3000  
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

**TO:** Members of the Board of Education  
**FROM:** Jeffrey Nellhaus, Acting Commissioner of Education  
**DATE:** December 3, 2007  
**SUBJECT:** Update on the Financial Situation in the Randolph Public Schools

During last week's Board of Education discussion on the Randolph Public Schools, Dr. Joseph Rappa, Executive Director of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), indicated that lack of adequate municipal financial support was one of the major problems facing the district. In particular, he stated that the town was improperly including its \$3 million annual assessment for the Blue Hills regional vocational school district in its net school spending for the Randolph Public Schools, thus reducing the funds available for the needs of the local schools. Board members asked whether this situation warranted a referral to either the Attorney General or the Department of Revenue.

I asked the Department's school finance office to review the relevant data, including the most recent financial returns for FY2007, which were filed by the town within the past several weeks. As will be explained in further detail below, our conclusion is that these particular allegations were inaccurate and were based on a misunderstanding of the school finance data. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson has reviewed and discussed the data with Dr. Rappa and Superintendent Silverman, and they concur. The town of Randolph is fully meeting its legal obligations for the financial support of the Randolph Public Schools.

### Background: Net School Spending and Reporting

The concept of "net school spending" was established in the 1993 Education Reform Law to set requirements for municipal school spending, and to measure compliance with those requirements. Each year, the Department sets a "net school spending requirement" for each operating school district in the state. The specific amount for each district is based on two factors: the amount that the state estimates the municipality can afford from its local revenue

sources, and the amount of Chapter 70 state school aid that the district will be receiving. The net school spending requirement is always at least equal to the district’s foundation budget, which in turn is based on student enrollment levels and demographics. In some cases, the net school spending requirement can exceed the foundation budget.

After the close of each fiscal year, the Department receives detailed financial reports from each district and municipality, documenting all education-related spending during that year. The Department uses this data to calculate each district’s “actual net school spending,” which is then compared to the net school spending requirement to determine compliance. Not all education spending is included in the net school spending calculation. Among the items that are excluded are pupil transportation; facility capital costs; adult education and other community programs; federal and state categorical grant programs; and revolving funds. Municipal payments to regional school districts are included in the financial reports but only affect the net school spending for the regional district, not the local district.

Net School Spending in Randolph for FY07

The chart below shows the net school spending calculations for the Randolph Public Schools for FY07:

<b>FY07 Net School Spending</b>	<b>School Committee</b>	<b>City or Town</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>244 RANDOLPH</b>			
1. Administration (1000)	1,348,708	301,352	1,650,060
2. Instruction (2000)	19,144,104	-	19,144,104
3. Attendance-Health (3100, 3200)	624,856	-	624,856
4. Food Services (3400)	-	-	-
5. Athletics/Student Activities/ Security (3500,3600)	485,826	-	485,826
6. Maintenance (4000)	2,954,434	93,566	3,048,000
7. Employee Benefits (5100)	-	1,192,378	1,192,378
8. Insurance (5200)	-	3,335,019	3,335,019
9. Retired Employee Insurance (5250)	-	-	-
10. Rentals (5300)	125,809	-	125,809
11. Short Term Interest (5400)	-	-	-
12. Tuition (9000)	3,885,945	1,034,207	4,920,152
13. Total School Spending (1 through 12)	28,569,682	5,956,522	34,526,204
14. School Revenues			
14a) FY07 School Revenues	-	-	-
14b) FY07 Circuit Breaker			
Reimbursement	1,034,360		1,034,360
14c) FY07 Charter Reimbursement		382,517	382,517
Subtotal, School Revenues (14a+14b+14c)	1,034,360	382,517	1,416,877
15. Total Actual Net School Spending (13 - 14)	27,535,322	5,574,005	33,109,327
16. FY07 Required Net School Spending			32,157,977

The district's total net school spending was \$33.1 million (line 15), of which \$27.5 million was spending from the school district budget and \$5.6 million from other municipal departments. The municipal spending included amounts provided by the town for administrative services (line 1); building maintenance (line 6); pensions, health insurance and other employee benefits (lines 7 and 8); and payments for school choice and charter school tuition (line 12). The charter school tuition cost is partially offset by state reimbursements (line 14c). The \$3.9 million in out-of-district tuition costs reported under the school committee budget (line 12) is for special education programs at private schools and educational collaboratives.

Note that the town's FY07 assessment for the Blue Hills vocational school district (\$3.3 million) is not included anywhere in this calculation, although of course it would be reflected in the separate net school spending calculation for the Blue Hills district. Randolph's net school spending requirement for FY07 was \$32.2 million (line 16), so the district exceeded its requirement by three percent. The erroneous conclusion regarding the reporting of the Blue Hills assessment was apparently the result of a misinterpretation of the data by EQA staff who were unfamiliar with the Department's financial reports.

### Monitoring Net School Spending

Board members asked questions at the meeting regarding the Department's activities to ensure compliance with these requirements. We have published regulations (603 CMR 10.06) and technical guidance defining what types of expenditures qualify for net school spending, and we work closely with district officials to resolve any disagreements that might arise at the local level. We review all financial reports submitted by districts for reasonableness and to identify significant changes from prior years that might indicate reporting errors. We also require the financial reports to be reviewed during the annual municipal audit. Finally, it is important to note that the Department provides the software used to calculate net school spending; the calculations are not done by the districts or towns themselves.

If a district does not comply with its net school spending requirement, we can take one of several enforcement actions. If the underspending is less than five percent of the requirement, we can carry over the shortfall and add it to the next year's requirement. If the underspending exceeds five percent, we can also reduce the town's school aid. Finally, where the problem is chronic, we can ask the Department of Revenue to hold up approval of the town's tax rate or we can ask the Attorney General to initiate appropriate legal action. Our school finance office has done an exceptional job over the years in monitoring net school spending, and as a result the rate of compliance is extremely high.

Net School Spending in Randolph over Four Years and Related Data

The chart below summarizes Randolph’s net school spending compliance for the last four years; the data for the current year (FY08) is preliminary, based on the district’s approved budget:

	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>	<b>FY07</b>	<b>FY08</b>
Foundation budget	28,526,425	28,415,668	30,652,226	31,690,386
Required net school spending	29,475,208	30,785,579	32,157,977	32,419,095
Actual net school spending - school committee	27,800,748	28,244,488	27,535,322	28,207,494
Actual net school spending - municipal	4,279,247	4,592,237	5,574,005	6,007,061
Actual net school spending - total	32,079,995	32,836,725	33,109,327	34,214,555
Actual nss as % of foundation - Randolph	112.5	115.6	108.0	108.0
Actual nss as % of foundation - state average	118.0	119.6	118.9	na

It can be seen that Randolph met its legal net school requirement in every year. In each year, the actual net school spending was significantly higher than the district’s foundation budget, although the extra spending was below the statewide average. Based on this data, there is no cause for a referral to either the Attorney General or the Department of Revenue for enforcement of the spending requirement.

Of course, the fact that the town has met its legal spending requirement does not necessarily mean that the district is adequately funded to meet all of its educational needs, nor does it necessarily mean that the town is not able to provide additional resources above and beyond the current spending levels. The first question, whether the district has adequate funds to meet its needs, is really a question of whether the state’s foundation budget is indeed adequate; as noted earlier, the foundation budget is a key determinant of the net school spending requirement. The foundation budget formula was first developed in the early 1990’s and was codified in the 1993 Education Reform Law. Since that time, there have been several minor changes to the formula as well as annual increases for inflation. The Governor’s Readiness Project task force is considering whether to recommend a major new study of the foundation budget’s adequacy.

The second question – can Randolph (and other towns) afford to spend more on K-12 education – has been extensively studied over the past several years. As a result of this study, the Legislature in FY07 adopted a new formula for calculating the local contribution component of the net school spending requirement. This new measure of municipal fiscal capacity, called the “aggregate wealth” formula, is based on both property values and personal income levels, and it is being phased in over a five-year period. According to this metric, the town of Randolph does not have the fiscal capacity to increase its local spending on education. In fact, the new formula is actually lowering Randolph’s required spending from local revenues, while providing a higher level of funding from state aid.

The attachment to this memorandum contains some additional financial statistics related to the Randolph Public Schools, which may help to provide further perspective about the district’s financial problems. The statistics are extracted from the data the Department is currently

analyzing for the fiscal distress study. We expect to report on that study in January. Please note that the Department only recently received the data for FY07 and it has not yet been fully edited. Some points to note:

- Randolph's foundation enrollment has declined by more than 13% over the past six years, from 4,055 students to 3,512. Because of this decline, total spending per pupil has actually gone up slightly in the past three years. (The Department changed its method of calculating per pupil expenditures in FY05, so prior years' data would not be comparable.)
- Randolph's instructional spending per pupil has essentially been flat the last three years. Most of the increases in total spending per pupil have undoubtedly been concentrated in non-instructional areas such as employee health insurance.
- In both total spending and instructional spending per pupil, Randolph is below the state average (although, as noted earlier, still above the foundation budget floor).
- Randolph's Chapter 70 aid lost ground to inflation from FY02 through FY06, but the district received sizeable increases in FY07 and FY08, in part because of the formula change described earlier.
- It appears the district has been able to provide reasonable teacher salary increases in recent years while at the same time maintaining a student/teacher ratio fairly close to the state average. (Again, the downturn in both of these measures in FY07 needs to be verified.) The data on student/teacher ratio is somewhat surprising in light of the superintendent's presentation in October about the increase in elementary class sizes and the elimination of many high school class sections. This bears further review.

We will continue to review the spending and staffing patterns in Randolph and other fiscally distressed districts to better understand how budget problems are affecting educational services.

If Board members have any questions about the information contained in this memorandum, please feel free to contact me, associate commissioner Jeff Wulfson (781-338-6500), or school finance programs manager Roger Hatch (781-338-6527).

Attachment

cc: Superintendent Richard Silverman, Randolph Public Schools  
Randolph Board of Selectmen  
Dr. Joseph Rappa, Executive Director, EQA  
Juliane Dow, Associate Commissioner, DOE  
Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, DOE