

*How Is Your  
School District  
Performing?*



*A look at*  
**East Longmeadow**  
Public Schools

2004–2006



EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL  
*Office of Educational Quality and Accountability*

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*The five-member Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) and its agency, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EOA), were established by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2000 to examine public school districts in the commonwealth. The mission of the EMAC and EOA is to provide independent verification of schools' and districts' efforts to promote higher levels of academic achievement among their students, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.*

*The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Massachusetts Department of Education; the superintendent of the East Longmeadow Public Schools, Dr. Edward Costa; the school department staff; and the town officials of East Longmeadow.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Test scores provide one method of assessing student achievement, but a variety of factors affect student performance. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) was created to examine many of these additional factors by conducting independent audits of schools and districts across the commonwealth. The agency uses these audits to:

- Provide a comprehensive evaluation of each school district's performance;
- Publish annual reports on selected districts' performance;
- Monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and
- Provide the public with information that helps the state hold districts and schools, including charter schools, accountable.

In April 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the East Longmeadow Public Schools for the period of 2004–2006. The EQA analyzed East Longmeadow students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and identified how students in general and in subgroups were performing. The EQA then examined critical factors that affected student performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

The review was based on documents supplied by the East Longmeadow Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Education; correspondence sent prior to the EQA team's site visit; interviews with representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers; numerous classroom observations; and additional documents submitted while the EQA team visited the district. The report does not take into account documents, revised data, or events that may have occurred after June 2006. However, district leaders were invited to provide more current information.

## Putting the Data in Perspective

*East Longmeadow, MA*



### DISTRICT

*Population:* 14,100  
*Median family income:* \$70,571  
*Largest sources of employment:* Educational, health, and social services; manufacturing; retail trade  
*Local government:* Board of Selectmen, Administrative Assistant, Open Town Meeting

### SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

*School committee:* 5 members  
*Number of schools:* 5  
*Student-teacher ratio:* 14.5 to 1  
*Per Pupil Expenditures:* \$9,216  
*Student enrollment:*  
 Total: 2,818  
 White: 93.8 percent  
 Hispanic: 1.2 percent  
 African-American: 2.7 percent  
 Asian: 2.2 percent  
 Native American: 0.0 percent  
 Limited English proficient: 0.0 percent  
 Low income: 6.0 percent  
 Special education: 22.5 percent

*Sources: 2000 U.S. Census and Massachusetts Department of Education.*

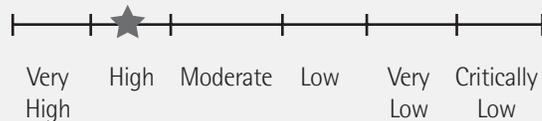
### EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

The Educational Management Audit Council accepted this report and its findings at their meeting of November 29, 2007.

## MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2006

	DISTRICT	STATE
Average Proficiency Index	86	78
English Language Arts Proficiency Index	93	84
Math Proficiency Index	78	72

### Performance Rating



The Average Proficiency Index is another way to look at MCAS scores. It is a weighted average of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, which means they have met the state's standards. A score of 100 indicates that all students are proficient. The Massachusetts DOE developed the categories presented to identify performance levels.

## HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?

### Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results

Students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 are required to take the MCAS tests each year in one or more specified subject areas, including English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE). Beginning with the class of 2003, students must pass the grade 10 math and ELA tests to graduate. Those who do not pass on the first try may retake the tests several more times.

The EOA analyzed current state and district MCAS results to determine how well district students as a whole and sub-groups of students performed compared to students throughout the commonwealth, and to the state goal of proficiency. The EOA analysis sought to answer the following five questions:

#### 1. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in East Longmeadow participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

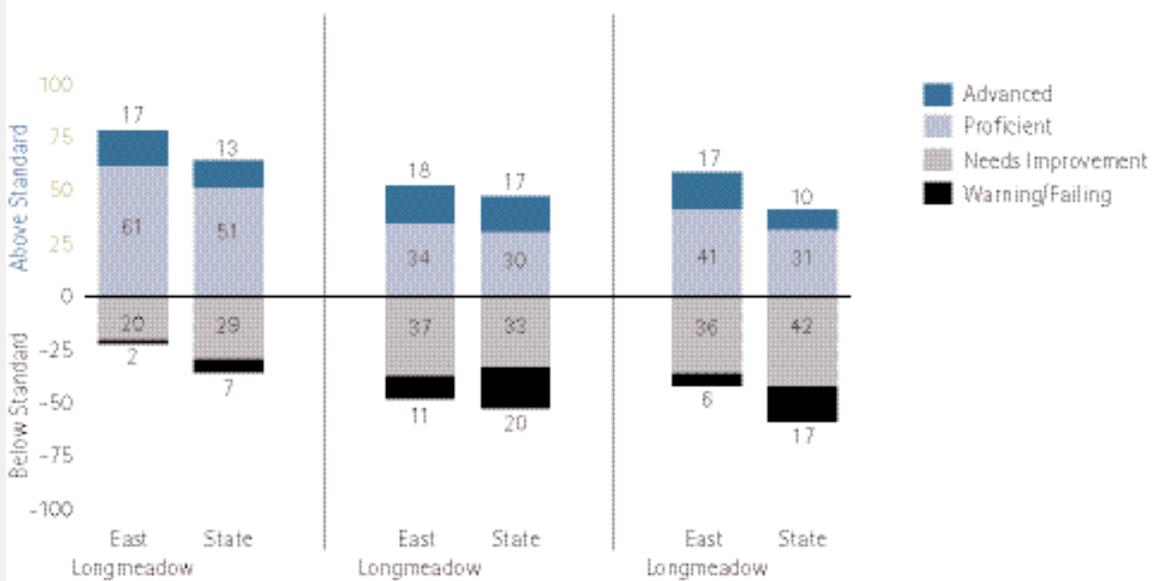
#### 2. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on the MCAS examination?

On average, nearly two-thirds of all students in East Longmeadow attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that statewide. Nearly four-fifths of East Longmeadow students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), and more than half of East Longmeadow students attained proficiency in math and in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-seven percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- East Longmeadow's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 86 proficiency index (PI) points, eight PI points greater than that statewide. East Longmeadow's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 14 PI points.
- In 2006, East Longmeadow's proficiency gap in ELA was seven PI points, nine PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of less than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). East Longmeadow's proficiency gap in math was 22 PI points in 2006, six PI points narrower than the

EAST LONGMEADOW SCORES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES, 2006

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



state’s average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of less than three PI points per year to achieve AYP. East Longmeadow’s proficiency gap in STE was 16 PI points, 13 PI points narrower than that statewide.

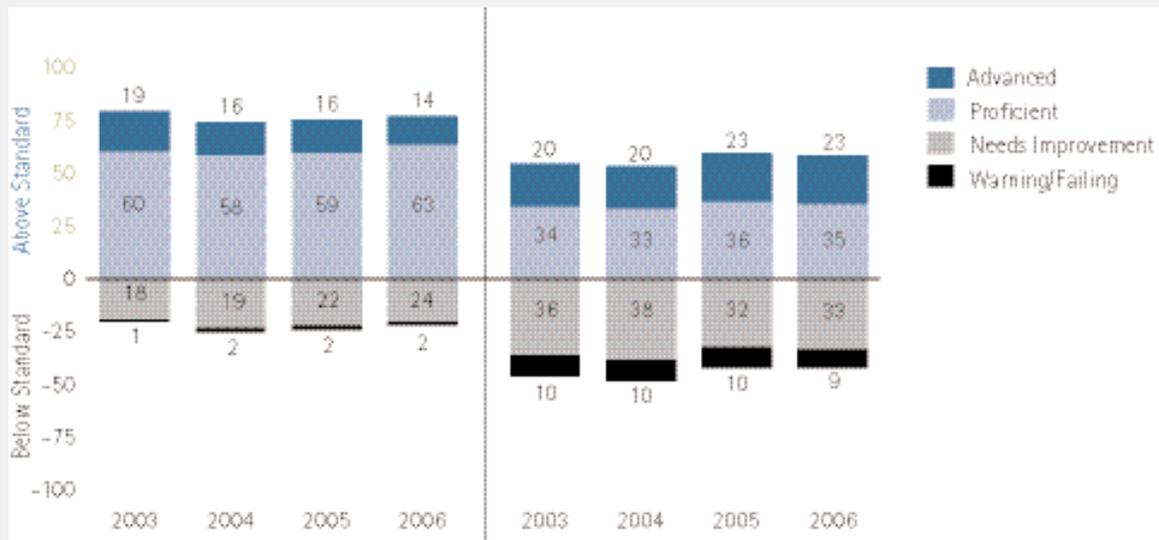
3. Has the district’s MCAS test performance improved over time?

Between 2003 and 2006, East Longmeadow’s MCAS performance showed little improvement overall and in math, and a slight decline in ELA and in STE.

- The percentage of students scoring in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories rose by one percentage point between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category remained the same. The average proficiency gap in East Longmeadow narrowed from 15 PI points in 2003 to 14 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of five percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003–2006, ELA performance in East Longmeadow showed a slight decline of nearly one PI point.
- Math performance in East Longmeadow showed a slight improvement of two PI points during this period. This resulted in an improvement rate of 10 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, STE performance in East Longmeadow declined by nearly one-half PI point.

## EAST LONGMEADOW ELA SCORES COMPARED TO MATH SCORES

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



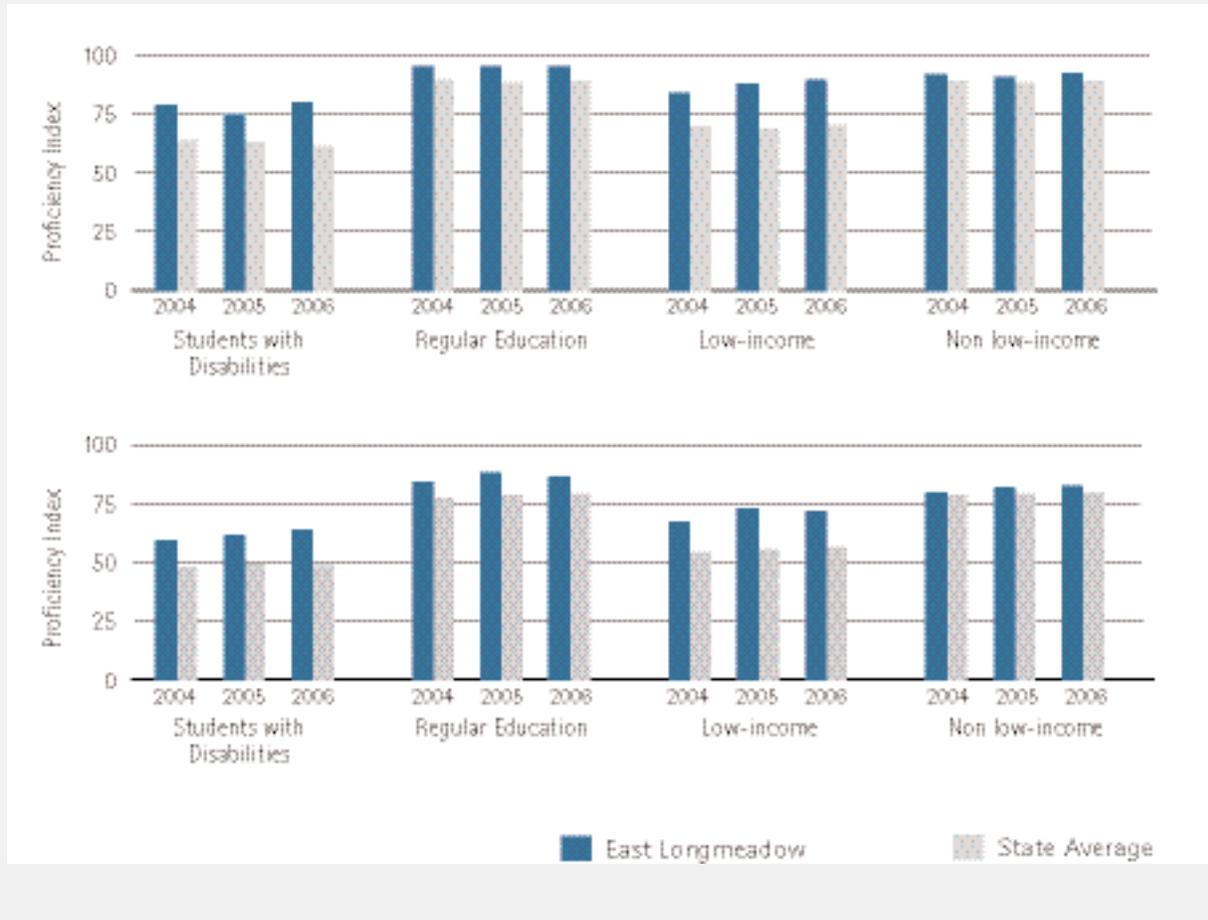
#### 4. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied among subgroups of East Longmeadow students. Of the eight measurable subgroups in East Longmeadow in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 15 PI points in ELA and 23 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in East Longmeadow in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than two-fifths of the students with disabilities, less than three-fifths of the African-American students, and less than half of the low-income students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, two-thirds or more of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA but wider in math. Approximately two-thirds of the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

## EAST LONGMEADOW STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES

## English Language Arts



5. *Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?*

In East Longmeadow, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 16 PI points in 2003 to 15 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 30 to 22 PI points over this period.

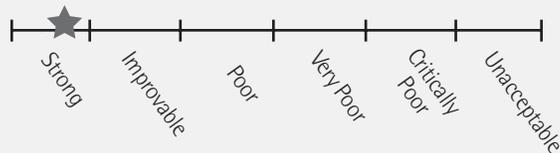
- All student subgroups in East Longmeadow had either a decline or no change in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA was African-American students.
- In math, all subgroups in East Longmeadow showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were African-American students and students with disabilities.

Performance at a Glance

Management Quality Index

The Management Quality Index is a weighted average of the district's performance on 67 indicators that measure the effectiveness of a district's management system. E. Longmeadow received the following rating:

Performance Rating:



WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Overall District Management

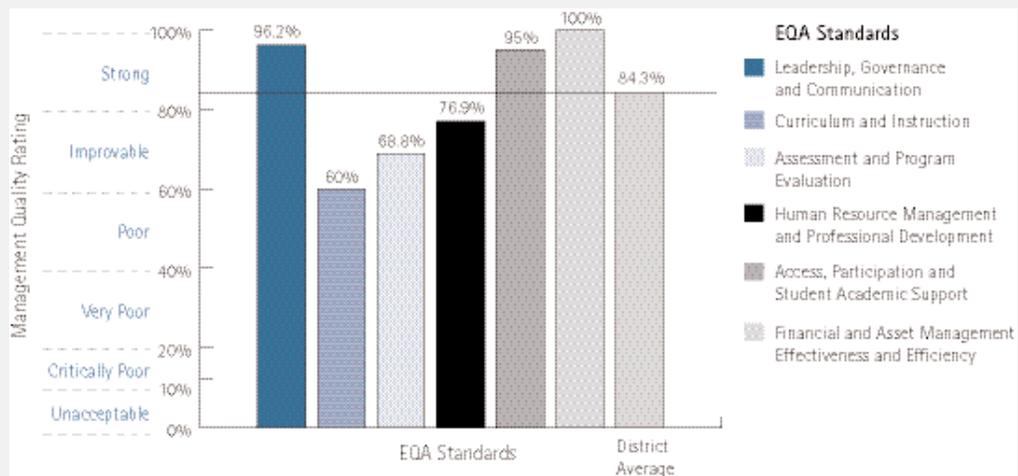
To better understand the factors affecting student scores on the MCAS tests, the EQA analyzes district performance on 67 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

Taken together, these factors are a measure of the effectiveness – or quality – of a district's management system. A score of 100 percent on the Management Quality Index (MQI) means that the district meets the standard and performed at a satisfactory level on all indicators. However, it does not mean the district was perfect.

In 2006, East Longmeadow received an overall MQI score of 'Strong' (84.3 percent). The district performed best on the Financial Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency and the Leadership, Governance, and Communication standards, scoring 'Strong.' It was rated 'Improvable' on the Curriculum and Instruction standard. Given these ratings, the district is performing better than expected on the MCAS tests. During the review period, student performance declined slightly in ELA but improved slightly in math. On the following pages, we take a closer look at the district's performance in each of the six standards.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

East Longmeadow, 2004–2006



## Leadership, Governance, and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. As measured by MCAS test performance, East Longmeadow ranked among the 'High' performing school districts in the commonwealth, with scores that were 'Very High' in ELA and 'Moderate' in math.

### Leadership and Communication

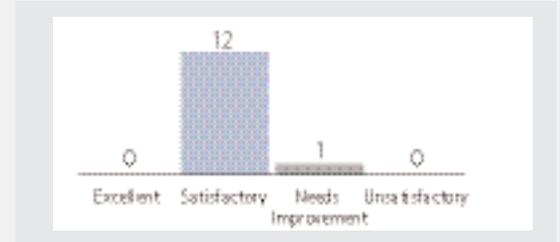
The East Longmeadow school district has enjoyed considerable stability at the leadership level. The leadership of the East Longmeadow Public Schools consisted of the superintendent and the five-member school committee. The superintendent has served the district since his appointment in 1998. The majority of school committee members have served a minimum of two three-year terms. The combined total of elected years of service among the five committee members reached 24 after the recent election. Newly elected members received training from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and attended a daylong induction/orientation program provided by the superintendent that identified emerging issues and concerns. Stability and longevity also existed within the administrative ranks as several individuals served the district for many years. The stability of leadership permeated the district wherein administrators, staff, and community members voiced confidence in and valued the quality of work and the commitment of the staff to the district's students.

The superintendent annually presented educationally sound budgets to the school committee for its consideration. The budget requests represented the priority needs of the district and its students as perceived by district leaders and as articulated in the district strategic plan and the school plans. The district effectively communicated those needs, purposefully advocated for their adoption within the community,

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district developed and implemented a comprehensive strategic plan with which the schools aligned their site-based improvement plans.
- District leaders developed, nurtured, and enjoyed strong collegial relationships with school committee members, town officials, and staff members.
- The superintendent annually recommended educationally sound budgets to the school committee based upon the perceived needs of the district and its students.
- The National School Boards Association and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees recognized the district for the quality of its evaluation process of the superintendent.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district had not conducted a formal program evaluation of its special education program despite a significantly higher than average percentage of special education students enrolled within the district.

and successfully communicated their importance to town officials.

## Planning and Governance

The superintendent and school committee enjoyed a collegial relationship with leaders of the East Longmeadow Education Association. The superintendent met regularly with association leaders and, along with a member of the school committee, met monthly with building representatives and association leaders to share mutual concerns and anticipate potential disputes.

The superintendent effectively governed the district and developed plans to meet its needs. The district revised and implemented a comprehensive strategic plan that included 10 goals and ensured that site-based plans complied with it. A template for the site-based plans enabled each principal to provide a context for plan development that included the achievement of its students and an action plan that required a commitment to SMART goals, SMART being the acronym for specific and strategic, measurable and monitored, action oriented and agreed upon, realistic and results oriented, and timed and tracked, that focused the improvement efforts at each school. District leaders regularly reviewed and annually reported to the school committee the progress made in the achievement of both district and site-based goals.

The superintendent met weekly with district leaders to share issues of mutual interest and concern and to stay abreast of school-based activities, events, and issues. The superintendent delegated authority to district principals and held them accountable for the success of their respective schools and students. Principals appreciated the confidence that the superintendent placed in them and recognized that his evaluation of their performance rested on their success in achieving their goals and their success in meeting the standards described in their evaluation document.

The district lacked a formal program evaluation process with respect to its special education program to determine the reason that special education students represented a high proportion of district students. Perceptions that families may have become attracted to the district due to the quality of educational programs may have some merit, yet a more formal program analysis may yield additional insights as to the root cause of such high special education enrollment rates.

## Curriculum and Instruction

The East Longmeadow Public Schools performed effectively in the areas of curriculum development and instructional practice – essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

### Aligned Curricula

The documented curriculum in East Longmeadow contained some, but not all, of the suggested essential components. Curricula for the tested core content areas included standards, benchmarks, timelines, and assessments. Observed assessments were described in global and generic terms and the district had few curriculum-based measures. Instructional strategies and resources were deliberately not included in the curriculum. Some benchmark assessments at the high school level and in science districtwide were more specific, but the criteria for determining mastery were not stated.

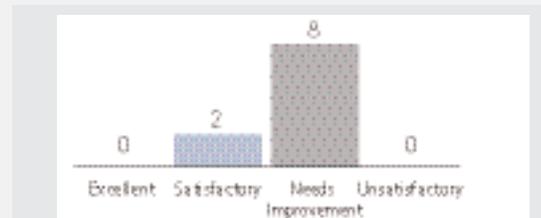
Coordinated teams with defined roles established the infrastructure in East Longmeadow to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment of the district's curricula. Monitoring of the implementation of curricula at the same grade levels at the elementary schools or in the same courses at the high school ensured consistency and uniformity. The vertical alignment facilitated the articulation of curricula, especially at the junctures between schools. The teams were under the central supervision of the director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, in cooperation with the superintendent and building principals.

Each school in East Longmeadow had adequate leadership to oversee the use, alignment, consistency, and delivery of curriculum. While there was a process to ensure consistency of implementation of curriculum, the district did not have a reliable way of determining the effectiveness of curricular delivery because it lacked formative measures of student progress.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district had an established process for aligning the curriculum and maintaining the alignment; curriculum development committees met regularly to make adjustments.
- The district had a cycle and defined procedure for curriculum development and renewal, involving a network of school-based and districtwide groups. Each group had a clear role and purpose.

### Areas for Improvement

- East Longmeadow's documented curriculum lacked instructional strategies and resources; formative or benchmark assessments were generic and lacked mastery criteria.
- The district lacked clarity about whose role it was to improve teachers' instruction. Principals focused primarily on implementation of the curriculum rather than the quality of instruction in their classroom walk-throughs.
- Technology was not integrated into the curriculum, and little evidence was presented or observed of the use of technology to individualize learning.

Building principals collaborated with department heads and other specialists on most curriculum-related tasks. Prior to the period under review, curriculum development, revision, and monitoring were largely site based under the direction of the building principals. During the period under review, the locus of control moved closer to the central office in order to give greater focus and direction to efforts to create more consistency among the intermediate (grade 3-5) schools, and to improve overall student performance, particularly in mathematics. East Longmeadow had an established cycle for curriculum development and modification and adopted materials based on research on best practices.

### Effective Instruction

Instructional leadership in East Longmeadow was broadly based, encompassing a number of individuals, and interviewees indicated a lack of clarity about those actually responsible for performing the role. While East Longmeadow administrators actively monitored teachers in the classroom, their focus was more on fidelity of implementation of the curriculum than the quality of instruction. The EQA examiners found little evidence of high expectations for student learning in observed classes.

The use of technology to individualize instruction was limited in East Longmeadow, and the adequacy of provisions for technology varied from school to school. During the period under review, East Longmeadow assessed the relationship between learning time and student achievement and increased instructional time in mathematics.

The sources of formative and summative student performance data were limited in the district, and student achievement results were used primarily for curriculum revision, identification of struggling and accelerated students, and provision of support services. Based on an analysis of the results of the MCAS tests, the primary summative measure used, the district adopted a scientifically-based program in mathematics. There was little systematic use of achievement data to determine professional development topics and improve teaching and learning.

## Assessment and Program Evaluation

Student assessment data include a wealth of information for district and school leaders on strengths and weaknesses in the local system, providing valuable input on where they should target their efforts to improve achievement.

### Student Assessment

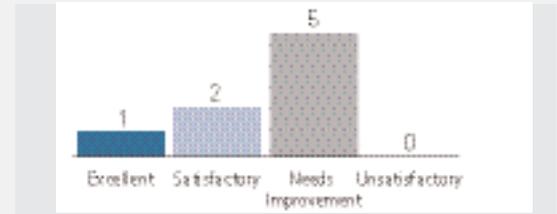
In 2003-2004, East Longmeadow eliminated the use of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) across the district. For many years this assessment had been routinely administered to students at most grade levels. It was expensive to administer, and since it was a summative evaluation it had limited usefulness to inform instruction in a standards-based curriculum. Similarly, the district had also used the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for many years, but teachers came to realize that the grade-level expectations for reading were too low and that using "the Gates" did little to inform instruction. Shortly after that, through a grade 1 reading grant from the Department of Education, the district began to use one of the recommended assessments, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS), to inform instruction in reading. In East Longmeadow, this began the building of an assessment system from the bottom up. The district added the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Group Reading Assessment & Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) at various grade levels to give teachers the information they needed to better plan instruction in English language arts. This assessment system in ELA was not in use at the middle school through grade 10 at the high school at the time of the review.

In math, the district continued to depend on the use of teacher-generated assessments, textbook unit tests, or the MCAS tests to gather information on math achievement. Therefore, no standardized, formative assessment was used in math at any level of the district in order to inform instruction, particularly at the middle school level, where district subgroups were not making AYP and the district was in corrective action.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 8 performance indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The high school's system of grading students every 30 school days and informing parents of student progress every 15 school days kept teachers, students, and parents informed of student achievement and enhanced teacher instruction.
- The district had developed a standards-based report card at grades K-5 and was "in the process" of reporting student achievement based on a standards-based curriculum.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district established formative assessment practices in ELA at the elementary level but primarily relied on teacher assessments, anecdotal information, and report card grades in math to inform practice.
- The district was not yet using formative assessments at the middle school level in ELA or math, and district subgroups were not making AYP in math.
- The district used vertical and school-based teams in establishing SMART goals in each SIP, but limited analysis to the MCAS data and anecdotal performance data, rather than a system of formative assessments used in each school, subject area, or specific program.

## Program Evaluation

Since East Longmeadow's assessment system was incomplete in ELA and math across the district, the district was limited in using data to internally evaluate programs in order to improve them. Although the district participated in mandatory or customary external evaluations, such as the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) or accreditations by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), it did not conduct any internal evaluations of programs, such as special education or middle school math, which was a weak performance area. Without gathering internal programmatic data, the district was unable to make informed decisions regarding modifications that should be made. Additionally, without looking at the quality of internal programs, the district was unable to determine whether the SMART goals, recommended by school improvement councils throughout the district as a means to improve student achievement, were having the desired effect.

In response to the need to raise student achievement for subgroup populations, the district added more time on learning at each school in both ELA and math based on anecdotal data and some underlying assumptions about the high quality of instruction and the use of "best teaching practices." To improve student achievement, each school added more time both within the school day and after the regular school day, at all levels.

During the period under review, the district relied heavily on conjecture and anecdotal evidence from teachers and administrators to determine whether changes made in a program were actually contributing to student achievement.

## Human Resource Management and Professional Development

To improve student academic performance, school districts must recruit certified teaching staff, offer teacher mentoring programs and professional development opportunities, and evaluate instructional effectiveness on a regular basis in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

### Hiring Practices and Certification

District administrators and the school committee placed a high priority on hiring only highly qualified candidates for open positions. Professional staff could not interview in the district without already possessing the appropriate certification. According to interviewees, most of the professional openings in the district occurred due to retirements, rather than people seeking employment elsewhere. East Longmeadow usually had a large pool of experienced candidates to choose from, and principals were able to choose the best person for the open position. All of the teachers in the random sample of personnel files reviewed and all of the administrators in the district had appropriate and updated certification. The district did not have any teachers on waiver during the period under review.

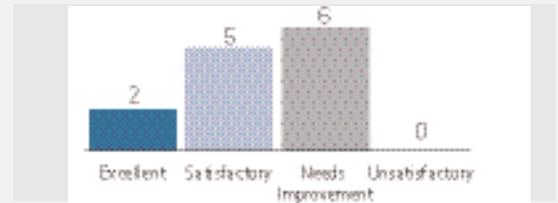
### Professional Development

Prior to the start of the school year, the district held a new staff induction day, and the district had a regular mentoring program for teachers. The superintendent directly mentored new administrators and principals. Professional development was aligned with the SMART goals listed in the SIPs. The district had not developed changes in supervision practices to determine whether new programs and training were being fully implemented and used.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- The district created a mentoring program and trained mentors for teachers; the superintendent mentored new principals and administrators.
- By the end of the review period, the district trained teachers and principals to analyze the MCAS data and started implementing at the primary level various systems of formative assessment in ELA.
- The district had a large number of promotional opportunities and ways to recognize teachers, which helped retain teachers in the district.

### Areas for Improvement

- In a random sample of 40 teacher evaluations, EQA examiners found all to be informative but only seven to be instructive with comments and suggestions intended to promote improved teaching.
- Examiners found no evidence of a consistent, formal walk-through protocol for the supervision of teachers that was used by all principals.

Districtwide induction topics included: information on substitutes; crisis plans and Connect-ED; curriculum mapping; IDEA/504/METCO/Title IX; student code of conduct; staff personnel policy books and intranet; district strategic plan; evaluation systems and rubrics; and the ELPH Character program. For three years, districtwide professional development was focused on mapping the curriculum at all levels. The elementary schools had site-based initiatives on using formative testing in literacy and implementing the Investigations program in mathematics. In 2004–2005, administrators had received training on using the DOE's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, and teachers received training in data analysis as they worked on grade-level or vertical curriculum committees. Individual professional development plans were required by the district and submitted directly to the central office.

### Evaluation

The school committee evaluated the superintendent on an annual basis, and the evaluation was considered to be informative, instructive, and likely to promote growth and professional development.

Principals presented little evidence that the district used effective systems of supervision to implement school goals for improving student achievement in their respective assignments. Principals claimed to use a walk-through process; however, the examiners found no evidence of a consistent, formal walk-through protocol or procedure for the supervision of teachers. There was also disagreement among administrators, principals, teachers, and union representatives as to whether the district had observation and summative forms, whether they were one and the same, or whether the self-evaluation was a mandatory part of the documentation.

The superintendent evaluated administrators on an annual basis. Administrators evaluated non-professional status teachers annually and professional status teachers in alternating years. Teachers were required to fill out a self-study form that mirrored the indicators on the evaluations. Some principals attached the self-studies to the summative evaluations, and therefore the process of using them was not consistent. Overall, all teacher evaluations were informative.

## Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

Students who are at risk of failing or dropping out need additional support to ensure that they stay in school and achieve proficiency.

### Services

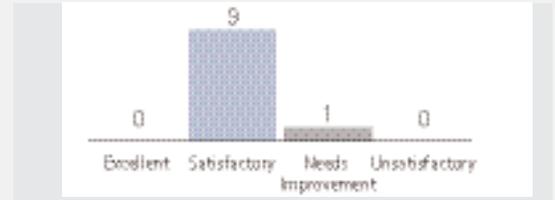
The district's schools provided a range of educational services and supplementary programs designed to meet student learning needs and improve academic achievement. The district had implemented or expanded a variety of early intervention services, in-school remedial, and supplementary programs in regular and special education during the period under review. The increased use of standardized diagnostic and formative assessments, especially at the elementary level, served to generate more and better student achievement data and identify students performing below grade level. Student assistance teams (SATs) and special education staff at all grade levels worked to identify students in need and to formulate interventions to best suit their needs. Although the district's proportion of limited English proficient (LEP), transient, and homeless student populations remained very low, the district had appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that these populations were provided with a full range of appropriate services and assistance.

Administrators and teachers acknowledged that the district conducted little regular or systematic analysis of student subgroup representation in advanced and/or accelerated programs. They were unable to accurately describe how closely subgroup enrollment and achievement rates paralleled overall population proportions. Although interviewees stated that the district encouraged and allowed students who did not meet qualifying criteria and academic prerequisites to select honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, a review of the data revealed that students from the district's two primary subgroups, the special education and low-income populations, were significantly underrepresented in these higher-level programs.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



### Areas of Strength

- Administrators and staff helped all students make successful transitions from one program, grade level, or school to another, focusing on maintaining or improving levels of student performance.
- Throughout the review period, the student attendance, retention, dropout, and out-of-school suspension rates for every school in the district remained substantially better than state averages.
- The high school offered a comprehensive and highly successful AP curriculum, recognized by the College Board for its consistently strong student achievement.

### Areas for Improvement

- East Longmeadow lacked a formal, districtwide system of formative and summative student assessment and program analysis to provide supplementary or remedial services resulting in improved student achievement.

## Attendance

East Longmeadow developed a comprehensive attendance policy and a set of implementation procedures that were in place in every school in the district. Each school's student handbook detailed attendance policies, enforcement practices, and consequences when absence limits were exceeded. Administrators described an extensive set of procedures employed by the schools to support their student attendance and punctuality policies and expectations, including frequent letters, phone calls, and parent conferences. In 2006, daily attendance for the district averaged 95.9 percent, compared to the state rate of 93.8 percent. Analysis of data revealed uniformly positive results in the attendance rates and patterns of each of the district's five schools, including the high school. Teacher absences averaged nine days excluding professional development days, except at the middle school where the rate was higher due to necessary medical absences.

## Discipline and Dropout Prevention

The number of disciplinary infractions and suspensions remained low in East Longmeadow and well below the state averages. From 2003 to 2006, the out-of-school suspension rate in all the district's schools averaged approximately half that of the state average, student retention rates at all grade levels remained substantially below state averages, and East Longmeadow High School's dropout rate averaged just under one percent, compared to the state average of almost four percent. Administrators and staff attributed these positive indicators to consistent enforcement of district disciplinary and attendance policies and ongoing communication between school and home.

## Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effective districts develop budgets based on student needs, submit financial documentation in a timely fashion, employ staff with MCPPO credentials, and ensure that their facilities are well maintained.

### Budget Process

The superintendent developed the budget through an open and participatory process. The school site-based budget committees and principals, with input from staff and school councils, met from June to November to develop the school's budget needs for each school. The business manager projected all contractual obligations and fixed costs for the next fiscal year. The town appropriations committee met with all town departments in November and provided instruction for the budget process. In December, members of the administrative team along with the superintendent met with the school committee to discuss identified budget needs and to review site-based requests and districtwide fixed costs. Budget development decisions reflected the needs of the district and not what the town could afford. Following an open forum in December, the school committee approved a budget that it considered equitable and defensible and submitted it to the town appropriations committee by the first week in January. The school committee and town appropriations committee held open meetings from January to May to review and negotiate the budget, and the school committee held several public budget forums during the same period to communicate the needs of the school department to the public. The school department budget presented at the annual town meeting had the support and favorable recommendation of the town appropriations committee.

The school committee received monthly budget reports and periodically approved requests for transfers. Principals did not receive monthly budget reports since they had access to the financial accounting system and had the ability to control and track their budgets and manage their funds at all times. Central office personnel regularly reviewed and monitored expenditures to ensure spending remained with-

### Performance at a Glance

#### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. East Longmeadow received the following ratings:



#### Areas of Strength

- The district practiced site-based budgeting. Analysis of student assessment data and SMART goals influenced budget decisions and the allocation of funds.
- The town provided adequate financial support for the schools.
- The district's accounting technology was fully integrated with the town's software.
- At the time of the EQA visit, the district had successfully reinstated most of the instructional positions eliminated, reduced athletic user fees, and eliminated user fees for participation in extracurricular activities.

in fiscal budget limits. The district did not allow accounts to run into the negative and transfers were made for any negative balances. The district used purchase orders to encumber expenditures from all funds for goods and/or services. Adequate internal controls existed in the business office to ensure the district adhered to procurement laws and processed payroll correctly.

### Financial Support

The district exceeded the net school spending (NSS) requirement of the Education Reform Act. The tax levy was at the maximum allowable. Over \$1,000,000 from free cash supported the town's annual budget, and the town designated approximately \$500,000 of this amount for the school budget.

Parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) at each elementary school and the middle school organized fund raising and spent their money on enrichment, cultural, and community-based activities. The East Longmeadow Educational Endowment Fund, a non-profit private foundation, raised money and awarded grants to teachers to augment educational opportunities not provided for in the budget process.

### Facilities and Safety

The district had five schools in generally good condition and maintained them with an in-house custodial staff. They were clean and had systems to ensure student safety. The town's department of public works provided grounds maintenance and exterior building maintenance. The district obtained the services of outside vendors for maintenance tasks that the town did not perform or that were beyond the scope of in-house personnel.

The district maintained a five-year capital plan that was included as part of the strategic plan, detailed the five school buildings and districtwide capital improvements, was updated and prioritized yearly, and was presented to the school committee for its approval. Per the East Longmeadow Town By-Laws, the plan was submitted in September to the town capital planning committee that studied all proposed capital outlays.

The Meadowbrook Elementary School had eight permanent modular classrooms to accommodate the full-day kindergarten program. Principal and interest payments on the project were made from tuition funds collected. In 2006, the town held a debt exclusion vote for the construction of 12 new permanent modular classrooms, and voters approved it in order to alleviate overcrowded conditions at each of the three elementary schools.

## CONCLUSION

The East Longmeadow Public Schools was considered to be a 'High' performing district, marked by student achievement that was 'Very High' in ELA and 'Moderate' in math during the review period as measured by the MCAS tests. Nearly two-thirds of East Longmeadow's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests. The EQA gave the district a Management Quality Index rating of 'Improvable,' with the highest rating in Financial Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency standard, and the lowest in Curriculum and Instruction.

The superintendent and business manager have been in East Longmeadow for nine years, and the high school principal has served there his entire professional career, but other administrators are fairly new. East Longmeadow is a high-performing district with student achievement problems in two areas: K-8 math and districtwide special education. Considering the lack of diversity and poverty in the town, the school district has a high special education population, which in 2005-2006 averaged 23 percent, compared to the state average of 17 percent.

East Longmeadow has abandoned the use of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills at all levels for the use of formative assessments in ELA that give teachers much more frequent information to use to adapt individual instruction. The district is not yet using a system of formative assessments in mathematics. At the time of the review, it adjusted the curriculum maps, increased time for math instruction, and is on the road to implementing Investigations math at both upper elementary (grade 3-5) schools. Although the district has looked at MCAS trends and patterns and has done an item analysis at the middle school in math, it has not yet done a root cause analysis to find the reason for the low math achievement and, as of 2006, the need for corrective action at this level.

The district has aligned its district and school goals, and all schools used the same format for the School Improvement Plans. To focus the work of each school, respective school goals were required to be SMART goals, SMART being the acronym for specific and strategic, measurable and monitored, action oriented and agreed upon, realistic and results oriented, and timed and tracked. The district, through its analysis of data, enabled each school to develop goals consistent with the strategic plan that addressed the needs of its students. Schools set a minimum of three SMART goals, two of which addressed the improvement of student achievement, particularly in the disciplines of ELA and mathematics.

The district has been engaged in curriculum mapping, initiated by the superintendent, for three years. The documented curriculum was not complete at the time of the review, but the district did have curricula for the tested areas that included standards, benchmarks, timelines, and some suggestions for assessment. The assessments were described in global and generic terms since the district had developed few specific, curriculum-based measures of attainment. According to interviewees, instructional strategies and resources were deliberately not included in the curriculum, which allowed for a wide variance of interpretation of best practices to use in instruction. Although the district had a well developed structure of committees which actively engaged many teacher-leaders and served to keep the curriculum aligned, most instruction and assessment for mastery was vague and left open to interpretation.

Since East Longmeadow's assessment system was incomplete, the district was limited in its ability to use various forms of assessment data to internally evaluate programs in order to improve them. For example, the proportion of East Longmeadow's special education population was much higher than the state average, yet an analysis of the special education program has not been completed. Administrators and teachers also acknowledged that the district conducted little regular or systematic analysis of student subgroup representation in advanced and/or accelerated programs. A review of the Advanced Placement data revealed that students from the district's two primary subgroups, the special education and low-income populations, were significantly underrepresented in these higher level programs.

East Longmeadow has very high standards for hiring new teachers. The district would not interview a candidate who lacked appropriate Massachusetts certification. The district is able to hire the best teachers, even if they started higher on the salary scale. There was little consistency and much disagreement among administrators, principals, teachers, and union representatives with respect to whether the district did both observational and summative evaluations or whether they were one and the same. A challenge for the district will be giving teachers appropriate and critical feedback over a long career of teaching to foster ongoing professional growth; the district has yet to develop a process that everyone consistently uses with confidence and equally understands. As a high growth community, another challenge for East Longmeadow is to develop a long-range facilities plan to accommodate the increasing number of students in its schools.

## APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

EQA's examination process provides successively deeper levels of information about student performance. All school districts receive an MCAS data review annually, but they do not all receive the full examination every year.

Based on the MCAS results, Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) policy, and random sampling, approximately 60 districts statewide received a site review. Still other districts – those that do not meet certain performance criteria set by the state Department of Education – received an even more detailed review.

### *Data-Driven Assessment*

Annually, the DOE and EQA's staff assess each public school district's results on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests to find out how students are performing. This review seeks to answer five basic questions:

1. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on MCAS?
2. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students (such as minority and low-income students and students with disabilities)?
3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?
4. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?
5. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

### *Standards-Based Examination*

Districts with MCAS results that fall within certain thresholds of performance, particularly districts that score below average, may be selected to receive a site review. This review seeks to provide a more complete picture of why the district is performing at that level, examining district management, planning, and actions and how they are implemented at the building level. It focuses in particular on whether the district uses data to inform its efforts.

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. EQA examines a total of 67 indicators to assess whether the district is meeting the standards and provides a rating for each indicator.

## APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN EQA REPORTS

**ABA:** Applied Behavioral Analysis

**ADA:** Average Daily Attendance

**ALT:** MCAS Alternative Assessment

**API:** Average Proficiency Index (of the English Language Arts Proficiency Index and Math Proficiency Index for all students)

**ATA:** Accountability and Targeted Assistance

**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress

**CAP:** Corrective Action Plan

**CBM:** Curriculum-Based Measures

**CD:** Competency Determination — the state's interim Adequate Yearly Progress indicator for high schools based on grade 10 MCAS test passing rates

**CMP:** Connected Math Program

**CORI:** Criminal Offender Record Information

**CPI:** Composite Proficiency Index — a 100-point index combining students' scores on the standard MCAS and MCAS Alternative Assessment (ALT)

**CPR:** Coordinated Program Review — conducted on Federal Education Acts by the DOE

**CRT:** Criterion-Referenced Test

**CSR:** Comprehensive School Reform

**DCAP:** District Curriculum Accommodation Plan

**DIBELS:** Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

**DIP:** District Improvement Plan

**DOE:** Department of Education

**DPDP:** District Professional Development Plan

**DRA:** Developmental Reading Assessment

**ELA:** English Language Arts

**ELL:** English Language Learners

**EPI:** English Language Arts Proficiency Index

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**FLNE:** First Language Not English

**FRL/N:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/No

**FRL/Y:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/Yes

**FTE:** Full-Time Equivalent

**FY:** Fiscal Year

**Gap Analysis:** A statistical method to analyze the relationships between and among district and subgroup performance and the standard of 100 percent proficiency

**GASB:** Government Accounting Standards Board

**GMADE:** Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation

**GRADE:** Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation

**GRADU:** The graduation yield rate for a class four years from entry

**IEP:** Individualized Education Program

**Improvement Gap:** A measure of change in a combination of the proficiency gap and performance gap between two points in time; a positive improvement gap will show improvement and convergence between subgroups' performance over time

**IPDP:** Individual Professional Development Plan

**IRIP:** Individual Reading Improvement Plan

**ISSP:** Individual Student Success Plan

**LASW:** Looking at Student Work

**LEP:** Limited English Proficient

**MASBO:** Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials

**MASC:** Massachusetts Association of School Committees

**MASS:** Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

**MAVA:** Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators

**MCAS:** Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

**MCAS-Ait:** Alternative Assessment — a portfolio option for special needs students to demonstrate proficiency

**MCPPO:** Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official

**MELA-O:** Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral

**MEPA:** Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment

**MPI:** Math Proficiency Index

**MQI:** Management Quality Index — an indicator of the relative strength and effectiveness of a district's management system

**MUNIS:** Municipal Information System

**NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind

**NEASC:** New England Association of Schools and Colleges

**NRT:** Norm-Referenced Test

**NSBA:** National School Boards Association

**NSS:** Net School Spending

**Performance Gap:** A measure of the range of the difference of performance between any subgroup's Proficiency Index and another subgroup's in a given district

**PI:** Proficiency Index — a number between 0–100 representing the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency

**PIM:** Performance Improvement Management

**POA:** Program Quality Assurance — a division of the DOE responsible for conducting the Coordinated Program Review process

**Proficiency Gap:** A measure of a district or subgroup's Proficiency Index and its distance from 100 percent proficiency

**QRI:** Qualitative Reading Inventory

**Rate of Improvement:** The result of dividing the gain (improvement in achievement as measured by Proficiency Index points) by the proficiency gap

**SAT:** A test administered by the Educational Testing Service to 11th and 12th graders

**SEI:** Sheltered English Immersion

**SIMS:** Student Information Management System

**SIOP:** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

**SIP:** School Improvement Plan

**SPED:** Special Education

**STE:** Science and Technology/Engineering

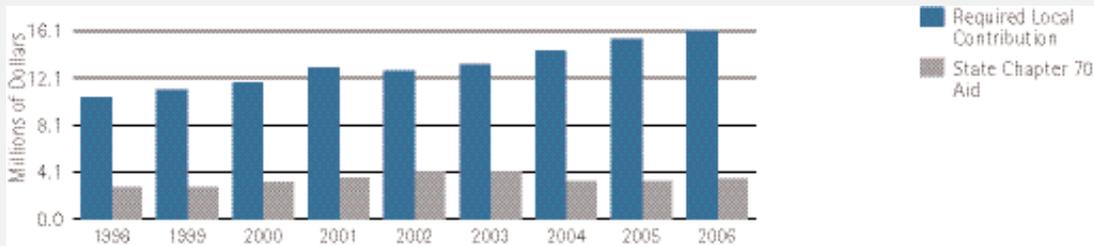
**TerraNova:** K–12 norm-referenced test series published by CTB/McGraw-Hill

APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1998–2006

A school district's funding is determined in part by the Chapter 70 program – the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to supporting school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of East Longmeadow's funding that was derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute.

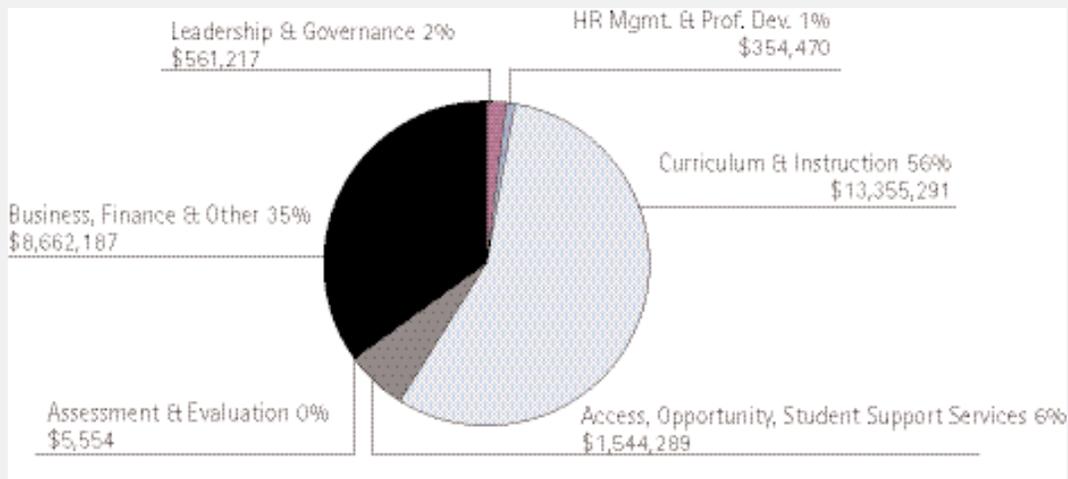
The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from \$20,115,860 to \$22,511,109; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$3,278,506 to \$3,415,856; the required local contribution increased from \$14,419,630 to \$16,081,730; and the foundation enrollment increased from 2,661 to 2,747. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 16.3 to 15.2 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending increased from 67.5 to 68.4 percent.

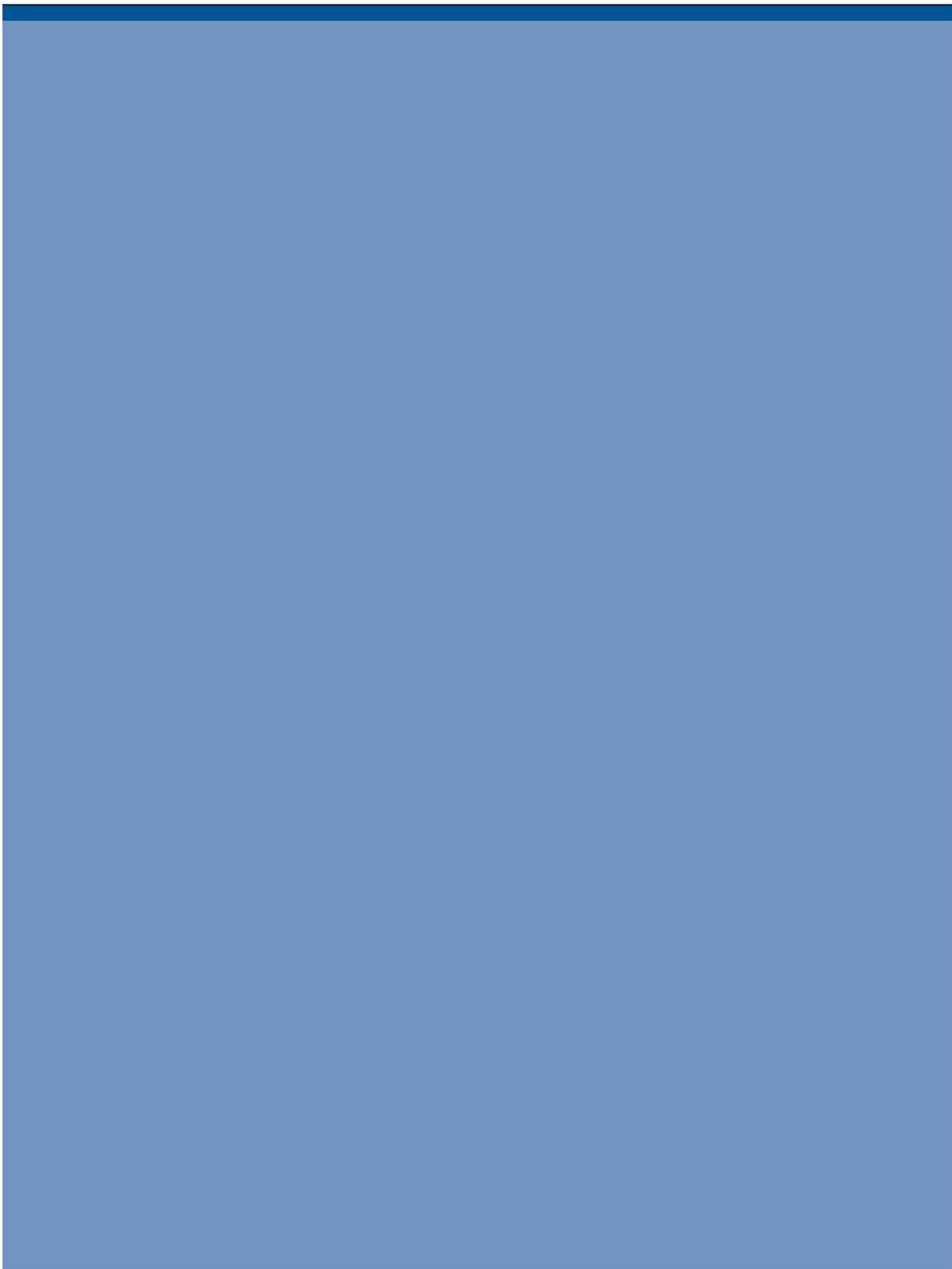
WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR EAST LONGMEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR EAST LONGMEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

FY05 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges)





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