



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Holyoke Public Schools Level 4 District Review

March 2011

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Overview of Level 4 District Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (DSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. Districts declared “underperforming” by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) and placed on turnaround plans will be reviewed periodically as determined by ESE. The purpose of this review of Level 4 districts is to provide the Department and the Board with information allowing them to assess the extent to which the district has strengthened its systems since the implementation of its turnaround plan, in order to determine future ESE assistance and intervention.

Key Questions

Four overarching key questions guide the work of the review team in these reviews.

1. How has the district addressed the issues that placed it in Level 4?
2. Is student achievement on the rise?
3. Do the district and schools have strong systems and practices in place?
4. Has the district built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own, without continued ESE Targeted Assistance support and intervention?

Methodology

The review uses former district review reports, the district’s turnaround plan, an analysis of the district’s current systems and practices, and district and student data in order to assess the district’s progress and its capacity to sustain improvements. To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the Key Questions (see section on Content of Findings below). To answer Key Question 3, reviews collect evidence for each of the six standards to be reviewed: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.** Team members previewed selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit to the district and schools. The teams consist of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

Holyoke Public Schools

The site visit to the Holyoke Public Schools was conducted from October 25-October 28, 2010. The site visit included visits to 9 of the 11 district schools: Maurice A. Donahue Elementary (K-8), Dr. Marcella R. Kelly Elementary (K-8), Lt Elmer J. McMahon Elementary (K-8), Morgan Elementary (K-8), William R. Peck (K-8), Lt. Clayre P. Sullivan Elementary (K-8), Edward N. White Elementary (K-8), Holyoke High School (9-12), and William J. Dean Technical High School (9-12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile¹

In November 2003 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (then the Board of Education) declared the Holyoke Public Schools underperforming, following a May 2003 recommendation for a declaration of underperformance from the Educational Management Audit Council, whose staff, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) had conducted a review of the school system in January 2003. The district was one of the first two districts declared underperforming by the Board. Assisted by the Department of Education (as ESE was then known), it developed a turnaround plan that was approved by the Board in September 2004. The Board later provided the district with America's Choice (AC) as a turnaround partner; AC worked with the district from May 2005 until the beginning of 2010. In February 2008, the Holyoke School Committee passed a major reorganization of schools in response to budget problems and declining enrollment, reducing the number of schools by two, closing the two middle schools, and making all of the elementary schools K-8 schools. In June 2008, the Board approved a District Plan for School Intervention for Holyoke as the guiding document to support and hold accountable the district's Commonwealth Priority Schools (CPSs).²

In January 2010, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, St. 2010, c. 12, which included a complete revision of Mass. Gen. Laws c. 69, ss. 1J and 1K, governing underperforming schools and districts, and in April 2010 the Board accordingly amended its corresponding regulations, at 603 CMR 2.00. In June 2010 two of Holyoke's schools, Morgan Elementary and William J. Dean Technical High School, were placed in Level 4 of the state's Framework for District Accountability and Assistance in accordance with the newly revised law and regulations.

¹ Student demographic data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

² Under 603 CMR 2.03(3) (replaced, along with the rest of 603 CMR 2.00, by the Board's amendment of April 27, 2010), Commonwealth Priority Schools were schools identified for corrective action or restructuring in ELA and or mathematics for students in the aggregate as the result of failing, for four or more years, to make Adequate Yearly Progress in the same subject or subjects under the No Child Left Behind law.

From January 2003 to April and May 2009, a series of reviews of the Holyoke Public Schools was conducted by EQA and for ESE, the reports of which may be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/default.html?district=H>.

Holyoke’s student enrollment has remained relatively stable over the last few years. The district’s students are 77 percent Hispanic, most of them of Puerto Rican origin, and 74.3 percent low-income.

Table 1: 2009-10 Holyoke Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	194	3.3	First Language not English	3,003	50.9
Asian	47	0.8	Limited English Proficient	1,377	23.3
Hispanic or Latino	4,542	77.0	Low-income	4,382	74.3
Native American	1	0.0	Special Education*	1,515	25.2
White	1,110	18.8	Free Lunch	4,075	69.1
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	---	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	307	5.2
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	7	0.1	Total enrollment	5,901	100.0

*Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

The local appropriation to the Holyoke Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$60,522,891, down slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$61,021,149. School-related expenditures by the city were estimated at \$18,326,639 for fiscal year 2011, down from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$20,371,242. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$66,727,160), expenditures by the city (\$21,246,380), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$24,206,119), was \$112,179,659.

On July 1, 2010, the former high school principal took over as the Holyoke superintendent, succeeding a superintendent who had been in the position since 2002. The assistant to the superintendent became the assistant superintendent, and a number of her previous responsibilities were assigned to newly hired staff, including academic directors (for ELA/Humanities, Math/Data Assessment, and Science/Technology). In addition, a new school business director and a new grants coordinator joined the staff. At that point, seven years had passed since the district had been declared “underperforming.” In 2003, when declared “underperforming,” Holyoke had very nearly the lowest student achievement scores of any multiple-school district in

the state; its student achievement scores in 2010 were the lowest of any multiple-school district.³ The newly appointed superintendent initiated a fresh round of activity, such as developing district and school improvement plans, arranging for a review of the district's business operations, planning a new administrator evaluation instrument, and providing school committee members with additional information to assist them in their decision-making.

Although the superintendent and his team are working to jump-start a fresh effort to improve the district and schools, the reality for Holyoke students currently remains the same. The district's efforts over the last seven years have not sufficiently narrowed the achievement gap between students in Holyoke and in the state. Whether this round of effort will have the necessary results cannot be determined at this point.

Student Performance⁴

A review of the district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) record shows that the 2010 performance ratings were Low in English language arts (ELA) and Very Low in mathematics. Further,

- With one exception, ELA in the aggregate in 2008, the district has not made AYP in the aggregate in either ELA or mathematics since 2006.
- The district has not made AYP for all subgroups since the federal government began reporting AYP results.
- When AYP for 2008, 2009, and 2010 is examined by grade span (3-5, 6-8, 9-12), only once, in 2008 ELA grades 9-12, did the district make AYP in either the aggregate or for all subgroups (it was in the aggregate).
- Subgroups not making AYP in 2010 include special education students, low-income students, Hispanic/Latino students, and limited English proficient/formerly limited English proficient students. In addition, White students did not make AYP in mathematics in the 3-5 grade span in 2010.

As shown under Key Question 2 below, there has been upward movement on the Composite Performance Index (CPI) and in median student growth percentiles (SGPs) over the last three test administrations; however, in 2010 Holyoke's CPI is still more than 20 points below the state's in both ELA and mathematics. As Tables 2 and 3 below show, the percentages of Holyoke students achieving proficiency on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in ELA and mathematics over the last four test administrations are remarkably low, although, again, there has been some upward movement.

³ In 2003 Holyoke Public Schools had the lowest ELA Composite Performance Index (CPI) (58.41) and the second-to-lowest (by .02 points) math CPI (41.05) of all multiple-school districts. In 2010, Holyoke had the lowest ELA CPI (66.0) and lowest math CPI (56.8) of all multiple-school districts.

⁴ Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

**Table 2: 2007-2010 Holyoke Proficiency Rates,
with 2010 Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade, for ELA**

Grade	2007	2008	2009	2010	<i>Median SGPs 2010</i>
Grade 3—Holyoke	21	16	21	25	<i>N/A</i>
Grade 3—State	59	56	57	63	<i>N/A</i>
Grade 4—Holyoke	19	12	16	15	<i>35.0</i>
Grade 4—State	56	49	53	54	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 5—Holyoke	23	21	18	23	<i>40.5</i>
Grade 5—State	63	61	63	63	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 6—Holyoke	28	29	25	28	<i>51.0</i>
Grade 6—State	67	67	66	69	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 7—Holyoke	33	31	28	32	<i>54.0</i>
Grade 7—State	69	69	70	72	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 8—Holyoke	38	42	45	44	<i>57.0</i>
Grade 8—State	75	75	78	78	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 10—Holyoke	41	43	52	53	<i>37.5</i>
Grade 10—State	71	74	81	78	<i>50.0</i>
All Grades—Holyoke	29	28	29	32	<i>47.0</i>
All Grades—State	66	64	67	68	<i>50.0</i>

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website; (for all grades percentages for 2007) District Analysis and Review Tool

**Table 3: 2007-2010 Holyoke Proficiency Rates,
with 2010 Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade, for Mathematics**

Grade	2007	2008	2009	2010	<i>Median SGPs 2010</i>
Grade 3—Holyoke	15	20	19	25	<i>N/A</i>
Grade 3—State	60	61	60	65	<i>N/A</i>
Grade 4—Holyoke	17	13	14	15	<i>42.0</i>
Grade 4—State	48	49	48	48	<i>49.0</i>
Grade 5—Holyoke	14	15	13	16	<i>40.0</i>
Grade 5—State	51	52	54	55	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 6—Holyoke	20	19	23	27	<i>68.0</i>
Grade 6—State	55	56	57	59	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 7—Holyoke	19	11	14	20	<i>55.5</i>
Grade 7—State	46	47	49	53	<i>50.0</i>
Grade 8—Holyoke	13	22	14	19	<i>64.0</i>
Grade 8—State	45	49	48	51	<i>51.0</i>
Grade 10—Holyoke	41	38	42	53	<i>48.0</i>
Grade 10—State	69	72	75	75	<i>50.0</i>
All Grades—Holyoke	20	20	20	25	<i>55.0</i>
All Grades—State	53	55	55	59	<i>50.0</i>

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website; (for all grades percentages for 2007) District Analysis and Review Tool

Other district indicators related to student achievement, such as rates of absence, suspension, and retention, and dropout rates, are remarkably high, and the graduation rate is unusually low. These matters receive full attention under Key Question 2 and in the Student Support section of this report.

Findings

Key Question 1: How has the district addressed the issues that placed it in Level 4?

While there are positive initiatives in the district to address some of the issues that placed it in Level 4, the district has not completely and systematically carried out any of the initiatives in the turnaround plan.

To address the issues that led to its classification as “underperforming” in 2003, the district wrote a turnaround plan with six initiatives intended to improve student achievement. ESE appointed America’s Choice (AC) as the district’s turnaround partner; it was an organization with a proven track record in turning around individual schools through a focus on English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. However, AC’s demonstrated capacity was at the school level and the needs of the district extended beyond that.

America’s Choice, under the direction of a site coordinator, initially focused its work on the middle school, developing curriculum maps and training teachers to provide targeted instruction and to track results. AC gradually began to do similar work at the elementary level. Efforts to extend its reach to the high school level were unsuccessful, reportedly in part due to resistance from high school staff (see p. 10 of the Evaluation Report on Holyoke Public Schools Turnaround Initiative 2005-2008).⁵ However, America’s Choice was moving to address curriculum and instruction issues at the elementary and middle school levels. The company introduced a balanced literacy program, to which it was committed, and brought a wealth of materials and expertise. But there was some persistent resistance to the role AC was playing in the district, in part because the company was an external partner not viewed as understanding Holyoke’s unique challenges (see pp. 17-18 of the Evaluation Report).

Early on, America’s Choice recognized that improving the achievement of the district’s students depended on more than improving its schools individually (see p. 9 of the Evaluation Report). In response, it moved beyond its level of expertise and began to work at the district level to improve operations there. This meant that the AC site coordinator, in both providing the superintendent with guidance and continuing to oversee ELA and mathematics instruction across the district, was stretched beyond her ability to be sufficiently effective (see p. 9 of the Evaluation Report). Additional AC consultants arrived, some adding more value than others (see pp. 10 and 12 of the Evaluation Report). Meanwhile, improvement in classroom instruction was not reflected in the student achievement results. As planned, AC arranged its own gradual withdrawal from the district. Some turnaround efforts continued, but not systematically or consistently. Even with significant levels of state funding and technical assistance, progress had been insufficient. And the district, to address budget shortfalls, began to cut staffing and, in effect, undermine its improvement efforts. Now, seven years after the district was declared underperforming, none of the six initiatives in the turnaround plan have been completely and systematically carried out.

Following is a report on the progress of each of the six initiatives in the turnaround plan.

⁵ This report may be found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/turnaround/08_0137.doc.

Initiative 1: The district will utilize a regionally developed student data management system.

The Holyoke Public Schools stated in their turnaround plan that the district would use a regionally developed student management system. As noted in the May 2007 EQA report, the original initiative was based on the assumption that the Department of Education (as ESE was then named) would create a data management system. The district's responsibility was to prepare its internal assessment collection system so that local student achievement data could be easily integrated into the state system to facilitate the district's ability to analyze data from multiple sources and monitor changes longitudinally. Holyoke was a pilot participant in the Department's Data Warehouse project in its early stages of development and now has begun to provide training in the use of the Data Warehouse. Also noted in the May 2007 EQA report, the initiative was designed to support teachers in using data to drive instruction, in part by forming a District Data Team, which was established during the 2005-2006 school year. By the time of the 2010 site visit, Holyoke still had not put into place consistent districtwide assessment policies and procedures, clear expectations for dissemination of data, standardized monitoring procedures, and sufficient professional development to support teachers and leaders in data use. Without sufficient support, proficiency in using data varies widely from school to school.

Initiative 2: The district will have aligned curricula Pre-K-12 in ELA and mathematics.

The district has partially addressed this initiative. Three alignments are required for a completely aligned curriculum. The first, alignment with the learning standards in the state frameworks, has been addressed. In the K-8 ELA and mathematics curricula, there is evidence in the documents of complete alignment with the state standards. At grades 9-12, while the documents are less well fleshed out than those for K-8, there is again evidence of alignment to the state standards.

The second alignment is horizontal—across classrooms in a grade and across all schools. Having a complete written curriculum in K-8 sets up the potential for implementation of a horizontally aligned curriculum. However, numerous interviewees reported that consistent implementation of the district's written curriculum across classrooms and between schools is not yet a reality. They indicated that there are variations from classroom to classroom as to what is being taught. Of particular concern is horizontal alignment between the two high schools. Each high school has its own written curriculum and course offerings, although not in the same detail as at the K-8 level. Without a common core curriculum, shared by the two high schools, students do not have the same assurances of access to the highest quality curriculum that the Holyoke Public Schools have to offer at the high school level.

The third alignment, vertical alignment from kindergarten through grade 12, is also a work in progress. This is in place in ELA and mathematics from kindergarten through grade 8. Staff at both high schools, however, reported they were in the initial stages of developing a scope and sequence in these two content areas.

Initiative 3: The district will hold educators accountable for delivery of instruction

The district's teacher evaluation procedure has little ability to hold educators accountable for delivery of instruction. Under the contract for July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2009⁶, which has not been extended or replaced with a new contract, administrators can base their evaluations on a remarkably small amount of information about teacher practice. The contract includes an "End of Year Evaluation Form" (Appendix D-1) and "Recommended Principles of Effective Teaching" (Appendix D-2). The standards contained in the "Recommended Principles" are, as required, very similar to the state-recommended Principles of Effective Teaching at 603 CMR 35.00. Each of Holyoke's standards has multiple examples, "exemplars," provided as indicators of effective teaching, adapted and expanded from the examples at 603 CMR 35.00. However, the language in Appendix D-2 specifies that a teacher may demonstrate satisfactory performance under a standard by demonstrating satisfactory performance on just one of the examples under that standard. Thus the agreed-on evaluation procedure has in effect reduced to 19 the number of examples that guide evaluations from the 127 examples included in Holyoke's "Recommended Principles."⁷ It is possible, therefore, for an evaluation to be conducted without reference to many examples that state important aspects of teaching and are crucial to student learning.⁸ Of the more than one thousand indicators in the randomly selected teacher evaluations reviewed by the review team for 2008-2010, only one was rated less than Satisfactory.

Several other factors contribute to poor accountability for delivery of instruction. There is no long-term recruiting plan to reduce the necessity of last-minute hiring of teachers who need waivers because they are not appropriately licensed. There is no explicit connection between the district's evaluation procedures and student achievement. In addition, neither the teachers' contract nor the school committee policy manual provides guidance and oversight to the district staff as it tries to change its instructional culture—which according to interviews with school staff has sometimes been resistant to change—to benefit all students. Addenda to the contract were negotiated for the district's two Level 4 schools, Morgan Elementary School and Dean Tech, but that language only addresses pay for additional time spent; accountability protocols to improve student learning are not included.

Initiative 4: The district will consistently assess, analyze, and monitor student performance.

Assessment processes vary significantly across the district. Holyoke's K-8 schools have implemented various practices for the ongoing collection of student performance data. Procedures for the review, dissemination, and use of that data differ, however, from school to school. These disparities are especially apparent in the district's two high schools, where data collection and analysis practices are much less extensive and well developed than in the rest of

⁶ Available at <http://educatorcontracts.doemass.org/view.aspx?recno=130>

⁷ The examples are not individually descriptive of the entire practice under a standard, so that meeting one example under a standard does not show that the *standard* has been met.

⁸ For instance, a teacher's performance under standard IIA, "The teacher plans instruction effectively," may be rated satisfactory if the teacher's performance meets example #11, "Plans engaging ways to introduce each unit of study," even if it does not meet any of the other 13 examples under that standard—for instance, #10, "Identifies individual and group needs and plans appropriate strategies . . . to meet those needs."

the district and are inconsistent from one high school to the other. Additionally, across the district, data is rarely used to drive decision-making, goal-setting, or the modification of curriculum or of academic support services. Holyoke has not yet developed a comprehensive, integrated data system with clearly defined and consistent districtwide policies and expectations whereby student performance in grades K-12 is sufficiently assessed, analyzed, and monitored.

Initiative 5: The district will develop and sustain a comprehensive professional development program.

The district has not developed a cohesive professional development program. A review of the documents made available to the review team indicated that the last professional development plan was for the 2006-2007 school year. This plan is on the district website, and the superintendent, central office administrators, and principals agreed that it was the most recent plan. District leaders said that they anticipated that a comprehensive professional development plan will be developed and completed later in the school year, following the preparation and acceptance of a new District Improvement Plan and new School Improvement Plans. The superintendent stated the intention of making the professional development plan an extension of the DIP and SIPs, with professional development programs that address the priorities and goals in these plans.

Interviewees pointed out that professional development in the district is scheduled on an annual professional development calendar that is overseen by the assistant superintendent and the academic directors. The information on the calendar is basic and provides limited detail about the various programs. On the district website, the “PD Express” provides a place for staff to view and register for professional development offerings.

School administrators told the team that the district currently has two half-days designated for districtwide professional development programs and three full days for school professional development offerings. Teachers in focus groups concurred. Administrators and teachers indicated that at the end of every professional development session attendees complete an evaluation form about the program.

Further professional development is available to new teachers, each of whom is assigned a mentor. Central office administrators and principals said that mentors attend a training program, meet with their mentees periodically, and receive a stipend. They reported that new principals (five this year) are also assigned mentors, and that the five new principals are scheduled to attend the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training this year.

Interviewees mentioned some other professional development or support for professional development that the district is providing, such as English language learner category training for teachers; tuition reimbursement at the rate of 50 percent of the cost of an approved course, up to a maximum of 500 dollars per fiscal year; and programs offered through a partnership with Holyoke Community College.

However, a repeated concern raised during interviews is that the district does not have a professional development committee and, as a result, professional development offerings are piecemeal rather than comprehensive and cohesive. At this time the assistant superintendent and

the academic directors are responsible for the professional development program with some input from the principals.

Initiative 6: The district will provide a program to stabilize highly mobile students so that they have access to high quality instruction that meets their individual needs.

The district has not moved to implement a consistent, districtwide program to address issues that arise from the very high, 28 percent mobility rate among Holyoke students, a rate that is almost three times as high as the statewide mobility rate of 10 percent.⁹ The district was originally committed to its Transient Opportunity Program (TOP), implemented in the 2004-2005 school year, and redesigned in 2005-2006. A Brown University report commissioned by the district questioned the district's decision to form TOP as a separate program, rather than a program integrated within each of the schools, as recommended by best practices for mobile students. The TOP program was eliminated as a result of budget cuts, but a promising model was initiated at two schools that is better aligned with the best practices noted in the Brown report. This model—the full service community school (FSCS) model—has been implemented at the new K-8 Peck school and is in the early stages of development at the Morgan. At the Peck school, authorities secured a grant from the Davis Foundation that allowed them to hire a family coordinator and a social worker. This, in turn, made it possible to implement a case management system. At the end of the 2008-2009 school year, according to school staff, each of the 28 Peck 8th graders with a case worker was promoted. This model holds promise because it addresses some of the underlying social/emotional/health issues experienced by a high percentage of mobile students, issues that have a serious negative impact on academic achievement. At the time of the review team's site visit, the system was fully operational at Peck and in the planning stage at Morgan. However, the team saw no evidence that the district was moving to adopt this model across the district, or any other consistent, districtwide strategy for addressing the problems resulting from mobility.

⁹ Mobility rates here are from the District Analysis and Review Tool at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>. The mobility rate referred to here is the churn rate, which measures the number of students transferring into or out of a district throughout the course of a school year. Churn represents the sum of all students who moved in or out, divided by all students reported as enrolled at any point in time throughout the school year. Each student is counted only once in the churn rate, regardless of the number of times during the year the student transfers in or out.

Key Question 2: Is student achievement on the rise?

Although student achievement in the Holyoke Public Schools has risen slightly faster since 2008 than student achievement statewide, it has not improved fast enough to make a significant difference in the achievement gap that exists between Holyoke students and students statewide.

As Table 4 below shows, the Composite Performance Index (CPI) and median student growth percentiles (SGPs) over the last three test administrations have shown upward movement in both ELA and mathematics, with the most pronounced movement in achievement being between 2009 and 2010 and with a significant change (of 11 points) in the median student growth percentile in mathematics between 2009 and 2010. The CPIs in both ELA and mathematics have risen slightly faster than the corresponding state CPIs.

Table 4: 2006-2010 Holyoke and State CPIs and Median SGPs

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
ELA CPI	Holyoke	61.6	63.3	61.6	62.9	66.0
	State	84.4	85.8	85.2	86.5	86.9
ELA Median SGP	Holyoke	*	*	40.0	40.5	47.0
	State	*	*	50.0	50.0	50.0
Mathematics CPI	Holyoke	47.4	50.8	50.4	51.0	58.5
	State	72.5	76.2	77.7	78.5	79.9
Mathematics Median SGP	Holyoke	*	*	41.0	44.0	55.0
	State	*	*	50.0	50.0	50.0

*Median SGPs were not calculated before 2008.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website; (for 2006 and 2007) District Analysis and Review Tool

The performance levels of the district's students are so low, however, that the improvement they have shown is not enough to make a significant difference in the achievement gap between them and students statewide as measured by CPIs: the gap in both ELA and mathematics is still more than 20 CPI points. Similarly, as shown in Tables 2 and 3 in the Student Performance section above, although there have been modest increases in the proficiency rates of Holyoke students in the last few years, those rates remain remarkably low, and since the statewide proficiency rates have increased by about as much, the gaps between Holyoke and state proficiency rates remain much unchanged. When the CPI is examined for subgroups (see Appendix C), similar patterns appear across all of the subgroups: in most cases in both ELA and mathematics, there is slow

improvement over the years from 2003 to 2007, then hardly any upward movement, or even a decline, between 2007 and 2009, and then the improvement seen in the district CPIs from 2009 to 2010 is repeated across the subgroups. However, one year of improvement does not indicate a trend.

Two of the seven K-8 schools in Holyoke show notable improvement. The Donahue shows an improvement trend over the three test administrations from 2008 to 2010 in both CPIs and median SGPs, with significant increases in its median SGPs in mathematics both between 2008 and 2009 and between 2009 and 2010. The Peck, only in existence for two years, shows a dramatic spike between its first and second years in both its CPIs and its median SGPs, the increase in its median SGPs being 24 percentile points for ELA and 22 percentile points for mathematics.

Table 5: Recent CPI and Median SGP Improvement in Two Holyoke Schools

		2008	2009	2010
Donahue				
ELA	CPI	68.9	72.3	75.0
	<i>Median SGP</i>	44.0	53.5	60.0
Mathematics	CPI	53.6	58.7	62.9
	<i>Median SGP</i>	43.0	59.0	69.0
Peck				
ELA	CPI	---	51.6	58.9
	<i>Median SGP</i>	---	33.0	57.0
Mathematics	CPI	---	40.5	51.9
	<i>Median SGP</i>	---	41.0	63.0

---Peck did not exist in its present form at the time of the 2008 test administration; the Peck Middle School was combined with the Lynch Middle School and the Lawrence Elementary School in 2008 to form the present K-8 school.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Attendance, suspension, retention, dropout, and graduation rates figure in the answer to the question of whether student achievement is on the rise. Unfortunately data in these areas presents a bleak and mostly unchanging picture.

Holyoke's 90.4 percent attendance rate in 2009-2010 was well below the state rate of 94.6 percent. In fact, the attendance rates in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 were 82.0, 87.1, 88.1, and 87.5 percent. No high school grade's attendance rate even reaches 90 percent; the 2009-2010 state attendance rates for these grades, on the other hand, were 93.0, 93.4, 93.1, and 92.6. The

percentages of chronically absent¹⁰ students are another area of serious concern. More than half of 9th graders (53.1 percent) were chronically absent in 2009-2010, as well as 41.8 percent of 10th graders, 37.9 percent of 11th graders, and 43.9 percent of 12th graders.

Suspension rates are also unacceptably high. In 2010, 32.8 percent of the students in the district received out-of-school suspensions. At Holyoke High School, 39.1 percent of students received out-of-school suspensions in 2010, and at Dean Tech, 72.2 percent of students. In fact, the out-of-school suspension rate at Dean has seen a dramatic increase over the last three years—from 48.4 percent in 2008 to 62.9 percent in 2009, to 72.2 percent in 2010. The Holyoke High rates have remained stable at around 40 percent for the same three-year period.

The percentage of district students retained in grade for 2009-2010 was 7.5 percent, a percentage roughly similar to those in earlier years. Rates of retention were relatively low in grades 3 through 8, but increased dramatically to 25.4 percent in 9th grade, in comparison with the 6.9 percent of 9th graders who were retained statewide. The explanation provided by the district for retaining a quarter of 9th graders is that students had to have a large number of credits to pass from 9th to 10th grade. Following on a recommendation by its leadership team after studying the issue in 2008-2009, the number of credits needed for promotion to 10th grade at Holyoke High School (but not for graduation) was reduced by 2.5 credits since the study had shown that a large number of students were missing promotion by 2.5 credits, which usually represented a physical education or health course that the study concluded could be made up later.

As indicated in Table 6 below, the district dropout rate is high and its graduation rate low, particularly when compared to the state.

Table 6: Comparison between Holyoke and State Annual Dropout Rates (Grades 9-12) and Four-year Graduation Rates: 2010

	Annual Dropout Rate (Grades 9-12)	Four-Year Graduation Rate
Holyoke	9.5	52.5
State	2.9	82.1

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

District officials stated that the Holyoke High School leadership team’s study led also to the purchase and use of credit recovery software, allowing students at Holyoke High School to receive credit for online coursework. Holyoke High School students received a total of over 60 credits in the 2009-2010 school year. The graduation rate at Holyoke High rose from 62.4 percent in 2009 to 67.0 in 2010. Although the same credit recovery system was implemented at Dean Tech, district officials stated that it was not used there. The graduation rate for Dean dropped from 36.7 percent in 2009 to 34.2 percent in 2010.

¹⁰ Chronic absence is defined as absence for more than 10 percent of a student’s days enrolled in the district.

At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year a new Dropout Task Force was formed, taking up the work of the previous Dropout Prevention and Recovery Work Group. The task force includes high school guidance counselors, public and private community partners, and two school committee members. It has solicited input from students, staff, and the public and analyzes dropout data along multiple indicators monthly. During October 2010 it instituted new withdrawal procedures for students.¹¹

The district has increased its attention to promotion, graduation, and dropout rates. The fact remains that attendance, suspension, retention, dropout, and graduation rates are unacceptable and have been so for a number of years. That being so, and with district proficiency rates and CPIs showing only modest increases and still so far below those of the state, the review team finds that, overall, student achievement is not on the rise.

¹¹ Since the time of the site visit, on the basis of the work of the new dropout prevention group and its predecessor, the district has identified three groups that are most at risk of dropping out: 8th and 9th graders who have been retained in grade; students who scored Warning on MCAS in 8th grade; and students identified as disconnected from school. Because grade 9 students are most likely to drop out of school and because Dean's grade 9 students have low attendance and high discipline rates, the district is planning a summer transition program for rising Dean 9th graders. It is planning to use Title I American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for this program. The task force plans to use attendance statistics for each shop at Dean and a revised exit interview process to inform improvement planning. The task force reports periodically to the superintendent and reported to a joint city council/school committee meeting in January 2011; it is engaging the city council in dialogue in order to create a citywide dropout prevention effort.

Key Question 3: Do the district and schools have strong systems and practices in place?

Leadership and Governance

While a new District Improvement Plan and new School Improvement Plans were under development, the district was without a current written, guiding strategy at the time of the review.

The superintendent stated that the previous District Improvement Plan ended at the close of the 2009-2010 school year, with the retirement of the former superintendent. At the time of the review the assistant superintendent, with input from all of the district's directors and principals, was in the process of drafting a DIP that was to be forwarded to him by the end of November. The superintendent said that he planned to present the draft DIP to the school committee for its review and approval at its first meeting in December.

The assistant superintendent, other central office administrators, and principals described the process for developing the DIP, which included requests to each of the directors and principals to "look at the data," "determine what it is telling you," "establish priorities," and "translate it into actionable steps." According to the superintendent and the other central office administrators, the principals were at the same time working under the direction of the assistant superintendent in the preparation of their School Improvement Plans. These administrators commented that the assistant superintendent had the responsibility of aligning the SIPs with the DIP. Principals indicated that members of their instructional leadership teams and school councils were assisting them with the development of their SIPS. Some principals remarked that they had already submitted the academic portion of their SIPs to the assistant superintendent, with the operations portion to follow at a later date. The superintendent, the other central office administrators, and the principals stated that all SIPs were to be prepared, submitted, and reviewed with the assistant superintendent, and then forwarded to the superintendent by February 15, 2011. In addition, the school committee members and the administrators told the review team that the recently approved turnaround plans for the Dean Technical High School and the Morgan school will serve as the SIPs for these two schools. School committee members confirmed that a new DIP and SIPs were being prepared for this school year, 2010-2011, and for the next two years, 2011-2013, and acknowledged the deadlines set by the superintendent.

Without a current DIP and current SIPs school personnel and the community were unclear about the district's key priorities and goals. District and school improvement plans help educational leaders to prioritize and allocate resources. Without agreed-upon priorities, schools and programs go their own way in directions that are sometimes fruitful and sometimes not. The process and timelines used by the district resulted in the elapse of half a year and more before the establishment of a guiding plan for the district and schools. The result is the loss of much valuable time in the 2010-2011 school year.

The school committee is not fulfilling its responsibilities, largely because of the apparent misunderstanding about the scope and purpose of its governance role.

When questioned, the superintendent stated that the school committee members understand their role and responsibilities. He mentioned that all but one of the school committee members had attended a two-day orientation and training session conducted by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. In addition, the superintendent said that he is keeping committee members informed about matters they should be aware of and is providing them with agenda back-up materials.

However, during interviews with the school committee, members demonstrated a misunderstanding of their authority, role, and responsibilities. One school committee member characterized the previous administration as “an administration of secrecy.” Members made remarks such as “No real orientation is provided by school district administration unless we ask for it”; “Everything we find, we do it ourselves”; “Without questioning, we know nothing”; and “We find out a lot from the ESE website.” Some examples cited of information members would have liked to receive but have not were: presentations on standardized test results (i.e. MCAS, SAT, and AP); information about what grants have been applied for and awarded to the district (approximately \$22 million) and how the grant money is being used¹²; and evaluations of instructional programs or the grade reorganization to determine their success, failure, or the need for modifications. Members did not understand that they have a duty to require presentation of the information they need to perform their jobs.

School committee members said that since his appointment, the new superintendent has provided them with information either before or during school committee meetings to help them make knowledgeable decisions. They expressed hope that the new superintendent would continue to improve the lines of communication and supply them with needed information. They also indicated that they were aware the superintendent would present the DIP to them at the initial school committee meeting in December. However, school committee members commented that, so far, they had not been involved in the development of the DIP and said that they wanted to make certain that their priorities were included in it before its approval.

Almost four months after the appointment of the new superintendent, both he and members of the school committee informed the review team that the two parties have yet to decide on a process and instrument for evaluating the superintendent’s annual performance. One school committee member voiced the opinion that it is the responsibility of officials at ESE to help the school district solve its problems, rather demonstrating an understanding of than the district’s responsibility to address existing problems itself. School committee members stated repeatedly that the school district needs more money to remedy its problems. Other needs cited by committee members were radical reformation of the collective bargaining agreement, professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals, and more mentors and coaches. At

¹² Minutes of the school committee and its finance subcommittee from early 2010, before the present superintendent’s tenure, show that information on this topic was presented, especially at the subcommittee. Not all school committee members attend subcommittee meetings, however. In addition, information on various grants was presented at various times, rather than in a coordinated grants presentation.

the same time, however, school committee members were unable to articulate the role that they have the responsibility to play in addressing those needs. For example, while they recognized the need to renegotiate elements in the teachers' contract, they did not realize that in their recent negotiations to modify the contract for teachers in the two Level 4 schools they had missed just such an opportunity to negotiate several of their items of concern.

School committee members and the superintendent did not have a firm understanding of and vision for a high-functioning governing body. It is important for the superintendent to provide the school committee with the guidance it needs and for the school committee to provide the district with the direction it needs. Playing a passive rather than an active role, the school committee fails to fulfill its important responsibility for leadership.

The district did not hold the superintendent or administrators responsible for the improvement of student achievement.

The superintendent stated that the previous superintendent had not evaluated him in 2009-2010 in his previous position as principal of Holyoke High School. The principals and the other central office administrators who were interviewed said that they also did not receive a written evaluation for 2009-2010. A review of the administrators' personnel folders confirmed this and revealed that some administrators had not been evaluated for several years. In addition, those evaluations that were found in the administrators' personnel folders for previous years were in most instances signed and informative but not instructive. This failure to evaluate administrators is contrary to the district administrator contract and to the provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 71, section 38.

Furthermore, while reviewing the certificates of licensure in the personnel folders of the administrators, it was noted that one principal is not licensed for her current position and that several other administrators do not have administrative licenses or have expired licenses.

The current superintendent reported that he intends to develop a new instrument to evaluate the performance of each central office administrator and principal in 2010-2011. However, during 2009-2010, with no written evaluations for any central office administrator or principal, these individuals were not held accountable for the performance of the district's students. The former superintendent did not fulfill her contractual obligations with respect to administrators and did not meet the legal obligation under the Massachusetts General Laws to evaluate administrators every year. And since the process for the superintendent's evaluation has not yet been decided and the new administrative evaluation instrument has not yet been developed, a significant portion of the 2010-2011 school year has passed during which administrators have had no clear understanding of the basis for their work or the expectations for their performance.

Curriculum and Instruction

While remarkable progress has been made in developing a written curriculum for English language arts and mathematics, especially for kindergarten through grade 8, implementation of the written curriculum is uneven and horizontal and vertical alignment is problematic.

With the help of America's Choice, the district has developed written curricula in ELA and mathematics at all levels. Reflecting the direction provided by America's Choice, the K-8 curriculum documents available on the district website are structured on the Readers' Workshop/Writers' Workshop model. These curricula are extensive. For example, the grade 3 ELA curriculum map has an overview, evidence of learning artifacts, probing questions, overarching unit goals and standards, unit work products, and charts for the first 30 days of the unit. The charts are set up under a lesson plan format with columns for an opening, work period, closing, and student work. This 3rd grade curriculum map closes with a 20-page resource section with elements such as alignment with the state framework, suggested readings, guidelines for book talks, and five essential practices for teaching English language learners. Curriculum maps for ELA for other grades and for K-8 in mathematics are similarly rich. In addition, in the third year of the America's Choice partnership, curriculum mapping was extended to include science (see p. 11 of the Evaluation Report)¹³, and that curriculum effort has continued in recent years.

As described by the 2010 English Language Learners (ELL) Program Report, the ELL program has developed an English Language Development (ELD) curriculum for grades 1-8 that is aligned with the ELA curriculum. It has also developed a sheltered immersion ELA curriculum for the same grade span for students with higher English proficiency skills, to facilitate the move from ESL to general education classrooms. The ELL program has also developed beginner ESL curriculum for the high schools.

Written curriculum at both Holyoke High School (HHS) and Dean Technical High School is fully aligned to the state frameworks. At Dean, a chart shows alignment with each learning standard, alignment with the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes, curriculum resources, and assessments. At Holyoke High School, a number of the courses use the Understanding by Design (UBD) format to lay out course requirements. However, accommodations for English language learners are simply summarized on a single sheet at the end of the Holyoke High School document rather than integrated into the coursework. In written curriculum at both high schools, courses tend to have a similar format: course description, materials, instructional objectives, instructional strategies, and assessments. However, rather than having the rich detail included in the K-8 curriculum maps, the high school entries are frequently generic. So, assessments may simply be lists of such items as graded notebooks, quizzes, class assignments, and exams. Also, the high school written curricula are kept in binders in central locations and seem to have had little revision since their original development. While there were no dates to indicate when these documents were developed, they have apparently been in place

¹³ This report may be found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/turnaround/08_0137.doc.

for several years, as both central office and school-based interviewees referred to the need to revise the high school curriculum documents.

Each K-8 school in the district has both an ELA and a mathematics coach, and coaches reported in interviews that they assume responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the curricula. In 2008, according to the district, it hired two K-8 ELL coaches who, in addition to supporting ELD implementation, share responsibility with the ELA and mathematics coaches for the implementation of the general education curriculum. District officials stated that in 2010-2011 science and social studies teachers who have completed at least one category training receive ELL coaching. Since the Morgan and Dean schools were placed in Level 4 in June 2010, the district has also hired two full-time ELL coaches for those schools.

The ELA and mathematics coaches expressed concern that curriculum implementation is uneven. Some teachers implement the curricula faithfully, and others do not. Teachers in focus groups described a similar situation. Some were also frank about some dissatisfaction with the Readers' Workshop/Writers' Workshop model and reported adjusting the curriculum to meet what they saw as the needs of their students. The fact that the district is piloting new mathematics programs for the elementary and middle schools is indicative of the district's uncertainty about the mathematics curriculum currently in place at those levels. At the high school level, department heads cannot assume the same function as coaches since they each teach four classes and at Dean department heads have responsibility for more than one department. Although high school teachers in their focus group referred with confidence to their written curricula, key central office personnel stated to the review team that there was no curriculum beyond K-8.

While written curricula K-12 show clear alignment with the state frameworks, horizontal and vertical alignment of the curricula as implemented remains an issue. Horizontal alignment across schools is particularly important since student mobility is a significant factor. The district had a 28 percent mobility (churn) rate in 2010. However, administrators, coaches, and teachers reported that the district's curriculum is not horizontally aligned across classes or from school to school. The two high schools, one being a technical school and one purely academic, have different programs of study, offer different courses, and have different curriculum leadership. Review team members learned in interviews that the district is beginning to address curriculum inconsistencies at the high school level, but this work is in the beginning stages. Vertical alignment also needs attention. Mathematics coaches reported a lack of time to address vertical alignment in K-8 schools, and high school interviewees discussed beginning efforts to develop a scope and sequence at that level.

The result is that even though there is a robust curriculum in ELA and mathematics in kindergarten through grade 8, there is inconsistent delivery of that curriculum. The district knows this: it was clear from interviews that administrators and teachers know that it is not certain that students will be exposed to what the state and district have designated as essential for their learning. And high mobility rates, which cannot be controlled by the district, exacerbate the seriousness of the matter. The situation is particularly problematic at the high school level where both high schools have functioned independently of one another, thus not sharing curricular leadership and other resources to improve instruction. Curricula at both schools are considerably

less well developed than K-8 curricula, and students transferring from one to the other high school will find little correspondence in the offerings; according to interviews, they have difficulty transferring for this reason.

The district is struggling to implement curricula that are in varying stages of development, have various amounts of detail, and are in various stages of implementation.

Classroom observations revealed some instructional strengths and some key areas in need of attention.

The review team observed instruction in 50 classes, for the most part in English language arts and mathematics, with a few science and social studies classes. Team members use an Instructional Inventory Record that lists 14 characteristics of strong instruction. They score each characteristic as having no evidence, partial evidence, or solid evidence.

The highest consistent scores were in the area of Organization of the Classroom.

- In 76 percent of the classes, reviewers noted solid evidence of respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. These are classrooms ready for learning.
- In 52 percent of the classes there was solid evidence of learning and language objectives being posted; however, in 28 percent of instances there were no evidence. This lack of objectives was surprising in a district placing such an emphasis on category training for teachers.
- In 64 percent of the classes there was solid evidence that class time was maximized for learning.

In the area of Instructional Design and Delivery, there were some positive, some mixed, and some negative results.

Among the positive results:

- In 68 percent of the classes, there was solid evidence that instruction linked academic concepts to students' prior knowledge and experience.
- In 52 percent of the classes, there was solid evidence that opportunities for students to apply new knowledge and content were embedded in the lesson.
- In 60 percent of classes, there was solid evidence that teachers paced the lesson to ensure active engagement of the students.

Mixed results included:

- In only 40 percent of the classes was there solid evidence of depth of content knowledge on the part of the teacher. There was, however, partial evidence of this characteristic 44 percent of the time.
- In only 40 percent of classrooms observed was there solid evidence of questions that required students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. However, there was partial evidence of such questions in another 40 percent.

Negative results included:

- In only 15 percent of classes was there solid evidence that instruction included a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. And in 40 percent of classrooms there was no evidence of a range of techniques.
- In 30 percent of classes observed there was no evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning. At the same time, there was solid evidence of this in 20 percent of the classes.
- In 42 percent of classes there was no evidence of students inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together in pairs or in small groups. In 38 percent, there was solid evidence of this characteristic.

The evidence of a positive climate in high percentage of the classrooms observed is an indication of classrooms where the setting is right for learning. And learning is underway in those classrooms where teachers link instruction to students' prior knowledge and where students are actively engaged. However, the three instructional characteristics significantly absent in classrooms, namely a range of instructional techniques, students articulating their thinking and reasoning, and students working with one another, are critical characteristics of classrooms where students are developing ownership over their own learning. The needs of Holyoke students are great. Classes in which there is only one instructional technique, such as direct instruction, are not addressing the range of students' needs. Students for whom English is a second language require multiple opportunities to use the language and interact with one another. But the review team's classroom observations indicate that instruction is not sufficiently robust to address those needs adequately.

The levels of special education and ELL staffing and the training of general education teachers are not sufficient to address the low proficiency rates of special education and LEP students.

In the 2009-2010 school year, 25.2 percent of the district's students were classified as special education students and 23.3 percent were classified as limited English proficient (LEP). As shown in Table 7 below, the data for students in both of these subgroups indicates very low levels of academic achievement.

**Table 7: 2010 Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles
for Holyoke Special Education and Limited English Proficient Students,
Compared to State and All Students**

		Special Education		Limited English Proficient		All Students	
		ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Proficiency Rate	Holyoke	6	3	3	5	32	25
	State	28	21	22	24	68	59
Median SGP	Holyoke	38.0	42.0	43.0	49.0	47.0	55.0
	State	41.0	43.0	50.0	53.0	50.0	50.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Although with the exception of special education students in ELA, median SGPs for both of these subgroups are in the moderate range, proficiency rates for both special education and LEP students are extremely low, much lower than the proficiency rates for these subgroups statewide. Well over 90 percent of Holyoke students in these subgroups have not achieved proficiency.

As might be expected from the proficiency rates, a far higher percentage of district special education and limited English proficient students score in the Warning/Failing category on MCAS tests than do so across the state, as Table 8 below indicates.

Table 8: 2010 Percentages of Special Education and Limited English Proficient Students in Warning/Failing Category: Holyoke Compared to the State

Assessment	Holyoke Special Education	State Special Education	Holyoke Limited English Proficient	State Limited English Proficient
Grade 3 ELA	63	29	47	22
Grade 3 Mathematics	73	34	55	27
Grade 4 ELA	84	40	66	33
Grade 4 Mathematics	84	36	63	28
Grade 5 ELA	71	35	72	35
Grade 5 Mathematics	82	50	90	45
Grade 6 ELA	72	33	71	36
Grade 6 Mathematics	74	49	71	47
Grade 7 ELA	64	28	72	39
Grade 7 Mathematics	85	56	89	60
Grade 8 ELA	60	28	71	37
Grade 8 Mathematics	88	61	86	63
Grade 10 ELA	44	17	48	27
Grade 10 Mathematics	57	27	75	35
All Grades ELA	66	30	65	32
All Grades Mathematics	78	45	75	40

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

For the majority of assessments the percentage of special education or LEP students scoring Warning/Failing in Holyoke is at least double the percentage of students in the same subgroup scoring Warning/Failing across the state. The achievement of the district’s special education and LEP students is unacceptably low when compared to students in the same subgroup statewide—and unacceptably low even without this comparison.

As Table 9 below shows, Holyoke’s 2010 annual dropout rates for special education and LEP students are high compared to those for state special education and LEP students. And the 2010 four-year cohort graduation rates for special education and LEP students are unusually low, particularly when compared with graduation rates for these subgroups across the state.

Table 9: 2010 Holyoke Annual Dropout and Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for Special Education and Limited English Proficient Students, Compared to State and to All Students

		Special Education	Limited English Proficient	All Students
Annual Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate	Holyoke	16.0	17.5	9.5
	State	4.7	8.5	2.9
Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Holyoke	18.6	26.3	52.5
	State	64.0	57.8	82.1

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website and, for LEP dropout rates, other ESE data

Both of these subgroups are in comparable circumstances in the district with respect to instructional support.

Special education students: According to ESE data, about 60 percent of the district’s special education students are fully included in mainstream classes; approximately another 15 percent are partially included.¹⁴ There are two issues with inclusion in the district. First, limited special education staff support is available for mainstream classes with special education students. Teachers reported that in most schools there is one special education teacher for each grade. In some schools, there is one special education teacher for two grades. Responsibility then rests with a single special education teacher to provide support for from three to six teachers and their students with disabilities. Furthermore, according to interviews with special education teachers themselves, this limited support is further diminished by their being frequently pulled from their teaching duties to administer testing, though according to the district it has tried to reduce the amount of testing it requests the special education teachers to carry out.

The second issue with inclusion is that regular education teachers with a number of special education students in their classrooms expressed the view that they were ill-equipped to address their needs. Teachers reported that they have had little professional development on differentiated instruction. Rather, training for mainstream teachers in this area seems to rest on the shoulders of the coaches, individuals with numerous other duties. The level of concern expressed by teachers about the need for appropriate instruction for special education students leads to the conclusion that little progress has been made in providing mainstream teachers with the instructional tools they need to work with these students.

School-based administrators were among the most vocal interviewees in expressing concern about the unaddressed needs of special education students in their schools. They expressed the view that many of the budget cuts in recent years have fallen on special education staffing since there is a sincere intention on the part of the central office and the school committee to preserve

¹⁴ The 2008-2009 figures are: 60.1 percent in full inclusion (outside of general education classroom <21 percent of the time); 15.1 percent in partial inclusion (outside of general education classroom 21-60 percent); 22.5 percent substantially separate (outside of general education classroom >60 percent); 2.3 percent out of district. See http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/gis/sped_map.aspx?orgcode=01370000&.

classroom teaching positions. Some interviewees felt that special education teachers and paraprofessionals are not seen as critical.¹⁵

English language learners: Conditions are similar regarding support for LEP students and their teachers. According to the district's 2010 English Language Learners Program Report, between the 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 school years the number of LEP students in the district decreased from 1481 to 1377, a decrease of 7 percent. However, at the same time, according to the report, the district lost 17.5 English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher positions: the number decreased from 60.6 to 43.1 (a decrease of 29 percent). It appears that the desire to preserve classroom teaching positions has resulted in cuts falling instead on ELL staffing.¹⁶ Although the district did hire two K-8 English language learner (ELL) coaches in 2008, these are the only two ELL coaches for 6 of the 7 K-8 schools (the Morgan, as well as Dean Tech, has its own ELL coach, hired in 2010 after these schools were placed in Level 4).

At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year the district also hired an ELL compliance specialist, whose duties include coordinating intake assessment, providing professional development, participating in school focus walks, coordinating monitoring of students who have exited the ELL program, analyzing and presenting ELL data, and helping teachers use data to improve instruction. This is a step in the right direction, as is the district's development of English language development (ELD) and sheltered English immersion (SEI) curriculum, mentioned earlier. In addition, the district is vigorously promoting all four categories of structured English immersion training for its teachers; the 2010 ELL program report indicated that 66 percent of all teachers had completed at least one of the four categories of structured English immersion training.¹⁷ A comparison of MCAS and Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) data for 2010, however, shows that in ELA 75 percent of Level 3 ELL students in Holyoke scored Warning/Failing on MCAS (compared to 60 percent of state Level 3 students) and 42 percent of Holyoke Level 4 students scored Warning/Failing (compared to 22 percent of state Level 4 students). In mathematics, 85 percent of Holyoke Level 3 students scored Warning/Failing (compared to 65 percent of state Level 3 students) and 58 percent of Holyoke Level 4 students scored Warning/Failing (compared to 32 percent of state Level 4 students).

In spite of the district's efforts in the area of ELL, the large population of ELL students receives insufficient support from ELL teachers because of large decreases in staffing. Also, many general education teachers need further training and support in structured English immersion.

¹⁵ According to ESE's data for the years 2008-2011, the number of the district's special education teachers (full-time equivalents or FTEs) decreased from 79.4 in 2007-2008 to 72.5 in 2008-2009, then increased to 84.8 in 2009-2010 and 89.3 in 2010-2011. In those years, the special education student to special education teacher ratio went from 17.8:1 to 20.7:1 to 16.9:1 to 16.6:1. See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html> (DART for Staffing & Finance, Holyoke special education staff tab). This data is not available on the DART for years before 2007-2008.

¹⁶ According to ESE's data for the years 2008-2010, the number of the district's LEP teachers (full-time equivalents or FTEs) fell from 60.6 in 2007-2008, to 51.1 in 2008-2009, to 43.1 in 2009-2010. In the same years, the LEP student to LEP teacher ratio went from 24.4:1 to 28.6:1 to 31.9:1.

See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html> (DART for Staffing & Finance, Holyoke teachers tab).

¹⁷ According to a post-review communication from the district, by March 2011 77 percent had completed at least one category training, and 24 percent had completed all four category trainings.

Similarly, students with disabilities receive insufficient support from special education teachers, while general education teachers reported receiving insufficient professional development on differentiated instruction. Special education and ELL students have achievement rates and graduation rates significantly lower than their peers in the district and their counterparts across the state. And they have correspondingly higher dropout rates. The data and the discussions with district personnel indicate that limited staff support and insufficient mainstream teacher training have resulted in unacceptably low achievement for special education students and English language learners.

Assessment

Progress is being made at the school level in the district’s K-8 schools in collecting and analyzing relevant student data, making it accessible to staff, and using it to monitor student performance, modify instruction, and determine individual student learning needs. However, the use of achievement data varies in effectiveness from school to school.

The district’s K-8 schools currently use numerous assessments to collect performance data and track student academic progress. These include: Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), Benchmarks for Science Literacy, Assessment and Learning K-12 (ALEKS, an online mathematics program), Connected Mathematics Project (CMP), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), and MCAS, as well as a variety of other locally developed unit pre- and post- tests in ELA and math. At the school level, the principals, ELA and mathematics directors, and coaches are primarily responsible for the analysis and dissemination of student data. Their role is to ensure that the staff in each school employs a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments to determine student educational needs and inform classroom instruction. Most of the district’s K-8 schools have begun to create “Data Rooms” or “Data Walls” where they display an array of timely student assessment information. These displays enable teachers to access, understand, and analyze relevant academic indicators. Some schools are establishing their own school-based data teams to support these efforts.

Some teachers and administrators indicated, however, that the quality, consistency, and overall effectiveness of assessment practices vary considerably across the district’s seven elementary schools. Further, staff asserted that Holyoke’s two high schools lag significantly behind the rest of the district in their efforts to systematically collect, analyze, disseminate, and use student assessment results. Interviews with staff indicated that a lack of a clear districtwide focus on training in data analysis has impeded the development of districtwide capacity on the part of teachers and administrators to analyze and use data effectively.

The Holyoke Public Schools currently lack consistent districtwide assessment policies and procedures, clear expectations for dissemination of data, standardized monitoring procedures, and sufficient professional development support for the analysis and use of data. Accordingly, data is seldom used in a systematic way to make improvements beyond the individual student level.

A District Data Team (DDT) was established during the 2005-2006 school year to promote the use of student performance data; the district created the position of director of curriculum and testing the same year to oversee and support the implementation of improved assessment policies and practices across the district. That position has since been eliminated and its responsibilities assigned to the assistant superintendent. Teachers and administrators reported that although the DDT has compiled a portfolio of district assessments, collects a great deal of student performance data, and produces various reports, it has not yet created a centralized, readily accessible data management system. Such a system would coordinate all student assessment and demographic data, oversee consistent assessment policies and procedures, establish clear expectations for the dissemination of data, and standardize procedures for tracking the effectiveness of initiatives in place in the district.

District and school leaders could provide the review team with little evidence that student assessment results and other pertinent data are used in a systematic way, even in the K-8 schools. Review team members noted from interviews that achievement data is seldom used to drive decision-making, prioritize goals, influence the allocation of resources, or initiate or modify programs and services within the district. The district's lack of clear focus on training in the analysis and use of data noted in the previous finding has particularly impeded the capacity of teachers and administrators to use data for these purposes. The absence of a comprehensive, coordinated, and accessible data system for K-12 along with the training needed to make full use of it limits the district's ability to use student data for such purposes as evaluating and improving curriculum and instruction broadly or modifying programs and services. Its ability to affect learning outcomes for groups of students as opposed to individual students is therefore also limited.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district does not yet have a fully functioning human resources system, and as a result it has little ability to influence student achievement.

The human resources (HR) function in the district has been reconfigured to include two experienced human resource professionals and a close-knit support team who have begun to transform the way the district keeps personnel records and influences personnel administration in the district. They reported in interviews their interest in adopting rational processes to guide the districts' varied HR functions. In the last two years the department has worked to reduce the numbers of waivers requested and pending; ESE data shows that from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011 the number of waivers requested has decreased from 64 to 34 and the number of staff on waivers has decreased from 42 to 25. However, it is clear from this review that the newly organized

department faces barriers in carrying out some essential HR functions. A fully functioning HR department not only keeps extensive records, but also influences decisions related to hiring, assignment, transfers, training, mentoring, performance assessment, and progressive discipline. The review team found that Holyoke's HR department is currently limited for the most part to tracking HR processes and events. Current district policies and practices limit the ability of the department to improve teacher quality.

Holyoke policies have not been adapted from the model policies provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to be specific to Holyoke. These policies, then, including those that have to do with performance evaluation or other policies related to human resources, are neither congruent with the Holyoke teachers' contract or practice in the district nor useful to district personnel looking for guidance.

In accordance with the district review protocol, the review team received a random selection of 58 teacher personnel files as well as all administrator files. The condition of the files varied from disorganized to more efficiently organized. The human resource division is trying to organize these files to be more functional. Under Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 38, and 603 CMR 35:06(1), every district is required to evaluate its administrators annually. However, no administrators were evaluated in 2009-2010. This means that for that year, at least, there was no contribution from this important internal system, intended to monitor and advance student achievement, on the district's efforts to improve that achievement.

A significant number of teachers have not been evaluated on time: approximately one-third of the 58 teacher personnel files reviewed contained either no evaluations or untimely ones for 2008-2010, the period under review. In addition, of the 2008-2010 evaluations that were completed on time, only one-third contained recommendations concerning instructional improvement. There was no goal-setting in any of the various evaluations the team reviewed, and of over a thousand indicators in the evaluations reviewed, only one indicator was rated below Satisfactory. There were no corrective action plans (CAPs) in the files, although the review team did hear from interviewees that when confronted with the possibility of a CAP, teachers resigned. Also, as described above under Key Question 1, the most recent teachers' contract dispenses with the use in evaluations of most of the examples of effective teaching adapted from the state's Principles of Effective Teaching.¹⁸ Finally, no evaluation reviewed tied instruction to professional development.

Given the lack of timeliness, the lack of recommendations for instructional improvement, the absence of goal-setting, the minimal use of the examples of effective teaching, and the use of a rating of Satisfactory or above in almost all instances (with no CAPs in evidence), the evaluation

¹⁸ For example, under "Effective Instruction," an administrator could assess that "The teacher makes learning goals clear to students" only because "Relevant performance standards are posted in the classroom and are explicitly linked to instruction." Another example is that an administrator could assess that "The teacher uses appropriate instructional techniques" only because the teacher "Demonstrates working knowledge of current research on optimum means for learning a particular discipline." Under "Effective Management of the Classroom Environment," administrators can determine that "The teacher maintains appropriate standards of behavior, mutual respect and safety," by "implementing all safety procedures in the classroom activity or setting." See also footnote 8 above.

system in the district is not connected to an effort to improve student achievement. It appears to be a self-contained system with no consequences. The teachers' contract cites "just cause" as the district standard for certain employment decisions, but the data in the evaluations would not necessarily amount to "just cause" in decisions concerning transfer, layoff, or discipline. In addition, administrators are not consistently evaluated annually, a violation of state law and regulation. The superintendent told the review team that he would develop a new teacher evaluation system after the state unveils its new standards and models in 2011, and that he intends to develop a new instrument for the evaluations of principals and central office administrators.

According to interviews with district administrators and city personnel, because of the city's late budget cycle, teacher recruiting is initiated very late in the year, sometimes as late as August. Many licensed candidates have already signed contracts in other districts, where the recruiting season begins as early as March. This creates delays in filling positions because some teachers offered positions have already accepted offers in other districts, requiring the district to consider other candidates (who may be less qualified) or re-post the position. Another result is that Holyoke makes a large number of hires of teachers who are not appropriately licensed and need waivers. This weakens the district's attempts to hire qualified, licensed staff: in 2009-2010, 93.5 percent of Holyoke staff were licensed in the area of their teaching assignment, compared to 97.1 percent statewide. In addition, hiring teachers on waivers burdens the supervisory system since teachers on waivers must meet basic licensing requirements while they are at the same time learning curriculum, methods, routines, and rules. These additional stressors can affect student achievement.

The various HR functions in the district are treated as separate, unconnected units. For example, a teacher may initiate and pursue outside coursework without permission from his or her supervisor and with no district oversight. And the district reimburses 50 percent of tuition costs up to a maximum of \$500.00 per year. When the degree is attained, the teacher moves to a higher annual salary. With no requirement for a connection between the degree and district needs, the district pays for any degree and then pays a higher salary, regardless of whether pursuing the degree is likely to improve the teacher's pedagogical skills or content knowledge, or add value to student learning. The HR department carefully tracks the progress of teachers' degree-seeking and its costs, but has no influence on the question of whether the teacher's pursuit of the degree is worthwhile or appropriate for reimbursement. The progression of coursework, reimbursement, degree attainment, and payment of a higher salary is a closed system not connected to a rational system of continuous improvement.

The human resource department tracks various processes and events related to such functions to recruiting, hiring, assignment, mentoring, licensing, and evaluation, and has worked to reduce the number of staff on waivers. However, there is no long-term recruiting plan. There is no evident effort to move the budget cycle earlier so that fewer teachers without appropriate licensure would be hired. Evaluations occur too infrequently for continuous improvement, less frequently than required by law, and rarely indicate that any improvement is necessary. Principals and other administrators were not evaluated in 2009-2010 in violation of 603 CMR 35:06(1), and the district mentoring program, though mentors and mentees are matched and

records of their meetings are kept, collects no follow-up information on the effects of mentoring on student achievement. The limited role played by the human resources department does not allow it to have the impact it should have on the effectiveness of supervisors and the quality of teachers and administrators, so that all students can be well served.

Professional development in the district is a collection of separate events that are not governed by any comprehensive philosophy, policy, or plan to systematically improve student achievement.

There is no current District Improvement Plan to serve as an anchor for the various professional development events, which include teacher-selected degree programs and workshops; workshop days planned and conducted by the district; school-based workshops; Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) controlled by teachers and principals; mandated structured English immersion category training; mentoring; and academic coaching. Professional development events have their origins in a disconnected set of policies, collective bargaining agreements, and school and district needs. However, teachers in interviews expressed concern that they are not surveyed about their professional development needs. Evaluations are completed by attendees at various training events, but according to interviews with central office staff these are filed away without being analyzed. At the time of the site visit at the end of October 2010, according to interviews, the professional development program for teachers and administrators for 2010-2011 had not yet been finalized.

According to interviewees, the district has some valuable professional development initiatives, for instance, academic coaching and the workshop model, introduced by America's Choice, or ELL category training. However, these activities occur in an organizational environment that has no clear priorities that guide professional development choices and the allocation of resources to district goals. The review team also found no evidence to suggest that the district attempts to determine the return on investment for professional development expenditures by determining how or whether such expenditures meet district priority goals or lead to improved student achievement. The district has no coherent plan to organize professional development and tie it to both the supervision and evaluation of instruction. No evaluations reviewed by the team revealed any connection between performance assessments and professional development. Once completed, tracked, and paid for, the various professional development events become another closed internal system. They have little connection to or impact on established district needs and are not providing staff at all levels with opportunities to support the district's goals. .

Student Support

The Holyoke Public Schools have not provided students with the comprehensive, high-quality support programs necessary for improving student attendance, discipline, and graduation rates and raising student achievement.

Holyoke has large percentages of high-need subgroups: students whose first language is not English (51 percent); LEP students (23 percent); students with disabilities (25 percent); mobile students (28 percent), and low-income students (74 percent). During ESE's review of the District

Plan for School Intervention (DPSI) of 2009 district leaders acknowledged that the high percentages of students with unaddressed needs adversely affect standardized test scores. Yet indicators related to attendance, discipline, promotion, and graduation, indicators that are tied to the existence of effective student support, show little improvement over the last three years.

Table 10: 2008-2010 Holyoke Public Schools Attendance, Discipline, Retention, Dropout, and Graduation Rates, Compared to State Rates

Indicator		2008	2009	2010
Attendance rate	Holyoke	90.4	90.2	90.4
	State	94.6	94.6	94.6
Chronic absence rate	Holyoke	31.3	31.5	31.5
	State	12.9	13.0	13.0
Out of school suspension rate	Holyoke	31.8	31.1	32.8
	State	6.2	5.3	6.0
Grade 9 retention rate	Holyoke	22.9	25.0	25.4
	State	7.6	7.7	6.9
Annual dropout rate—grades 9-12	Holyoke	11.6	9.8	9.5
	State	3.4	2.9	2.9
4-Year cohort graduation rate	Holyoke	49.8	48.5	52.5
	State	81.2	81.5	82.1

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website; grade retention reports on ESE website; other ESE data

The review team’s interviews and examination of documents showed that although district leaders have acknowledged the challenge of serving a relatively high concentration of students with critical needs, the district has not established consistent, districtwide programs that address some of these critical needs, such as adequate support programs for special education and ELL students, behavioral programs, or family outreach programs. There are points of light in the form of worthy initiatives at individual schools, such as the hiring of more Spanish-speaking outreach workers; strong parental engagement; some improved ELL and inclusion practices; intervention classes; tutoring programs; and alliances with community institutions, including colleges and mental health facilities. However, without districtwide programs the district cannot adequately deal with the social, economic, and health issues that present barriers to higher academic achievement for the great majority of its students.

The William R. Peck School (K-8) is transforming itself into a full service community school (FSCS) in which parents, faculty, students, and community allies work together strategically to address the needs of students and families, resulting in significant academic gains. This promising pattern of growth is becoming a model to other educators in the district.

The new K-8 Peck school was formed in 2008 through the merger of the former Peck and Lynch middle schools and the Lawrence elementary school. Under the leadership of a dynamic principal and administrative team, Peck has developed an inclusive culture that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of its students and families; the school has already shown impressive gains on MCAS.

The Peck school's Overall Strategic Framework establishes that ongoing analysis of data is to underlie all school initiatives. Teachers are trained in the interpretation of data and hold their meetings in a large, functional data room. Through strategic grant writing and staffing, the FSCS has been able to develop programs to (1) improve academic performance, (2) increase direct parental participation, and (3) provide direct health and counseling services to students. This three-fold initiative lies at the heart of much of the improvement Peck has experienced and the promise Peck holds. With the support of grants, the school hired a family coordinator and a social worker and put in place a case management system that provides services to children and families in crisis. As a result, according to school staff, there were no retentions among the 28 homeless 8th grade students from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. The Peck Parents United in Action (PPUA), which has its own Family Resource Center in the school building and holds monthly conversation sessions (*charlas*), brings a large group of parents into school each day. They have a deep sense of ownership and pride in their children's school. Peck ACCESS brings in local college students, business people, and community organizations. Members of both PPUA and ACCESS assist in classrooms and with tutoring and mentoring programs including Homework House and Walking School Bus. There are school-based medical and mental health clinics. The academic focus is on strengthening the English Language Development (ELD) program for English language learners, continuing implementation of the Readers'/Writers' Workshop model, implementing schoolwide literacy and numeracy initiatives, and continuing improvement of the inclusion model for special education students.

The record shows dramatic improvement in most measures of academic achievement. Between 2009 and 2010, the CPI in ELA grew from 51.6 to 58.9; in mathematics, from 40.5 to 51.9. The median student growth percentile (SGP) in ELA jumped from 33.0 to 57.0, and in mathematics from 41.0 to 63.0. Given the significant improvement in MCAS results and its generally good attendance rates, Peck achieved AYP in 2010 in the aggregate and for the Hispanic and low-income subgroups in both ELA and mathematics, and for the LEP subgroup in mathematics. It also made substantial progress with the other subgroups (for instance, the CPI for LEP students rose more than 10 points in both ELA and mathematics). The rise in median student growth percentiles for other subgroups (26.5 to 50.0 (ELA) and 34.0 to 57.5 (math) for LEP students and 27.0 to 38.0 (ELA) and 40.0 to 47.0 (math) for students with disabilities) holds promise that the school is moving toward AYP among other subgroups as well.

Peck's holistic approach to education and its integration with family and community life hold great promise for all the Holyoke Public Schools. The review team was impressed not only by the school itself but also by the very favorable comments it heard from parents, students, and district personnel from other schools and the central office. Peck is already a model, providing support to the Morgan school for full service community school development there and inspiration to many Holyoke educators.

The school zones created in 2008 to implement the K-8 model have had two unintended consequences: inequity in student/teacher ratios and class size among the schools and increased ineligibility for busing.

It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the impact of the 2008 plan that created seven K-8 schools in place of the previous model of separate elementary and middle schools. However, members of the review team heard comments about its effect on Holyoke education from several groups, including administrators, faculty members, and concerned parents. Several administrators expressed the view that a substantial evaluation of the K-8 model, now in its third year, would be useful. Based on the capacity of existing school buildings, patterns of population density, and street layout, seven mini-districts were created. However rational the process of redrawing school boundaries appeared to be, class size and student/teacher ratios vary considerably from school to school as a result: some K-8 schools have classes with over 30 students, while some have classes with fewer than 20. This raises questions of equity, expressed by some faculty members. In addition, according to interviewees, the problem is further complicated because the boundaries of the school zones as they are currently drawn make it difficult to develop a coherent and comprehensive system of bus routes. This has led to hardships among students who are not eligible for bus transportation and must walk to school along potentially unsafe routes that are a great concern to parents; according to an administrator, ineligibility for bus transportation contributes to the unacceptably high rates of chronic absenteeism and tardiness.

With the many challenges its students face, the district can ill afford inequitable assignment of students across the newly created school zones. Overcrowded classrooms are not conducive to student learning. And the expectation that students will walk to school through reportedly unsafe sections of the city seems to indicate an apparent disregard for the safety of the students as they make their way every day from portal to portal, while contributing to the attendance and tardiness problems that are chronic in Holyoke. The recent redistricting with its resulting inequity in class size and apparently insufficient busing support represents a serious issue for the district.

Financial and Asset Management

Since the district was declared “underperforming,” the Holyoke Public Schools have received substantial financial support from the state and from grants. However, 7 years later, the district has seen little improvement in student achievement.

In fiscal year 2010, Holyoke’s actual net school spending¹⁹ was \$74,871,472. Chapter 70 aid from the state made up \$66,432,722 of this amount; local funds constituted the remainder (\$8,447,750). The district also spent over \$20,000,000 from federal and state grants. The total amount of actual school-related expenditures in fiscal year 2010, including expenditures by the district (\$66,727,160), all expenditures by the city (\$21,246,380), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$24,206,119), was \$112,179,659. In fiscal year 2009, the district’s per-pupil expenditure was \$15,513, compared to the \$13,006 expenditure per pupil statewide. Its per-pupil expenditure was (\$1,300 to \$4,250) greater than the per-pupil expenditure of all ten districts identified on the ESE website as being similar to Holyoke in grade structure, district wealth, and enrollment.²⁰ When the district was declared “underperforming” in 2003, it had very nearly the lowest CPIs of any multiple-school district in the state; its CPIs in 2010 were the lowest of any multiple-school district. Expenditure of large sums of money on the education of Holyoke students has had little apparent effect on the level of their achievement.

The review team learned about numerous programs in place in the district, but heard little about evaluations of these programs to determine their effectiveness. The superintendent was aware that decisions on allocation of budget funds are seldom based upon the knowledge that what is being funded works for students. He mentioned having invited the Massachusetts Association of School Budget Officers (MASBO) to conduct a financial audit of the district. He said that he hoped that that study would put the district in a better position to allocate funding according to what has proven effective.

Some stakeholder groups repeatedly told the review team that they need more money. The school committee in its interview spoke forcefully about this need. Town officials, on the other hand, are supportive of the schools, but questioned the need for more money. Without question, the district has made serious cuts in areas such as staffing for special education and LEP students that will have a negative impact on the achievement of those students. While the business manager can and does provide a specific accounting as to where the money is spent, the district cannot produce evidence that the money is well spent—that it funds valuable positions, programs, and services that help students learn. Indeed, it appeared from interviews that few in the district raise questions about how or why budget decisions are made and whether better ones might be made.

The district is expending large sums of money on the education of its students with relatively small gains in student achievement as a result. Especially given what is known about future

¹⁹ Actual net school spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures, transportation, grants, and revolving funds.

²⁰ See http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/schfin/statistics/ppx09_comp.aspx?ID=137.

revenue shortfalls at both local and state levels, continuing to allocate budget funds with little understanding of cost-effectiveness is hard to justify.

Key Question 4: Has the district built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own, without continued assistance from ESE targeted to the district?

Under the new superintendent, the district has set in motion many initiatives that may create future capacity for the district to operate independently and effectively. However, at the current time, the district does not demonstrate that capacity.

The district, under its new superintendent, who assumed the position on July 1, 2010, is working to build the capacity to maintain improvement on its own. In the area of leadership, the capacity is still in its early stages of development. However, at the time of the site visit, little was in place. Interviewees reported that a District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans were works in progress. The superintendent anticipated that the DIP would be submitted to him for his review at the end of November and that he would present it to the school committee for its review and approval at the first December school committee meeting. Principals indicated that they were preparing SIPs with the assistance of members of their instructional leadership teams and school councils. The plan was that the assistant superintendent would review each SIP with the school principal and ensure its alignment with the DIP. Principals told review team members that the superintendent had requested that all SIPs be submitted to him by February 15, 2011, so that he can then present them to the school committee. However, as of the time of the review team's site visit, with no completed DIP or SIPs, the school system had no approved priorities and goals for this school year.

The capacity of the school committee to play its designated role is not clear. Interviews with the school committee and the superintendent revealed different viewpoints about the committee's understanding of its role and responsibilities. Although the superintendent took the position that school committee members understand their role and responsibilities, committee members in interviews revealed that they did not. Members of the school committee demonstrated a lack of awareness about their responsibility to request pertinent information and reports from the superintendent needed to inform their decision-making. They stated that under the previous superintendent they were unable to carry out their responsibility to make sound, informed decisions because little information was presented to them, although they said that the new superintendent has provided more information than they received in the past. According to these members, the school committee in the past had not received such important information as analyses of standardized test results, information on grants, and evaluations of programs and initiatives (such as grade realignments); the committee apparently did not understand its responsibility to request pertinent information and reports from the superintendent. School committee members indicated the need for continued ESE support, maintaining that the district could not sustain continuous improvement on its own with its limited budget.

The district has also not yet built the capacity to hold administrators responsible for the improvement of student achievement. As of the time of the review, the school committee and the superintendent had not agreed upon a process and an instrument by which the committee will annually evaluate the superintendent. No central office administrators or principals were evaluated during 2009-2010. During the review team's visit, the superintendent indicated that he

was investigating instruments for administrative evaluations and would use a new one to evaluate the performance of administrators for 2010-2011. So far, however, the evaluation system for administrators had not been finalized. As a result, the superintendent and all other administrators were well into the school year with no understanding of how they will be evaluated.

The district has not yet built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement in curriculum and instruction on its own. Continuous improvement in curriculum would involve completing and aligning the curriculum, monitoring its implementation by teachers, and revising it in response to this monitoring and student achievement data. After being declared underperforming, the district significantly improved its written curriculum K-8 during the partnership with America's Choice. Since America's Choice did not extend to the high school, similar rich curriculum development did not occur there. Recently, there has been little curriculum development in any area except science: the district has not demonstrated that it has built the capacity to improve curriculum on its own. Under the new superintendent, the district is beginning to address its high school curriculum needs on its own. And there is new energy in the newly appointed district content area directors. However, it is not yet clear that these recent developments will lead to a systemic capacity to write, implement, and revise curriculum.

The increasingly common practice of using data to plan instruction will serve to highlight for teachers the students' needs, identification of which is the first step in addressing the district's serious instructional needs. Teachers who through data analysis better understand their students' needs then must acquire instructional strategies to address those needs. However, the current lack of a strong professional development program leads to the conclusion that at this point the district has not built the capacity to address its instructional needs.

Although Holyoke's K-8 schools are making progress in developing and refining school-based procedures and practices for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of student performance data, they are inconsistent and limited in scope. The district lacks a comprehensive, fully integrated and carefully coordinated data system that would enable school and district leaders and staff to use student assessment results to coordinate the improvement of student achievement in kindergarten through grade 12. Such a data system would be helpful in all aspects of decision-making, such as those related to goal-setting, academic programs and services, and classroom instruction. Without such a system, the district lacks the capacity to maintain high levels of continuous improvement in response to ever-changing student and school needs.

Insufficient attention to supervision and evaluation may be a factor in the district's struggle to make gains in student learning. The district's administrator contract and state regulations require that central office administrators and principals be evaluated annually. However, no principal or other administrator was evaluated in 2009-2010. Almost a third of teacher personnel files reviewed for 2008-2010 contained either no evaluations or untimely ones. In addition, according to district records provided to the review team, several supervisors do not hold administrative licenses, further undermining the district's capacity to influence instructional improvement through skilled supervision. The teacher evaluation tool is ineffective. In spite of the 127 examples of effective teaching, teachers may meet the requirement of satisfactory performance

under each of the standards by satisfactory performance on only one example for each of the 19 standards, or 19 out of 127 examples. This practice severely limits the ability of a principal to influence instruction in his or her school—only one of the more than one thousand indicators in the evaluations reviewed for 2008-2010 was rated less than Satisfactory, demonstrating lack of recognition of distinctions among teachers with varied levels of skill and experience as professional educators.

The district HR department publishes a calendar of scheduled evaluation years, an aid in ensuring that all evaluations of administrators and teachers are tracked and centrally read for quality control. The HR staff has the capacity to track and provide quality reviews of evaluation documents in cooperation with the assistant superintendent, but the team's review of personnel files indicates that there is still not sufficient oversight of evaluations by central office staff. Nor are evaluations sufficiently tied to instructional and curricular priorities or student achievement. The district's history of low enforcement of evaluation protocols is a concern, but it can be remedied by leadership and with a changeover to supervision and evaluation practices that are more likely to yield improvement in teaching and learning.

The district has not built the capacity to organize its professional development efforts and align them with its needs. The district professional development needs are not prioritized, and there is scant evidence that the instructional needs of teachers are surveyed as professional development events are planned. Rather, professional development is currently an array of offerings, some mandated, some voluntarily selected, some related to licensure, and some rising out of the need for improved instruction. These are not categorized or organized in a districtwide plan, but are found in various district publications, calendars, and web pages. According to the District Analysis and Review Tool on the ESE website, in fiscal year 2009 the Holyoke Public Schools spent \$5,167 per teacher on professional development, which is more than \$2,000 more than the per-teacher spending on professional development statewide. In fiscal year 2008 there was a similar difference (of more than \$1,700) between district and state per-teacher spending on professional development, and in earlier years the differences were even greater. That kind of expenditure requires careful auditing to make sure professional development is influencing student learning.

In the area of student support individual schools and programs have developed successful initiatives on their own. These include homework centers, mathematics and ELA intervention classes, hiring more bilingual outreach workers, and creating alliances with partners such as local mental health agencies, colleges, and community groups. However, the review team learned in interviews that these programs and alliances stem almost entirely from the initiative and creativity of various school communities and their leaders. The review team found little evidence that the district as a whole has built the capacity to create effective plans or programs to improve student support services and implement them consistently across the district.

The district has not built the capacity to make budget decisions based on an understanding of which programs and services are effective in improving student achievement. There is as yet little evidence that the district understands the critical importance of evaluating the effectiveness of its numerous programs. Only when the district can establish the effectiveness or

ineffectiveness of individual programs in improving student achievement will it have the capability of making budget decisions targeted at improving student achievement. As in so many areas, whether it builds this capacity is still an open question.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

Holyoke Public Schools should develop a District Plan focused on establishing an effective district system of support and intervention in its schools. ESE should monitor and provide technical assistance for the implementation of the Plan.

District systems has are not sufficiently complete, connected, and clear to address the issues confronting it. Interviews with school committee members, district and school leaders, and teachers indicated that the district has not established and communicated a clear direction for systemic improvement. Seven years after the development of its initial turnaround plan, none of the six initiatives in the plan has been completed, showing that the movement to address district weaknesses has been largely inadequate. A new District Plan to guide the district's turnaround efforts should be developed with urgency, focusing on the development of effective systems and incorporating essential turnaround plan initiatives that have not yet been completed.

The review team recommends that ESE appoint a monitor to oversee efforts by the school system to address the various issues that require attention. The monitor should report to ESE on District Plan benchmark progress in the areas of leadership and governance; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; student support services; human resources and professional development; financial and asset management; and student performance (achievement and related student indicators such as rates of attendance, suspension, and retention, dropout rates, and graduation rates at Holyoke High School and Dean Technical High School). ESE should also provide assistance and guidance to the superintendent and other leaders in the district, providing support for: (1) the development and implementation of district and school plans; (2) the school committee's and superintendent's work to clarify and carry out their roles and responsibilities so that the school committee makes well-informed decisions concerning policy development, the budget, and the evaluation of the superintendent; and (3) labor management issues that may need attention.

ESE support for critical areas and ongoing monitoring appear to be necessary at this point to keep the district focused on accelerating improvements districtwide.

The school committee needs to use its governance role to provide the oversight and support that the district needs to accelerate improvement. Part of this responsibility is to ensure that the superintendent provides effective leadership and an urgent call to action so that district weaknesses are addressed systematically through the effective implementation of a clear District Plan.

Leadership for the turnaround of the school system is ultimately the responsibility of the school committee and the superintendent. Uncertainty about the role and responsibilities of school committee members exists and needs to be remedied. The school committee needs to take ownership of the issues the school system faces and not place responsibility elsewhere. The school committee needs to provide clear priorities for the superintendent and hold him accountable. The school committee should establish and implement a system for regular evaluation of the superintendent according to priorities identified in the District Plan. It is the

school committee's role to ensure through its evaluation process that the superintendent is providing educational leadership, clear priorities, and high expectations for the district and administrators.

It is essential that the school committee and new superintendent work within their roles to provide the necessary leadership, direction, and support in accordance with the new District Plan, so that staff and stakeholders can work systematically to address the school system's longstanding educational issues and move the district forward.

Curriculum and Instruction

District and school administrators should ensure that the K-12 written curriculum is vertically aligned and implemented consistently in all classrooms. Part of this work should be to ensure that curriculum at the high school level is at least as well developed as at the elementary and middle levels, so that students at both high schools have access to a strong education.

The district needs to improve curricular alignment between grades (vertical alignment) and between classrooms at the same grade level (horizontal alignment). Horizontal alignment across schools is particularly important given the 28 percent mobility rate in the district in 2010. Mobility rates are the rates at which students transfer into or out of a school or district. The district has a comprehensive K-8 written curriculum, but it is not in place in all classrooms.

The two high schools, one a vocational school and one not, have separately developed, very different curricula, causing difficulties for students transferring from one to the other. Dean Technical High School is a Level 4 vocational school with curriculum autonomy; the district should look carefully at the preparation of these students and determine the common academic knowledge and skills that students graduating from both high schools should possess and build these components into the academic and vocational curricula accordingly.

Components of the high school curricula are often not specific enough to provide guidance to teachers. For instance, assessments in the curriculum document may consist of a list of possible kinds of assessments without clear assessment expectations or student benchmarks. To address this issue and to ensure that all high school students have access to the curriculum designated by the state and agreed upon within the district, the district urgently needs to revise and further develop its curriculum for grades 9-12 to have the type of detail the K-8 curriculum has. This process should involve teachers from both schools who understand the importance and the significance of the work. Upon completion of better developed, more detailed curriculum at the high school level, the district will have the comprehensive K-12 written curriculum it needs.

Job-appropriate responsibilities for curriculum development, improvement, and delivery should be built into the supervision and evaluation process to drive shared ownership and accountability for all teachers, coaches, department heads, and school and district administrators so that the curriculum at all levels is implemented and aligned both horizontally and vertically through

grade 12. Only when staff share responsibility for student learning of the content and skills articulated in an aligned grade K-12 curriculum will student achievement rise.

Teachers should receive support for acquiring the range of instructional strategies needed for the students they teach, effective supervision while they acquire them, and fair evaluations that provide feedback and accountability for using these strategies to improve student learning.

The review team's classroom observations showed a low incidence of key instructional characteristics. In 40 percent of the classrooms observed, there was no evidence of a range of instructional techniques. In 30 percent of the observed classrooms, there was no evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning. In 42 percent of classrooms, there was no evidence of students inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together in pairs or small groups. Students, rather than actively participating in their learning, seemed passive recipients.

Whether through workshops or through job-embedded training, the district should provide teachers with enough professional development opportunities to increase the range of instructional strategies in their toolkit and allow them to learn instructional techniques that call forth higher-order thinking by students. However, the district will only have the assurance that teachers implement a range of instructional strategies, including strategies that help students develop as independent learners, when the teachers and their supervisors are explicitly held accountable for this outcome through the evaluation system.

The district should improve the instruction of its special education and limited English proficient students through increased support from special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers as well as through targeted training for mainstream teachers.

District data on the achievement of special education and LEP students, as well as interviews with special education, ESL, and mainstream teachers, reveals that the education of students in these two subgroups needs serious attention. The achievement of these two subgroups is unacceptably low. In the last two years the district has taken some steps to improve the education of both subgroups. However, it appears from reports by administrators and teachers and analysis of data that there is insufficient classroom support available to both students and mainstream teachers from special education and ESL teachers. In addition, regular education teachers reported in interviews that they considered themselves ill-equipped to address the instructional needs of special needs students in their classrooms, and although the district has made progress recently in training regular education teachers in structured English immersion, many regular education teachers need further training and support.

The remarkably poor achievement of these students cannot be ignored. They need adequate classroom support from special education and ELL staff. In addition, regular education teachers must be equipped with the instructional strategies they need to work with these subgroups in their classrooms. The low achievement of special education students and English language learners is a very serious matter that needs urgent action.

Assessment

The district should improve its use of student data to make mid-course corrections and to inform instruction. To do so, the district should establish and use a comprehensive and readily accessible data management system. It should also develop a set of consistent, specific, districtwide assessment policies and procedures, set clear expectations for implementation, and provide ongoing professional development supports.

The district has been making progress in its efforts to collect and analyze student data, make it accessible to staff, and use it to inform and improve instruction. This work has been largely school-based rather than systemic and has occurred primarily in the K-8 schools. Consequently, the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of the assessment policies and procedures currently in place vary across the district's K-8 schools, and the two high schools lag considerably behind the elementary schools in collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and using assessment results. Further, the focus has been largely on individual student progress, with considerably less attention given to using pertinent data to prioritize goals, allocate human and financial resources, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs, policies, and support services.

The review team recommends that the district establish a single integrated, centralized, readily accessible data management system to collect and house all student assessment results and demographic data, for all regular education, special education, and ELL students. The district should develop consistent and specific assessment policies and procedures for kindergarten through grade 12, articulating clear expectations and oversight responsibilities for continuous data collection, analysis, and dissemination and developing standardized data-based practices to inform all aspects of decision-making, including decisions about policy, instructional programs and services, and supervision.

Finally, the district is strongly encouraged to equip all staff members with the skills and tools they need. Professional development programming should be carefully designed to support the capacity of teachers and administrators to use student assessment results to adjust instruction, programs, and support services.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district needs to continue to improve its newly organized human resources department and ensure that it can actively promote the development of human capital. The district should advance teacher recruiting earlier in the year and advance teacher assignment timelines accordingly.

The human resources department now has two experienced human resource professionals and a close-knit support team who have begun to transform the human resources functions in the district. For instance, they have worked successfully over the last two years to reduce the number of requested and pending waivers. For the most part, however, the activities of the human resources department have been limited to tracking the various human resource functions rather than using this information and the expertise of the HR staff to inform decision-making and

administrator and teacher practice. The HR department should work with decision-makers on the following: the evaluation system should be revised; human resource policies should be updated to reflect the teachers' contract and district practice; policies on reimbursement to teachers for outside coursework and on salary increases for degrees attained should be revised to require that the coursework and degrees receive district approval based on their relationship to district goals; and teacher recruiting should be moved earlier in the year so that the district can better compete with other districts to hire the best available qualified, licensed staff. (Teacher assignment timelines should be advanced accordingly.) By making these changes, the district will maximize the use of its HR department to strengthen its staff.

The district should establish and consistently implement rigorous and comprehensive evaluation systems in alignment with the state's new evaluation framework and use them to promote effective administrative leadership and teaching focused on raising the achievement of all students to high levels.

Currently, teacher and administrator evaluation occurs less frequently than required by law. Review of personnel files indicated that administrators are not evaluated annually, as required, and in the 2009-2010 school year no administrators were evaluated. In a turnaround district with some of the lowest student test scores in the Commonwealth, principals and central office administrators were not formally held accountable last year for the effects of their supervision on teaching and learning. The outdated evaluations that were found in administrators' personnel files described their practices but did not provide feedback about how they might become more proficient in their leadership responsibilities. Almost one-third of the teacher evaluation files randomly selected by the team had no evaluations or evaluations that occurred less frequently than every two years as required by law.

Holyoke's teacher evaluation tool is ineffective and inconsistent with current ESE regulations that were developed to ensure that educators were held to consistent standards that meet the state's Principles of Effective Teaching. The state's Principles of Effective Teaching provide 79 examples. Holyoke's teacher evaluation tool provides 127 examples adapted from the state's Principles and allows teachers' performance to be found Satisfactory by reference to just 19 of those 127 examples. The 127 examples include many elements that are less crucial to student learning, so a teacher may receive a rating of Satisfactory on 19 of the least critical components. For example, under "Effective Instruction," an administrator could assess that "The teacher makes learning goals clear to students" only because "Relevant performance standards are posted in the classroom and are explicitly linked to instruction." Another example is that an administrator could assess that "The teacher uses appropriate instructional techniques" only because the teacher "Demonstrates working knowledge of current research on optimum means for learning a particular discipline." Under "Effective Management of the Classroom Environment," administrators can determine that "The teacher maintains appropriate standards of behavior, mutual respect and safety," by "implementing all safety procedures in the classroom activity or setting." As such, the tool makes it very difficult to provide feedback to teachers whose students are not learning. All but one of the total of over one thousand indicators in the 58 teacher evaluations reviewed were rated Satisfactory or above. Further, goal-setting and recommendations for instructional improvement should be included to encourage professional

growth for staff, as no goal-setting was seen in any of the evaluations reviewed and no recommendations for improvement in two-thirds of them.

The district has indicated that it will develop a new teacher evaluation system after the state establishes a new statewide framework for evaluation in spring 2011. It should do so without delay once the new framework is established.

The review team's classroom observations revealed the frequent absence of important instructional characteristics such as use of a range of instructional strategies and students engaged in their own learning by working with one another. Effective and regular evaluations of principals focused on improving their educational leadership are key to creating the conditions, environment, and accountability necessary for effective teaching. Effective and regular evaluations of teachers are key to providing clear direction for teachers to continuously hone their skills as educators. These elements are particularly critical in a district such as Holyoke where students need exceptional teaching and leadership to overcome barriers to learning.

The district should set up a broad-based professional development committee to establish and maintain a prioritized districtwide professional development plan that is coordinated with the new District Plan. The district should monitor changes to instructional practice as a result of key professional development initiatives.

In October of 2010 the professional development program for teachers and administrators for 2010-2011 had not yet been finalized and the district was without a clear set of priorities to guide the choice of professional development initiatives. The review team found no evidence of any efforts by the district to monitor change to classroom practice as a result of professional development or otherwise determine the return on its investment in professional development activities. Neither was professional development tied to the supervision or evaluation process.

As the new District Plan is developed, the superintendent should appoint a professional development committee to review past professional development, survey stakeholders concerning professional development needs, and produce a clear, prioritized professional development plan based on student data, to be integrated and aligned with the new District Plan. When approved, the professional development plan should be appropriately supported by the budget.

Professional development initiatives should be assessed to determine the extent of their influence on classroom practice and student learning.

A cohesive professional development program that is continuously monitored and improved will more efficiently and effectively develop teacher and leader knowledge and skill.

Student Support

The district should adapt aspects of successful models such as the full service community school (FSCS) model being developed at Peck and Morgan to develop a systemic approach for providing the critical student support services needed in all of its schools.

Embedding carefully targeted, professional support services for students and their families in schools is key to improving academic and social outcomes for Holyoke students. The Peck school (K-8) is developing one promising, comprehensive model that it is sharing with the Morgan school (K-8). The success of this program, which produced dramatically improved results on MCAS between 2009 and 2010, is rooted in several factors: the direct, daily involvement of committed parents and community partners in the school community; the case management system; social and academic interventions like Walking School Bus and Homework House; a student/family focused school culture; use of data-based decision making and instruction; and improvement in academic support for ELL and special education students.

The district should continue to evaluate the FSCS model carefully. Also, it should continue to evaluate its other promising approaches, such as the Dropout Task Force, the summer program for Dean 9th graders, the credit recovery system, and other initiatives designed to address critical student needs. Features of models that are proven successful, like the FSCS model, should be adapted into a consistent, districtwide student support system so that each school in Holyoke meets the academic and socio-emotional needs of its students.

The district should begin a study of the K-8 model and its unintended consequences for transportation, class sizes and student/teacher ratios throughout the district.

Parents have serious concerns about the lack of a comprehensive busing plan for Holyoke Public School students. Some faculty members have raised concerns about the inequity in class sizes and student/teacher ratios among the K-8 schools. Several administrators expressed the view that a substantial evaluation of the K-8 model, now in its third year, would be useful. The review team recommends that Holyoke Public Schools undertake a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the K-8 model and its effects on transportation, class sizes and student/teacher ratios. The study could become an important step in making timely, regular assessment of all districtwide programs (K-12) and operations an accepted, consistent practice in the Holyoke Public Schools.

Financial and Asset Management

The Holyoke Public Schools should arrange for a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of the staffing, programs, and services funded; weed out ineffective programs and services; and invest in effective ones.

In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of Holyoke's actual school-related expenditures was \$112,179,659. The district's per-pupil expenditure in fiscal year 2009 was \$15,513, greater than the \$13,006 expenditure per pupil statewide and greater than the per-pupil expenditures of all ten

districts identified on the ESE website as being similar to Holyoke in grade structure, district wealth, and enrollment. However, the district has little knowledge of how effective the staff, programs, and resources are that it funds through its large budget—or whether they are effective at all. The review team heard little about program evaluations or about any commitment to implemented programs because of their established effectiveness. In fact, the superintendent acknowledged that the district seldom allocates budget funds based on which programs have been proven to improve student achievement, and indicated that it would be desirable to do so. From the students’ low achievement and the lack of significant improvement in that achievement, the district appears to derive little value from the money it expends.

And the superintendent acknowledged during a discussion of the budget that decisions on allocation of budget funds are seldom based upon the knowledge that what is being funded works for students. He mentioned having invited the Massachusetts Association of School Budget Officers (MASBO) to do a financial audit of the district. He said that he hoped that that study would put the district in a better position to allocate funding according to what has proved effective.

The stakes are high in Holyoke. When the district was declared “underperforming” seven years ago, student achievement was among the lowest of any multiple-school district in the state. Now, seven years later, after the expenditure of large amounts of money, this remains true. Year after year, the district sees little improvement in the level of achievement. Although the district saw an increase from 2009 to 2010, the pattern of chronically low performance must change. The district should use student achievement data, program evaluation, and financial information to determine what is working and what is ineffective and/or inefficient. Then, with that knowledge in hand, the district should eliminate ineffective programs and initiatives, expand those found to be effective, and pilot possible new ones that hold promise for improving student learning. Only then can the district be confident about the programs it is offering its students and be assured that its student achievement will improve.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Holyoke Public Schools was conducted from October 25 – October 28, 2010, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. John Kulevich, Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Assessment

Dr. Thomas Johnson, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. Arnold Clayton, Student Support

Dr. Charles Valera, Financial and Asset Management

Patricia Williams was the review team coordinator.

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Level 4 Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following city of Holyoke financial personnel: Mayor, City Treasurer, Chief Procurement Officer, Chairman of City Council Finance Committee.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Holyoke School Committee: 4 school committee members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Holyoke Teachers Association: president, vice-president.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Holyoke Public Schools central office administration: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, ELA Humanities Director, Science/Technology Director, Director of Special Education, Mathematics and Data Assessment Director, ELL Director, Director of Human Resources, Assistant Director of Human Resources, Director of Student Services, Director of Grants, Finance Director, Homeless Educational Coordinator.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Holyoke Public Schools: E N White Elementary (K-8), Holyoke High (9-12), Kelly Elementary (K-8), Lt Clayre Sullivan Elementary (K-8), Lt Elmer McMahan Elementary (K-8), Maurice A. Donahue Elementary (K-8), Morgan Elementary (K-8), William R. Peck (K-8), William J Dean Tech (9-12).
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers, coaches, students, and parents.
 - The review team conducted 50 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the 9 schools visited.
- The review team conducted interviews with ESE staff who were responsible for accountability monitoring.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - District Turnaround Plan
 - ESE Monitoring Reports related to the Turnaround Plan

- Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
- Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reports
- Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
- Teachers' contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Organization chart
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the past year
 - Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
 - Curriculum maps
 - K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Program evaluations
 - 2010 English Language Learners Program Report
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Calendar
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time schedules
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)

- Administrative evaluations and certifications
- Randomly selected teacher personnel files
- Peck school Overall Strategic Framework

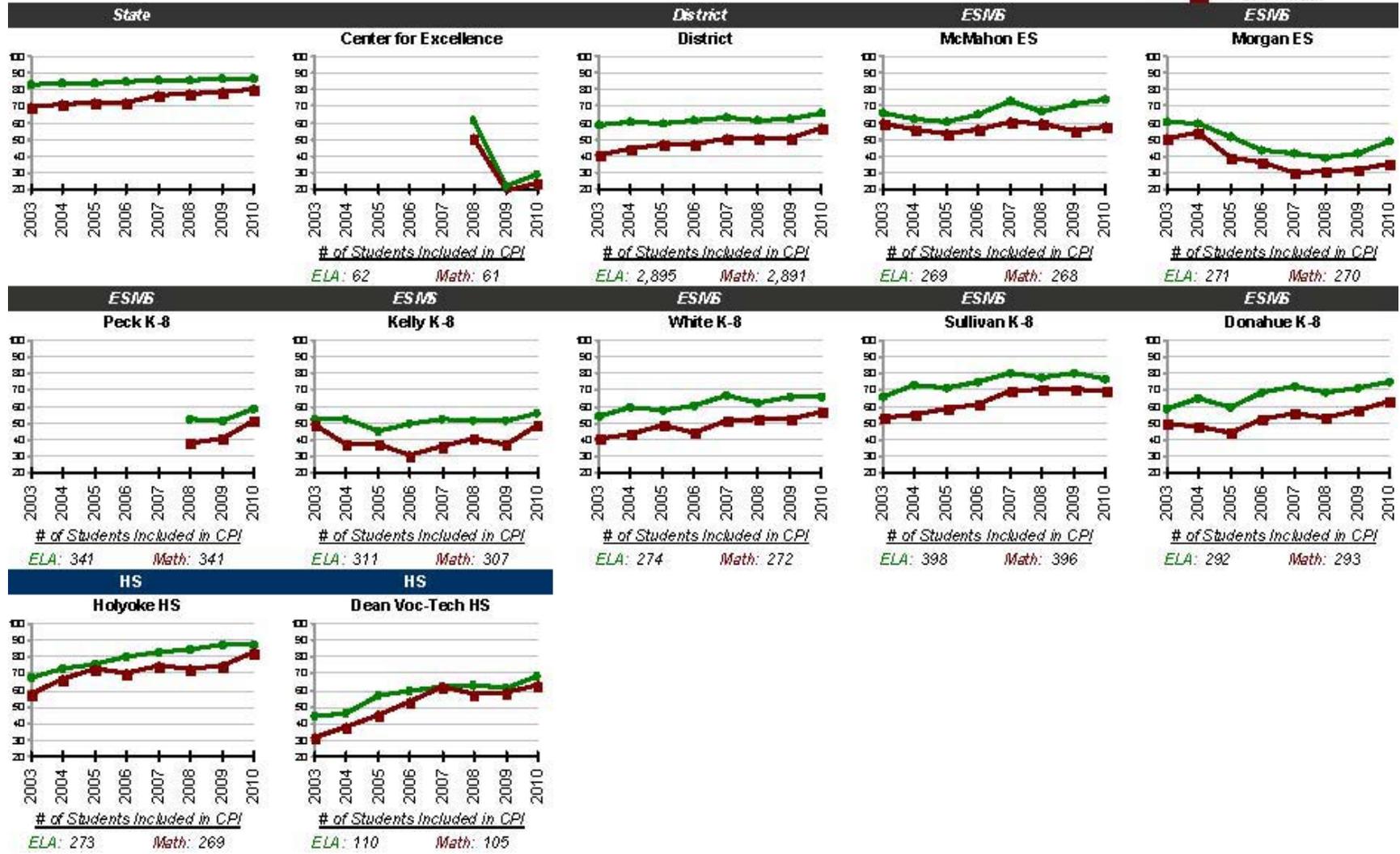
Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 4 review of the Holyoke Public Schools, conducted from October 25-29, 2010.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>October 25</p> <p>Introductory meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' association</p>	<p>October 26</p> <p>Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits to Sullivan and Morgan schools; classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with School Council parents; focus group with ELL parents.</p>	<p>October 27</p> <p>Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits to Kelly, McMahon, Donahue, and White schools, and school visit to Dean Vocational Technical School; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; school committee interviews</p>	<p>October 28</p> <p>School visits to Dean Vocational Technical School, Holyoke High School; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; team meeting; closing meeting with district leaders</p>

Appendix C: Holyoke CPI Trends 2003-2010 for Schools and Subgroups

● CPI - ELA
■ CPI - Math



● District CPI - ELA
■ District CPI - Math

