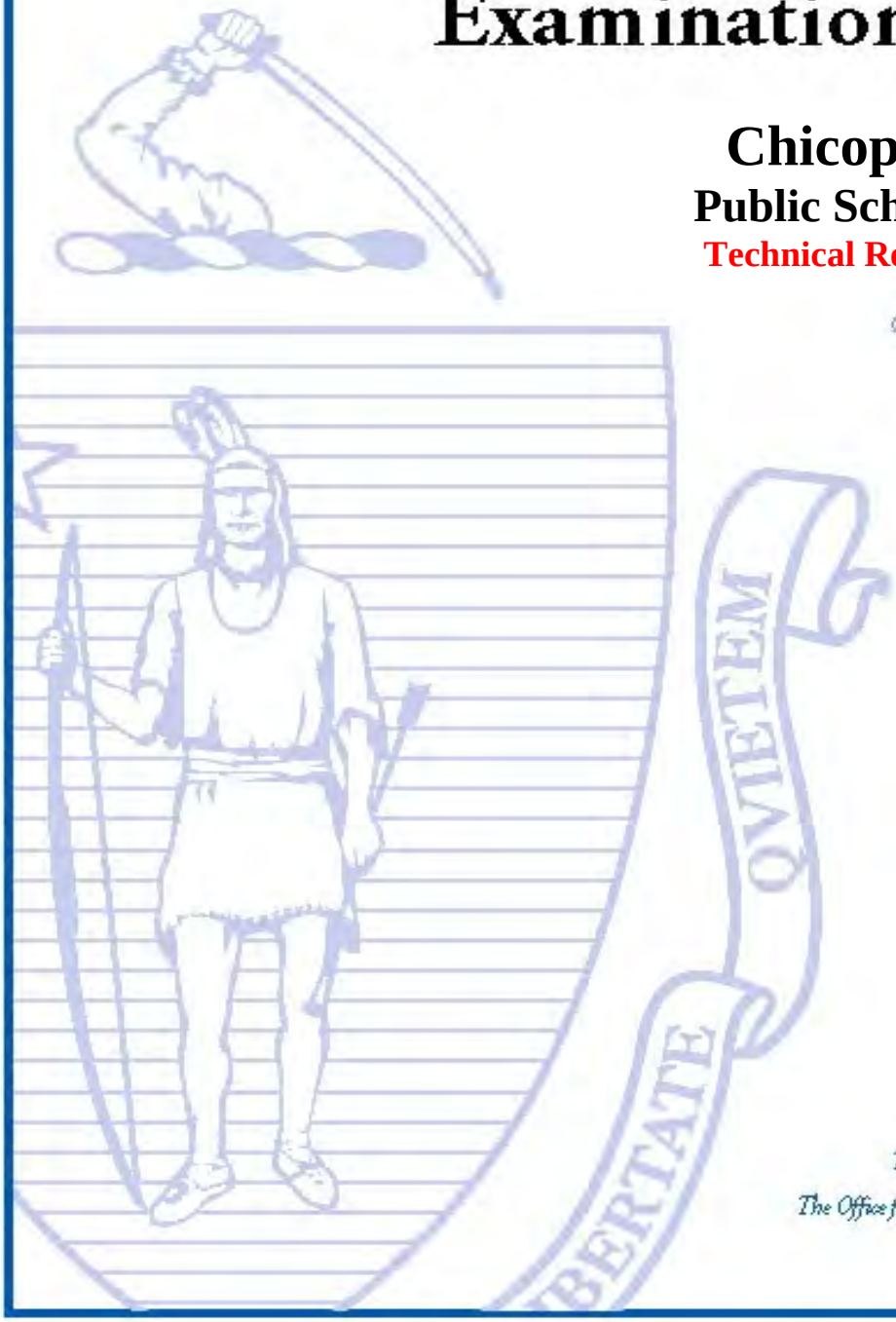
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Chicopee
Public Schools
Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered



The Education Management Audit Council
The Office for Educational Quality and Accountability

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings at its meeting on October 24, 2007.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of the Chicopee Public Schools, Richard Rege; the school department staff of the Chicopee Public Schools; and the town officials in Chicopee.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Chicopee Public Schools in March 2007. With an average proficiency index of 67 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (75 PI points in English language arts and 59 PI points in math), the district is considered a 'Low' performing school system based on the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement below the state average. Slightly more than one-third of Chicopee's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

The city of Chicopee, located in Hampden County in central Massachusetts, is a diverse urban community with an industrial background. It is the home of Westover Air Force Reserve Base, as well as an event advertised as one of the "largest Polish celebrations in the United States." The largest sources of employment within Chicopee are manufacturing; educational, health, and social services; and retail trade. The city is governed by a Mayor-Council form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Chicopee had a median family income of $44,136 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 333 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city had a total population of 54,653 with a population of 10,089 school-age children, or 18 percent of the total. Of the total households in Chicopee, 29 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 31 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Twelve percent of the population age 25 years or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2005-2006 the Chicopee Public Schools had a total enrollment of 7,527. The demographic composition in the district was: 72.8 percent White, 21.4 percent Hispanic, 3.2 percent African-American, 1.3 percent Asian, 0.2 percent Native American, 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.8 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 5.4 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 51.4 percent low income, and 14.7 percent special education. Eighty-seven percent of school-age children in Chicopee

attended public schools. The district offers school choice, and 177 students from other communities attended the Chicopee schools in 2005-2006. A total of 104 Chicopee students attended public schools outside the district, including one student who attended a charter school.

The district has 15 schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including 10 elementary schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 5, two middle schools serving grades 6 through 8, two high schools serving grades 9 through 12, and one secondary school serving grades 6 through 12. The administrative team at the time of the review consisted of a superintendent, an assistant superintendent for students, an assistant superintendent for accountability, an assistant for curriculum, and a business manager. Each school had a principal, and the two high schools each had three vice-principals. The district has a 12-member school committee.

In FY 2006, Chicopee's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was $10,305, compared to $11,196 statewide, ranking it 175 out of the 325 of 328 school districts reporting data. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from $60,556,625 to $63,253,146; Chapter 70 aid increased from $36,376,295 to $37,613,808; the required local contribution increased from $23,330,217 to $25,483,093; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 7,747 to 7,513. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 60.1 to 59.5 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending increased from 65 to 66 percent.

Context

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) previously visited the Chicopee Public Schools in 2003 and 2005. In both visits, examiners noted that the district had made slow progress in improving student achievement scores. EQA visited once again in 2007 and noted progress, but the district continued to face obstacles.

Despite exceeding net school spending (NSS) requirements, and despite the city's generous allocation of reimbursements from cable television revenue and Medicaid billing fees to the district, it has struggled financially and has been unable to meet expenses. It made very effective

use of grants for services such as professional development to compensate for its inadequate financial support, but these funding sources were unpredictable.

While some textbooks were brand new, others were approaching 20 years of service. The city supported the construction of two new high schools even as it was forced to close an elementary school. Like other school districts, Chicopee experienced traditional political challenges of patronage and control, although evidence indicated that the city administration treated the schools autonomously throughout the review period.

Chicopee's district and school improvement plans were comprehensive and detailed but had not been fully implemented. The district leadership fostered a culture of independence among the individual schools, without much accountability to the central office and districtwide coordination of support services and monitoring of instructional practices. That culture appeared to be changing under the tenure of the superintendent and leadership staff serving during the EQA site visit. The district central office still needed to clarify roles and responsibilities, but administrators appeared to be asserting their authority over the schools.

The district's curriculum and instruction services continued to require improvement, although examiners saw increasing use of differentiated instruction at the elementary schools. The district decided to focus on the tested areas of ELA and math. The district has not yet addressed expectations for science and social studies performance, as those subjects will become tested areas over the next few years. The district's efforts to improve achievement among subgroup populations remained limited.

The district still needed to improve its program evaluation services, but it had made strides in its personnel evaluation practices since the previous visits. None of the administrators or principals had been evaluated during the review period, although the superintendent implemented an evaluation process in 2006-2007 and stated that he received the support of the school committee to provide merit-based salary increases. Both the new administration and the school committee expressed hope that the district had addressed the problems that resulted in managerial turnover, in order to reverse the trend.

The EQA Examination Process

The Massachusetts Legislature created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in July 2000 to provide independent and objective programmatic and financial audits of the 350-plus school districts that serve the cities and towns of the commonwealth. The agency is the accountability component of the Education Reform Act of 1993, and was envisioned in that legislation. The EQA works under the direction of a five-person citizen council, appointed by the governor, known as the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC).

From March 26-29, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Chicopee Public Schools for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. This examination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the onsite visit.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Chicopee to be a 'Low' performing school district with an average proficiency index of 67 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006, marked by student achievement that was 'Moderate' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Very Low' in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance declined by one-half PI point in ELA and improved by nearly five PI points in math, which closed the district's average proficiency gap by nearly seven percent.

The following provides a summary of the district's performance on the 2006 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and the findings of the EQA examination.

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, slightly more than one-third of all students in Chicopee attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much less than that statewide. Less than half of Chicopee students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), and less than one-third of Chicopee students attained proficiency in math and in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-three percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- Chicopee's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 67 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points less than that statewide. Chicopee's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 33 PI points.
- In 2006, Chicopee's proficiency gap in ELA was 25 PI points, nine PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of three PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Chicopee's proficiency gap in math was 41 PI points in 2006, 13 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of five PI points per year to achieve AYP. Chicopee's proficiency gap in STE was 40 PI points, 11 PI points wider than that statewide.

Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?

Between 2003 and 2006, Chicopee's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall and in STE, more improvement in math, and no improvement in ELA.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by three percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by three percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Chicopee narrowed from 37 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of eight percent.

- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Chicopee was relatively flat, improving by less than one-half PI point. This resulted in an improvement rate of two percent, a rate much lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Math performance in Chicopee showed improvement during this period, at an average of more than one and one-half PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Chicopee had slight improvement in STE performance, increasing by an average of one PI point annually over the two-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate of five percent.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Chicopee students. Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Chicopee in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 35 PI points in both ELA and math (non low-income, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Chicopee in 2006 in ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, limited English proficient (LEP) students, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-tenth of students with disabilities, slightly more than two-fifths of LEP and Hispanic students, and slightly less than one-third of African-American and low-income students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, more than two-fifths of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math, and the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math. More than one-third of the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

Has the equity of MCAS test performance among the district's student subgroups improved over time?

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 46 PI points in 2003 to 36 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 28 to 36 PI points during this period.

- In Chicopee, all student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities and non low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, although the level of improvement for most subgroups was slight. The most improved subgroup in ELA was LEP students.
- In math, all subgroups in Chicopee with the exception of students with disabilities showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was also LEP students.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on seven, 'Needs Improvement' on five, and 'Unsatisfactory' on one of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

During the review period, the district employed three superintendents. The first superintendent accepted a position elsewhere, and the second superintendent served as an interim superintendent for approximately a year during an unsettled period. After the interim superintendent resigned, the school committee selected a third individual, who served at the time of the EQA site visit, to assume the role. Interviewees mentioned that the district needed stability in administrative leadership, and praised the third superintendent for his success on a number of initiatives. Under his leadership, the district developed a new improvement plan covering the period 2007-2010 involving an expanded group of stakeholders, began construction of two new high schools, and hired a new assistant superintendent for curriculum. Interviewees also mentioned expanded use of assessments, support for additional academic coaches, and added focus on dropout prevention and attendance issues.

Administrators reported that they had not received evaluations since 2001. The current superintendent stated, and administrators confirmed, that in 2006-2007 he had initiated a districtwide evaluation process for administrators and principals. According to the superintendent, this process focused primarily on mutually agreed upon goals for personal, school, and student improvement. In addition, the superintendent indicated that he had received approval from the school committee to initiate a merit pay system in conjunction with the evaluation process.

Interviewees reported that communications improved during the latter part of the review period. Representatives from the teachers' association stated that the number of grievances filed had decreased significantly. Various interviewees remarked that the superintendent had implemented a half-hour briefing session prior to school committee meetings to provide interested staff with background information about agenda items. Also, administrators and teachers in focus groups commented that the district had instituted a classroom walk-through process for principals and central office administrators to observe the teaching and learning process. Teachers reported receiving informal feedback from the walk-through visits, although this was not part of the teacher evaluation process.

Administrators indicated that during the review period, the district increased the amount of information on its website. Also, interviewees stated that from mid-October through January, each of the principals made school committee presentations, referred to as the "State of the Schools" reports. The presentations included items such as the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), MCAS test results, accomplishments of the previous year, trends, and initiatives. In addition, school committee meetings received coverage from local television and newspapers such as *The Chicopee Herald* and the Springfield *Republican*. Furthermore, some of the interviewees mentioned that in the last year and a half of the review period, the relationship between city hall and the school district had improved.

During the latter part of the review period, the superintendent led the district leadership team's effort to develop the Chicopee Public Schools District Improvement Plan (DIP) for 2007-2010 that expanded upon the previous DIP. Similarly, principals, with the assistance of their school

council members, began the process of elaborating on details in their SIPs, realigning them with the new DIP, and maintaining a focus on improving student achievement.

Administrators acknowledged that both middle schools had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) and needed to prepare corrective action plans. Also, they understood that half the elementary schools had downward trends in their MCAS ELA and math test results. In addition, administrators commented that the district had not addressed the needs of all subgroup populations, especially English language learner (ELL) and low-income students.

Assessments used included Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) at grades preK-5, Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) at grades K-12, Galileo Math at grades 6-8, and benchmark tests. Analysis of results led to review and revision of the curriculum guides, time on learning, existing interventions, and teaching strategies.

The district made effective use of grants. With Title I funds, it hired an ELL coach for grades K-8 and two ELA coaches. It also used grants to fund two math coaches. Through the Striving Readers program, a federal initiative aimed at improving reading performance among middle and high school students, the district added a reading coach. The district also received a federal Smaller Learning Communities grant.

The leadership at the Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School developed a corrective action plan entitled “Three Major Initiatives for School Improvement.” Also, the elementary and middle schools had begun the process of using more formative and summative assessments to improve student achievement. In addition, the elementary and middle schools started to develop curriculum guides; both levels developed and implemented math curriculum guides, and the middle schools were developing an ELA curriculum guide in 2006-2007.

At the high schools, the administration established a task force to study the prevalence of dropouts. The administration had begun analyzing the data collected from a survey in order to determine steps to improve student attendance and minimize dropouts. The district reported high but declining dropout rates, and a high and increasing rate of absenteeism.

Curriculum and Instruction

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on two and 'Needs Improvement' on eight of the ten performance indicators in this standard.

At the beginning of the review period, the district had in place a curriculum that mostly consisted of lists of state framework learning standards, organized into a timeline by term. In 2004, the district hired an assistant superintendent for curriculum and professional development and undertook an ambitious plan for expansion of curriculum documents. At the time of the EQA audit, the district had developed elementary and middle school math curricula and had plans to implement a new middle school English language arts (ELA) curriculum and to begin work on the elementary ELA curriculum. While these curriculum documents contained few references to assessments, the district was administering formative and summative assessments to measure the achievement and progress of all students in elementary ELA and math and in middle school math. Administrators planned to adopt similar assessments in the remaining tested content areas and at the high school level in the future.

The existing curricula were aligned with the state frameworks, but horizontal and vertical alignment within and across schools was only possible in those areas where the curriculum had been revised and expanded. At the elementary level, teachers achieved vertical and horizontal alignment in ELA and math by faithful implementation of the Houghton Mifflin programs in place in both content areas. The Galileo assessment system ensured horizontal alignment of the math curriculum at the middle school level.

The district provided considerable professional development around effective instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction and the three-tiered intervention model, but EQA examiners did not always observe these strategies implemented in classrooms. District personnel reported the availability of instructional technology such as the FastMath, Geometer Sketchpad, and Accelerated Reader software programs, in addition to graphing calculators and SmartBoards. However, EQA examiners observed the use of this technology in fewer than one third of the sample of classrooms that examiners visited.

In addition, while the district promoted effective instructional strategies, they were most often geared to instruction of students in the aggregate. Some of the strategies introduced were appropriate for special education students, including the Lindamood-Bell system and the Read 180 program, and the district increased the use of inclusion during the review period. However, the district was only beginning to address the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) and low-income students. It hired coaches for English language learner (ELL) students, in addition to math and ELA coaches, to support teachers in implementing specific strategies.

In those content areas in which formative assessment data were available, principals facilitated discussions with teachers in grade-level meetings about results disaggregated by classroom. These discussions enabled teachers to gain perspective on the achievement of their own students and to learn from the strengths and successes of their colleagues.

During the review period, ELA and math instructional blocks were 90 minutes long, and the district increased ELA instructional time by 45 minutes to accommodate interventions. It introduced Read 180 to the curriculum at all levels, further adding ELA instructional time.

EQA examiners visited 54 classrooms and observed evidence of effective instructional practices, high expectations, and student engagement in the learning process most often at the elementary level and least often at the high school level. Interviewees indicated that curriculum oversight was lacking at the middle and high school levels, where teachers held more autonomy. Assessment data for use in monitoring instruction were not available in middle school ELA and in any content area at the high school level.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on six and ‘Needs Improvement’ on two of the eight performance indicators in this standard.

The district’s assessment program was beginning to prove its usefulness to instructional delivery. Student assessment was in frequent use at the elementary level, and less so at the middle and high school levels. All district elementary teachers became accustomed to using the DIBELS. In addition, most elementary schools also used the SRI as part of the Read 180 grant to assess

student performance in ELA. All schools analyzed students' MCAS test results, with some schools completing the analysis in-house and others receiving their results from district contractors. For the 2007-2008 school year, administrators reported that all schools would complete the analysis in-house. Some schools used additional assessment tools, including the Stanford Achievement Test, to measure progress among at-risk students.

The middle and high schools' approach to assessment was less sophisticated. Schools at both levels focused on the analysis of MCAS test scores, and administrators reported "a real strength" in item analysis. The middle schools used assessments associated with the FastMath curriculum, Houghton Mifflin AYP, and the Galileo Math assessment system. The high schools used the GMADE, but mainly for course and level placement, and the Chicopee Comprehensive High School participated in the High Schools That Work program, which required administering a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) examination to some graduating seniors.

The elementary level also exceeded the other levels in the sophistication of the evaluation of programs. In general, the district was just beginning to evaluate and improve programs by using assessment results to measure program effectiveness. The district evaluated support programs such as Title I and special education using pre- and post-test results, and parent and staff surveys. Few other programs were systematically evaluated, and the district was adopting common examinations at midyear and year end. In the elementary schools, teachers used the DIBELS and SRI formatively to assess student progress. In math, most elementary school program assessment efforts were based upon the use of published assessments accompanying textbook programs. At the middle school level, the district used the Galileo assessment system to determine student achievement in math. All schools relied heavily on analysis of MCAS test results to provide annual snapshots of curriculum effectiveness.

Through participating in the Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, central office administrators began conducting districtwide walk-throughs of classrooms. Its continued use of this practice helped in planning professional development activities, as well as identifying instructional issues, such as classroom management and curriculum alignment, that school principals addressed. Modifications to curriculum and instructional services as a result of assessment include increased instructional time for ELA, the

replacement of a foreign language position with a math teacher at the middle school level, and the reassignment of special education teachers at the high school level.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on seven, 'Needs Improvement' on five, and 'Unsatisfactory' on one of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

During the review period, the Chicopee Public Schools engaged in professional and equitable practices for the identification, recruitment, and hiring of effective educational staff. Central office and school administrators attended job fairs and formed cooperative relationships with local colleges and universities, such as Framingham State College, to identify and recruit the most qualified applicants for teaching positions. They also welcomed student teachers and practicum students from various higher education institutions to work in many of the schools in the district. Despite these efforts, administrators reported that it was still a challenge to find minority candidates and to hire sufficient numbers of certified teachers to fill vacancies, especially in the areas of math, science, and special education. Recent teacher licensure data indicated that of the 674 teachers employed in the district, 54 were uncertified, and fewer than half of these were on waiver. Almost all teachers on waiver made substantial annual progress toward or completed certification requirements. The district reported that 27 of 28 administrators were certified.

The district offered professional development programs that supported the improvement of paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators during the review period. The mentoring program paired first-year teachers with an experienced teacher mentor and provided a two-day orientation before the start of the school year, followed by required monthly meetings and ongoing support from their mentors. Principals matched experienced teachers who were new to the district with a district veteran for support. Central office administrators matched first-year principals with an experienced principal or central office administrator. Additionally at the elementary level, new administrators reported benefiting from the information shared online by all elementary

principals through the "e-group." Assistant principals and districtwide administrators reported that they had no mentors.

Central office administrators assessed professional development needs by surveying teachers and paraprofessionals, reviewing district and school improvement plans, and auditing grant requirements. They compiled this information each school year to form a Staff Development Plan along with an activities calendar that met the district's professional development goals while also meeting the needs of individuals and schools. The district offered training for teaching content, using support strategies, and implementing schoolwide initiatives or grants. Topics included TestWiz, Performance Improvement Mapping, AIMSWeb Progress Monitoring and Response to Intervention System/DIBELS, Galileo, Lindamood-Bell, and SRI. Administrators explained that the district trained almost all teachers and paraprofessionals in approaches to use with special education students, and they acknowledged that many staff working with ELL students received no training during the review period in sheltered English immersion and other programs. Content coaches supported embedded professional development in the elementary and middle schools. During the review period, the district adequately supported professional development offerings, but it relied excessively on unpredictable grant funding for this purpose.

During the review period, district administrators completed teacher evaluations according to the teacher contract and two central office administrators received evaluations. Administrators described the teacher evaluation as a checklist they completed in a timely fashion, and expressed displeasure with their inability to measure the teacher's impact on student achievement with the current instrument. In examining a random sample of 42 personnel folders, EQA staff found 37 teacher evaluations completed. Almost all were informative, but only two were conducive to professional growth or overall effectiveness. The remaining five folders belonged to first-year teachers whose evaluations were not yet completed. Superintendents completed no principal evaluations during the review period. The superintendent and principals stated during interviews that principals submitted goals and participated in two goal conferences with the superintendent during the 2006-2007 school year. A central office administrator completed one subordinate central office administrator's evaluation in 2005, and the school committee completed one evaluation of the current superintendent in 2006.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on one, 'Needs Improvement' on eight, and 'Unsatisfactory' on one of the ten performance indicators in this standard.

The Chicopee Public Schools used data on student achievement, attendance, and behavior to design policies, procedures, and programs for at-risk students. Data analysis was systematic, continuous, and broadly based at the elementary and high schools, but the middle schools lacked a comparable process. Chicopee used formative and summative assessments regularly and systematically to identify students making unsatisfactory progress and provided a range of supplemental and special education services to help targeted students improve performance.

The district had well articulated student identification procedures and many specially designed instructional programs, especially in early literacy at the K-5 level. Chicopee provided early intervention programs in literacy to ensure that students achieved proficiency in reading by the end of grade 4, but the results were inconsistent across schools because of differences in leadership, staffing, and the manner of implementation of the intervention model. The district did not effectively coordinate its English language learners' programs and services, and many teachers were not fully trained in the sheltered English immersion model.

Chicopee had a full continuum of special education programs and services, ranging from assistance rendered to students within their regular education classrooms to substantially separate programs. However, Special education student performance was low and declining in grade 3 reading, grades 4 and 7 ELA, and grade 4 math.

Four district schools, Bowe, Litkin, Selser, and Streiber, did not meet AYP targets in ELA. Interestingly, the four schools that achieved AYP enrolled larger populations of low-income and English language learner students than many of the schools that did not. Administrators told the EQA that faithful implementation of the district's reading intervention model, introduced by the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, partly accounted for the disparity in achievement among the eight schools. Additionally, teacher absenteeism was above the district average in the two middle schools that failed to meet AYP targets in ELA and math in 2006.

Union representatives stated that the teacher contract's buy-back provision served as an incentive to use sick days.

Subgroup analysis was minimal and limited mostly to the special education population. While the district collected and categorized data on disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and retentions by subgroup, there was no formal analysis to determine whether subgroups were overrepresented. The four-year graduation rate in Chicopee was significantly lower in the aggregate than for subgroups, but Chicopee had not explored the root causes other than to establish a task force to study the dropout problem.

Chicopee did not have policies, practices, or procedures to increase proportionate subgroup representation in honors and accelerated programs. The district did not systematically track the enrollment of students in honors and Advanced Placement courses by subgroup, and lacked programs at the elementary and middle schools to identify promising minority students and prepare them to succeed in accelerated high school programs.

Chicopee had policies and practices promoting attendance, an attendance supervisor, and a software program for recording, reporting, and tracking absences. The monitoring of attendance was systematic at the high school level, but inconsistent at the elementary and middle school levels, where interventions were not always timely. Practices varied from school to school because the K-8 policy did not contain intermediary limits and required actions. The K-8 absenteeism limit of 20 days was two days in excess of the state standard for chronic absenteeism, and students with chronic attendance problems were not identified routinely as part of the transition to ensure appropriate intervention at the next level. Rates of chronic absenteeism in Chicopee were high and increasing in each grade at the middle and high school levels.

Chicopee had documented policies and procedures for disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Out-of-school suspensions were well in excess of statewide averages, but declining at the high schools while increasing at the middle schools. Alternatives to suspension instituted at the high schools stemmed an increase in out of school suspension rates, but more alternatives were needed at the middle schools.

To address its high retention rate, the district created a fifth-year senior program for credit-deficient juniors as an incentive to remain in school. The dropout rate in Chicopee was high but declining. Chicopee had practices and procedures to prevent dropping out but not a formal policy. There were no procedures or practices to track dropouts and return them to school, and the district lacked personnel to track such students. Chicopee conducted a self-study resulting in recommendations for identifying and assisting students at risk of dropping out through credit recovery efforts and partnerships with other agencies, and tracking and recovering students who had left school without graduating.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Chicopee Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on nine and 'Needs Improvement' on four of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

The Chicopee school district's budget development process was open and participatory. Principals and administrators with budget authority built their budgets and then defended them at an administrative team meeting. The school district allocated the budget on a per pupil basis by level, without regard for subgroup needs. No student data were incorporated into the budget allocation process, although the district funded numerous enrichment programs to improve student performance. Once the budget was finalized at the administrative level, the administration forwarded this recommendation to the school committee's finance subcommittee. Deliberations continued regarding budget requests. The subcommittee forwarded a recommended budget to the full committee, then to the mayor, and finally to the board of aldermen. The administration made reductions in areas that had the least negative impact on the classroom, primarily in the area of maintenance. Supplies, materials, and textbooks were level funded in FY 2006. The district maximized resources through cooperative purchasing with the city and with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. At the time of the EQA site visit, the central office was restructuring its personnel management system by consolidating this operation with the business office. The district funded most of its professional development programs through grants, and established the Chicopee Academy, an in-district special education program, to maintain enrollment.

The city contributed above the minimum required local contribution in FY 2006 and the previous three fiscal years. The city used approximately $1.7 million in Medicaid receipts to support the school district, and used $250,000 from a local cable contract for technology in the schools. In December 2004, the city provided over $500,000 for nurses' salaries and funded the construction of two new schools through capital requests. The school district had accounts for prior year invoices that the city did not close after invoices were paid, so that the schools could tap the funds with school committee approval.

In the budget development process each school presented its capital requests. In addition, the school district had a list of capital projects for FY 2006. The city built a new high school, and the new Chicopee Comprehensive High School was under construction at the time of the EQA site visit. Overall, the facilities were clean and safe, although some began to show their age with worn doors and mechanisms. The school district and city had a safety plan and a citywide crisis management plan.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

The EQA's analysis of student achievement data focuses on the MCAS test results for 2003-2006, with primary attention paid to the 2006 MCAS tests. This analysis is framed by the following five essential questions:

1. **Achievement: Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on the MCAS examination?**
2. **Equity of Achievement: Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?**
3. **Improvement: Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?**
4. **Equity of Improvement: Has the equity of MCAS test performance among the district's student subgroups improved over time?**
5. **Participation: Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?**

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA subjected the most current state and district MCAS test results to a series of analyses to determine whether there were differences between the mean results of district students and those of students statewide or among student subgroups within the district. Descriptive analyses of the 2006 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Chicopee and the average scores of students in Massachusetts.

To highlight those differences, the data were then summarized in several ways: a performance-level based summary of student achievement in Chicopee; and comparative analyses of districtwide, subject-area, grade, school, and subgroup achievement in relation to that of students statewide, in relation to the district averages, and in relation to other subject areas, grades, and subgroups.

The EQA then subjected the data to gap analysis, a statistical method that describes the relationship between student aggregate and subgroup performance and the state standard or target of 100 percent proficiency on the MCAS tests. Gap analysis also describes the relative achievement of different entities at a specific point in time, as well as how those relationships change over time. Gap analysis consists of several separate indicators, each of which builds on the others, and can be applied to a district, school, or subgroup of students.

The basis for gap analysis is the *proficiency index*, which is a measure of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, or meeting the state standard. The unit of measure is proficiency index (PI) points, and a score of 100

indicates that all students in the aggregate or in a subgroup are proficient. It can be calculated for overall achievement as well as achievement in an individual subject. Please see Appendix A for more detailed information about the proficiency index.

The *proficiency gap* is a measure of the number of proficiency index points by which student achievement must improve to meet the goal of proficiency for all students. It is the gap or difference between the current level of proficiency as measured by the proficiency index and the target of 100. A gap of zero indicates that all students in the aggregate or in a subgroup are proficient.

The *performance gap* is a measure of the range of, or variance in, achievement among different student subgroups within a district or school at a specific point in time. It measures the differences between the proficiency index of the highest-performing subgroup and those of the other subgroups. It also measures the difference in performance between any two entities. When the performance gap narrows over time, equity increases; when it widens over time, equity decreases.

Achievement

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

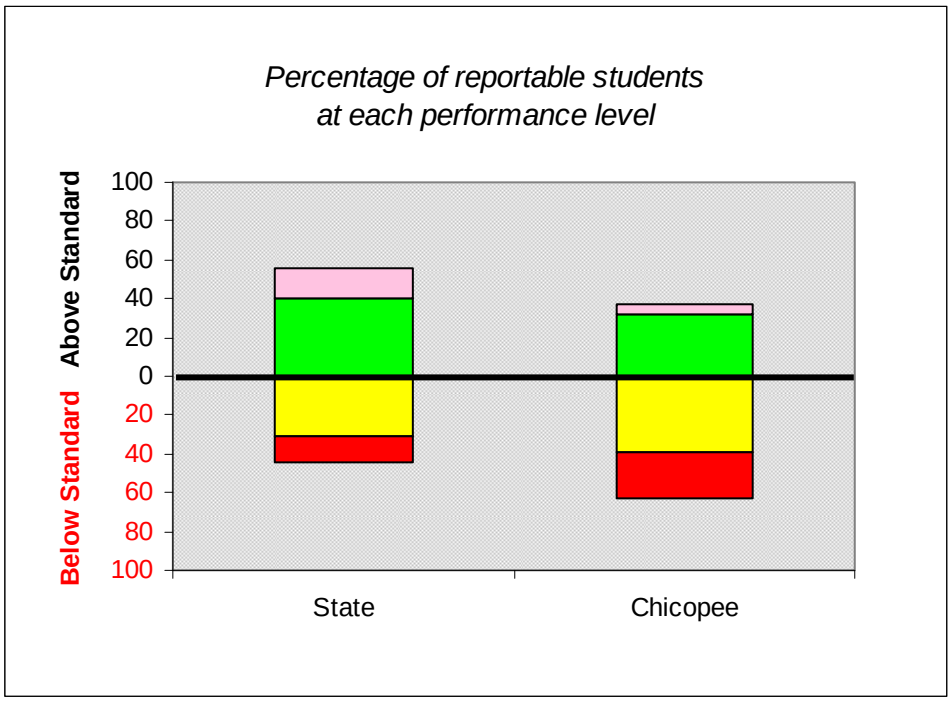
Findings:

- On average, slightly more than one-third of all students in Chicopee attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much less than that statewide. Less than half of Chicopee students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), and less than one-third of Chicopee students attained proficiency in math and in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Chicopee's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 67 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points less than that statewide. Chicopee's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 33 PI points.

- In 2006, Chicopee's proficiency gap in ELA was 25 PI points, nine PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of three PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Chicopee's proficiency gap in math was 41 PI points in 2006, 13 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of five PI points per year to achieve AYP. Chicopee's proficiency gap in STE was 40 PI points, 11 PI points wider than that statewide.

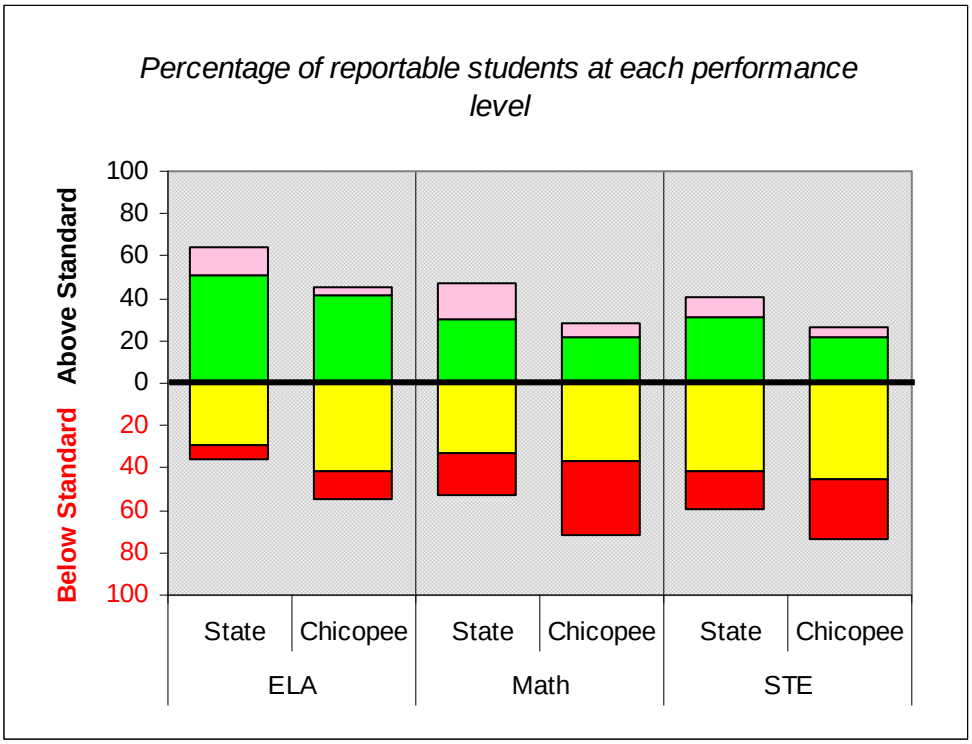
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State	Chicopee
Advanced	15	5
Proficient	41	31
Needs Improvement	31	39
Warning/Failing	14	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	36
Average Proficiency Index (API)	78.3	67.1

In 2006, 36 percent of Chicopee students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, 20 percentage points less than that statewide. Twenty-four percent of Chicopee students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, 10 percentage points more than that statewide. Chicopee's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 67 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points less than that statewide. Chicopee's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 33 PI points.

Figure/Table 2: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2006



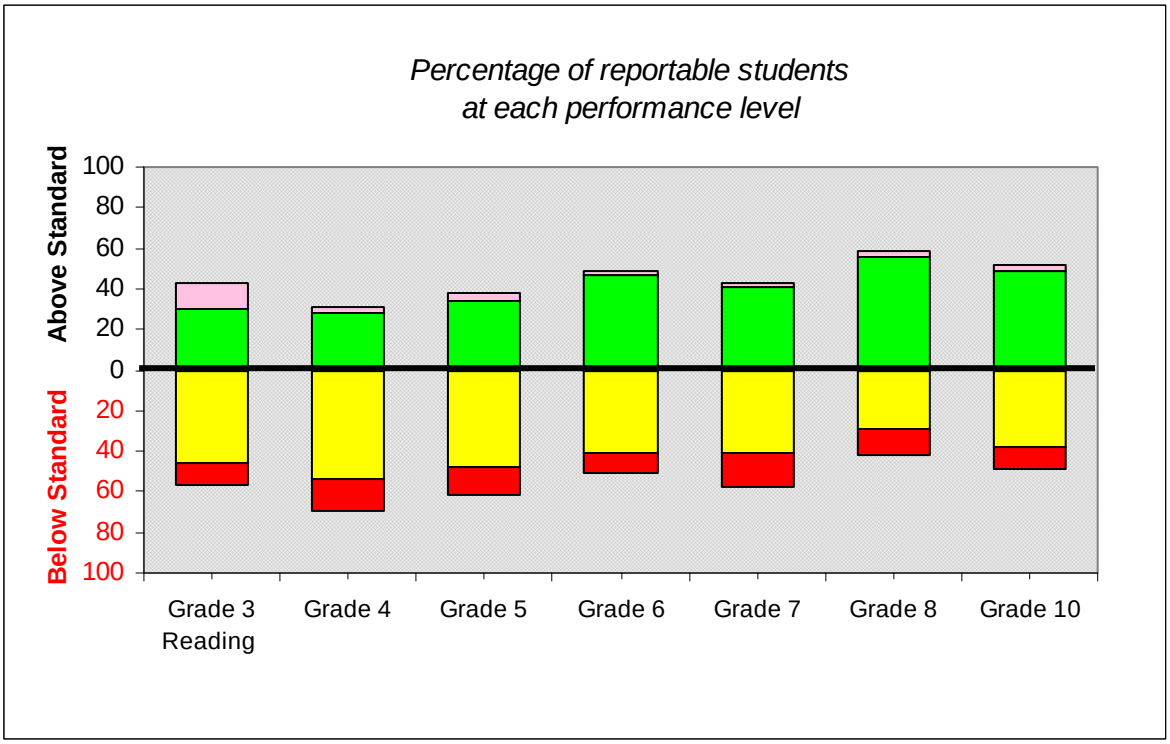
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee
Advanced	13	4	17	6	10	4
Proficient	51	41	30	22	31	22
Needs Improvement	29	42	33	37	42	45
Warning/Failing	7	13	20	35	17	29
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	45	47	28	41	26
Proficiency Index (PI)	84.3	75.2	72.3	58.9	71.4	60.4

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was lower in Chicopee than statewide. In Chicopee, 45 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 64 percent statewide; 28 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 47 percent statewide; and 26 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 41 percent statewide.

Chicopee students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Chicopee students in ELA was 75 PI points; in math, it was 59 PI points; and in STE, it was 60 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 84, 72, and 71 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Chicopee students was 25 PI points in ELA, 41 PI points in math, and 40 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 16, 28, and 29 PI points, respectively. Chicopee's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of three PI points in ELA and five PI points in math to meet AYP.

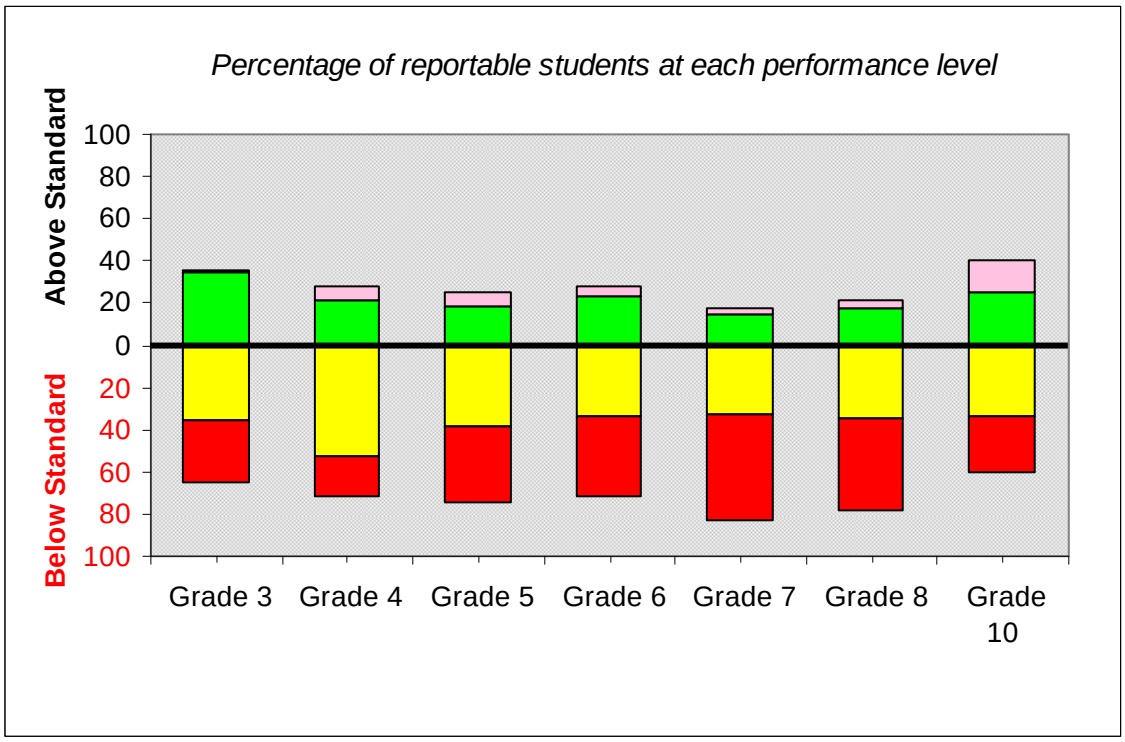
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	13	3	4	2	2	3	3
Proficient	30	28	34	47	41	55	49
Needs Improvement	46	53	48	41	41	29	38
Warning/Failing	11	16	14	10	16	13	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency	43	31	38	49	43	58	52

The percentage of Chicopee students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 31 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 58 percent of grade 8 students.

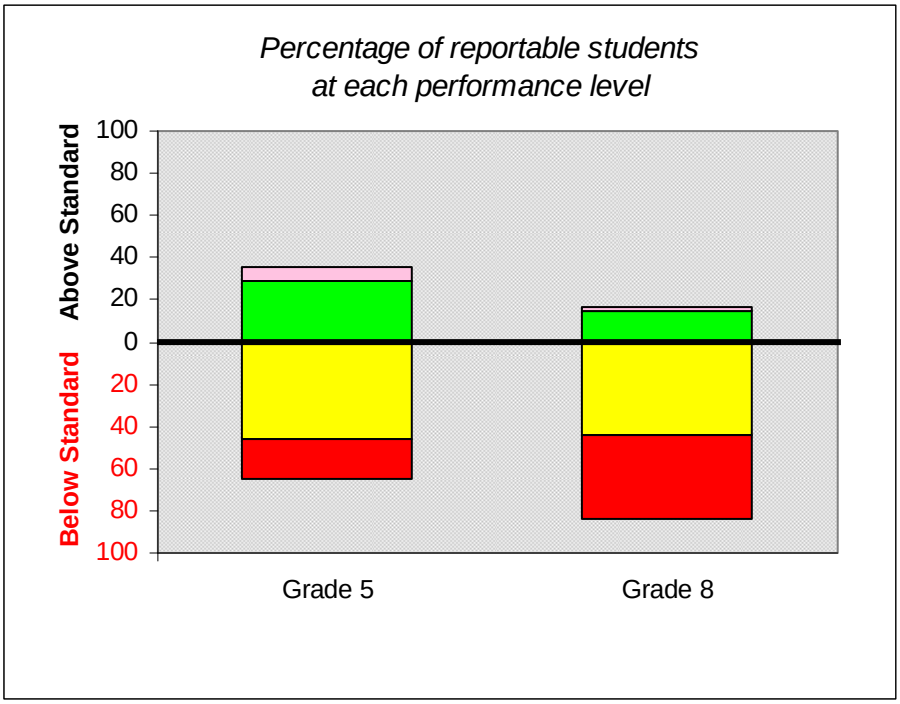
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	1	7	8	5	3	4	15
Proficient	34	21	18	23	14	17	25
Needs Improvement	36	53	38	34	32	34	34
Warning/Failing	29	19	36	38	50	44	26
Percent Attaining Proficiency	35	28	26	28	17	21	40

The percentage of Chicopee students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math also varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 17 percent of grade 7 students to a high of 40 percent of grade 10 students.

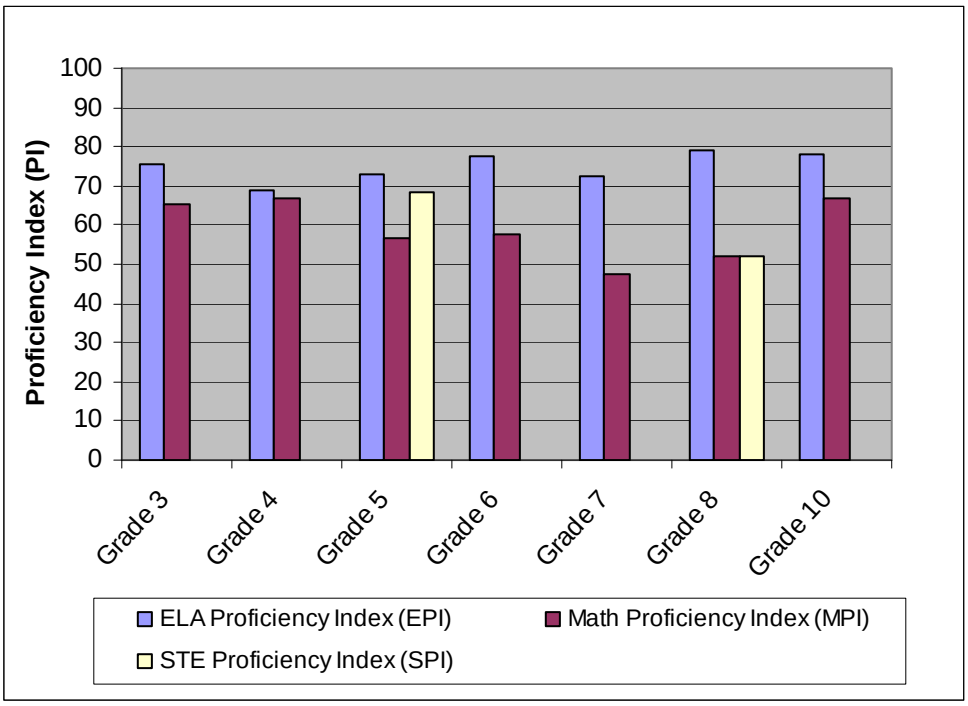
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5	Grade 8
Advanced	7	1
Proficient	29	15
Needs Improvement	46	44
Warning/Failing	18	40
Percent Attaining Proficiency	36	16

In Chicopee in 2006, 36 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 16 percent of grade 8 students did so.

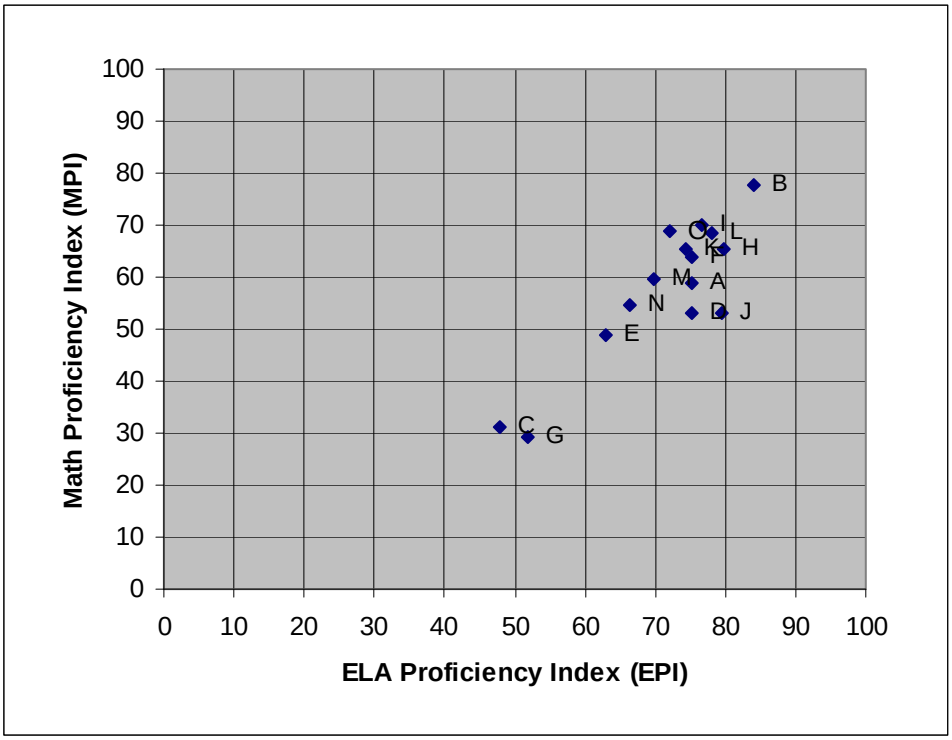
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	75.3	69.1	73.1	77.8	72.6	79.3	78.0
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	65.5	66.7	56.6	57.6	47.7	51.9	66.8
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			68.5			52.2	

By grade, Chicopee's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 21 PI points at grade 8 to a high of 31 PI points at grade 4. Chicopee's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 33 PI points at grades 4 and 10 to a high of 52 PI points at grade 7. Chicopee's STE proficiency gap was 31 PI points at grade 5 and 48 PI points at grade 8.

Figure/Table 7: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by School, 2006



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Chicopee	75.2	58.9	7,811
B	Barry Elementary School	84.0	77.7	412
C	Belcher Elementary School	47.9	31.3	24
D	Bellamy Middle School	75.2	53.0	1,882
E	Bowe Elementary School	63.1	48.9	395
F	Bowie Elementary School	75.1	63.8	456
G	Chicopee Academy	51.8	29.4	81
H	Chicopee Comprehensive High School	79.7	65.2	665
I	Chicopee High School	76.7	70.0	563
J	Fairview Middle School	79.5	52.9	1,490
K	Gen. John J. Stefanik Elem	74.4	65.3	357
L	Lambert-Lavoie Elem	78.2	68.4	296
M	Litwin Elementary School	69.9	59.8	540
N	Selser Elementary	66.5	54.6	388
O	Streiber Memorial Elem	72.1	68.7	262

Chicopee's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 16 PI points at Barry Elementary School to a high of 52 PI points at Belcher Elementary School. Chicopee's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 22 PI points at Barry Elementary School to a high of 71 PI points at Chicopee Academy.

Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Chicopee students. Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Chicopee in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 35 PI points in both ELA and math (non low-income, students with disabilities, respectively).

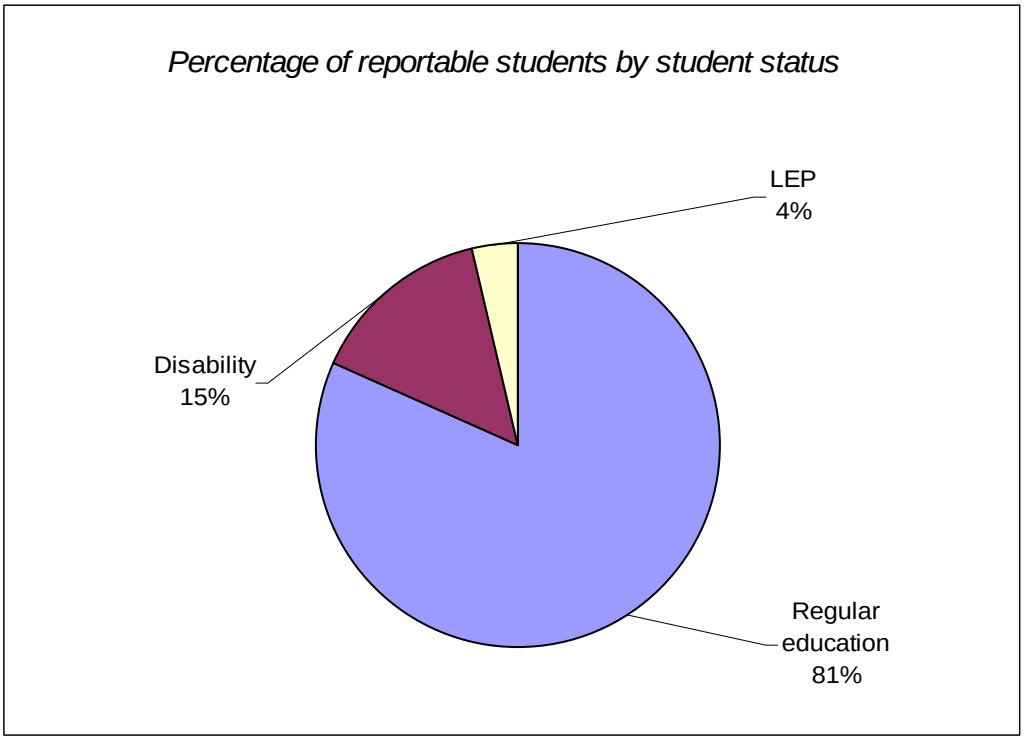
- The proficiency gaps in Chicopee in 2006 in ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, limited English proficient (LEP) students, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-tenth of students with disabilities, slightly more than two-fifths of LEP and Hispanic students, and slightly less than one-third of African-American and low-income students attained proficiency.

- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, more than two-fifths of the students attained proficiency.

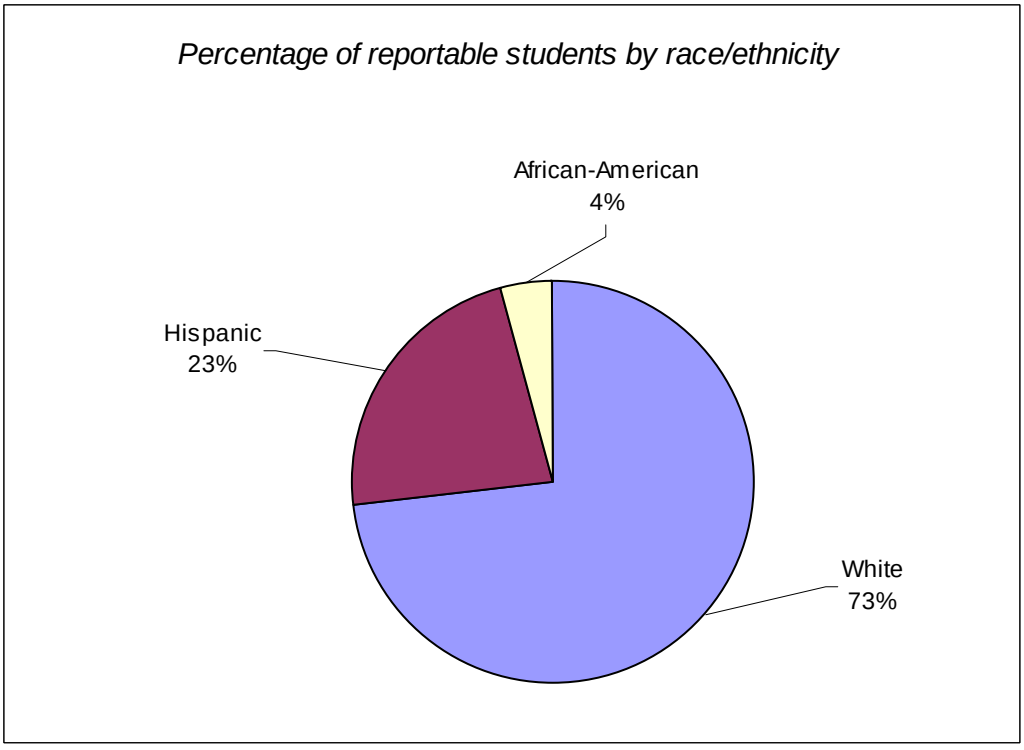
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math, and the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math. More than one-third of the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

Figures 8 A-C/Table 8: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2006

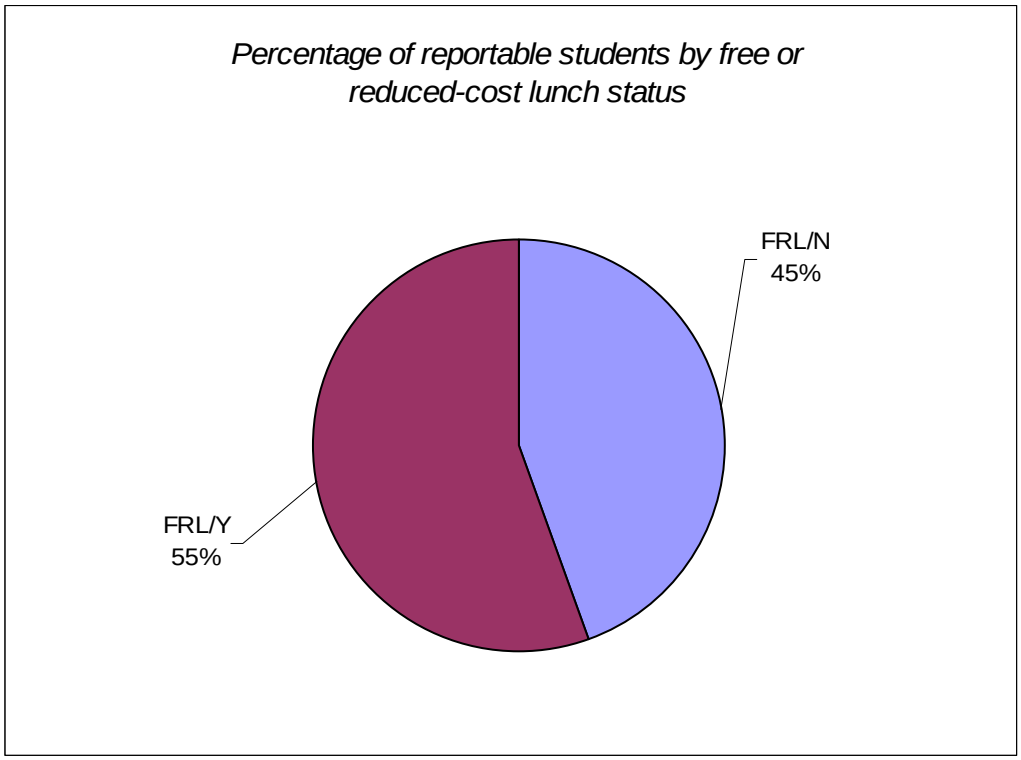
A.



B.



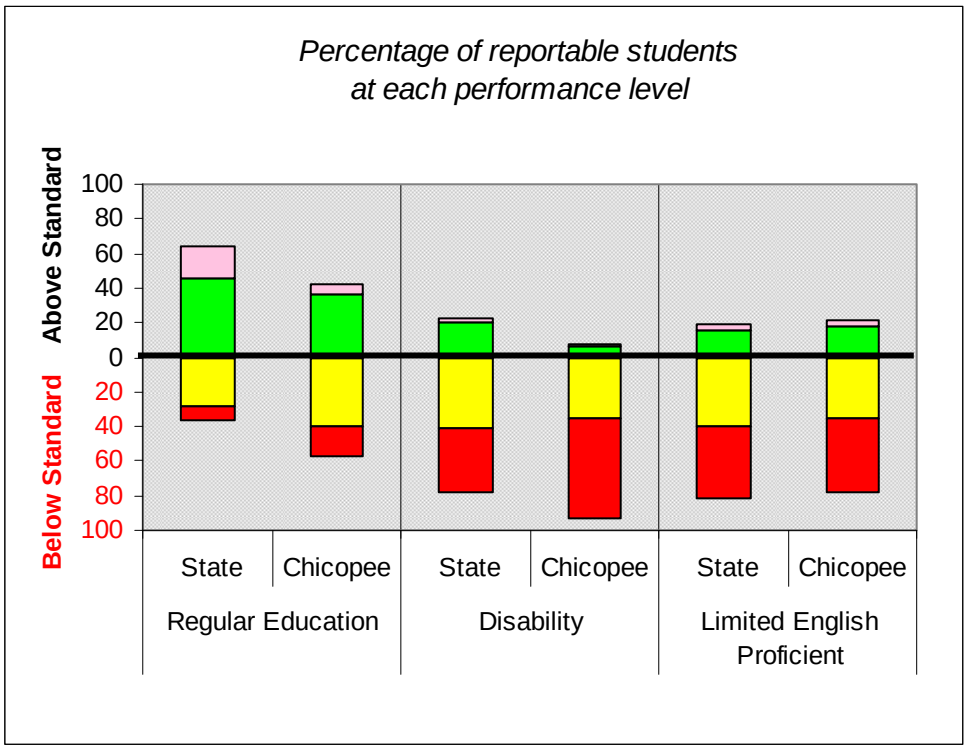
C.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	3,219
	Disability	577
	LEP	140
Race/ethnicity	White	2,819
	Hispanic	878
	African-American	158
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,753
	FRL/Y	2,183

In Chicopee in 2006, 15 percent of the students were students with disabilities, four percent were students with limited English proficiency, 23 percent were Hispanic students, four percent were African-American students, and 55 percent were students participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

Figure/Table 9: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Student Status Subgroup, 2006

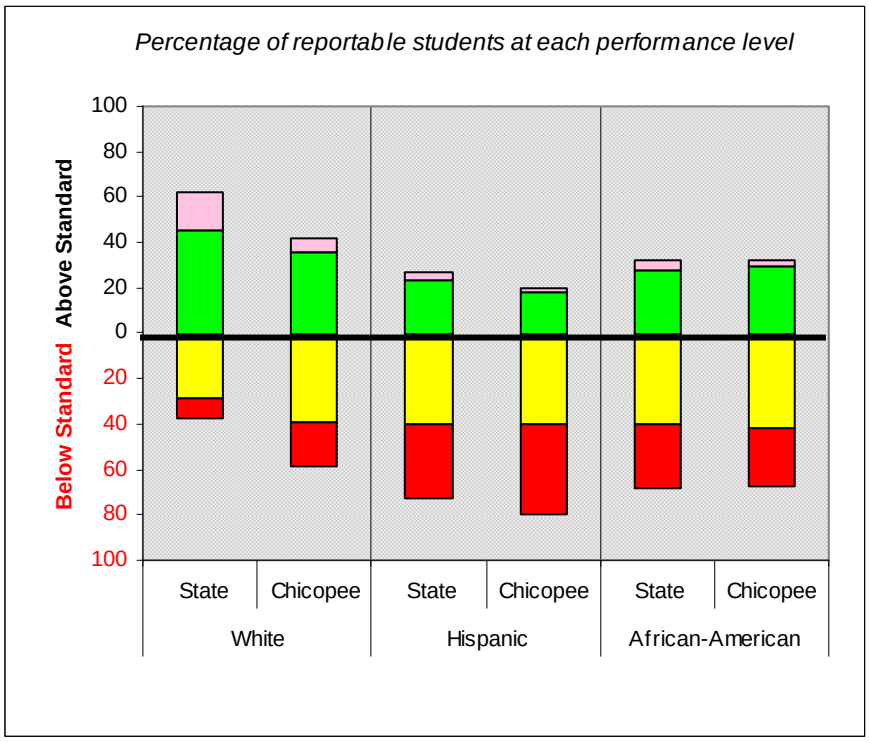


	Regular Education		Disability		Limited English Proficient	
	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee
Advanced	18	6	2	1	3	4
Proficient	46	36	20	7	16	18
Needs Improvement	28	40	41	35	40	36
Warning/Failing	8	17	36	58	42	43
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	42	22	8	19	22
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.0	72.3	55.9	40.0	52.0	52.7

In Chicopee in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than five times greater than that of students with disabilities and nearly two times greater than that of students with limited English proficiency. Forty-two percent of regular education students, eight percent of students with disabilities, and 22 percent of LEP students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Chicopee's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 28 PI points for regular education students, 60 PI points for students with disabilities, and 47 PI points for LEP students. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 32 PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it was 19 PI points.

Figure/Table 10: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup, 2006

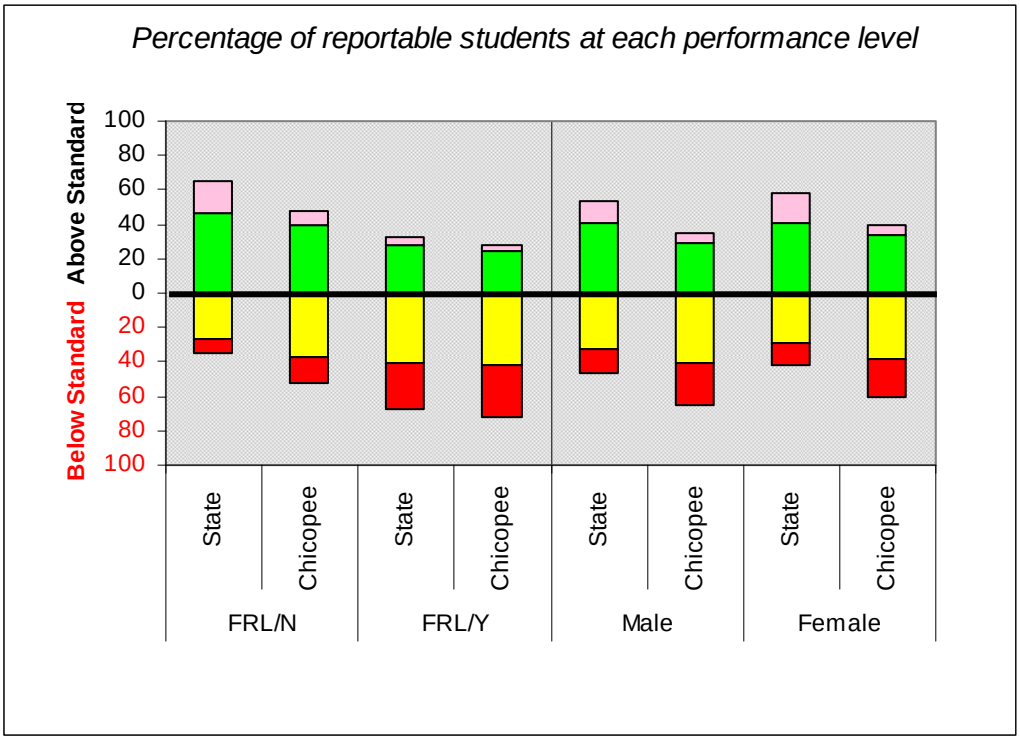


	White		Hispanic		African-American	
	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee
Advanced	17	6	4	2	4	3
Proficient	45	35	23	18	27	29
Needs Improvement	29	39	40	40	40	41
Warning/Failing	9	19	33	40	28	26
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	41	27	20	31	32
Average Proficiency Index (API)	82.9	71.1	59.2	53.8	63.2	64.9

In Chicopee in 2006, performance on the MCAS tests varied by race/ethnicity, as 41 percent of White students, 20 percent of Hispanic students, and 32 percent of African-American students attained overall proficiency.

Chicopee's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 29 PI points for White students, 46 PI points for Hispanic students, and 35 PI points for African-American students. The average performance gap between White and Hispanic students was 17 PI points, and between White and African-American students it was six PI points.

Figure/Table 11: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status and Gender Subgroups, 2006

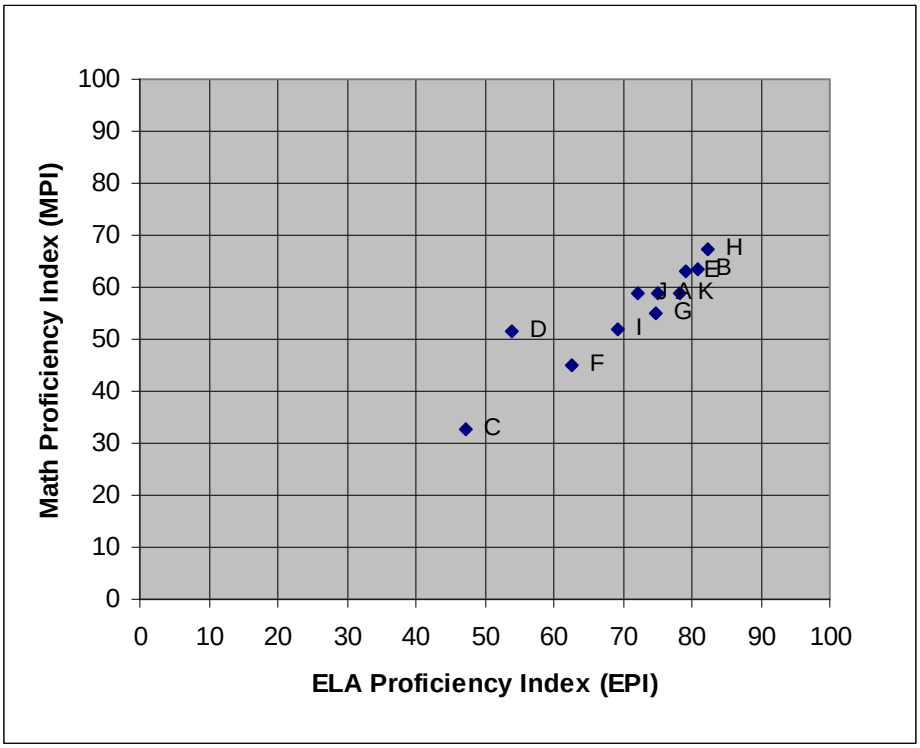


	FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee	State	Chicopee
Advanced	19	8	5	3	13	5	17	5
Proficient	46	40	27	25	40	29	41	34
Needs Improvement	27	37	40	41	32	40	29	39
Warning/Failing	8	15	27	31	15	25	13	22
Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	48	32	28	53	34	58	39
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.5	75.0	63.5	60.7	77.1	65.6	79.6	68.6

In Chicopee in 2006, 28 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 48 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 39 PI points for low-income students and 25 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was 14 PI points.

Performance on the 2006 MCAS tests was somewhat stronger for female than for male students in Chicopee, with 39 percent of female students and 34 percent of male students attaining overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 34 PI points for male students and 31 PI points for female students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was three PI points.

Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by Subgroup, 2006

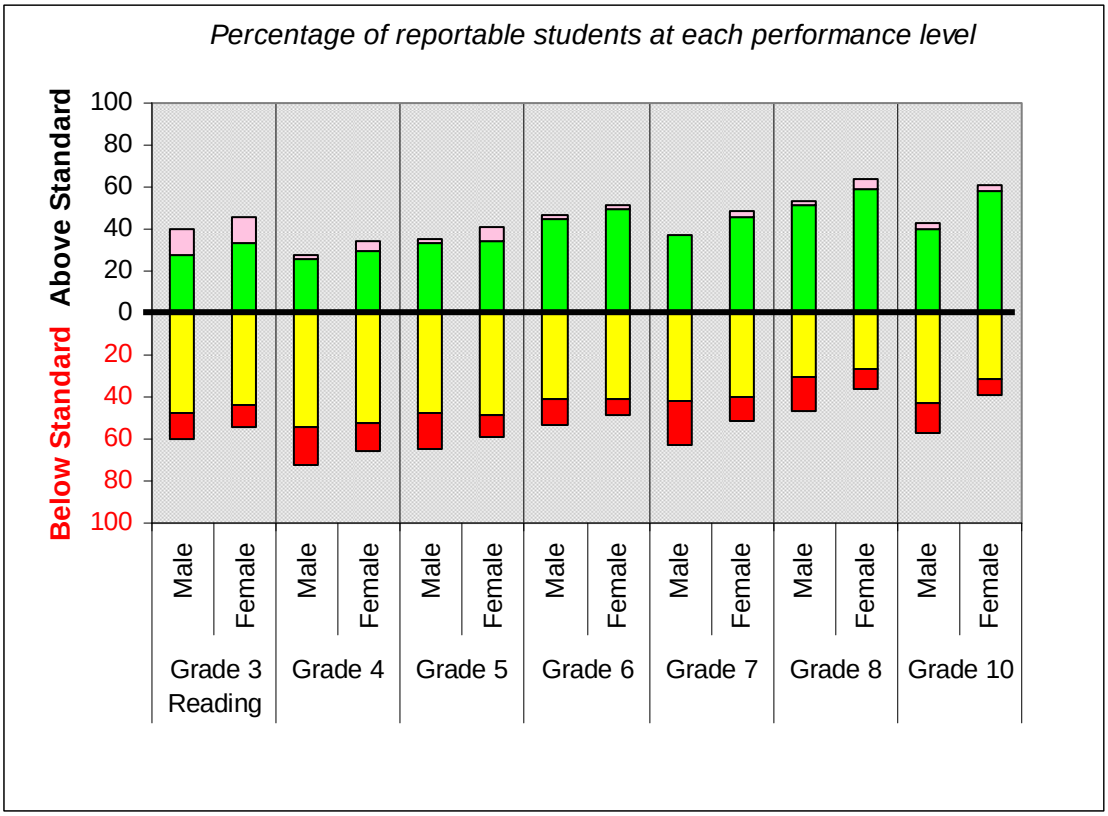


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Chicopee	75.2	58.9	7,811
B	Regular Education	80.9	63.6	6,444
C	Disability	47.3	32.6	1,090
D	LEP	53.9	51.5	277
E	White	79.0	63.1	5,592
F	Hispanic	62.5	45.1	1,742
G	African-American	74.8	54.9	316
H	FRL/N	82.4	67.5	3,464
I	FRL/Y	69.4	52.0	4,331
J	Male	72.2	58.9	4,050
K	Female	78.3	58.9	3,745

Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Chicopee in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 35 PI points in ELA (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 35 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).

The proficiency gaps in Chicopee in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students. The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math, and the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA and the same as the district average in math.

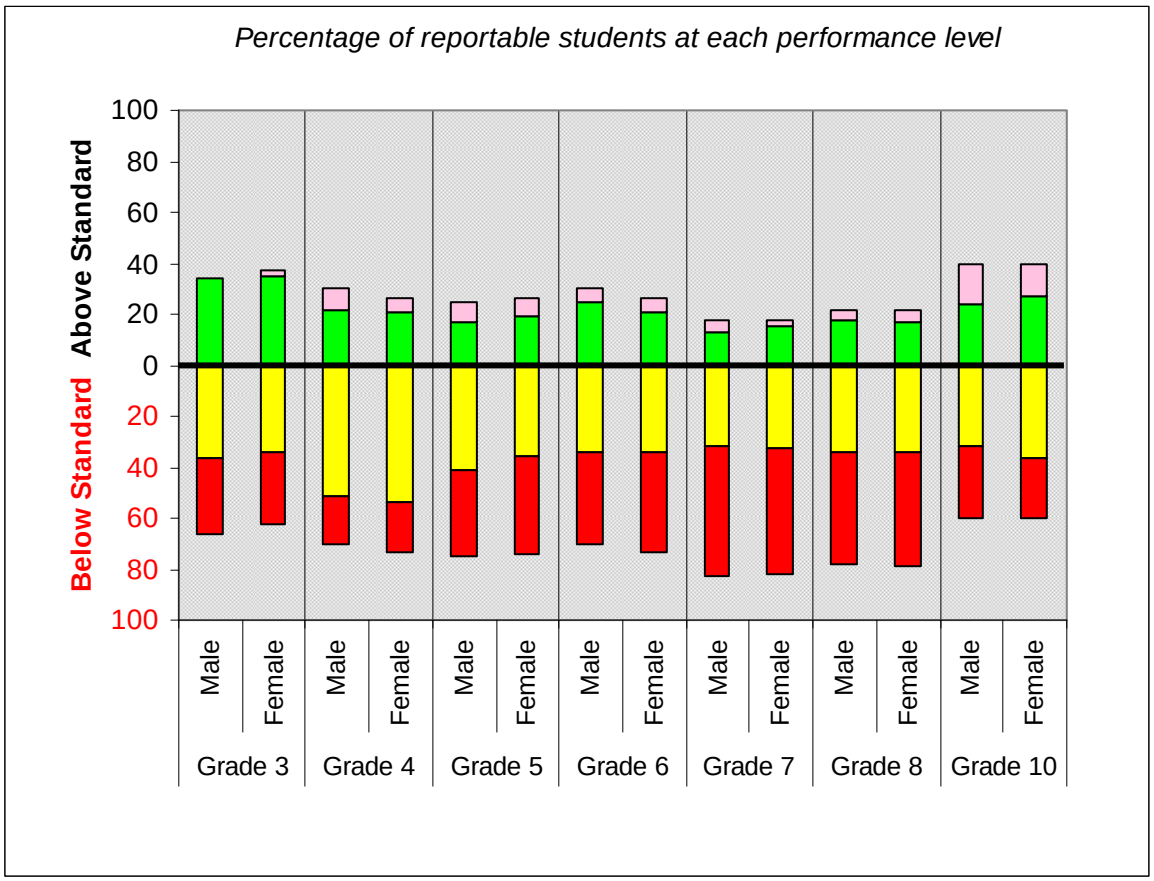
Figure/Table 13: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	12	13	2	4	2	7	2	2	1	3	1	4	3	3
Proficient	28	33	26	30	34	34	44	49	37	45	52	59	40	58
Needs Improvement	48	44	55	52	47	49	41	41	41	40	31	27	43	32
Warning/ Failing	12	10	18	14	17	10	12	8	21	11	16	9	15	7
Percent Attaining Proficiency	40	46	28	34	36	41	46	51	38	48	53	63	43	61

In Chicopee in 2006, female students outperformed male students on all grade-level ELA tests.

Figure/Table 14: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	0	2	8	6	8	7	5	6	4	2	4	5	16	13
Proficient	34	35	22	21	17	19	25	21	13	16	17	17	24	27
Needs Improvement	37	34	51	54	41	36	34	34	32	33	34	34	32	37
Warning/ Failing	29	28	19	20	34	38	36	40	51	50	44	44	28	23
Percent Attaining Proficiency	34	37	30	27	25	26	30	27	17	18	21	22	40	40

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, female students outperformed male students at grades 3, 5, 7, and 8. Male students outperformed female students at grades 4 and 6. Male and female students performed at the same level on the grade 10 math test.

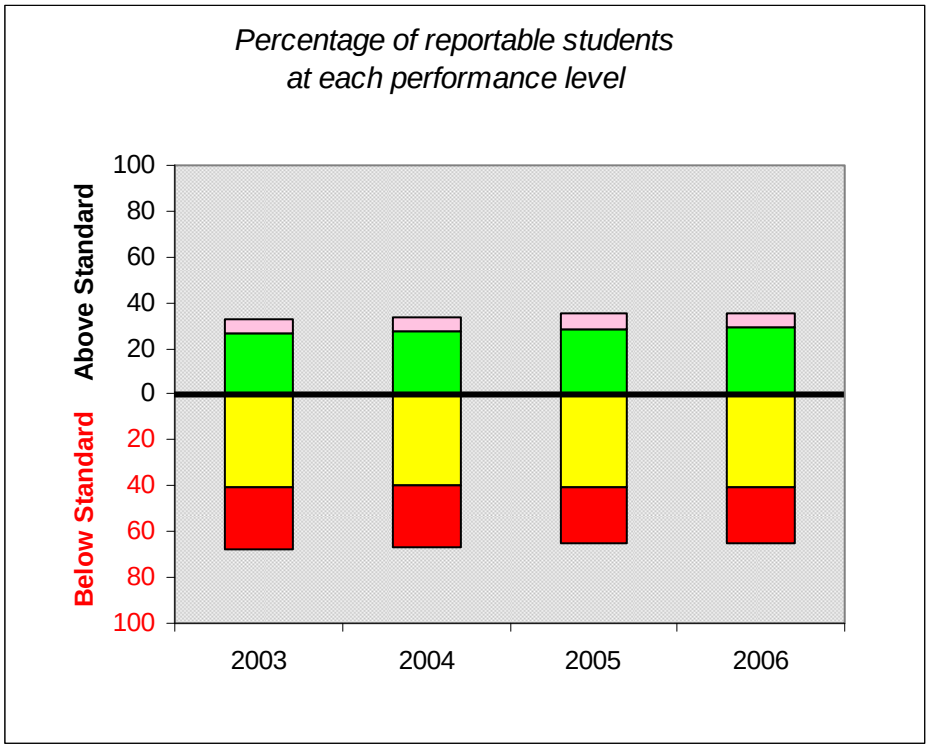
Improvement

Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Chicopee's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall and in STE, more improvement in math, and no improvement in ELA.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by three percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by three percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Chicopee narrowed from 37 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of eight percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Chicopee was relatively flat, improving by less than one-half PI point. This resulted in an improvement rate of two percent, a rate much lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Math performance in Chicopee showed improvement during this period, at an average of more than one and one-half PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Chicopee had slight improvement in STE performance, increasing by an average of one PI point annually over the two-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate of five percent.

Figure 15/Tables 15 A-B: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2003-2006



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	6	6	7	6
Proficient	27	28	28	30
Needs Improvement	40	40	40	40
Warning/Failing	27	27	25	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	33	34	35	36
Average Proficiency Index (API)	63.2	63.9	65.4	66.3

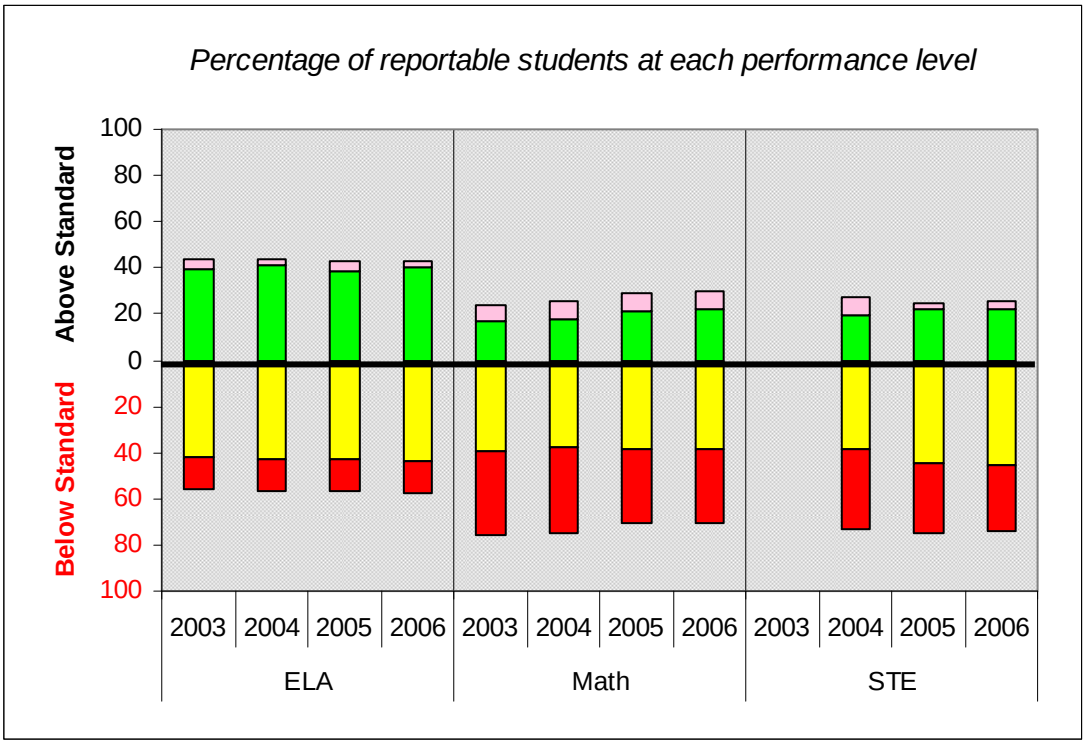
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	227	226	266	228
Proficient	1,057	1,102	1,120	1,173
Needs Improvement	1,595	1,605	1,593	1,605
Warning/Failing	1,071	1,067	977	968
Total	3,950	4,000	3,956	3,974

Note: Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years; therefore, the 2006 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 1.

The percentage of Chicopee students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests increased from 33 percent in 2003 to 36 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 27 percent in 2003 to 24 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Chicopee narrowed from 37 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of eight percent.

Figure/Table 16: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2003-2006



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	5	3	5	3	7	8	8	8		7	3	4
Proficient	39	41	38	40	17	18	21	22		20	22	22
Needs Improvement	42	43	43	43	39	38	38	38		39	45	45
Warning/ Failing	14	13	14	14	37	37	33	32		34	30	29
Percent Attaining Proficiency	44	44	43	43	24	26	29	30		27	25	26
Proficiency Index (PI)	73.2	74.1	73.6	73.6	55.7	56.1	59.3	60.8		58.4	59.7	60.4

Note: Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years; therefore, the 2006 data for ELA and math may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 2. STE data for 2003 are not available.

Although the percentage of Chicopee students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 44 percent in 2003 to 43 percent in 2006, the proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from 27 PI points in 2003 to 26 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of two percent, a rate much lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Chicopee students attaining proficiency in math increased from 24 percent in 2003 to 30 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 44 PI points in 2003 to 39 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

Although the percentage of Chicopee students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 27 percent in 2004 to 26 percent in 2006, the proficiency gap in STE narrowed from 42 PI points in 2004 to 40 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of five percent.

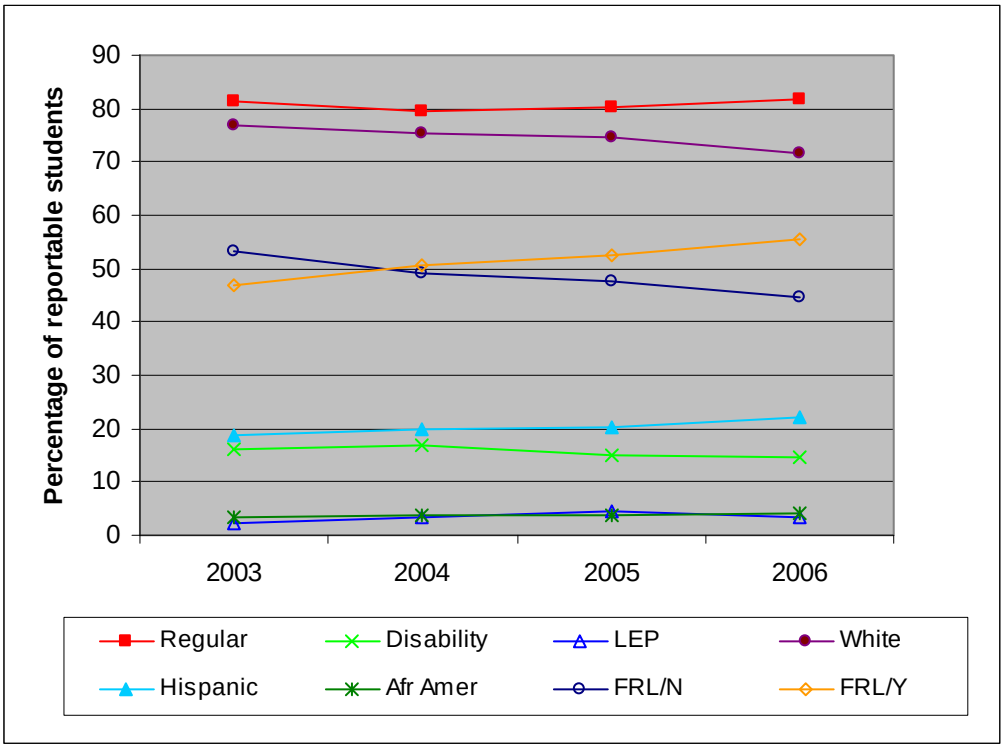
Equity of Improvement

Has the equity of MCAS test performance among the district's student subgroups improved over time?

Findings:

- In Chicopee, all student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities and non low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, although the level of improvement for most subgroups was slight. The most improved subgroup in ELA was LEP students.
- In math, all subgroups in Chicopee with the exception of students with disabilities showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was also LEP students.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 46 PI points in 2003 to 36 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 28 to 36 PI points during this period.

Figure/Table 17: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2003-2006



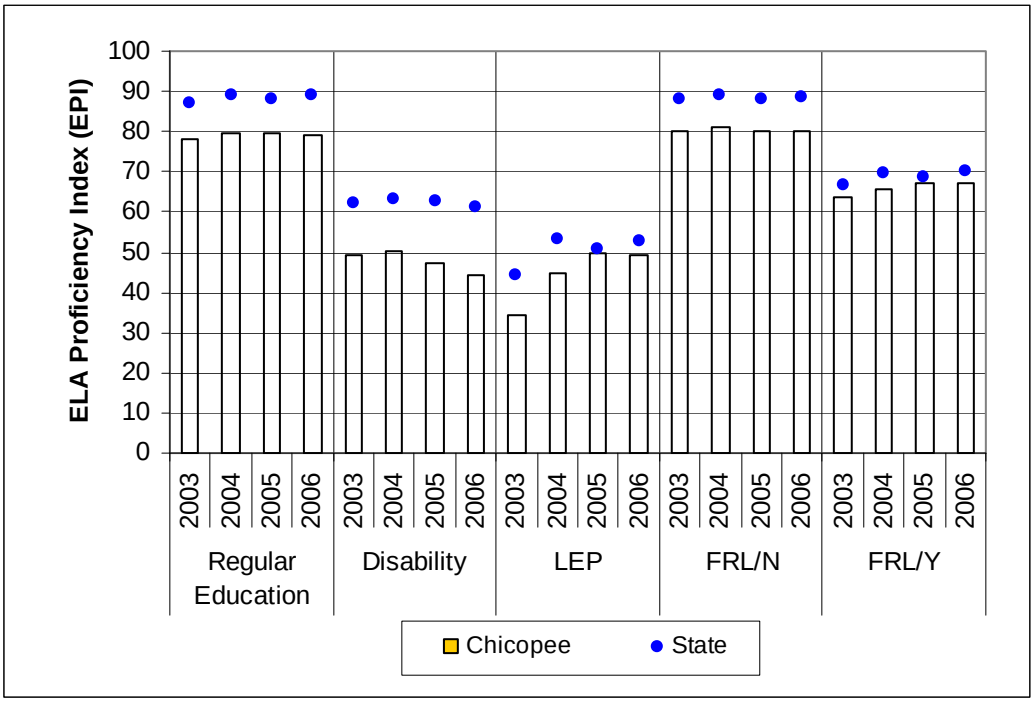
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Chicopee	2,909	3,388	3,343	3,936	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	2,371	2,690	2,687	3,219	81.5	79.4	80.4	81.8
Disability	473	578	506	577	16.3	17.1	15.1	14.7
LEP	65	120	150	140	2.2	3.5	4.5	3.6
White	2,238	2,548	2,493	2,819	76.9	75.2	74.6	71.6
Hispanic	542	668	676	878	18.6	19.7	20.2	22.3
Afr Amer	102	130	122	158	3.5	3.8	3.6	4.0
FRL/N	1,544	1,670	1,592	1,753	53.1	49.3	47.6	44.5
FRL/Y	1,365	1,718	1,751	2,183	46.9	50.7	52.4	55.5

Note: The 2006 percentages of students reported here may differ from those reported in Figure 8; the percentages shown here are based on the total number of students in the district, whereas the percentages shown in Figure 8 are based on the number of students in reportable subgroups.

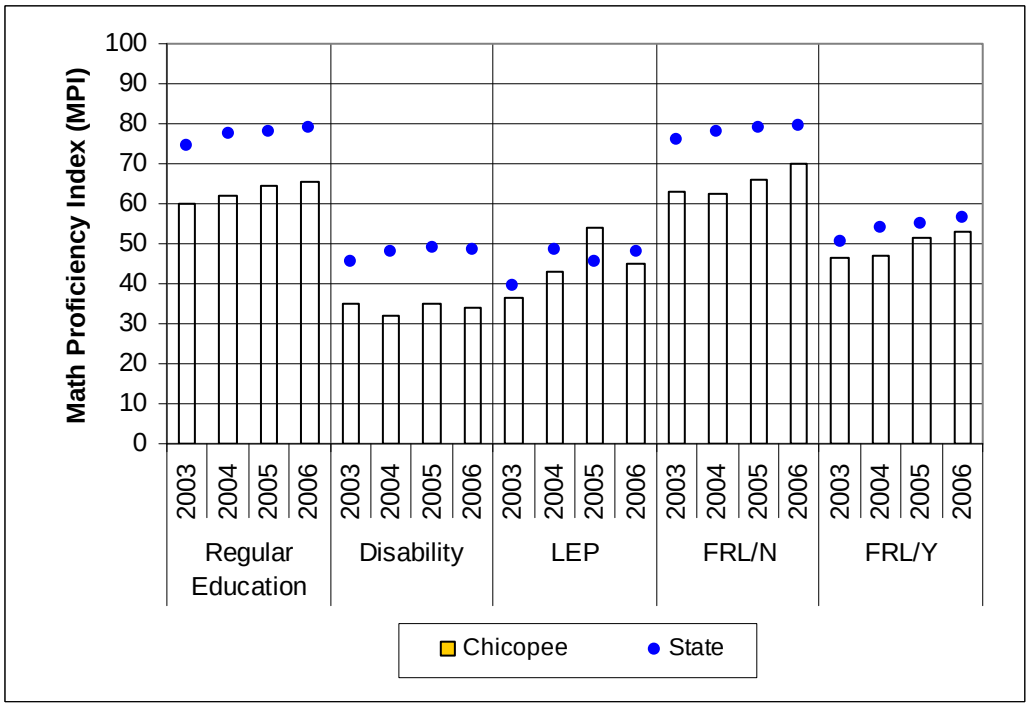
Between 2003 and 2006 in Chicopee, the proportion of students with disabilities decreased by less than two percentage points and that of students with limited English proficiency (LEP) increased by more than one percentage point. During this period, the proportion of Hispanic students increased by nearly four percentage points, that of African-American students increased by one-half percentage point, and that of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by less than nine percentage points.

Figures 18 A-D/Table 18: MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Subgroup, 2003-2006

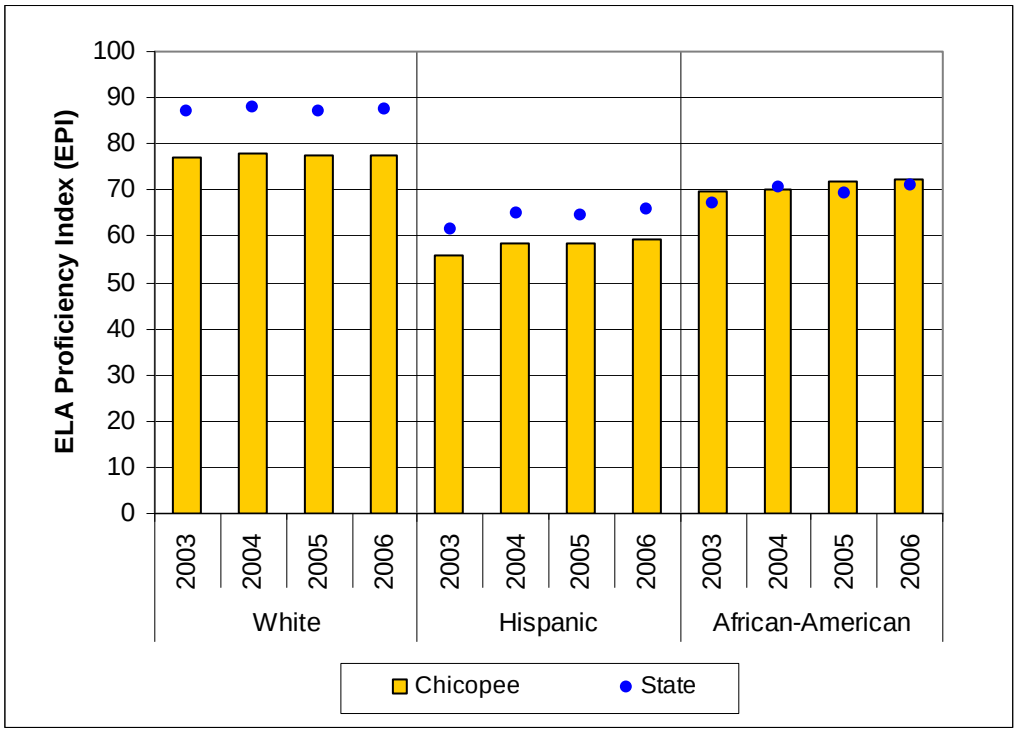
A. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



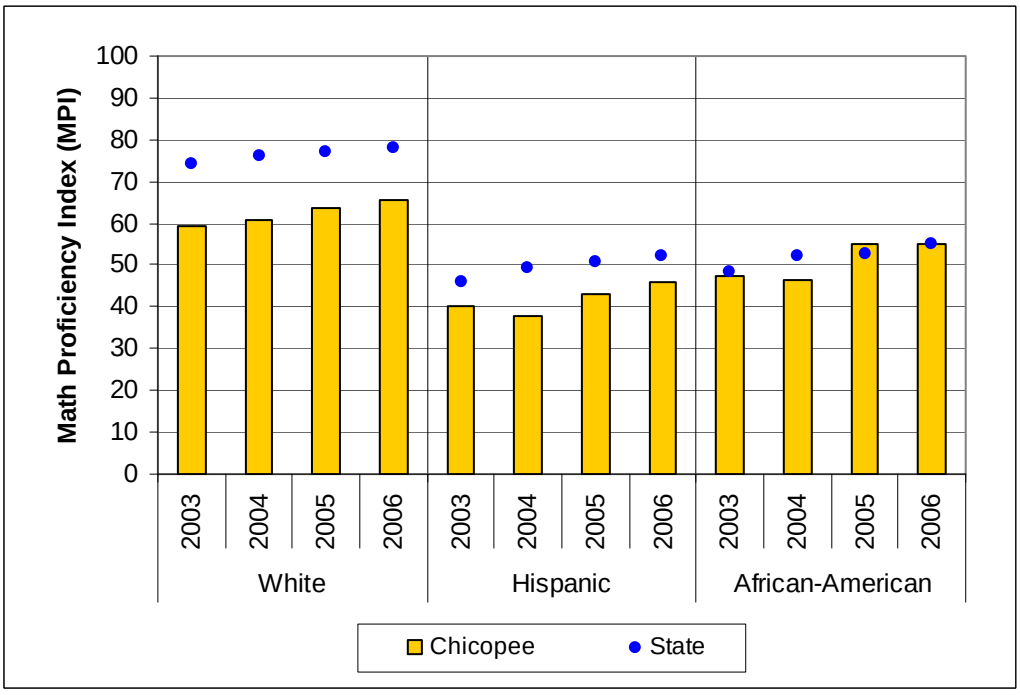
B. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



C. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup



D. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup

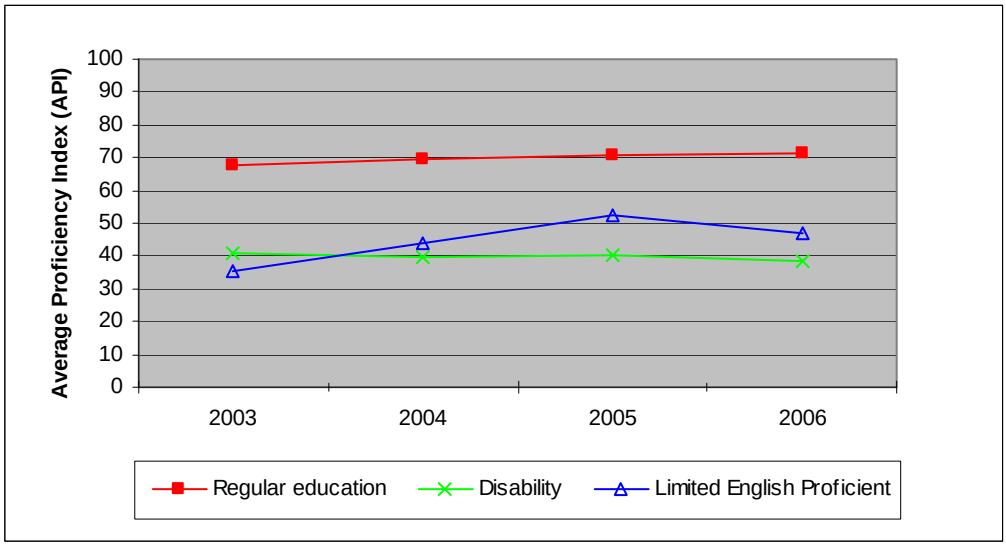


State				Chicopee			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	78.3	59.9
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	79.8	61.8
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	79.5	64.3
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	79.0	65.4
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	49.3	34.9
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	50.4	31.8
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	47.2	35.0
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	44.2	33.8
LEP	2003	44.4	39.6	LEP	2003	34.5	36.6
	2004	53.4	48.4		2004	45.0	43.2
	2005	50.9	45.6		2005	50.0	54.1
	2006	52.9	47.9		2006	49.5	44.8
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	80.2	62.9
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	81.0	62.6
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	80.0	66.2
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	80.2	69.9
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	63.9	46.4
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	65.9	47.2
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	67.1	51.7
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	67.3	52.8
White	2003	86.9	74.4	White	2003	77.1	59.3
	2004	87.7	76.2		2004	78.1	60.9
	2005	87.1	77.2		2005	77.3	63.4
	2006	87.4	77.8		2006	77.6	65.4
Hispanic	2003	61.4	45.7	Hispanic	2003	55.7	40.4
	2004	64.8	49.3		2004	58.5	37.9
	2005	64.6	50.6		2005	58.4	42.9
	2006	65.8	52.2		2006	59.5	45.9
African-American	2003	67.1	48.4	African-American	2003	69.7	47.2
	2004	70.5	52.3		2004	70.1	46.4
	2005	69.4	52.8		2005	71.8	55.0
	2006	70.9	55.2		2006	72.1	54.8

In Chicopee, all student subgroups, with the exception of students with disabilities and non low-income students, had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in ELA was students with limited English proficiency. In math, all subgroups in Chicopee, with the exception of students with disabilities, showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was LEP students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 46 PI points in 2003 to 36 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 28 to 36 PI points during this period.

Figure/Table 19: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Student Status Subgroup, 2003-2006

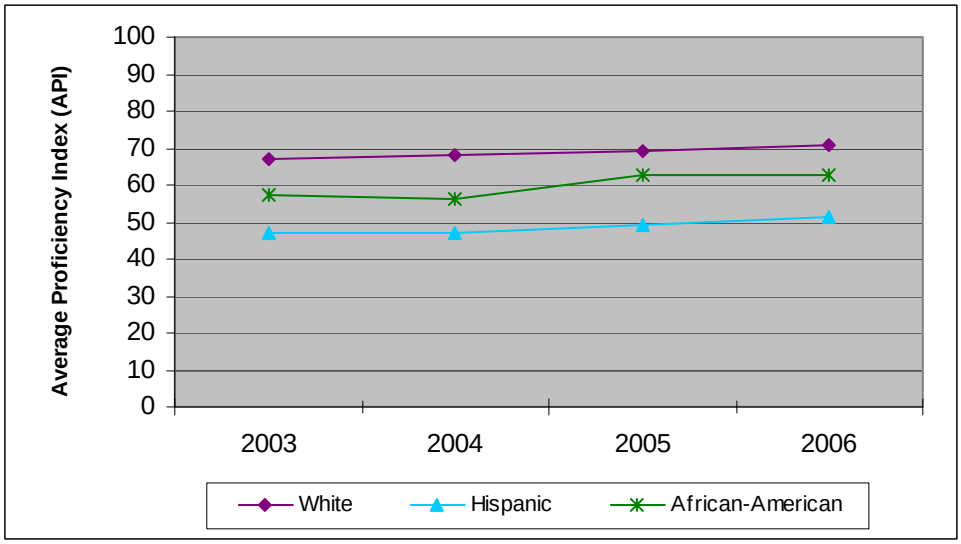


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	67.8	78.3	59.9	51	27
	2004	69.6	79.8	61.8	51	30
	2005	70.8	79.5	64.3	51	34
	2006	71.2	79.0	65.4	49	35
Disability	2003	40.8	49.3	34.9	11	7
	2004	39.6	50.4	31.8	10	3
	2005	40.0	47.2	35.0	6	7
	2006	38.3	44.2	33.8	6	3
Limited English Proficient	2003	35.4	34.5	36.6	8	7
	2004	43.9	45.0	43.2	9	16
	2005	52.3	50.0	54.1	17	26
	2006	46.9	49.5	44.8	17	11

Students with disabilities in Chicopee had a decline in overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while the performance of regular education and LEP students showed improvement during this period. The average proficiency gap for Chicopee's students with disabilities widened from 59 to 62 PI points; for regular education students, it narrowed from 32 to 29 PI points; and for LEP students, it narrowed from 65 to 53 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 11 percent for regular education students and 18 percent for LEP students.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing student status subgroups remained the same.

Figure/Table 20: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup, 2003-2006

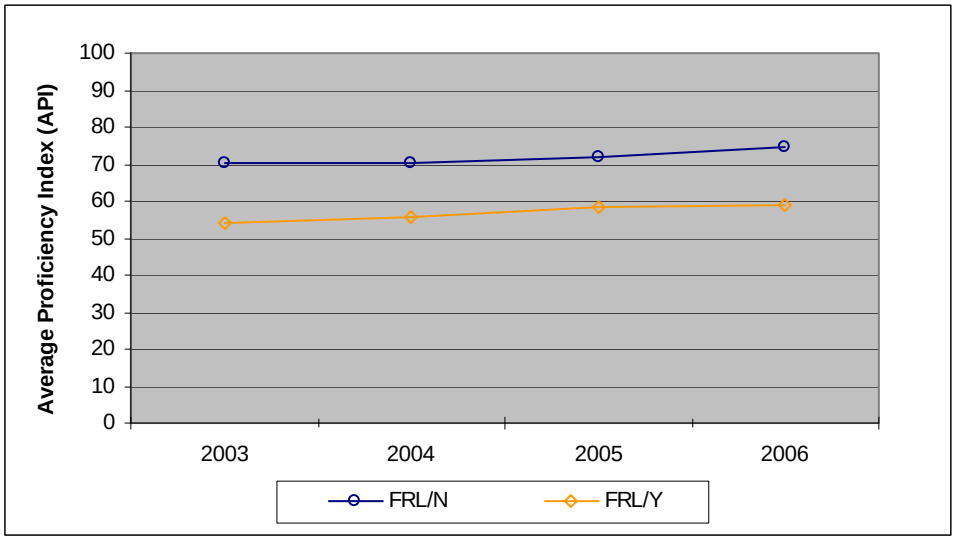


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
White	2003	66.9	77.1	59.3	50	28
	2004	68.3	78.1	60.9	49	30
	2005	69.3	77.3	63.4	48	34
	2006	70.6	77.6	65.4	49	35
Hispanic	2003	46.9	55.7	40.4	18	8
	2004	46.8	58.5	37.9	22	7
	2005	49.3	58.4	42.9	22	11
	2006	51.6	59.5	45.9	22	14
African-American	2003	57.4	69.7	47.2	31	14
	2004	56.0	70.1	46.4	34	16
	2005	62.7	71.8	55.0	38	27
	2006	62.5	72.1	54.8	35	19

All three racial subgroups in Chicopee had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for White students narrowed from 33 to 29 PI points; for Hispanic students, it narrowed from 53 to 48 PI points; and for African-American students, it narrowed from 43 to 37 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 11 percent for White students, nine percent for Hispanic students, and 12 percent for African-American students.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing racial subgroups narrowed by one PI point.

Figure/Table 21: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2003-2006

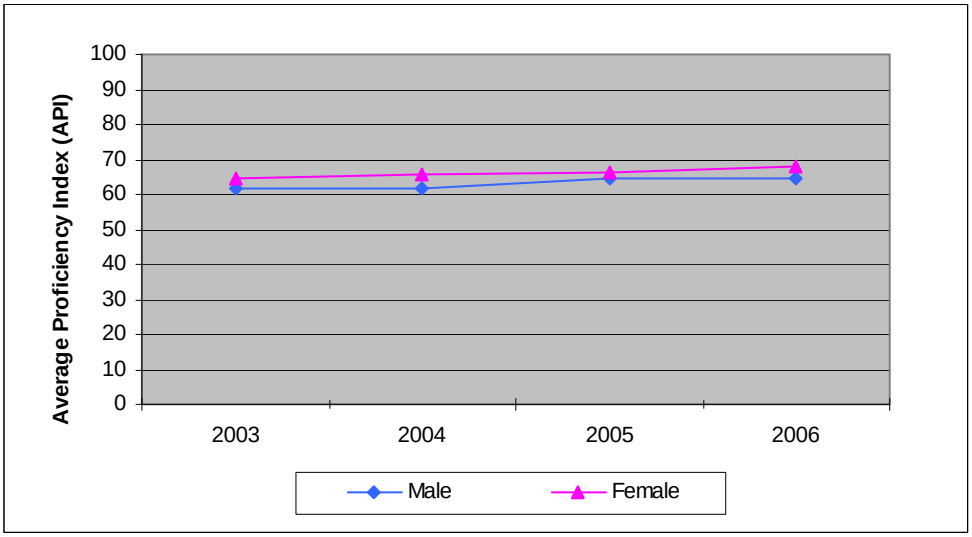


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	70.3	80.2	62.9	55	32
	2004	70.3	81.0	62.6	54	33
	2005	72.0	80.0	66.2	53	38
	2006	74.4	80.2	69.9	53	40
FRL/Y	2003	53.9	63.9	46.4	30	13
	2004	55.6	65.9	47.2	31	15
	2005	58.3	67.1	51.7	32	20
	2006	58.9	67.3	52.8	32	21

Both the low-income (FRL/Y) and non low-income (FRL/N) subgroups in Chicopee had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 46 to 41 PI points, and for non low-income students it narrowed from 30 to 26 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 11 percent for low-income students and 14 percent for non low-income students.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between low-income students and non low-income students narrowed by one PI point.

Figure/Table 22: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Gender Subgroup, 2003- 2006



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	61.8	69.2	56.0	38	25
	2004	61.9	70.6	55.4	38	25
	2005	64.8	71.1	60.1	37	30
	2006	64.8	69.7	61.0	37	31
Female	2003	64.8	77.7	55.5	51	23
	2004	66.0	77.6	56.9	49	26
	2005	66.1	76.6	58.3	49	29
	2006	67.8	77.9	60.5	49	29

Both male and female students in Chicopee had improved performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for male students narrowed from 38 to 35 PI points, and for female students it narrowed from 35 to 32 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of eight percent for male students and nine percent for female students.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between male and female students remained the same.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Findings:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Chicopee	ALL LEVELS	**3,914**	**3,897**	**1,106**
	Advanced	160	249	45
	Proficient	1,609	848	242
	Needs Improvement	1,639	1,444	499
	Warning/Failing	506	1,356	320
Regular Education	Advanced	153	239	42
	Proficient	1,532	805	229
	Needs Improvement	1,331	1,272	443
	Warning/Failing	210	902	197
Disability	Advanced	2	4	2
	Proficient	56	15	9
	Needs Improvement	248	133	46
	Warning/Failing	242	390	105
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	5	6	1
	Proficient	21	28	4
	Needs Improvement	60	39	10
	Warning/Failing	54	64	18
White	Advanced	127	227	38
	Proficient	1,301	683	208
	Needs Improvement	1,121	1,072	369
	Warning/Failing	250	811	178
Hispanic	Advanced	18	17	6
	Proficient	212	104	22
	Needs Improvement	413	283	86
	Warning/Failing	230	465	130
African-American	Advanced	7	2	0
	Proficient	62	31	8
	Needs Improvement	69	62	30
	Warning/Failing	21	62	9
Asian	Advanced	8	3	1
	Proficient	20	24	2
	Needs Improvement	23	19	8
	Warning/Failing	5	10	1
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	98	189	25
	Proficient	892	477	140
	Needs Improvement	635	647	214
	Warning/Failing	110	416	74
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	62	60	20
	Proficient	711	370	102
	Needs Improvement	1,001	795	283
	Warning/Failing	396	936	245
Male	Advanced	66	139	30
	Proficient	759	435	136
	Needs Improvement	881	749	248
	Warning/Failing	321	700	165
Female	Advanced	94	110	15
	Proficient	844	412	106
	Needs Improvement	755	693	249
	Warning/Failing	185	652	154

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	580	0	0
	2004	538	0	0
	2005	493	0	0
	2006	502	499	0
Grade 4	2003	528	532	0
	2004	574	578	0
	2005	547	548	0
	2006	503	504	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	559
	2005	0	0	597
	2006	562	560	560
Grade 6	2003	0	601	0
	2004	0	552	0
	2005	0	574	0
	2006	593	595	0
Grade 7	2003	584	0	0
	2004	594	0	0
	2005	564	0	0
	2006	565	566	0
Grade 8	2003	0	535	0
	2004	0	582	580
	2005	0	589	590
	2006	555	549	546
Grade 10	2003	581	589	0
	2004	555	565	0
	2005	573	561	0
	2006	634	624	0
All Grades	2003	2,273	2,257	0
	2004	2,261	2,277	1,139
	2005	2,177	2,272	1,187
	2006	3,914	3,897	1,106

Notes

Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years. The following grades are included in the trend data for 2003-2006 reported in Figures/Tables 15-22 and in the table of n-values by grade and year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4, 7, 10
Math: 4, 6, 8, 10
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5, 8

Data for science and technology/engineering (STE) are not included in computing overall proficiency and the average proficiency index (API); they will be included beginning in 2007 when STE becomes a graduation requirement.

The highest performance level for grade 3 reading in 2006 is Advanced/Above Proficient; this level did not exist in prior years, when the highest level was Proficient.

Subgroup inclusion is based on the number of students and the number of schools in the district. To be included as reportable, a subgroup must have at least 10 times the number of schools in the district. Subgroup inclusion for all years of the trend data is based on the 2006 data.

N-values represent the number of tests taken unless otherwise specified.

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

Standard I: Leadership, Governance, and Communication														
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**Total**
Excellent														
Satisfactory	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	**7**
Needs Improvement			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓			**5**
Unsatisfactory										✓				**1**

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

School committee, district leadership, and school leadership established, implemented, and continuously evaluated the cost effectiveness and efficiency of policies and procedures that were standards-based, focused on student achievement data and designed to promote continuous improvement of instructional practice and high achievement for all students. Leadership actions and decisions related to the attainment of district and school goals were routinely communicated to the community and promoted public confidence, financial commitment and community support needed to achieve high student and staff performance.

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Interviewees expressed a desire for leadership stability, as the district employed three superintendents during the review period.
- Four of the elementary schools had improved MCAS ELA and math test scores, whereas the other four elementary schools had a decline in achievement. Neither of the middle schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP), and both needed to develop corrective action plans.
- The district lacked a systemic approach to curriculum development, implementation, evaluation, and revision.
- The district did not comply with the Massachusetts General Laws pertaining to the annual evaluation of principals.
- School committee members did not recall using student assessment results to make decisions during the budget review process; rather, they relied on the superintendent's recommendations.

Summary

During the review period, the district employed three superintendents. The first superintendent accepted a position elsewhere, and the second superintendent served as an interim superintendent for approximately a year during an unsettled period. After the interim superintendent resigned, the school committee selected a third individual, who served at the time of the EQA site visit, to assume the role. Interviewees mentioned that the district needed stability in administrative leadership, and praised the third superintendent for his success on a number of initiatives. Under his leadership, the district developed a new improvement plan covering the period 2007-2010 involving an expanded group of stakeholders, began construction of two new high schools, and hired a new assistant superintendent for curriculum. Interviewees also mentioned expanded use of assessments, support for additional academic coaches, and added focus on dropout prevention and attendance issues.

Administrators reported that they had not received evaluations since 2001. The current superintendent stated, and administrators confirmed, that in 2006-2007 he had initiated a districtwide evaluation process for administrators and principals. According to the superintendent, this process focused primarily on mutually agreed upon goals for personal, school, and student improvement. In addition, the superintendent indicated that he had received approval from the school committee to initiate a merit pay system in conjunction with the evaluation process.

Interviewees reported that communications improved during the latter part of the review period. Representatives from the teachers' association stated that the number of grievances filed had decreased significantly. Various interviewees remarked that the superintendent had implemented a half-hour briefing session prior to school committee meetings to provide interested staff with background information about agenda items. Also, administrators and teachers in focus groups commented that the district had instituted a classroom walk-through process for principals and central office administrators to observe the teaching and learning process. Teachers reported receiving informal feedback from the walk-through visits, although this was not part of the teacher evaluation process.

Administrators indicated that during the review period, the district increased the amount of information on its website. Also, interviewees stated that from mid-October through January, each of the principals made school committee presentations, referred to as the "State of the Schools" reports. The presentations included items such as the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), MCAS test results, accomplishments of the previous year, trends, and initiatives. In addition, school committee meetings received coverage from local television and newspapers such as *The Chicopee Herald* and the Springfield *Republican*. Furthermore, some of the interviewees mentioned that in the last year and a half of the review period, the relationship between city hall and the school district had improved.

During the latter part of the review period, the superintendent led the district leadership team's effort to develop the Chicopee Public Schools District Improvement Plan (DIP) for 2007-2010 that expanded upon the previous DIP. Similarly, principals, with the assistance of their school council members, began the process of elaborating on details in their SIPs, realigning them with the new DIP, and maintaining a focus on improving student achievement.

Administrators acknowledged that both middle schools had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) and needed to prepare corrective action plans. Also, they understood that half the elementary schools had downward trends in their MCAS ELA and math test results. In addition, administrators commented that the district had not addressed the needs of all subgroup populations, especially English language learner (ELL) and low-income students.

Assessments used included Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) at grades preK-5, Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) at grades K-12, Galileo Math at grades 6-8, and benchmark tests. Analysis of results led to review and revision of the curriculum guides, time on learning, existing interventions, and teaching strategies.

The district made effective use of grants. With Title I funds, it hired an ELL coach for grades K-8 and two ELA coaches. It also used grants to fund two math coaches. Through the Striving Readers program, a federal initiative aimed at improving reading performance among middle and

high school students, the district added a reading coach. The district also received a federal Smaller Learning Communities grant.

The leadership at the Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School developed a corrective action plan entitled "Three Major Initiatives for School Improvement." Also, the elementary and middle schools had begun the process of using more formative and summative assessments to improve student achievement. In addition, the elementary and middle schools started to develop curriculum guides; both levels developed and implemented math curriculum guides, and the middle schools were developing an ELA curriculum guide in 2006-2007.

At the high schools, the administration established a task force to study the prevalence of dropouts. The administration had begun analyzing the data collected from a survey in order to determine steps to improve student attendance and minimize dropouts. The district reported high but declining dropout rates, and a high and increasing rate of absenteeism.

Indicators

1. The district and school leaders had a clearly understood vision and/or mission, goals, and priorities included in the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The standards-based plan and the analysis of student achievement data drove the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The Chicopee Public Schools had a District Improvement Plan (DIP) for the review period that included a mission statement, four goals accompanied by strategies and measurements, 10 essential outcomes, eight beliefs, and eight operating principles. The superintendent and the other administrators stated that the central office administrators developed the Chicopee Public Schools District Improvement Plan for 2003-2006.

The district's mission statement included a goal "to maintain high standards and expectations for all students by involving teachers, parents and community." The statement included the objective of "foster[ing] ongoing growth and change necessary to provide students with the knowledge, skills and values they will need to lead meaningful and productive lives."

The DIP's four goals were: improve student learning and achievement; provide safe, clean, orderly learner-centered environments; increase parental and community involvement; and improve district effectiveness and efficiency. The strategies associated with the first goal included the alignment, design, and implementation of a curriculum for grades preK-12 based on the state standards, the design and adoption of a student performance assessment and accountability system, and instruction that focused on the needs of each student leading to the attainment of the essential outcomes. The measurements listed for the first goal consisted of standardized tests and performance assessments such as portfolios and report cards.

Administrators reported that the superintendent presented the DIP to the school committee for its approval. In addition, school committee members acknowledged that they had received and approved the DIP.

During the latter part of the review period, the superintendent began the planning process for the Chicopee Public Schools District Improvement Plan 2007-2010. The district leadership team that prepared the new DIP included the superintendent, the other central office administrators, the principals, the Title I literacy coach, the Title I parent coordinator, the Title I liaison, the president of the Chicopee citywide parent teacher organization (PTO), and the president of the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce. In addition to expanding upon the previous DIP, some of the other changes included: the establishment of five new goals, the first two of which were standards-based, focused on improving student achievement; the inclusion of benchmarks such as the combined proficiency index (CPI) levels in the objectives of the first goal along with designated ELA and math assessments; and modifications to the essential outcomes. Administrators stated that the school committee approved the new DIP in February 2007.

2. School committee members were informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities under the Education Reform Act, and relied on student achievement data and other educationally relevant data as the foundation of their policy-making and decision-making.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

School committee members mentioned that they understood their roles and responsibilities under the Education Reform Act. The school committee members indicated that they periodically

attended the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) workshops and, at times, used the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) website. They commented that the superintendent provided them with pertinent information in their agenda packets. Furthermore, the school committee members stated that from time to time, some of the members attended the superintendent's briefings, a half-hour meeting in advance of the regular school committee meeting.

The school committee members commented that the administration submitted a wide variety of reports, such as MCAS test results, curriculum initiatives, progress on the two high school construction projects, student attendance, and dropout data. Also, school committee members indicated that at least once per year they met with their state representative or senator to discuss current educational issues.

School committee members acknowledged receiving and approving the DIP and SIPs. However, they mentioned that during the budget review process, they relied upon the administration's recommendations concerning the justification for allocating limited resources to designated program areas.

School committee members and central office administrators mentioned that the school committee had four subcommittees covering policy, facilities, curriculum, and finance. The members of the four subcommittees kept the other members of the school committee informed about matters pertaining to their respective subcommittee.

The superintendent confirmed the statements of the school committee members about their understanding of their roles and responsibilities under the Education Reform Act. Also, administrators stated that the district produced a monthly 30-minute television show, "School Days," that provided the school committee members and the public with information about topics such as student assessment and curriculum throughout the district.

3. <u>The district was highly effective at data selection, data generation, data gathering and interpretation, data use, and data-driven decision-making.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The entire district did not select, generate, gather, interpret, and use data in its decision-making process during all of the years under review. Administrators reported that during the latter part of the review period, the middle schools started to analyze data. Also, administrators commented that the district had not made use of the subgroup assessment data other than the special education test results.

Besides the MCAS test results, the administrators stated that the faculty recently expanded its use of assessment results such as those from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) at grades preK-5; the Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) at grades preK-5; Galileo math at grades 6-8; and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) at grades K-12. Interviewees commented that the middle school math teachers had recently begun to administer the Galileo math formative assessment every four to five weeks. In addition, the middle school staff started to use benchmark assessments to gather information on the progress of each student in math.

According to interviewees, the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability met with each principal to review and analyze the MCAS test results for his or her school. Elementary and middle school principals then reviewed the MCAS test results with their staffs at faculty meetings. At the high schools, the principals reviewed the MCAS test results with the supervisors who, in turn, reviewed them with the teachers in their departments. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that they also discussed the MCAS test results at the administrative council meetings and at the monthly meetings held by principals at each level.

Administrators indicated that they gathered and analyzed data from the Student Information Management System (SIMS) and I-Pass, and cited an example of the monitoring of chronically absent students. In the final year of review, based upon the data collected, the elementary schools implemented a “School for Life Program” in partnership with the Hampden County District Attorney’s Office. In phase one of the program, the attendance supervisor and the guidance counselor sent a letter concerning school attendance laws to the parents of chronically absent students. In phase two, the district produced a contract to be signed by the student, the parent or guardian, and the school, with the understanding that failure to comply with the provisions could

result in an expedited Child in Need of Services (CHINS) hearing. According to interviewees, the middle schools implemented the "School for Life Program" in 2006-2007.

At the high school level, the principals established a Student Advisory Task Force Committee (SATFC) to explore the reasons for the dropout rate. The committee developed and distributed a survey to gather information but has not reported the survey results.

4. Each school used an approved School Improvement Plan (SIP) that was aligned with the DIP and was based on the analysis of student achievement data. (Only for multi-school districts)

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, each of the public schools in Chicopee had a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that the school committee approved. Administrators reported that principals asked the school council members to assist them in preparing the SIPs. A review of the SIPs' goals showed alignment with the DIP goals. Some examples of goals in SIPs aimed at improving student achievement included increasing the percentage of Chicopee High School students scoring above standard on the MCAS math test within three years; increasing the percentage of grade 6 and 8 students passing the MCAS math tests; and increasing the percentage of grade 4 students at the Bowie Memorial Elementary School scoring above standard on the MCAS math test within three years. The SIP goals included performance data and accomplishments from the previous year and outlined accompanying strategies, key actions, progress indicators, timelines, person(s) responsible, and needed resources. The duration of the SIPs ranged from one to three years. According to central office administrators, the Title I schools had one-year SIPs, some principals sought to develop two-year SIPs, and schools under restructuring had three-year SIPs.

The Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School underwent a school panel review in the fall of 2005. Among other things, the district developed a report entitled "Three Major Initiatives for School Improvement: Fairview Middle School, Chicopee," dated June 27, 2006. The three initiatives included: "Development of collaborative leadership and professional learning community," "Improvement of the culture and climate of Fairview Middle School to increase learning, enhance collegiality, and communication, improve student performance, and raise expectations for all," and "Improvement of instructional foundations at Fairview Middle School

in the areas of written curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment." In addition, the report contained sections on organizational and structural changes, evidence used to identify these issues, barriers encountered previously, and resources and expertise needed to implement changes.

5. The district leadership promoted equity by treating schools' populations and allocations differently and allocating more and better resources to their students and schools with greater needs.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district did not promote equity by treating school populations equally. Administrators indicated that other than the special education subgroup, the district neither analyzed the MCAS test results of the subgroups nor allocated resources to meet the needs of students in the various subgroups. Also, the most recent Coordinated Program Review (CPR) indicated that the district needed to provide more support for ELL students.

The superintendent and the other administrators stated that the district had made some attempts to increase equity in the district. With Title I funds the district hired an ELL coach for grades K-8 in 2004-2005, and two ELA coaches, one for grades preK-8 and one for the Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School in 2005-2006. Also, with grant funds the district hired two math coaches, one for grades preK-8 and another for the Fairview Middle School in 2005-2006. Administrators reported that the district also added the position of assistant for curriculum in 2004-2005 through the local educational agency (LEA) budget. In addition, at each of the high schools in February 2006, the district added a reading coach through the Striving Readers grant.

Central office administrators mentioned that the district employed approximately 45 to 50 Title I teachers and support staff during each of the years under review. Furthermore, according to these administrators, special education grant monies allowed the district to fund six teaching positions and one certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA) position.

Funds from a Smaller Learning Communities grant allowed the high schools to implement a team approach in which a team of English, math, science and social studies teachers taught 90 to

100 grade 9 students with integrated units. This initiative also included an advisor/advisee component, one teacher for 10 students. One of the high schools later extended the team approach to grade 10.

Central office administrators mentioned that in 2006 the district provided each level with a normed figure for supplies, textbooks, and equipment as follows: in elementary schools, $140 per student multiplied by the prior year's October 1 enrollment; at the middle school level, $150 per student multiplied by the prior year's October 1 enrollment; and at the high schools, $160 per student multiplied by the prior year's October 1 enrollment.

6. <u>The superintendent annually recommended and the school committee annually approved educationally sound budgets based primarily on the analysis of student achievement data and advocated for these budgets with the appropriating authority and community.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Almost all the interviewees stated that during the review period the district had less than adequate financial resources. Some of the comments about the budget included, "What you need, you never get," "We're trying to make ends meet," and "We're asked to do more with less." Furthermore, the school committee members indicated that although they had received the DIP and SIPs, they did not focus on student achievement results during the budget review sessions, but rather relied on the superintendent to recommend to them what the school system needed.

The superintendent indicated that the school committee requested that he present them with a needs based budget, mindful of net school spending. As part of the budget development process, the superintendent commented that each of the administrators presented his/her proposed budget with justifications to the administrative council. Following this council's review, the superintendent made a presentation of the proposed school department budget to the school committee at one of its meetings covered on television (Channel 5) and by the local newspapers, *The Chicopee Herald*, the Springfield *Republican*, and *The Reminder*. During the review sessions, the proposed needs budget decreased until it reached a figure below which the school committee would not accept, yet not at the lower figure proposed by the mayor. Since FY 2005,

through discussions with the mayor, the school department received approximately $1.7 million in Medicaid funds to support its proposed budget.

According to the administrators, after the annual public hearing on the budget, the superintendent made a presentation of the budget to the mayor and the board of aldermen.

Also, the superintendent stated that each of the principals had a prior year account. Monies saved during the year in a school went into a prior year account at the end of the fiscal year for that school and the principal had responsibilities for those funds. The superintendent commented that the account served as a reward system for monitoring budget expenditures.

7. The leadership periodically reported to the school committee, staff, and community on the extent of its attainment of the goals in the DIP and the SIPs, particularly regarding student achievement.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, administrators stated that they shared with the school committee, staff, and community progress made toward attaining the goals in the DIP and SIPs. The superintendent mentioned that throughout the year the school committee had presented to it reports such as MCAS test results and curriculum initiatives that focused on the goals in the DIP, especially aimed at improving student achievement. In addition, the superintendent commented that the school committee meetings received coverage on television and by the local newspapers.

The superintendent determined that the former DIP for 2003-2006 "was not broad enough in scope" and he wanted "the goals to be enhanced and expanded." In addition, the superintendent stated that he "wanted to make the DIP teacher and parent friendly." As a result, the superintendent divided the members of the district leadership team into subcommittees, each subcommittee focusing on one of the goals in the DIP. These meetings produced a new draft of The Chicopee Public Schools District Improvement Plan 2007-2010 that contained five modified or new goals, new objectives, and revised strategies, measurements, essential outcomes, beliefs, and operating principles. The superintendent indicated that he shared the new draft DIP with the members of the administrative council, and then had the principals share it with staff at faculty

meetings. The district leadership team that drafted the DIP reviewed the feedback and made the final modifications to the DIP. The superintendent remarked that he presented the new draft DIP to the school committee and received approval for it in February 2007. Administrators confirmed the statements of the superintendent about the development of the new DIP.

The superintendent and other administrators stated that from late October to early January, principals presented reports to the school committee on the "State of the Schools." The PowerPoint presentations included items such as overviews of MCAS test scores, other assessments, trends, school staffing, demographics, initiatives, and perceived needs. In addition, the principals presented the proposed new goals for their SIPs and the performance data and accomplishments related to the SIP goals from the previous year.

Principals indicated that they periodically apprised school council members of progress made toward attainment of the goals in their respective SIPs. Teachers in focus groups, however, responded differently as to how often the principals updated them on progress toward SIP goal attainment. The responses ranged from frequently to rarely.

8. District and school leadership used and effectively implemented practices that required all staff to regularly use aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data to improve instructional programs and services for all student populations.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators commented that they did not use disaggregated student assessment data to improve instructional programs and services for students in all subgroup populations. Administrators provided limited information as to how they used assessment data to implement programs and services to assist underperforming ELL and low-income students.

The superintendent stated that once the district received the MCAS test results, the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability examined them. Following the examination of the MCAS test results, the assistant superintendent reviewed them with the superintendent, and then met individually with the principals to discuss the test results for their schools. Using TestWiz, the assistant superintendent and each principal analyzed the test data. Administrators

stated that at the elementary schools, the principals shared the MCAS test results at faculty meetings and later with teachers at grade-level meetings or with individual teachers. At the middle schools, principals also shared the MCAS test results at faculty meetings. Following the faculty meetings, the middle school principals reviewed the test results with teachers at grade-level and content area meetings. High school principals shared MCAS test results at faculty meetings and reviewed the results with department heads, who examined them with the teachers in their departments. The superintendent and the other central office administrators mentioned that all administrators and a select group of teachers had received training in TestWiz.

Administrators commented that staff not only analyzed MCAS test results, but also examined student data from assessment instruments such as DIBELS, GRADE, SRI, Galileo Math and benchmark tests. Administrators indicated that, among other things, the analysis of assessment results led to the examination of items such as the curriculum guides, time on task, existing interventions, and teaching strategies. Furthermore, the analysis led to the examination of how the district used the funds from grants such as Title I, special education, Smaller Learning Communities, and Striving Readers.

9. District and school leaders monitored student achievement data throughout the year, considered the goals identified in the DIP and the SIPs, and implemented or modified programs, policies, and services as required.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators reported that they monitored student achievement data during the year, and reviewed the goals in the DIP and SIPs that resulted in new programs or modifications to programs, services, and policies in the district. Administrators stated that the district completed math curriculum guides for pre-kindergarten and grades 6-8 in August 2006 and implemented them in 2006-2007. To improve student achievement in math at the middle school, the district introduced the Galileo Math assessments and benchmark tests.

Administrators mentioned that they anticipated the completion of a middle school ELA curriculum guide by August 2007. Also during the review period, to improve student achievement the district hired an ELL coach, two ELA coaches, two math coaches, and an

assistant for curriculum. In addition, the district hired a reading coach for each of its high schools from the Striving Readers grant.

Since the Department of Education had placed the Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School under corrective action, the district assigned one ELA and one math coach to this school. Also, in June 2006 the administration at the Fairview Middle School presented a report entitled "Three Major Initiatives for School Improvement" to address ways to meet AYP targets. Furthermore, administrators at the Fairview Middle School implemented two "Period 8" after-school programs, one for at-risk students and another for general homework.

At the high school, the Smaller Learning Communities grant provided funds to implement a team approach in grade 9 to assist students with the transition from grade 8. Also, in April of each year all grade 8 students took a departmental math test to determine placement in the algebra courses in grade 9.

10. The performance of the superintendent, administrators, and principals was annually evaluated based on MCAS results, other student achievement data, and the attainment of the goals in the DIP and the SIPs.

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

The school committee members stated that they did not evaluate the former superintendent during the review period since he resigned to become a superintendent in another district. Also, the school committee members indicated that they did not evaluate the former interim superintendent since the position lasted for a brief period. The school committee members reported that the current superintendent received an evaluation for his performance during 2005-2006.

A review of the superintendent's evaluation instrument indicated that it consisted of three sections: 1) general performance traits and characteristics; 2) performance factors derived from the job description, district's administrative philosophy, and critical work activities; and 3) specific district goals and objectives. The instrument included a five-point rating scale that ranged from distinguished to marginal. School committee members mentioned that each member

evaluated the superintendent using the agreed upon evaluation instrument and that the school committee chair compiled the information, wrote the final evaluation, and shared it with the superintendent. The superintendent concurred with the school committee's evaluation of him.

The superintendent commented that neither he nor the two former superintendents had evaluated any of the central office administrators or any of the principals during the review period. Also, the superintendent stated "There is nothing for administrators' evaluations since 2001." Interviews with the central office administrators and the principals confirmed the statements of the superintendent about evaluations of administrators and principals. A review of the personnel files of the central office administrators and the principals showed no formal evaluations of them by the superintendent.

The superintendent mentioned that for 2006-2007, he started an evaluation process of his administrators and principals. The process began with individual meetings with them in September and October to mutually agree on personal, school, and student performance goals. The second phase of the process involved a midyear meeting in January with each administrator and principal to review his or her written updates on the goals. According to the superintendent, the next phase of the evaluation process will consist of a meeting with each principal in May, and then the superintendent will write the evaluation of each administrator and principal. In addition, the superintendent stated that in 2007 the school committee would allow him to use a pool of money for pay raises for central office administrators and principals.

11. <u>The superintendent effectively delegated the educational and operational leadership of the schools to the principals and program directors and used student achievement data to assess the success of their leadership.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the administrators reported that the superintendent delegated the educational and operational leadership to the principals and program directors, the superintendents did not formally evaluate them. The superintendents did not use student achievement data to assess, in written performance evaluations, the success of the leadership of the administrators and principals. The superintendent acknowledged that none of the superintendents in Chicopee

completed written evaluations of the administrators and principals since 2001. The personnel files of these administrators and principals had no written evaluations for any of the years of the review period.

Principals mentioned that the superintendent expected them to develop their SIPs with the assistance of their school councils and to monitor the progress of each goal. Also, the principals indicated that the superintendent anticipated receiving from them proposals to implement new programs or to modify existing programs and services to improve student achievement based upon the analysis of student assessment data. In addition, the superintendent delegated to them the responsibility to prepare their proposed school budgets along with the rationale for their budget requests. Furthermore, principals commented that they had responsibility for screening, interviewing, and recommending candidates to fill vacant positions in their schools. Principals stated that the superintendent did not interview the finalist candidates recommended by the principals. The superintendent confirmed that he did not interview teacher candidates recommended for appointment by the principals.

12. The school committee and superintendent created a culture of collaboration and developed contracts and agreements that encouraged all stakeholders to work together to support and sustain improved student achievement.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the latter part of the review period, the school committee and the superintendent created a culture of collaboration and developed contracts and agreements that encouraged stakeholders to work together to improve student achievement. Interviewees commented about the "turmoil" in the district in the process to appoint a new superintendent for 2005-2006. With a new superintendent in place, interviewees indicated that the district had settled down and expressed optimism about the future. The interviewees remarked about the development of a new DIP for 2007-2010 by an expanded group of stakeholders, the construction of two new high schools, the initiative plan for the Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, and the preparation of math curriculum guides for grades preK-8. In addition, interviewees mentioned the district's hiring of ELL, ELA, math, and reading coaches, and the assistant for curriculum, the use of data in the

decision-making process, expanded use of assessment instruments to improve student achievement, and surveying of stakeholders to examine the issues of student attendance and dropouts.

The superintendent indicated that the district had seven employee unions/associations: 1) teachers; 2) unit "B" administrators (i.e., assistant principals, department heads, and coordinators); 3) nurses; 4) paraprofessionals; 5) secretaries and clerks; 6) custodians; and 7) cafeteria workers. Interviewees characterized the atmosphere surrounding negotiations as "collaborative," "professional," "smooth," and "a bit confrontational at times." According to the superintendent, the final settlement for the last three-year contracts with the seven employee unions amounted to 3.0 percent in year one; 3.25 percent in year two; and 3.25 percent in year three.

Representatives of the teachers' association informed EQA team members about the "significant decrease" in the number of grievances filed in the last year and a half of the review period. Also, the teacher association representatives talked about the improved communications with the current administration. The superintendent classified the individual agreements with the administrators and the principals as boiler plate contracts, and discussed the contracts in relation to the culture of the area.

13. <u>The superintendent created and disseminated a comprehensive safety plan in collaboration with the community and plans were reviewed annually with the police and fire departments prior to each school year. School and district safety plans were aligned.</u>

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence:

The superintendent and administrators commented about the district safety committee. This committee led by the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability included assistant principal representatives from the elementary, middle and high schools, a representative from the police and fire departments, emergency responders, a nurse, the school physician, the transportation supervisor, the maintenance director, and the food services director. According to the superintendent, this committee met monthly and examined the existing safety plans and protocols. Administrators mentioned the need to lock down five schools recently due to a

robbery in the area. Also, the administrators spoke favorably about the use of the Connect Ed system, whereby the superintendent telephones parents about the need to lock down some schools.

In addition, district and school personnel served on a committee that developed and periodically reviewed the City of Chicopee Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The plan consisted of four parts: 1) the basic plan; 2) the emergency management response organization; 3) the emergency management processes and protective procedures; and 4) natural and technological hazards. Principals reported that they reviewed evacuation plans with staff. Also, the principals mentioned that they distributed and reviewed with their staff the Chicopee Public Safety Procedures booklet. The booklet contained procedures pertaining to: a) bomb/threat/code blue; b) earthquake; c) building evacuation; d) fights/gangs/group violence; e) fire/explosion; f) hazardous materials; g) out of control student; h) suspected drugs/alcohol; i) severe thunderstorm/tornado; j) violence-weapons/hostage/code gray; k) stranger(s)/intruder(s); l) crisis intervention protocol; m) bomb threat procedure check list; and n) important telephone numbers.

The principals stated that security in their schools consisted primarily of locking all the doors, maintaining a voice box and buzzer system at the front door, signing in and out at the main office, use of visitor's passes and identification badges, and the installation of video cameras at the front door and in some corridors. In addition, each of the secondary schools had a school resource officer.

Standard II: Curriculum and Instruction											
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**Total**
Excellent											
Satisfactory				✓		✓					**2**
Needs Improvement	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
Unsatisfactory											

II. Curriculum and Instruction

The curricula and instructional practices in the district were developed and implemented to attain high levels of achievement for all students. They were aligned with components of the state curriculum frameworks and revised to promote higher levels of student achievement.

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The curriculum development process was underway in the district with particular progress in elementary and middle school math and plans to continue the work in elementary and middle English language arts.
- The district understood the importance of formative and summative assessments for measuring student progress against standards. The district had a full complement of such assessments in elementary ELA and middle school math; middle school ELA, high school math and ELA, and science at all levels were in need of development.
- Without developed curricula and assessments at several levels, administrators did not always have the tools to monitor horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum and the effectiveness of teachers' instruction
- The high schools received considerably lower ratings than the elementary and middle schools on many of the indicators in the EQA classroom observation tool.

Summary

At the beginning of the review period, the district had in place a curriculum that mostly consisted of lists of state framework learning standards, organized into a timeline by term. In 2004, the district hired an assistant superintendent for curriculum and professional development and undertook an ambitious plan for expansion of curriculum documents. At the time of the EQA

audit, the district had developed elementary and middle school math curricula and had plans to implement a new middle school English language arts (ELA) curriculum and to begin work on the elementary ELA curriculum. While these curriculum documents contained few references to assessments, the district was administering formative and summative assessments to measure the achievement and progress of all students in elementary ELA and math and in middle school math. Administrators planned to adopt similar assessments in the remaining tested content areas and at the high school level in the future.

The existing curriculum aligned with the state frameworks, but horizontal and vertical alignment within and across schools was only possible in those areas where the curriculum had been revised and expanded. At the elementary level, teachers achieved vertical and horizontal alignment in ELA and math by faithful implementation of the Houghton Mifflin programs in place in both content areas. The Galileo assessment system ensured horizontal alignment of the math curriculum at the middle school level.

The district provided considerable professional development around effective instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction and the three-tiered intervention model, but EQA examiners did not always observe these strategies implemented in classrooms. District personnel reported the availability of instructional technology such as the FastMath, Geometer Sketchpad, and Accelerated Reader software programs, in addition to graphing calculators and SmartBoards. However, EQA examiners observed the use of this technology in fewer than one third of the sample of classrooms that examiners visited.

In addition, while the district promoted effective instructional strategies, they were most often geared to instruction of students in the aggregate. Some of the strategies introduced were appropriate for special education students, including the Lindamood-Bell system and the Read 180 program, and the district increased the use of inclusion during the review period. However, the district was only beginning to address the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) and low-income students. It hired coaches for English language learner (ELL) students, in addition to math and ELA coaches, to support teachers in implementing specific strategies.

In those content areas in which formative assessment data were available, principals facilitated discussions with teachers in grade-level meetings about results disaggregated by classroom.

These discussions enabled teachers to gain perspective on the achievement of their own students and to learn from the strengths and successes of their colleagues.

During the review period, ELA and math instructional blocks were 90 minutes long, and the district increased ELA instructional time by 45 minutes to accommodate interventions. It introduced Read 180 to the curriculum at all levels, further adding ELA instructional time.

EQA examiners visited 54 classrooms and observed evidence of effective instructional practices, high expectations, and student engagement in the learning process most often at the elementary level and least often at the high school level. Interviewees indicated that curriculum oversight was lacking at the middle and high school levels, where teachers held more autonomy. Assessment data for use in monitoring instruction were not available in middle school ELA and in any content area at the high school level.

Indicators

1. The district implemented curricula for all grade levels in tested core content areas that clearly addressed all the components of the state curriculum frameworks. The curricula document contained, at a minimum, components that addressed: objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, articulation maps, and measurable outcomes or assessments.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district was in the process of updating and expanding curricula during the review period. In 2004, the district had "framework maps," which were listings by year and term of framework learning standards to be addressed. These provided teachers with little guidance as to what to do in their classrooms. The district did make one important move in 2003 – it adopted the Houghton Mifflin ELA and math series for grades K-5. These programs provided teachers with concrete lessons and assessments, although not yet connected to the state learning standards.

With the appointment of an assistant to the superintendent for curriculum and professional development in 2004, the district undertook the task of reviewing and revising curriculum at all levels and in all content areas. Teachers completed the elementary math curriculum at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, and the district began its implementation during the 2006-2007

school year. This document contained statements of what students were to know and be able to do as well as indications of whether teachers were to review, teach, enrich, or supplement objectives, references to Houghton Mifflin lessons, and state framework standards. The document did not include references to appropriate instructional strategies or assessments. However, administrators and teachers in interviews indicated that they used Houghton Mifflin benchmark assessments three times per year and the program unit tests. They also indicated that they were searching for additional formative assessments to use in elementary math.

The district completed its middle school math curriculum in the summer of 2006. This curriculum expanded upon what had been simply a list of topics, vocabulary words, and state learning standards by term. In place in 2006-2007 was a chart of student learning outcomes, state learning standards, and text references. The text references included the Glencoe texts as well as a number of supplementary materials since the Glencoe text did not cover much of what was required by the state frameworks. Teachers also received a day-by-day list of state learning standards to be covered. Although not listed in the curriculum document itself, the district at the same time implemented a Galileo assessment system developed cooperatively by state consultants, district staff, and Galileo consultants. This system provided for three benchmark tests and eight formative assessments in the course of the school year.

The math departments at both high schools had begun to work together, although common courses were frequently taught using different texts, and common midterm and final exams within and between schools were not in place.

The district was developing a new middle school ELA curriculum during 2006-2007 and expected to implement it during the 2007-2008 school year. The middle school ELA curriculum document in place during the review period was a segmented chart with everything broken down by language, composition, reading/literature, and media standards, but with no indication of how these elements and activities were to be integrated. The middle school teachers were using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) three times per year to measure students' comprehension ability.

The district planned to develop the elementary ELA curriculum next. During the review period, teachers worked with the Houghton Mifflin program and a curriculum that simply listed state

learning standards and district objectives, but established no connections between the state standards and the district-adopted ELA program. To measure accomplishment of the Houghton Mifflin ELA objectives, all teachers used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as well as Houghton Mifflin benchmark assessments.

In high school English, the supervisors at both buildings worked together. However, during the review period, while the departments had established expectations for format and content of midyear and final exams, each teacher continued to develop his or her own assessments. Without common objectives and assessments, administrators and teachers lacked information as to student achievement of district objectives.

In science, teachers had made progress regarding the assignment of topics to particular grade levels, but planned considerable curriculum development.

2. The district's curricula in all tested areas were aligned horizontally and vertically.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the review period, the curriculum documents available at all levels did not provide teachers with the frame of objectives, resources, and assessments which they needed to implement a common curriculum for all students. At the elementary level, the alignment came from the implementation of the Houghton Mifflin ELA and math programs as well as the administration of the DIBELS and the program benchmark assessments in both ELA and math. In 2006-2007, the district implemented a more detailed elementary math curriculum that made connections between the state learning standards and the adopted math program. However, discussions with principals and teachers revealed that following the implementation of Reading First grants in 2004, all district elementary schools hewed closely to the implementation schedule of the two Reading First schools. Common planning time reinforced the alignment of what teachers taught. As a result, there was horizontal curriculum alignment in elementary ELA. In addition, the expanded elementary math curriculum was in place for 2006-2007. With regard to vertical alignment, again because of increasing faithfulness to the adopted ELA and math programs, there was vertical alignment at the elementary level in both content areas. A

curriculum in need of development and lacking current textbooks meant there was little alignment in elementary science.

The middle school math curriculum, until implementation of the new curriculum in 2006-2007, consisted of a list of topics and vocabulary words. This brought little alignment either horizontally or vertically. This situation was exacerbated by the absence of an assessment system to measure student achievement. Rather, teachers had the autonomy to and did design their own courses. The Galileo assessment system brought horizontal alignment to the math curriculum in 2006-2007. The middle school ELA curriculum, while connected to the state frameworks and somewhat more specific, provided teachers with no guidance as to how to implement its several strands simultaneously. Teachers at each middle school had different texts available for implementation of the curriculum. The resulting lack of alignment led the district to move forward in revising the middle school ELA curriculum during 2006-2007. In science, the middle school curriculum stated what students were to know and be able to do, but made no connections to the common individual texts that addressed the various topics in its curriculum. In addition, there was no common assessment system.

At the high schools, English supervisors reported there were common grade-level requirements for writing. At the same time, administrators and teachers confirmed that individual teachers had some autonomy regarding the specifics of what they taught and the assessments they administered. In addition, textbooks varied across schools. The result was limited agreement as to what students should be taught and a lack of an assessment system to measure whether students had learned it.

Some measure of vertical alignment of curriculum as students moved from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school came from inclusion on curriculum teams of teachers from other levels. Also, districtwide literacy committees address alignment issues.

3. Each school in the district had a curriculum leader who oversaw the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of delivery of the district's curricula that focused on improvement for all of its students.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Building principals readily agreed they were the curriculum leaders in their buildings. Middle school principals got support from the designated vice principal for curriculum, and high school principals from their part-time content area supervisors. All reported regular walk-throughs, although it was unclear how focused these were and how the administrator followed up with the teacher afterward. Curriculum oversight at the middle and high schools was a particular challenge due to what leaders referred to as the "culture of independence" among some teachers, who felt they had the right to teach what they determined to be important. In addition, without a fully developed curriculum and formative and summative assessments, except for initial implementation of Galileo in middle school math in 2006-2007, middle and high school principals lacked the data analysis tools to determine the effectiveness of the delivery of the curriculum.

At the elementary level during the review period, the Houghton Mifflin ELA and math programs stood in place of a fully developed curriculum and had been in place since 2003. Staff reported that during the program adoption process they had determined that these two programs represented a close fit with what was required by the state frameworks. Since the adoption, interviewees reported that the district had put in place some effective tools to monitor the consistency and effectiveness of delivery of these two programs. The DIBELS was administered three times a year for progress monitoring, as well as the SRI and, in most elementary schools, the GRADE. Individual student results from the DIBELS were available to principals and teachers through an online portal, AIMSWeb. In addition, DIBELS results could be disaggregated by teacher. Interviews with teachers and principals revealed that they reviewed these assessment results and put interventions in place to address recognized student needs.

4. Each school provided active leadership and support for effective instructional strategies, techniques, and methods grounded in research and focused on improved achievement for all students.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Professional development in effective instructional strategies occurred at both the district and school levels during the review period. Much of this professional development was focused on

improving the achievement of students in the aggregate, rather than that of specific subgroup populations. The exception was that the district addressed the instructional needs of special education students by introducing the Lindamood-Bell system and the Read 180 program. District ELA, ELL, and math coaches, and in one case a school ELA and math coach, supported classroom teachers as they implemented specific instructional strategies.

Interviewees reported that the district had been providing professional development in differentiating instruction since 2003 and that this focus would continue. They felt this instructional strategy had "taken root" in the district. However, EQA examiners saw examples of differentiated instruction in only 37 percent of classrooms observed districtwide, in 60 percent at the elementary level, in zero percent at the middle school level, and in 17 percent at the high school level.

Middle school principals reported a year-long focus on teaching in a standards-based environment to address teacher resistance, and administrators reported success. Also, at one middle school and some elementary schools, administrators reported the introduction of the Step-up-to-Writing program.

The high schools had participated in a High Schools That Work grant, a Smaller Learning Communities grant, and most recently a Striving Readers grant. Implementation of each of these grants brought professional development on numerous research-based instructional strategies.

At the elementary level, as a result of using formative assessments to determine student instructional needs, principals focused professional development on presenting effective interventions to address these needs. They reported a degree of satisfaction with the array of ELA interventions available to teachers, but were investigating additional math interventions.

Finally, the ELL coach reported providing category training for a number of teachers in sheltered English immersion (SEI).

5. The district had an established, documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of curricula that was based on valid research, the analysis of the MCAS test results, and other assessments, and focused on improved achievement for all subgroups.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district did not have an established, documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of curricula. Until the appointment of the assistant to the superintendent for curriculum and professional development in 2004, little work had been done to develop curriculum. Since that appointment, there had been a great deal of curriculum development activity. The math curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels had been revised and expanded, and implemented in 2006-2007. Revisions to the middle school ELA curriculum were underway in 2006-2007 and were scheduled for implementation in 2007-2008. The district then planned to turn its attention to the revision of the elementary ELA curriculum.

When questioned, administrators and teachers discussed curriculum as constantly evolving. Plans were already in place to review the new elementary and middle school math curricula during the summer of 2007, after their first full year of implementation. However, the district lacked a structure for curriculum oversight. There was no standing curriculum committee or plan for phased systematic review of curriculum.

6. The district analyzed student achievement data and allocated instructional time in the tested core content areas that focused on improved rates of proficiency for all students.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district met the state requirements for time on learning. Throughout the review period, elementary ELA and math were scheduled as 90-minute blocks. Interviewees reported that during the review period the district increased elementary ELA instructional time by 45 minutes to ensure that interventions did not interfere with regular instructional time. In this way, the district made ELA instruction a priority and to a certain degree subordinated math and science instruction. In addition, the introduction of Read 180 at all levels added to ELA instructional

time. In effect, those students involved with Read 180 received an additional 45 minutes of instructional time.

Also, the district had moved during the review period to more inclusion of special education students in regular education classes. This access to the mainstream curriculum represented an important adjustment in the quality of their instructional time. Finally, at Fairview Middle School at-risk students were required to attend a period 8 math class after school.

7. Appropriate educational technology was available and used as an integral part of the instructional process.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Observations by EQA examiners revealed an average of 2.6 modern computers per classroom. Interviewees reported that many software programs were available to support classroom computer instruction, including FastMath, Geometer Sketchpad, and Accelerated Reader. The recently opened Chicopee High School was well equipped with technology, and both high schools reported adding a significant number of graphing calculators during the review period. In addition, Bellamy Middle School had installed SmartBoards in a number of classrooms. Examiners observed these in use. Also, the introduction of Read 180 at all levels significantly increased the use of technology for the delivery of instruction.

Interviewees reported the regular availability of professional development in the use of instructional technology in classrooms. However, EQA examiners observed the appropriate use of classroom technology in only 26 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, in 30 percent at the elementary level, in 25 percent at the middle school level, and in 17 percent at the high school level.

8. District and school leaders actively monitored teachers' instruction for evidence of practices that reflected high expectations for students' work and mastery.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Central office administrators and building principals reported that they conducted walk-throughs frequently, and they cited numerous indicators of high expectations on the part of the teachers, among them posted student work, student engagement, higher level thinking skills, and wait time. In addition, the district's commitment to analyzing results from formative assessments, already accomplished at the elementary level and being introduced at the middle school level, indicated its determination to know and address the achievement levels of each of its students. Also, elementary and some middle school teachers reported that principals demonstrated high expectations for students when they facilitated grade-level meetings during which teachers together looked at student achievement disaggregated by classroom. The discussions focused on determining what accounted for the variations in student achievement in different classrooms.

EQA examiners observed positive instances of high expectations in 64 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, in 73 percent at the elementary level, in 63 percent at the middle school level, and in 44 percent at the high school level.

9. Through the ongoing use of formative and summative student assessment data, the district monitored the effectiveness of teachers' instruction and provided resources, professional development, and support to improve and maintain high levels of instructional quality and delivery.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Central office administrators, as well as elementary and middle school principals, indicated during interviews an understanding of the power of formative and summative assessment data as a tool for monitoring the effectiveness of teachers' instruction. A full array of formative and summative assessment data were available in elementary ELA through the use of the DIBELS, GRADE, SRI, and Houghton Mifflin benchmark assessments. Principals had Houghton Mifflin benchmark assessment data for math achievement. The DIBELS could be and was disaggregated by teacher, and principals as well as teachers had access to the information. Principals reported that teachers in grade-level teams examined their own and other teachers' results and noted and discussed variations in achievement levels by classroom. This activity in itself was effective in

motivating teachers to provide more effective instruction. In addition, principals requested that ELA and math coaches work with individual teachers needing support.

In middle schools, Galileo was implemented to provide formative and summative math achievement data in 2006-2007. These data were also disaggregated by teacher and examined at grade-level team meetings.

Administrators did not report directly using these data in the evaluation of teachers. Formative and summative assessment data were not yet available for middle school ELA or at the high school in any content area.

10. Random observations of classrooms revealed that teachers used a variety of effective techniques and strategies to address differences in learning style, and that instruction was student-focused, reflected high expectations, and called for engaged learning and participation on the part of students.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 54 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted at the district's 14 schools as follows: 30 at the elementary schools, 12 at the middle schools, and 12 at the high schools. In total, the EQA examiners observed 31 ELA classrooms, 13 math classrooms, and 10 classrooms of other subjects.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 85 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 100 percent at the elementary level, 75 percent at the middle school level, and 58 percent at the high school level.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that require the use of higher order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off-task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it should be age-appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged. The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 76 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 87 percent at the elementary level, 65 percent at the middle school level, and 58 percent at the high school level.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 64 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 73 percent at the elementary level, 63 percent at the middle school level, and 44 percent at the high school level.

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be

attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 65 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 77 percent at the elementary level, 64 percent at the middle school level, and 35 percent at the high school level.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 75 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 89 percent at the elementary school level, 72 percent at the middle school level, and 42 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	19	7	4	30	19.2	0.5	81	78	7.4
Middle	7	4	1	12	20.7	0.2	25	21	11.8
High	5	2	5	12	18.2	0.9	24	17	12.8
Total	31	13	10	54	19.3	0.5	130	116	9.0

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Elementary					
Total observations	120	236	87	139	80
Maximum possible	120	270	120	180	90
Avg. percent of observations	100%	87%	73%	77%	89%
Middle					
Total observations	36	70	30	46	26
Maximum possible	48	108	48	72	36
Avg. percent of observations	75%	65%	63%	64%	72%
High					
Total observations	28	63	21	25	15
Maximum possible	48	108	48	72	36
Avg. percent of observations	58%	58%	44%	35%	42%
Total					
Total observations	184	369	138	210	121
Maximum possible	216	486	216	324	162
Avg. percent of observations	85%	76%	64%	65%	75%

Standard III: Assessment and Program Evaluation									
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
Excellent									
Satisfactory	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	**6**
Needs Improvement				✓	✓				**2**
Unsatisfactory									

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

The district and school leadership used student assessment results, local benchmarks, and other pertinent data to improve student achievement and inform all aspects of its decision-making including: policy development and implementation, instructional programs, assessment practices, procedures, and supervision.

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- Particularly at the elementary school level, the district used student assessment results to identify students experiencing learning difficulties and used that information to provide learning support.
- The district used a number of vehicles, including cable television and web-based parent portals, to provide information about student achievement to parents and community members.
- Following analysis of student MCAS data, the district instituted support programs for some subgroup populations, particularly students with disabilities, and eventually expanded those with the most promising results to all students in need.
- The district conducted two levels of walk-throughs, both of which focused on supervision of curriculum delivery and instructional techniques and were used to inform professional development planning at the district level.

Summary

The district's assessment program was beginning to prove its usefulness to instructional delivery. Student assessment was in frequent use at the elementary level, and less so at the middle and high school levels. All district elementary teachers became accustomed to using the DIBELS. In

addition, most elementary schools also used the SRI as part of the Read 180 grant to assess student performance in ELA. All schools analyzed students' MCAS test results, with some schools completing the analysis in-house and others receiving their results from district contractors. For the 2007-2008 school year, administrators reported that all schools would complete the analysis in-house. Some schools used additional assessment tools, including the Stanford Achievement Test, to measure progress among at-risk students.

The middle and high schools' approach to assessment was less sophisticated. Schools at both levels focused on the analysis of MCAS test scores, and administrators reported "a real strength" in item analysis. The middle schools used assessments associated with the FastMath curriculum, Houghton Mifflin AYP, and the Galileo Math assessment system. The high schools used the GMADE, but mainly for course and level placement, and the Chicopee Comprehensive High School participated in the High Schools That Work program, which required administering a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) examination to some graduating seniors.

The elementary level also exceeded the other levels in the sophistication of the evaluation of programs. In general, the district was just beginning to evaluate and improve programs by using assessment results to measure program effectiveness. The district evaluated support programs such as Title I and special education using pre- and post-test results, and parent and staff surveys. Few other programs were systematically evaluated, and the district was adopting common examinations at midyear and year end. In the elementary schools, teachers used the DIBELS and SRI formatively to assess student progress. In math, most elementary school program assessment efforts were based upon the use of published assessments accompanying textbook programs. At the middle school level, the district used the Galileo assessment system to determine student achievement in math. All schools relied heavily on analysis of MCAS test results to provide annual snapshots of curriculum effectiveness.

Through participating in the Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, central office administrators began conducting districtwide walk-throughs of classrooms. Its continued use of this practice helped in planning professional development activities, as well as identifying instructional issues, such as classroom management and curriculum alignment, that school principals addressed. Modifications to curriculum and

instructional services as a result of assessment include increased instructional time for ELA, the replacement of a foreign language position with a math teacher at the middle school level, and the reassignment of special education teachers at the high school level.

Indicators

1. District assessment policies and practices were characterized by the continuous collection, analysis, and use of student assessment results by district and school leadership.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used many forms of data that it regularly analyzed and that school and district leadership used on a regular basis. One particular piece of evidence provided by the district was a document entitled "The Superintendent's Annual Statistical Report," dated October 2006. This report contained MCAS results for all grade levels in all school buildings over the years 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006, consisting of the percentage of students scoring at each performance level. In addition, it listed enrollment figures, retention rates, individual school budgets, number of home-educated students, building damage costs, student suspensions and expulsions, in-school accidents, and employee accidents. There was no subgroup analysis specifically included, although teachers reported that they felt that the district possessed "a real strength" in using item analysis of MCAS results. Interviewees cited several changes in curriculum, instruction, and time allocation as a result.

In addition to the MCAS results, the district used other student assessment tools on a routine basis. At the elementary school level, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills and the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation were used in an increasing number of the schools at least three times per year to assess reading performance. The GMADE was pilot tested at the Bowe School to assess math performance at the middle school. Elementary schools that participated in the Read 180 grant used the Scholastic Reading Inventory to measure reading achievement. The same assessment was used for students matriculating from grade 5 to 6 and from grade 8 to 9 to determine the most advantageous placement for students. During early elementary years, the SRI was also used to inform instruction among students who were receiving reading interventions.

In addition, some middle school students were receiving assessment services using tools associated with the FastMath curriculum, some students' progress was monitored using the Houghton Mifflin AYP assessment, and some were monitored using the Lindamood-Bell assessments. Students receiving services funded by the Striving Readers grant at the secondary level were assessed using the Stanford 9 Diagnostic Test, and the middle school was using the Galileo Math assessment system four times per year to determine progress toward benchmarks. In addition, at the high school the district used a locally developed math assessment for placement purposes in grade 9, but in 2006-2007 the changeover was made to GMADE to ensure greater reliability and validity. Chicopee Comprehensive High School participated in the High Schools That Work (HSTW) program during the review period. One feature of that national support program for education reform was the administration on a semiannual basis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to a randomly selected population of graduating seniors, accompanied by a student and staff survey. This test was evaluated and normed against a national population. The survey was interpreted locally. During the 2006-2007 school year, Chicopee High School also joined the program, but it had not yet conducted the assessment at the time of the review.

2. District and school leadership required all students to participate in all appropriate assessments.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period the district required all students to participate in all appropriate assessments. Both district students in the aggregate and subgroups participated at or above the required level.

The district reported that on testing days students who were not in school received personal telephone calls from the school office, and on occasion individual rides to school were provided. Administrators reported conducting assemblies for grade 10 students and making widespread use of the Connect Ed telephone messaging system. In addition, according to administrators, the schools sent letters home to the families of students who had missed one or more of the testing days and were required to complete the missing section(s).

Students with disabilities were required to obtain medical documentation in order to be excused from the testing process. Administrators reported that between one and two percent of special education students participated in the alternative MCAS assessment.

3. Through the use of district-generated reporting instruments and report cards, district and school leaders implemented assessment systems to measure the attainment of goals, progress, and effectiveness. These assessment reports were focused on student achievement and were communicated to all appropriate staff and community members.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used several different reporting instruments to provide information on the results from its assessments to parents and other interested stakeholders. The district immediately reported MCAS results to parents by mail. In addition, regular reports were made in presentations to the school committee in scheduled, posted, and televised evening meetings.

Each of the schools had regular monthly newsletters that were sent home to students' parents. In an interview with parents serving on the school improvement councils of several district schools, parents requested improved communication with the schools. Parents reported that the "backpack network" was effective through grade 6, but wished that the newsletters were also posted online. In each school administrators reported that MCAS night was an annual event, although it was not well attended. One administrator reported combining the MCAS night with a Bingo-for-Books event to increase parental participation. Other administrators reported success with coffee and cookie meetings, and the Comprehensive High School served a spaghetti supper. Schools that combined parent conferences with distribution of report cards reported attendance rates of 97 to 100 percent.

Reports by each school to the school committee began in January of each year. During 2006, the schools were presented in two groups: those making AYP, and those that were 'in need of improvement.' In addition, there was a regular television show that was broadcast on local access cable television. The program, called "School Days," was televised "live" and had what was described as "good viewership." The administrator who regularly hosted the program reported frequently being recognized in the community.

The district also used other forms of technology to report school results to parents. At the high schools, teachers used a program called Grade Book Wizard to provide parents with a portal they could use to access their child's school performance. Other schools used the IPASS portal for the same purpose. The program also allowed parents to review their student's homework performance, missing assignments, upcoming projects, and other academic landmarks. Other schools reported plans to use similar parent interfaces, but were awaiting technological updates that will accompany the telecommunication department's relocation to the new Chicopee Comprehensive High School building in 2007-2008.

4. In addition to the MCAS test, the district and school leadership regularly used local benchmarks and other assessment tools to measure student progress and analyzed and disseminated the results in a timely manner to appropriate staff.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district used benchmarks to measure student progress in several ways, but not at all levels or in all curricular areas. Using the DIBELS, progress toward the reading benchmarks was measured three times per year at the elementary level. Math benchmarks were addressed in September using the Houghton Mifflin benchmark assessment tools, and writing portfolios were maintained throughout. During the 2006-2007 school year the district began work on districtwide writing rubrics. In addition, all elementary schools used Houghton Mifflin reading benchmarks and AYP. In all of the elementary schools, common unit tests accompanying the program were used to measure student achievement against the published standards, more or less aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

At the secondary level, less evidence was presented that ongoing assessment was being practiced in a systemic way. There were summative assessments at the end of some courses, but with the exception of some common midterm examinations, there were few formative assessments in place. The district used writing samples across the curriculum to measure progress, but not against benchmarks. There were no common textbooks, but a common selection was planned for the high schools.

5. The district and school leadership used student assessment results and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional and support programs.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district used student achievement results and other pertinent data to measure instructional and support programs, particularly at the elementary level. In all of the elementary schools, teachers used both the DIBELS and the SRI to identify students who were not making sufficient progress in the reading programs. Once identified, three levels of intervention were available, both for regular and special education students. During the 2001-2002 school year, Read 180 became a support program in the district. Next, the Lindamood-Bell program was pilot tested in the special education classes, and then expanded into the regular education population. The most recent support structure for those students was the FastMath program, introduced in 2003-2004. In all cases, internal assessments administered at both the beginning and end of the interventions were used as measures of effectiveness.

Student assessment results, attendance and discipline records, and daily performance were used to identify students for whom the individual student team (IST) was called upon to provide a response to intervention. The IST was constituted on an individual basis to respond to the conditions challenging the student, but always included the adjustment counselor, classroom teacher, and other classroom teachers as available. The IST also served as the pre-referral team for the special education program. Each building at every level used the IST structure for individual student support. Improvement in the student assessment results, attendance and discipline data, and daily classroom performance was taken as evidence of successful intervention.

The Title I program used the DIBELS administered at the beginning and end of the year to determine both eligibility and progress. Other support programs were changed at the elementary level as well. During the budget development process, school administrators justified requests for paraprofessionals and other support personnel using the number of students served and time of intervention data from the prior year, along with pre- and post-test data.

Program assessment at the middle school was less formalized. Administrators reported that teachers largely relied on MCAS results and assessments built into particular instructional programs to determine the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction. The middle school had begun a grant funded experiment with the Galileo assessment program for math and reported encouraging results. The high schools relied primarily on interpretation of the MCAS results.

6. The district and school leadership regularly engaged in internal and external audits or assessments to inform the effectiveness of its program implementation and service delivery systems. The data from these assessments were provided to all appropriate staff.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district underwent a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the Department of Education during 2002 and again in 2005. The first report cited a number of compliance issues that were substantially addressed by the time of the second report.

The special education department conducted an internal audit during the spring of 2006. As a result of this audit, the student liaisons were changed from supervisors to team chairpersons assigned by the district.

The Title I program underwent an annual audit during the entire review period. A comprehensive report form was forwarded to each Title I principal, with instructions that a team of respondents, including at least one special education teacher, one ELL teacher, and three to five other teachers in addition to the principal, complete it. The draft form was then referred to the school council for review, before returning it to the central office for final submission to the Department of Education. In addition, the high schools participated in regular visits from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The Comprehensive High School participated in the High Schools That Work alternate year assessment, and Chicopee High School planned to participate in it as well beginning in 2007-2008.

During the review period, central office administrators also implemented a program of focused and documented walk-throughs. Initially begun as a part of the PIM process required of underperforming schools, the process, described as “mostly supervisory,” took hold within the

district and was expanded to include all schools. At least once per month central office personnel inspected a targeted school, deciding in advance what to look for, and spent 20 minutes in each classroom taking notes. Following the walk-through, the central office team would meet with the building principal outlining the results of the review. The principal then followed up by providing written or verbal feedback to teachers, and sometimes by carrying out further walk-throughs. Administrators reported that the results of these walk-throughs were valuable in planning professional development activities for the staff, although other issues were recognized as a result as well. In one math classroom, administrators identified a classroom management issue. In another classroom, the teacher had difficulty connecting content with the state framework standard. The respective principals corrected these problems.

Each principal also had a protocol for conducting supervisory walk-throughs. A written checklist that the principal could file but which could not be used for teacher evaluation purposes were used in these walk-throughs.

7. The district and school leadership annually reviewed student assessment results and other pertinent data to maximize effectiveness in assigning staff, prioritizing goals, and allocating time and resources.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Annual reviews of student assessment data resulted in changes in assigning staff, prioritizing goals and objectives in the School Improvement Plans, and allocating time and resources across the district. At the elementary level, districtwide adjustments were made to the amount of time devoted to ELA, increasing instructional time for students receiving reading interventions from 90 to 135 minutes per day. In other schools, students taking part in the Read 180 program also received the additional 45 minutes of daily instruction in ELA.

Both of the district's middle schools were under corrective action plans approved by the Board of Education. As a part of that effort, the use of data was mandated to review staffing changes. At Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, for example, one foreign language teaching position was eliminated and replaced by an additional math teacher. This effort was intended to improve math assessment scores. At Chicopee Comprehensive High School, special education

teachers were reassigned from special education to specific academic departments, allowing them more access to the tested curricula. The Stefanik School also experienced staff changes, and the Fairview expected changes soon. The superintendent reported plans for four voluntary and three involuntary transfers for the 2007–2008 school year based upon student assessment results.

8. District and school leadership routinely used program evaluation results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services to continuously improve the delivery of instruction and student achievement.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

District administrators described the pilot testing of the Language Exclamation program. This experiment ended in failure at the elementary level, and the entire program was moved to the middle school. Results at that level were reportedly much better. The Houghton Mifflin reading and math programs were adopted in 2004, bringing consistency to district instruction, which had previously used a variety of programs and resources. The adoption of Read 180 was based upon a review of student assessment results as well.

At the middle school level, administrators cited the after-school program, and the addition of one math, one ELA, and one ELL coach. Each of these staff additions resulted from ongoing outside audits, according to administrators. In addition, district leadership also cited the Smaller Learning Communities grant that was in place at Chicopee High School following a trial at the Comprehensive High School, and the newly adopted Striving Readers program, begun in 2006-2007, as other examples of new programs designed to improve the delivery of instruction and student achievement.

Standard IV: Human Resource Management and Professional Development														
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**Total**
Excellent														
Satisfactory	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	**7**
Needs Improvement		✓	✓		✓			✓		✓				**5**
Unsatisfactory									✓					**1**

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The district identified, attracted and recruited effective personnel, and structured its environment to support, develop, improve, promote and retain qualified and effective professional staff who were successful in advancing achievement for all students.

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- During the review period, district staff completed one evaluation of a central office administrator and the school committee completed an evaluation of the current superintendent. District leadership conducted no evaluations of principals or other central office administrators during this period.
- According to data submitted to the EQA by the district, 620 of 674 teachers had appropriate Massachusetts licensure, leaving 54 unlicensed persons in classrooms, with 22 of those on waiver, eight holding licensure but not in the subject area, and 24 working in vacant positions.
- The EQA team found little or no evidence that the district measured the effectiveness of its professional development program in promoting student achievement. In addition, the team found limited evidence that the district used data analysis or tools to identify the specific needs and strategies necessary to improve the achievement of low-performing subpopulations such as ELL, special education, and low-income students.
- In interviews, administrators and teachers generally agreed that the district's mentoring program for first year teachers was comprehensive, supportive, and effective.

- The EQA visiting team found that during the review period the district's personnel office functioned efficiently and competently, and that the district's professional development budget and workshop offerings were substantial.

Summary

During the review period, the Chicopee Public Schools engaged in professional and equitable practices for the identification, recruitment, and hiring of effective educational staff. Central office and school administrators attended job fairs and formed cooperative relationships with local colleges and universities, such as Framingham State College, to identify and recruit the most qualified applicants for teaching positions. They also welcomed student teachers and practicum students from various higher education institutions to work in many of the schools in the district. Despite these efforts, administrators reported that it was still a challenge to find minority candidates and to hire sufficient numbers of certified teachers to fill vacancies, especially in the areas of math, science, and special education. Recent teacher licensure data indicated that of the 674 teachers employed in the district, 54 were uncertified, and fewer than half of these were on waiver. Almost all teachers on waiver made substantial annual progress toward or completed certification requirements. The district reported that 27 of 28 administrators were certified.

The district offered professional development programs that supported the improvement of paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators during the review period. The mentoring program paired first-year teachers with an experienced teacher mentor and provided a two-day orientation before the start of the school year, followed by required monthly meetings and ongoing support from their mentors. Principals matched experienced teachers who were new to the district with a district veteran for support. Central office administrators matched first-year principals with an experienced principal or central office administrator. Additionally at the elementary level, new administrators reported benefiting from the information shared online by all elementary principals through the "e-group." Assistant principals and districtwide administrators reported that they had no mentors.

Central office administrators assessed professional development needs by surveying teachers and paraprofessionals, reviewing district and school improvement plans, and auditing grant requirements. They compiled this information each school year to form a Staff Development

Plan along with an activities calendar that met the district's professional development goals while also meeting the needs of individuals and schools. The district offered training for teaching content, using support strategies, and implementing schoolwide initiatives or grants. Topics included TestWiz, Performance Improvement Mapping, AIMSWeb Progress Monitoring and Response to Intervention System/DIBELS, Galileo, Lindamood-Bell, and SRI. Administrators explained that the district trained almost all teachers and paraprofessionals in approaches to use with special education students, and they acknowledged that many staff working with ELL students received no training during the review period in sheltered English immersion and other programs. Content coaches supported embedded professional development in the elementary and middle schools. During the review period, the district adequately supported professional development offerings, but it relied excessively on unpredictable grant funding for this purpose.

During the review period, district administrators completed teacher evaluations according to the teacher contract and two central office administrators received evaluations. Administrators described the teacher evaluation as a checklist they completed in a timely fashion, and expressed displeasure with their inability to measure the teacher's impact on student achievement with the current instrument. In examining a random sample of 42 personnel folders, EQA staff found 37 teacher evaluations completed. Almost all were informative, but only two were conducive to professional growth or overall effectiveness. The remaining five folders belonged to first-year teachers whose evaluations were not yet completed. Superintendents completed no principal evaluations during the review period. The superintendent and principals stated during interviews that principals submitted goals and participated in two goal conferences with the superintendent during the 2006-2007 school year. A central office administrator completed one subordinate central office administrator's evaluation in 2005, and the school committee completed one evaluation of the current superintendent in 2006.

Indicators

1. The district's policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of professional staff resulted in the employment of an effective teaching force that advanced student achievement.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews, school administrators responded to questions about the process that they used to hire teachers, and the responses of school administrators agreed substantially with those of central office administrators. District staff posted approved vacancies internally and advertised them in local newspapers. For vacancies in schools, principals reviewed applicant folders, formed interview teams, conducted interviews, and recommended candidates for hire. Principals indicated that central office administrators respected their authority in the hiring of staff, although on occasion they had to accept a candidate whom they had not recommended. Where vacancies in district programs existed, such as special education, the principal and director collaborated and arrived at a consensus for hiring. Many respondents mentioned the inclusion of teachers and relevant specialists on interview teams.

District administrators acknowledged that it was difficult to find minority applicants and teachers with reading, science, or special education certification. To recruit minority teachers, central office and school administrators attended job fairs and highlighted the need for bilingual candidates. One principal reported that they currently had sufficient minority staff when she included the paraprofessionals who speak Spanish. Administrators reported that they contacted colleges or found qualified candidates from college or university student teachers when seeking to fill vacancies, such as reading, science, or special education. With respect to administrator vacancies, the superintendent shared that the district had very few minority applicants and that this fact puzzled him. He hoped to see more minority or bilingual applicants for future vacancies.

Several principals reported finding teachers who improved student achievement. One principal shared that observing college practicum students teach was helpful in finding talent. Principals added that they looked for energy, enthusiasm, dedication, life experiences, and a positive attitude.

2. <u>All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to the documentation presented by the district to EQA, 27 administrators held the correct license for their position and one did not. An EQA check for updated certification of

current administrators revealed 21 certified principals, directors, and/or superintendents out of 22 administrators at this level. The school business manager was uncertified.

An EQA check on teaching certification revealed that the district verified that teachers possessed updated Massachusetts certification and verified with the DOE the waiver status of those not certified. According to district documents, 620 out of 674 teachers held appropriate Massachusetts licensure. Of the 54 unlicensed teaching positions, 22 were teachers on waiver, eight were teachers holding licensure but not in the subject area, and 24 were staff substituting in vacancies. According to interviewees, the district supported teachers hired on waiver through its mentoring program. Through the Chicopee/Elms Partnership, the school committee approved district payment for the cost of courses at Our Lady of the Elms College to help teachers obtain certification through a master's degree program.

3. In the event of unfilled positions, professional staff were hired on professional waivers and were provided mentoring and support to attain the standard of substantial annual progress toward appropriate licensure.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In documents submitted to the EQA, the district reported 22 unlicensed teachers employed on waiver. According to district and school administrators and teachers, principals assigned a mentor to all first-year teachers, including those working on a waiver. ELA and math coaches provided additional support to waiver teachers through after-school tutoring on the Massachusetts Tests of Educator Licensure (MTEL). The district personnel office provided lists to remind principals of the teachers at their school on waivers. Principals provided encouragement and tracked the progress of waiver teachers toward certification. Administrators reported that most teachers on waivers completed the requirements for certification; however, on occasion principals terminated waiver teachers who failed to make substantial annual progress. In addition to the 22 unlicensed teachers on a waiver, the district had 24 vacant positions. It was unclear whether those vacancies constituted instructional positions, as was the licensure status of persons currently substituting in them.

An EQA examination of randomly pulled personnel files found 37 out of 42 teachers certified, with the five uncertified teachers on waivers. One of the five waiver teachers requested a waiver for a third year.

4. The district provided teachers and administrators who were new to the district or their assignments with coaches or mentors in their respective roles and included an initial orientation that addressed the importance of the assessment and use of student data.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The EQA team confirmed during interviews with administrators and teachers that all first year teachers had a mentor. The principal matched a mentor with each beginning teacher, made the recommendation to hire mentors, and ensured that all mentors received district training. In interviews, teachers involved complimented the district's mentor program, which provided an initial orientation for all teachers new to the district. The orientation included an overview of classroom management procedures, differentiated instruction, and curriculum and assessment issues presented by the ELA and math coaches. After the orientation, beginning teachers participated in mandatory monthly training and received ongoing mentor support on key topics. According to principals, there was no shortage of quality mentors. Principals assigned "go to" staff members for experienced teachers who were not new to teaching but were new to the district. Some of these teachers attended beginning teacher training on topics of interest to them.

District administrators assigned mentors to new principals. During the review period, new assistant principals and other administrators new to their positions had no mentors. The mentoring for new principals was less formal than the mentoring program for teachers, with new principals contacting their mentor on an "as needed" basis. New elementary principals also accessed mentoring from all elementary principals through the "e-group," a formal gathering of the elementary principals who met as a subset of the regularly scheduled administrative meetings.

5. The district's professional development programs included development of data analysis skills and the use of item analysis and disaggregated data to address all students' achievement.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Three of the four goals in the Staff Development Plan for FY 2006 related to data analysis skills and student achievement. Professional development for goal two focused on "increasing teachers' expertise in teaching to high standards aligned with the district and state." Goal three stressed professional development "that will result in increased student achievement and narrowing student achievement gaps." In goal four, the district endeavored to "use effective assessment tools to link teacher training to student outcomes and achievement as a measurement of the effectiveness of professional development training." District staff met these goals by providing TestWiz and Performance Improvement Mapping training for all administrators, supervisors except for special education supervisors, and ELA and math coaches. They also trained all grades K-3 staff in AIMSWeb/DIBELS assessments, all middle school staff in Galileo online benchmark and formative assessments, all special education staff in Lindamood-Bell assessments, and all grades K-12 staff in Scholastic Reading Inventory online. In addition, ELA and math coaches provided embedded professional development on data analysis to improve student achievement to staff at all levels during grade level/content area meetings, with emphasis on the use of the aforementioned assessment tools. Most school staff analyzed math data by reviewing student written responses on unit tests, midyear tests, or other assessments without the use of technology or data analysis tools. One elementary and one middle school piloted the use of data analysis tools for math through the Galileo system with the intention of moving their innovations, if successful, districtwide.

EQA staff obtained evidence of the use of data analysis through interviews and a review of documents. District and school leadership displayed some understanding about subgroup and item analysis of MCAS data and placed these data in the District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans, using MCAS reports, TestWiz, and PIM applications. During interviews, administrators and teachers generally reaffirmed their high expectations for students and described the strategies they used for individuals, subgroups, and problematic test items. In terms

of subgroups, these strategies focused primarily on meeting the achievement needs of special education students. There was little evidence of the use of disaggregated data to identify the achievement needs of ELL or low-income students in order to determine specific programs or services for support.

Administrators also mentioned that the dropout task force had not specifically targeted interventions to the needs of Hispanic and low-income students, subgroups that were overrepresented in the dropout population. One administrator stated that subgroup analysis of dropouts was meaningless because the categories were not discrete, with students possibly counted in more than one group. Another said that the task force needed to place more emphasis on identifying the needs of Hispanic and low-income students.

6. The district's human resources policies and practices encouraged professional growth and recognition and placed high priority on retaining effective professional staff and on creating promotional opportunities for effective teachers.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to documentation and interviews, the district had policies and practices that encouraged professional growth and recognition, and which placed a high priority on retaining effective professional staff and creating promotional opportunities for effective teachers. For example, there were districtwide and school-based opportunities for teachers. These varied from building to building, and included ELA coach, math coach, curriculum team leader, and supervisor positions in the district. The district promoted a number of persons working within the Chicopee Public Schools to central office and building level leadership positions. There were also many opportunities for teachers on waivers to attend graduate courses to complete their certification requirements with the district paying most or all of the costs. The district spent $134,000 between 2004 and 2006 on Framingham State College tuition. The district recently supported teachers who needed to complete recertification requirements by obtaining a master's degree, through approval of a change effective in 2007-2008, a cooperative initiative between Chicopee Public Schools and Our Lady of the Elms College.

7. The district's professional development program was informed by most or all of the following: the instructional program content; student, teacher, and administrator needs as indicated by program assessments; research-based practices; the staff evaluation process; and student achievement data.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators developed the district professional development program based upon an August survey of all teachers to determine their instructional program content needs and on student, teacher, and administrator needs such as those indicated by the mid-cycle CPR. They also offered training based on the professional development necessary to carry out research-based practices such as the Reading First program and on student achievement data such as the low MCAS scores in schools not making AYP. The district's office of curriculum and staff development produced a Staff Development Plan FY 2006 that included the professional development rationale and professional development goals, a summary of the FY 2006 professional development needs assessments, and a professional development content and activity planner. District staff divided the needs assessment into categories of overall district needs, Titles I, IIa, IId, III, IV, special education needs, and individual teacher and paraprofessional needs, with bullets for listing professional development topics in each category. In addition to the above needs, staff consulted School Improvement Plans to determine the needs to be included in the professional development content and activity planner. The professional development content and activity planner tied professional development topics and dates to intended participants, funding sources, district goals, and professional development goals for each activity. It also stated the number of hours, the name of the presenter, and the targeted participants by school, team, or category.

According to the 2005-2006 school calendar, the district scheduled two days for staff in-service and one day for staff preparation and meetings before the start of classes. Teachers of grades 6-12 had two additional days in the school year scheduled for the purpose of staff development, with one additional staff development day for teachers of grades preK-5. The district required beginning teachers to attend a two-day orientation, with teachers new to the district attending a

one-day orientation, prior to the start of the school year. These days for new teachers were in addition to the regular academic year with no compensation.

According to documentation and interviewees, the district trained some regular education teachers during the review period in using the sheltered English immersion (SEI) model, a protocol for second language learners. Administrators and teachers said that many of the teachers trained received part, but not all, of the SEI training. The performance of the ELL subgroup in Chicopee on state assessments was low. In classroom observations, EQA examiners found very little evidence of the use of the SEI protocol in regular education classrooms.

8. Changes in the expectations for programs and practice were monitored and supported by changed supervision and evaluation standards and in the professional development plans of professional staff.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators monitored teacher fidelity to changes in the expectations for programs and practice by periodically walking through classrooms. Principals, supervisors, and central office administrators acknowledged that the walk-throughs were not part of a teacher's formal evaluation. They used the information gathered from walk-throughs to determine program or practice strengths and weaknesses. If they saw a number of teachers struggling in implementing facets of a program or with a particular practice, then the school leaders would discuss the issue with all staff at faculty or team meetings. Principals, supervisors, or administrators who noted teacher-specific issues would provide personal feedback. Principals asked coaches to provide additional support to individuals or groups of teachers through embedded professional development such as model lessons and coaching sessions.

In all elementary schools during the period reviewed, teachers used the Houghton Mifflin math and reading series, along with DIBELS assessments for reading program placement. When the district adopted these series in 2003-2004, Houghton Mifflin consultants provided year-long training and support to all teachers. After the first year, mentors provided reading and math program support to beginning teachers, and senior teachers provided this support to teachers new

to the district. Two schools had Reading First grants to fund changes in early reading instruction with Reading First coordinators performing a function similar to ELA coaches.

Likewise, at both high schools the district implemented the Striving Readers initiative, a grant-funded program that trained all high school teachers to use reading strategies as they taught their content area to students. The district supported teachers through ongoing professional development from outside consultants in order to implement the new reading initiative.

9. The district's evaluation procedure for administrators' performance was aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act and was informative and instructive, and used to promote individual growth and overall effectiveness. Compensation and continued employment were linked to evidence of effectiveness, as measured by improvement in student performance and other relevant school data.

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

According to documentation confirmed in an interview with the superintendent, one of the 28 district administrators, the school business manager, had no certification as an administrator.

During the review period, superintendents completed no principal evaluations on an annual basis as required by law. An assistant superintendent completed one central office administrator's evaluation in 2004-2005. This evaluator completed the evaluation in a timely manner, obtained the signature of the person being evaluated, and ensured that it contained the components of the Education Reform Act. The evaluation contained informative wording, but it was not instructive nor did it promote growth and overall effectiveness. In an interview, the superintendent acknowledged that he and his predecessors did not complete any principal evaluations. He cited the brief tenure of superintendents during the recent past as a likely reason why the evaluations were not completed. He shared that he held goal and midyear conferences with all principals during the 2006-2007 school year. He intended to complete evaluations for all principals at the end of 2007, and indicated that he could fund compensation for principal performance in improving student achievement or in accomplishing other goals.

The school committee conducted an evaluation of the superintendent in 2006. Members completed the evaluation in a timely manner and obtained the superintendent's signature. The superintendent's evaluation contained some of the components of the Education Reform Act, was informative and instructive, and promoted growth and overall effectiveness.

10. The district's evaluation procedure for teachers' performance was aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act and was informative and instructive and used to promote individual growth and overall effectiveness. The district provided opportunities for additional professional development and support to struggling teachers. After following due process, the district took action against persistently low-performing teachers.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to the negotiated contract, "The purpose of the evaluation procedure is to provide a current assessment of a teacher's performance and to assist in correcting deficiencies if any exist." The evaluation instrument aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching. Administrators evaluated non-professional status teachers on an annual basis and professional status teachers every two years, unless the evaluator gave a teacher an unsatisfactory annual rating. In that case, the evaluator placed the professional status teacher on a remediation plan, which required annual evaluation.

The EQA team examined a random sample of 42 personnel folders. The sample included 38 folders of teachers with appropriate certification documents, including three first-year teachers for whom no annual evaluations were completed. The remaining personnel folders were for four teachers hired on waiver, two of whom were first-year teachers with no annual evaluation completed. Out of 37 folders with evaluations, 33 contained evaluations that were timely (either annual or in alternating years for professional status teachers), 37 contained signed evaluations, and 36 contained evaluations with the components of education reform. Administrators completed all evaluations using the same districtwide form, which was a checklist. Out of the 37 folders with checklist evaluations, 34 contained evaluation checklists that were informative and two contained checklists with instructive recommendations or suggestions conducive to professional growth or overall effectiveness from a supervisor.

11. Administrators in the district used effective systems of supervision to implement district/school programs and goals for improving student achievement in their respective assignments, and used these systems to address the strengths and needs of assigned staff.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews, principals described their supervision of staff to monitor fidelity of program implementation and to measure their respective school's progress in meeting student achievement goals. All principals reported the use of walk-throughs to ensure that teachers faithfully carried out the key components of the district's ELA and math programs. Assistant principals, supervisors, and central office administrators helped principals in this task by also conducting walk-throughs and sharing their findings with the principal. Principals and school leaders met with groups of teachers to provide embedded professional development and to discuss program issues and concerns affecting most of the staff. They provided personal feedback when a small number of teachers needed to address an issue concerning program implementation.

Principals used periodic reports and online tools to determine whether their school was "on target" in meeting student achievement goals. Examples of these sources were TestWiz item analysis and disaggregation reports available when MCAS data arrived, PIM analysis reports using MCAS and other data, AIMSWeb/DIBELS reports after completion of each assessment period, and Galileo benchmark reports every five weeks. After reviewing these student achievement reports, the principals decided how to lead their teachers in adjusting curriculum and instruction for individuals and groups. They also celebrated achievement successes with their staff.

The superintendent also addressed student achievement goals by monitoring the district's progress on the District Improvement Plan. School principals watched their school's progress in student achievement as compared to their School Improvement Plan goals. The superintendent provided a report on the state of the district once a year to the school committee. Principals presented a state of the school report for their school to the school committee once a year. During these presentations, administrators shared successes and future needs.

12. The district's employment (human resources), supervision, and professional development processes were linked and supported by appropriate levels of funding.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, Chicopee Public Schools had an assistant superintendent for personnel; however, the district eliminated this position at the start of the 2006-2007 school year. Due to the ensuing consolidation, the school business manager supervised all human resources staff and activities. All personnel folders requested by EQA staff, including evaluations of professional staff, were readily available and in good order.

District staff organized ongoing professional development for each school year into a Staff Development Plan and a Staff Development Activities booklet. The plan included information on professional development goals, a summary of needs assessments, and a content and activity planner. The activities booklet provided all professional development offerings for the summer before the start of the school year. It also enumerated the scheduled workshops for the next school year and listed the title, date(s), time, place, presenter(s), number of participants, and funding source for each workshop. Overall, district staff tied ongoing professional development to needs assessments, including those indicated in School Improvement Plans. Central office staff also aligned all professional development to district and grant funding sources listed in the school department's budget. During the review period, Chicopee Public Schools' total professional development budget was as follows: $1,699,243 in FY 2003, $722,333 in FY 2004, and $1,922,558 in FY 2005. Chicopee's local contribution was $953,664 in FY 2003, $26,009 in FY 2004, and $375,024 in FY 2005. Grant-funded support of the district's professional development totaled $745,579 in FY 2003, $696,324 in FY 2004, and $1,547,534 in FY 2005.

School principals, with the help of personnel department staff, monitored the progress of professional staff on waivers. Data indicated that most teachers on waivers made substantial annual progress toward appropriate licensure or completed their certification requirements. A small number of teachers were released due to failure to make substantial annual progress.

13. The district provided ongoing and regular training in dealing with crises and emergencies to all staff, provided procedures for substitutes, student-teachers, and volunteers responsible for students, and provided opportunities to practice emergency procedures with all students.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In personal interviews with principals, each had a copy of the district safety plan, which included protocols for basic and comprehensive emergencies. Each principal added specific information pertaining to his/her school and included this information in handouts to teachers, which was updated on an annual basis and distributed during staff meetings held before school opened for students.

Principals told the EQA that each school had a crisis team comprised of the administrators in the building, school nurse, and school social worker. In coordination with the district, each school conducted periodic fire drills and bus evacuation drills. Administrators conducted lockdown drills at secondary schools, but did not do so at elementary schools to avoid upsetting the children. If a situation warranted it, administrators called security personnel to come to their school. Kelly Services trained all substitutes for Chicopee Public Schools in safety procedures. Schools provided booklets which contained a section on school safety procedures that were specific to each building. EQA staff found no evidence regarding the method used in each school to inform student teachers and school volunteers of school safety procedures.

Standard V: Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support											
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**Total**
Excellent											
Satisfactory							✓				**1**
Needs Improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		**8**
Unsatisfactory										✓	**1**

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The district provided quality programs for all students that were comprehensive, accessible and rigorous. Student academic support services and district discipline and behavior practices addressed the needs of all students. The district was effective in maintaining high rates of attendance for students and staff and retained the participation of students through graduation.

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district responded to external recommendations, conducted self-studies, adopted research-based programs, and increased services to students at risk, resulting in improvements in student achievement in some schools at certain levels, increased student attendance, and lower dropout rates.
- Procedures for identifying students making unsatisfactory progress, as well as intervention and transition programs, were most effective at the K-5 and high school levels and least effective at the middle school level.
- The results of early literacy intervention programs varied at the elementary schools because of differences in leadership, staffing, and the manner of implementation.
- Although the four-year graduation rate for each subgroup was significantly lower than the aggregate rate in Chicopee, district analysis of subgroup achievement and needs was minimal and limited to the special education population.
- According to trend data compiled by the district, teacher use of sick days and leave time declined by nearly 20 percent from 2002-2003 to 2005-2006. Administrators attributed this to more active monitoring and follow-up. However, teacher absenteeism rates remained high in Chicopee, and very high in some schools.

- The ELL program lacked direction and not all teachers were trained in the sheltered English immersion model.

Summary

The Chicopee Public Schools used data on student achievement, attendance, and behavior to design policies, procedures, and programs for at-risk students. Data analysis was systematic, continuous, and broadly based at the elementary and high schools, but the middle schools lacked a comparable process. Chicopee used formative and summative assessments regularly and systematically to identify students making unsatisfactory progress and provided a range of supplemental and special education services to help targeted students improve performance.

The district had well articulated student identification procedures and many specially designed instructional programs, especially in early literacy at the K-5 level. Chicopee provided early intervention programs in literacy to ensure that students achieved proficiency in reading by the end of grade 4, but the results were inconsistent across schools because of differences in leadership, staffing, and the manner of implementation of the intervention model. The district did not effectively coordinate its English language learners' programs and services, and many teachers were not fully trained in the sheltered English immersion model.

Chicopee had a full continuum of special education programs and services, ranging from assistance rendered to students within their regular education classrooms to substantially separate programs. However, Special education student performance was low and declining in grade 3 reading, grades 4 and 7 ELA, and grade 4 math.

Four district schools, Bowe, Litkin, Selser, and Streiber, did not meet AYP targets in ELA. Interestingly, the four schools that achieved AYP enrolled larger populations of low-income and English language learner students than many of the schools that did not. Administrators told the EQA that faithful implementation of the district's reading intervention model, introduced by the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, partly accounted for the disparity in achievement among the eight schools. Additionally, teacher absenteeism was above the district average in the two middle schools that failed to meet AYP targets in ELA and math in 2006. Union representatives stated that the teacher contract's buy-back provision served as an incentive to use sick days.

Subgroup analysis was minimal and limited mostly to the special education population. While the district collected and categorized data on disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and retentions by subgroup, there was no formal analysis to determine whether subgroups were overrepresented. The four-year graduation rate in Chicopee was significantly lower in the aggregate than for subgroups, but Chicopee had not explored the root causes other than to establish a task force to study the dropout problem.

Chicopee did not have policies, practices, or procedures to increase proportionate subgroup representation in honors and accelerated programs. The district did not systematically track the enrollment of students in honors and Advanced Placement courses by subgroup, and lacked programs at the elementary and middle schools to identify promising minority students and prepare them to succeed in accelerated high school programs.

Chicopee had policies and practices promoting attendance, an attendance supervisor, and a software program for recording, reporting, and tracking absences. The monitoring of attendance was systematic at the high school level, but inconsistent at the elementary and middle school levels, where interventions were not always timely. Practices varied from school to school because the K-8 policy did not contain intermediary limits and required actions. The K-8 absenteeism limit of 20 days was two days in excess of the state standard for chronic absenteeism, and students with chronic attendance problems were not identified routinely as part of the transition to ensure appropriate intervention at the next level. Rates of chronic absenteeism in Chicopee were high and increasing in each grade at the middle and high school levels.

Chicopee had documented policies and procedures for disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Out-of-school suspensions were well in excess of statewide averages, but declining at the high schools while increasing at the middle schools. Alternatives to suspension instituted at the high schools stemmed an increase in out of school suspension rates, but more alternatives were needed at the middle schools.

To address its high retention rate, the district created a fifth-year senior program for credit-deficient juniors as an incentive to remain in school. The dropout rate in Chicopee was high but declining. Chicopee had practices and procedures to prevent dropping out but not a formal policy. There were no procedures or practices to track dropouts and return them to school, and

the district lacked personnel to track such students. Chicopee conducted a self-study resulting in recommendations for identifying and assisting students at risk of dropping out through credit recovery efforts and partnerships with other agencies, and tracking and recovering students who had left school without graduating.

Indicators

1. The district administration and staff used aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data on student participation and achievement to adjust instruction and policies for at-risk populations and provided additional programs and supports to assist their progress and academic achievement.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee administrators and staff used aggregate data on student achievement, attendance, and behavior to design policies, procedures, and programs for at-risk students. Data analysis was systematic, continuous, and broadly based at the elementary and high school levels, but this process was not fully in place at the middle school level. At the middle school level, the curriculum was largely undocumented, compromising interpretation of student achievement results. Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that middle school grade-level team meetings had been held inconsistently and often without a clear purpose. The district did not administer a standardized achievement battery and relied on the MCAS tests as its primary measure of overall student performance.

Analysis of subgroup performance in the district was limited to the special education population, and there was little evidence of use of data to identify the needs of underperforming Hispanic and low-income students in order to customize programs and services to increase their participation and proficiency. Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that analysis of the MCAS tests results originated in the central office and continued in the schools. The assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability examined the results to determine district trends, and distributed individual school results to the building principals.

The principals used TestWiz software to generate an item analysis, and they discussed student and curricular strengths and needs at faculty meetings. Grade-level teams at the elementary and

middle schools and departmental teams at the high schools met subsequently to discuss the implications for teaching and learning. Elementary and high school administrators and teachers told the EQA team that these meetings were directed and goal oriented, and gave examples of recommendations for adjusting instruction and increasing services to improve student performance.

For example, high school administrators and teachers based district participation in the federal Striving Readers program on results substantiating a significant population of adolescents with chronic reading problems. All of these students had difficulty with comprehension, and some were also struggling with decoding. Elementary teachers stated that the development of writing rubrics came from an analysis of student responses to open-ended questions. It was evident that many students needed guidance and direct instruction to compose complete answers.

Middle school administrators and teachers cited few examples of any changes resulting from grade-level meetings to analyze student data. The Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School was labeled underperforming by the Department of Education in 2005 based on poor and declining subgroup achievement. The April 2006 fact finding report by the Department of Education stated that grade levels at this school met infrequently, and the meetings were often poorly conducted and inconclusive.

Chicopee analyzed data on dropouts and considered the effects of its attendance and suspension policies on the dropout rate. In 2005-2006, the district was awarded a Dropout Prevention and Alternative Education Self-Assessment Project grant. A multidisciplinary task force formed under the auspices of the grant developed short- and long-term recommendations for keeping students in school. These included credit recovery initiatives and partnerships with other agencies. The task force was comprised of teachers, specialists, counselors, and administrators.

In interviews with the EQA team, administrators stated that while the Hispanic and low-income subgroups were overrepresented in the dropout population, the task force had not specifically targeted interventions to their needs. One administrator stated that subgroup analysis was meaningless because the categories were not discrete, and a student might be counted in more than one. Another told the EQA team that the task force should have placed greater emphasis on identifying the needs of district Hispanic and low-income students.

2. At each grade level, the district used formative assessments and summative data to identify all students who did not meet expectations and provided these students with supplementary and/or remedial services that resulted in improved academic achievement and MCAS test proficiency.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee used formative and summative assessment data regularly and systematically at most grade levels to identify students not meeting expectations and provided a range of supplemental remedial and special education services to help targeted students improve their achievement. While Chicopee had well articulated student identification procedures and many specially designed instructional programs, especially in early literacy at the K-5 level, the district was identified for corrective action for all subgroups in ELA and for corrective action in the aggregate and for all subgroups in math in 2006. According to Department of Education data, Chicopee failed to make AYP in ELA in the aggregate except at grades 9-12, and for all subgroups. In math, the district failed to make AYP both in the aggregate and for all subgroups.

These findings were based on combined results for all schools at three grade spans, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. While both middle schools failed to make AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups, the results for individual schools at the elementary and high school levels were mixed: four of eight K-5 elementary schools made AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups. Chicopee High School made AYP in both ELA and math, and Chicopee Comprehensive High School made AYP in ELA but not in math.

In interviews with the EQA examiners, administrators and teachers described the use of literacy assessments to identify students in need of remedial or specialized instruction, to form and disband instructional groups, to guide instructional planning, and to monitor individual student progress toward the achievement of standards. At the elementary K-5 level, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was administered at three intervals to measure decoding skills and fluency. In both schools with Reading First grants and increasingly in the other elementary schools as well, the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) was administered in addition to the DIBELS to assess comprehension. In a

three-tier intervention system, elementary students were placed in one of three fluid instructional groups: at risk, at some risk, or at low risk. The students at greatest risk were reassessed with greater frequency to determine their progress and needs.

At the elementary level, the district offered a number of research-based intervention programs including Project Read, Read Naturally, and Lindamood-Bell Reading for certain students under special educational management. At the middle school level, grade 5 DIBELS results were used to identify students in need of intervention, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) was administered three times each year to assess progress and to identify emerging needs. Students who failed the MCAS tests were provided individual student success plans (ISSPs) to ensure continuity of specialized instruction and appropriate modifications in the regular education classes.

At the high school, grade 8 SRI scores and the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test were used to determine student needs. At Chicopee High School, the teachers of some English courses administered common midterm and final examinations and the results were monitored to identify students not achieving standards. Beginning in 2006-2007, the Striving Readers program was offered at the high school level in collaboration with the Springfield Public Schools. Targeted students received specialized instruction using the Read 180 program during a double English period. Both high schools offered grant-funded MCAS support tutoring programs before and after school and during the summer for grade 11-12 students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category in ELA, math, or both.

Administrators and teachers described the formative assessments used to identify students in need of remediation in math and the supplemental programs and services provided. At the elementary level, tests were administered at the end of each unit, and cumulative AYP benchmark tests were administered three times each year to assess student progress and needs in math. In the seven elementary schools with schoolwide Title I programs, Title I teachers rendered tutorial instruction to students not achieving standards. In the other schools, paraprofessionals and other assistive personnel provided deficit-centered instruction under teacher supervision.

At the middle school level, formative assessments in math were administered eight times each year at six to eight week intervals, and benchmark assessments were given three times each year using the web-based Galileo program. At the high school, the Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE) was administered to determine placement for Algebra I, and common midyear and final examinations were given in both Algebra I and Geometry. These results were used for placement, to modify regular program instruction, to plan interventions, and to measure improvements in skill acquisition.

Administrators and teachers described a procedure in each school to identify and assist students making unsatisfactory progress. The title of the procedure and forms varied from school to school, but there were common elements. In each school, an interdisciplinary team including an administrator received referrals of underachieving students from teachers, developed documented intervention plans, and formally monitored the success of the plans. Students who did not benefit from these plans after a trial of six to eight weeks were referred for further assessment under the special education law.

Administrators described a full continuum of special education programs and services in Chicopee, ranging from assistance rendered to students within their regular education classrooms in a full inclusion model to categorical substantially separate programs for students with language-based learning disabilities, behavioral and emotional disorders, intellectual disabilities, and students on the autism spectrum. Nevertheless, during the review period the performance of students under special educational management in Chicopee was low and declining in grade 3 reading, grades 4 and 7 ELA and grade 4 math.

According to Department of Education data, more than one-third of the students receiving special education services in Chicopee were enrolled in substantially separate, private day or residential school programs. In interviews with the EQA team, administrators stated and teachers confirmed that many students enrolled in district special education programs had severe special needs. Teachers told the EQA team that some of these students had taken a standard or modified administration of the MCAS tests with apparent difficulty, and might be eligible for consideration for the MCAS alternative portfolio assessment.

When asked, administrators stated that they were conservative about use of the alternative assessment, and did not wish to exceed the three percent guideline under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. One administrator added that the district was cited for many non-compliance issues in the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the Department of Education in 2002, and would await approval and validation of its improvement plan by the department later in 2007 before petitioning to exceed the three percent guideline. According to Department of Education data, 7.7 percent of Massachusetts students with special needs took the MCAS alternative assessment in 2006.

The proficiency gaps in Chicopee in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that many teachers were not fully trained in the SEI model; however, such training was ongoing in the district. Central office administrators stated that no one was officially in charge of the ELL program.

3. Early intervention programs in literacy were provided at the primary education level to ensure that all students were reading at the 'Proficient' level on the MCAS test by the end of Grade 4.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the review period, Chicopee provided early intervention programs in literacy to ensure that students achieved proficiency in reading by the end of grade 4, but the manner of implementation was more successful in some district elementary schools than others as measured by attainment of AYP in ELA. In 2006, students were performing according to expectation in the aggregate and by subgroup in four of the eight K-5 elementary schools in Chicopee.

In interviews with the EQA team, administrators traced the history of implementation of the schoolwide reading improvement model in Chicopee from its origins through 2007. They stated that the initiative began in 2002 when the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability engaged a consulting group to design and present a three-tier intervention model to elementary administrators and staff. In the beginning, funding from the Reading First and BayState Readers grants underwrote implementation of the model in three of the elementary

schools. Since then, the model had been adopted by all Chicopee elementary schools. As one administrator summarized, district elementary schools had a uniform model by 2002-2003 and uniform interventions by 2003-2004.

According to Department of Education data, the Barry, Bowie, Lambert-Lavoie, and Stefanik schools achieved AYP targets in ELA in 2006, while Bowe, Litwin, Selser and Streiber did not. Demographics did not always correlate with performance. For example, among the schools that made AYP, the enrollments of LEP and low-income students were higher than the district average at Barry, and enrollments of LEP, low-income, and special education students were higher than the district average at Stefanik. Among the underachieving schools, enrollments of LEP, low-income and special education students were lower than the district average at Streiber.

In interviews with the EQA team, administrators did not attribute differences in results to the composition of the student body. Administrators told the EQA team that the successful schools were characterized by faithful implementation of the reading intervention model. They further stated that leaders of the higher-achieving schools maintained a focus on literacy. This required rejecting initiatives in science and socials studies and even subordinating math to the accomplishment of literacy goals.

The administrators added that the leaders of the higher-achieving schools actively monitored to ensure that the intervention model was implemented as conceived, maximized staff effectiveness by placing teachers at grade levels and in roles best serving the needs of the school, and transferred or terminated teachers who did not abide by the program. One administrator stated, “There is no place for teachers with alternative belief systems in a school that urgently needs to make progress.”

In interviews with the EQA examiners, teachers from the higher-achieving schools commented that their principals were clear about the mission of the school and the expectations for them, were visible in the classrooms, and were ready to offer support. One stated, “I really didn’t want to group and regroup kids and do all this testing, but it was for the best, and given the choice now, I wouldn’t do it any other way.”

4. District administration and staff helped all students make effective transitions from one school, grade level, or program to another. This assistance was focused on maintaining or improving levels of student performance.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee provided assistance to students at junctures. Procedures were in place for transitioning students between grades, schools, levels, and programs, and ultimately from school to work or postsecondary education. Transitional programs and activities in Chicopee were generally well designed and successful, except for those supporting the transition to middle school.

Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that the transition to the middle school program was minimally adequate. Under the current procedure, middle school counselors met with elementary teachers to discuss students' strengths and needs and gave this information to receiving teachers. On Step-Up Day, grade 5 students visited the middle schools and participated in an orientation program. An evening session for parents describing middle school programs and expectations was held in the spring. Some elementary teachers stated that differences in grouping practices, methodology, and program emphasis complicated the transition from elementary to middle school for parents and students. One administrator said, "We could do a much better job," and went on to state that direct meetings between grade 5 and 6 teachers were needed to articulate programs and services and to share information about students.

Administrators also told the EQA team that the parent component of the transition to middle school program needed enhancement to increase participation. Some parents worked and could not attend a meeting held in the evening. Others lacked transportation. Teachers and administrators told the EQA examiners that the new middle school principals were willing to collaborate with their elementary colleagues to make the transition program more effective.

Administrators told the EQA examiners that orientation sessions for kindergarten students and their parents were held at the elementary schools in the spring prior to kindergarten entry. District preschool and kindergarten teachers met at the Szetela Early Childhood Center to discuss the needs of kindergarten-eligible children. Elementary principals informed private preschool operators of the kindergarten registration, screening, and orientation dates, and guidance

counselors met with private preschool teachers to discuss the needs of certain children entering kindergarten.

At the K-5 level, principals and teachers at each grade level composed the classes for the following year, equalizing enrollments while providing for gender balance, a teachable range, and positive group dynamics. Teachers completed an individual pupil progress card describing each student's literacy and numeracy skills and any accommodations required to maximize learning. Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that because the elementary schools had common core programs in literacy and math and common pacing guides, students moved seamlessly from one school to another in the district. They went on to say that a significant number of students changed schools during the school year.

The EQA examiners reviewed copies of letters of invitation, agendas, and explanatory materials documenting orientation programs for students transitioning from middle school to high school. Held regularly in the spring, these programs included facilities tours, meetings with receiving teachers, and explanations by administrators and counselors of expectations, opportunities, and requirements. Concurrently, evening informational meetings were held for parents.

Chicopee developed clear entry criteria and admissions procedures for Chicopee Alternative High School and the Career and Technical Education program at Chicopee Comprehensive High School. The EQA team reviewed the referral and transfer protocols developed in 2006. Central office administrators stated that these protocols helped smooth the transition to these programs. Principals told the EQA examiners that high school guidance counselors assisted students with post-secondary planning. The district sometimes engaged external experts to conduct evening sessions for parents of sophomores and juniors on the college search process and financial planning. Counselors and career educators advised students entering the job market.

5. <u>The district had fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices to reduce discipline referrals, grade retention, suspension, and exclusion.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee had documented policies and procedures for disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. While a credit accumulation policy determined status at the high school, there was no written policy on pupil progression in grades K-8. The policies and procedures set forth in the system-wide discipline code, revised in 2005, afforded adequate due process provisions. While the district collected and categorized data on disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and grade retentions by subgroup, there was no formal analysis to determine whether low-income, Hispanic, special education, and LEP students were overrepresented.

The district did not evaluate the effects of its disciplinary policies and procedures on graduation and dropout rates with formality and regularity. For example, while the 2006 four-year graduation rate in Chicopee was 62.7 percent in the aggregate, the four-year graduation rates for low-income, Hispanic, special education, and LEP students in Chicopee were 50.2 percent, 36.5 percent, 38.2 percent, and 35.7 percent, respectively, according to Department of Education data. Administrators stated that while they were aware of these disparities, they had not determined the causes.

Administrators told the EQA team that the discipline code was distributed to all students annually. The code contained regulations on behavior, tardiness, absences, and student identification. These policies and procedures were explained by administrators at orientation assemblies during the first week of school at the middle and high schools and posted on the district website. At the elementary schools, teachers explained the code to their classes.

During the review period, out-of-school suspensions were high but declining at the high school level, and high and increasing at the middle school level. Except for the grade 9 retention rate in 2003, district grade level retention rates were at or below the statewide averages for each grade.

According to Department of Education data, the aggregate three-year averages for out-of-school suspensions in Chicopee were well in excess of statewide averages. While there was little change in grades 9-12, suspension rates were rising in grades 6-8. Over the three-year interval between 2004 and 2006, out-of-school suspensions averaged 16.0 percent in grade 6, 20.9 percent in grade 7, and 19.8 percent in grade 8. During the same interval, out-of-school suspensions

averaged 26.4 percent in grade 9, 28.1 percent in grade 10, 24.3 percent in grade 11, and 26.4 percent in grade 12.

Administrators told the EQA examiners that the institution of such alternatives to suspension as the student support center, Saturday School and Wednesday and Thursday school during the review period at the high school level stemmed an increase in out-of-school suspensions. Under these alternative provisions, students served detention for minor infractions outside of the school day and transportation home was provided. High school administrators estimated that out-of-school suspension rates would have doubled without these alternatives. They stated that more interventions were needed at the middle school level.

According to Department of Education data, during the period between 2003 and 2005, district retention rates were highest in grades 1, 2, 9, and 12, averaging 4.1 percent, 2.4 percent, 10.5 percent, and 3.6 percent, respectively. Administrators told the EQA examiners that students in grades 1 and 2 were retained when they lacked readiness. Although there was no documented policy on retention, principals made the final recommendation and parents retained the right to overrule it.

Administrators stated that grade 9 retentions rates were historically high because of credit deficiency, and the very high retention rate of 24.1 in 2003 was because of the extraordinary needs of that class. Grade 9 retentions declined to a low of 1.5 percent in 2005. During the same interval, grade 12 retention rates increased from 2.8 percent in 2003 to 4.2 percent in 2005. Administrators attributed these changes to the fifth-year senior program. Under this program, credit deficient juniors were accorded senior privileges for two years as a graduation incentive and dropout preventative. Administrators told the EQA examiners that adding a year created a continuous progress model, decreasing reliance on retentions to remedy credit deficiencies.

6. <u>The district had policies, procedures, and practices to prevent or minimize dropping out, and to recover dropouts and return them to an educationally appropriate placement.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee had practices and procedures to prevent dropping out, but not a formal policy. There were no procedures or practices to track dropouts and return them to school. During the review period, the dropout rate in Chicopee was high, but declining. The district set a goal to increase the graduation rate and decrease the dropout rate in its 2007-2010 District Improvement Plan, and conducted a comprehensive self-study in 2005-2006 that resulted in recommendations for identifying and assisting students at risk of dropping out and tracking and recovering students who had left school without graduating. The district collected and maintained data on dropouts but did not formally analyze them for subgroup representation.

During the interval between 2004 and 2006, the dropout rate in Chicopee averaged 6.8 percent, compared to the state average of 3.7 percent. According to district trend data, the rate declined from 6.9 percent in 2004 to 6.2 percent in 2006. In 2005-2006, a district task force comprised of teachers, specialists, counselors, and administrators studied the incidences of and reasons for dropping out in Chicopee, and developed a range of short- and longer-term prevention strategies and options for returning dropouts. The planning that was conducted under the auspices of the task force was funded by a state-administered federal grant. Among the recommendations of the task force were creation of a formal mentoring program for all at-risk students, increasing work readiness experiences through the district Career Tech program, and collaboration with Holyoke Community College to increase educational and career options for dropouts.

High school administrators told the EQA examiners that administrators and student services staff met weekly to identify and intervene with students at risk. When a student declared the intent to drop out, a meeting was arranged to determine the reasons and to make accommodations, including modifications of requirements. Administrators further stated that the task force had learned by surveying students that those who could name a caring adult at school were at lower risk of dropping out. They stated that the teaming of grades 9 and 10 and the advisory program at Chicopee High School under the terms of a Small Learning Communities grant had helped personalize the educational experience for students at risk.

Administrators told the EQA team that the district was flexible in its efforts to keep students in school. Administrators entered into contracts with students in order to improve their attendance

and behavior. Principals also approved courses at external summer schools and other educational agencies, and authorized supervised work experiences and apprenticeships as ways of fulfilling core course, credit, and graduation requirements.

When a student decided to drop out despite the accommodations offered, counselors provided information on summer, adult evening, and GED programs, and furnished the name of a contact person at school to answer questions, resolve problems, and make arrangements for reentry. Administrators told the EQA examiners that most dropouts neither maintained contact with school staff nor returned to school on their own initiative. Administrators stated that there were insufficient personnel in Chicopee to track all of the students who had left school.

7. The district implemented policies and programs that addressed the needs of transient and homeless students and provided them with timely and equitable access to quality programs.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Although Chicopee did not have a policy or protocol on transient and homeless students, district practices met the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Chicopee had a designated homeless liaison, advertised the availability of services in the schools and the larger community, kept a census of homeless families, and provided or arranged for the provision of appropriate services to homeless and transient students, including transportation to schools of origin.

In interviews with the EQA team, administrators stated that the district attendance supervisor was the coordinator of services for homeless and transient families. Administrators went on to say that the population of homeless families in Chicopee had doubled to 120 from the prior year. This was because Chicopee was a desirable location for families relocating from Springfield and Holyoke. The high demand for limited housing in Chicopee caused rent increases, displacing families of limited means. Most homeless families were displaced residents, although some homeless families entered the district. The supervisor attempted to find permanent housing for displaced and homeless families. In the interim, the district transported the children from shelters and temporary residences to their schools.

Chicopee advertised the availability of services for homeless families through posters and fliers and mailings to community agencies. The EQA examiners reviewed these notices. In interviews, principals provided the EQA examiners with examples of provisions for homeless students. In one instance, tutoring was provided on-site at a shelter until transportation was arranged. In another, a student was enrolled as required before immunization and other records were furnished.

8. District and school policies and practices promoted the importance of student attendance, and attendance was continuously monitored, reported, and acted upon.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee had policies and practices promoting attendance, a district attendance supervisor, and a software program for recording, reporting, and tracking absences. The monitoring of attendance was systematic at the high school level, where students with high absenteeism were identified and supported and consequences were levied as a last recourse. Monitoring at the elementary and middle school levels was inconsistent, interventions were not always timely, and students with attendance problems were not routinely identified as part of the transition from level to level.

The Chicopee absence policy as of 2005 allowed up to 20 absences in grades K-8. At the high school level, eight absences were allowed in a semester course and 16 absences were allowed in a full-year course. Students exceeding the limit were subject to loss of credit for the course. In answer to questions by the EQA, administrators stated that a district committee had set the absence limits using data from surrounding communities. Administrators stated they were not aware that the K-8 absence limit of 20 days was two days in excess of the state definition for chronic absenteeism.

Administrators stated that at the elementary level guidance counselors monitored attendance and intervened by communicating or conferencing with parents; however, because the policy did not contain intermediary limits and required actions, practices varied from school to school. For example, in some schools a letter would be sent or a conference scheduled after 10 absences, while in others no action was taken until the 18th absence. Administrators told the EQA team that in some instances absences had mounted to 30 days before any action was taken.

High school administrators told the EQA examiners that they used attendance data to intervene with individual students approaching the limit under the policy. High school attendance clerks initiated calls to parents before the eighth day of absence and left a message requiring the parent to call the school. Administrators and counselors told the EQA examiners that over 50 percent of the appeals for lost credit were resolved in favor of the petitioning student. This was because the absences were justified for medical or other reasons, or the student and principal had agreed to an attendance improvement plan. One administrator stated that the purpose of the policy was to encourage students to improve their attendance rather than to make it impossible for them to graduate, and added that students were given every consideration.

According to district and Department of Education records, the aggregate attendance rate in Chicopee improved marginally from 92.2 percent in 2003-2004 to 93.3 percent in 2005-2006, compared to the statewide average of 94.2 percent. Rates of chronic absenteeism were high and increasing at each grade at the middle and high school levels. The 2006 rates were 21.8 percent in grade 7, 21.8 percent in grade 8, 22.6 percent in grade 9, 23.1 percent in grade 10, 26.8 percent in grade 11, and 32.7 percent in grade 12. High school administrators stated that they did not receive data from the middle school identifying students with attendance problems. One administrator stated that it was difficult to be proactive without this information.

9. District and school policies and practices promoted and tracked the importance of staff attendance and participation, and appropriate provisions were made to ensure continuity of the instructional program.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Chicopee recorded and tracked teacher use of sick and personal leave, and informed principals daily about the condition of the district substitute account. According to trend data compiled by the district, teacher use of sick days and leave time declined by nearly 20 percent from 2002-2003 to 2005-2006. Administrators attributed this to more active monitoring and follow-up. In 2005-2006, the range between the schools with the lowest and highest absenteeism in Chicopee was wide, indicating differences from school to school in teacher commitment and administrative interpretation and enforcement of the provisions of the contract.

Teacher absenteeism in both middle schools was significantly higher than the district average. Both of these schools failed to make AYP in ELA and math in 2006, and one was declared underperforming. The underperforming school had the poorest teacher attendance in the district. According to an analysis of raw data compiled and submitted by the district to the EQA, the average number of days a Chicopee teacher was absent for any reason during the prior school year was as follows: Bowe Elementary, 6.2; Streiber Elementary, 7.7; Chicopee Academy, 9.1; Bowie Elementary, 9.8; Lambert-Lavoie Elementary, 10.4; Chicopee High School, 10.4; Selser Elementary, 11.3; Barry Elementary, 12.0; Belcher Elementary, 12.8; Chicopee Comprehensive High School, 12.8; Bellamy Middle School, 13.5; Litwin Elementary, 14.8; Stefanik Elementary, 15.2; and Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, 16.1. The Belcher, Chicopee Comprehensive, Bellamy, Stefanik, and Fairview schools exceeded the state average of 12.0.

The average number of days absent not counting planned absences for professional days was as follows: districtwide, 11.4; Bowe Elementary, 5.1; Streiber Elementary, 7.2; Chicopee Academy, 8.8; Bowie Elementary, 9.8; Lambert-Lavoie Elementary, 9.7; Chicopee High School, 9.7; Selser Elementary, 9.6; Barry Elementary, 11.0; Belcher Elementary, 11.6; Chicopee Comprehensive High School, 12.2; Bellamy Middle School, 13.0; Litwin Elementary, 14.1; Stefanik Elementary, 14.4; and Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, 15.6.

Article XVII of the teacher's contract allowed 15 sick leave days with no maximum accumulation. Temporary leave provisions included one day for personal business, one day for visiting schools and attending conferences, up to three days for religious observance, and up to five days for bereavement or family illness. The contract contained a buy-back provision for unused sick days. Teachers retiring with 20 or more years of district service were compensated at the rate of $10 per day for up to 125 days, and at 20 percent of per diem for days in excess, up to a maximum of $10,000. In interviews with the EQA team, union representatives stated that the buy-back provision was an insufficient incentive for teachers approaching retirement. Those teachers were more likely to take rather than retain unused sick days.

Administrators told the EQA examiners that the personnel office tallied teacher absences and sent daily reports to the building principals and central office administrators. Administrators stated that they ascertained the reasons for frequent absences in personal conferences with

teachers, especially when there was a suspected pattern of absences. Central office administrators stated that teachers requesting a personal day were required to check a statement on a form indicating that it was to be used for business that must be contracted during the school day, as the contract stipulates. They went on to say that teachers were also required to categorize the allowable reason for the leave by checking the appropriate box. Union representatives stated that the contract did not require teachers to make these assurances, and most teachers left these spaces blank on the form.

The majority of principals interviewed by the EQA team stated that teacher absenteeism was not a problem, even in the schools with higher rates. When asked about Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, the school with the highest absenteeism rates, central office administrators reported that morale was low when it was declared underperforming, and some teachers highly resistant to adopting new practices were protesting by taking days off from school. They further stated that 17 teachers left the school at the end of the 2006 school year, and more were expected to leave in June 2007.

According to administrators and district records, qualified substitutes were engaged when teachers were absent. The district contracted with a vendor for the provision of substitutes. The vendor ensured that all substitutes had at least a bachelor's degree. One administrator stated that the substitute pool was strong and some substitutes had been hired as permanent teachers. Chicopee provided orientation sessions for substitutes addressing programs, services, policies, practices, and expectations and briefed them on the school and district safety plans.

10. District and school leadership implemented policies, procedures, and practices to increase proportionate subgroup representation in advanced and/or accelerated programs, in order to close the achievement gap.

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Chicopee did not have policies, practices, or procedures to increase proportionate subgroup representation in honors and accelerated programs. The district did not formally track the enrollment of low-income, Hispanic, and special education students in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses to determine proportional representation, and had no feeder programs at

the elementary or middle schools to identify promising students and prepare them to succeed in accelerated high school programs.

According to the high school programs of study and district administrators, Chicopee offered both AP and honors courses. In interviews with the EQA examiners, administrators stated that the criteria for enrollment were the teacher's recommendation and a qualifying grade in a prerequisite course. Parents could exercise the right to enroll a student in a course against recommendation by endorsing an acknowledgement form.

Administrators stated that the district did not disaggregate data on enrollment in district AP and honors courses to determine the representation of low-income and Hispanic and students receiving special educational services. They further stated that there were no barriers to enrollment, and students were encouraged to take the most challenging program.

Standard VI: Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency														
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**Total**
Excellent														
Satisfactory	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	**9**
Needs Improvement		✓	✓	✓							✓			**4**
Unsatisfactory														

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The district engaged in a participative, well-documented, and transparent budget process that used student achievement as a factor in the overall budget. The district acquired and used financial, physical, and competitive capital resources to provide for and sustain the advancement of achievement for all students enrolled in the district. The district regularly assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of its financial and capital assets and had the ability to meet reasonable changes and unanticipated events.

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The city supported the schools with additional revenues by contributing above the minimum required local contribution each year, by allocating additional funds from supplemental sources, and by allowing the district and each school to use accounts once prior year invoices were paid. However, these did not result in adequate educational and operational resources.
- The district used MUNIS for its financial accounting system, resulting in improved communication regarding school finances.
- The school business administrator position had significant turnover; despite this, the current staff maintained the operations of reporting and managing the overall budget.
- The school and city had a formal written agreement regarding charges the city paid on behalf of the school district.
- Capital planning was done both with building-based needs and districtwide needs. The city had a capital planning committee with school representation.
- The district managed its grants effectively.

- The school facilities were safe and had appropriate plans at the district and city level. Classrooms in the district's schools had the plan.

Summary

The Chicopee school district's budget development process was open and participatory. Principals and administrators with budget authority built their budgets and then defended them at an administrative team meeting. The school district allocated the budget on a per pupil basis by level, without regard for subgroup needs. No student data were incorporated into the budget allocation process, although the district funded numerous enrichment programs to improve student performance. Once the budget was finalized at the administrative level, the administration forwarded this recommendation to the school committee's finance subcommittee. Deliberations continued regarding budget requests. The subcommittee forwarded a recommended budget to the full committee, then to the mayor, and finally to the board of aldermen. The administration made reductions in areas that had the least negative impact on the classroom, primarily in the area of maintenance. Supplies, materials, and textbooks were level funded in FY 2006. The district maximized resources through cooperative purchasing with the city and with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. At the time of the EQA site visit, the central office was restructuring its personnel management system by consolidating this operation with the business office. The district funded most of its professional development programs through grants, and established the Chicopee Academy, an in-district special education program, to maintain enrollment.

The city contributed above the minimum required local contribution in FY 2006 and the previous three fiscal years. The city used approximately $1.7 million in Medicaid receipts to support the school district, and used $250,000 from a local cable contract for technology in the schools. In December 2004, the city provided over $500,000 for nurses' salaries and funded the construction of two new schools through capital requests. The school district had accounts for prior year invoices that the city did not close after invoices were paid, so that the schools could tap the funds with school committee approval.

In the budget development process each school presented its capital requests. In addition, the school district had a list of capital projects for FY 2006. The city built a new high school, and the new Chicopee Comprehensive High School was under construction at the time of the EQA site

visit. Overall, the facilities were clean and safe, although some began to show their age with worn doors and mechanisms. The school district and city had a safety plan and a citywide crisis management plan.

Indicators

1. The district's budget was developed through an open, participatory process, and the resulting document was clear, comprehensive, complete, current, and understandable. The budget also provided accurate information on all fund sources, as well as budgetary history and trends.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to administration, principals, and the superintendent, the budget process began in the fall of each year. The superintendent asked for the principals' requests, reviewed them, and presented a recommended budget to the school committee's budget subcommittee. The subcommittee recommended a budget to the full committee, then the full committee recommended a budget to the mayor and the board of aldermen.

The district's FY 2006 budget booklet included a letter from the interim superintendent to the board of aldermen dated June 13, 2005. In this letter the superintendent wrote, "This budget does not cut any positions providing for a 3.25 percent contractual increase for all staff. All other line items are level funded at their 2004-2005 level." The booklet included the following: FY 2002 adopted budget, FY 2002 expended budget, FY 2003 adopted budget, FY 2003 expended budget, FY 2004 adopted budget, FY 2005 adopted budget, and the superintendent's FY 2006 recommended budget. The next sections included charts of school expenses and state aid that presented the school budget, city charges, state aid, percentage changes in operating budget, percentage changes in state aid, and percentage change of city aid from FY 1995 to FY 2005. A report "Estimated School Receipts to the City of Chicopee" listed the revenue received from the state for FY 2000 to FY 2004 actual, FY 2005 estimated, and FY 2006 estimated. The next section on proposed staffing changes for 2005-2006 was an Excel chart listing position, location, request, regular education budget or grant/revolving budget. The site department budgets section provided the following: administration salaries and operating expenses for the FY 2005 budget, FY 2006 requested, adjustments and final, plus a comments section. The booklet presented

information for each school including financial information, MCAS information and narratives describing accomplishments for various fiscal years and capital requests by each school. The next section, grants information, listed all grants from FY 2000 to FY 2005. It had a section on student population information that presented the October 1, 2004 enrollment data by school.

2. The budget was developed and resources were allocated based on the ongoing analysis of aggregate and disaggregated student assessment data to assure the budget's effectiveness in supporting improved achievement for all student populations.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administration and principals, the district developed its budget using the known personnel expenses and personnel requests. The district allocated operating expenses on a per pupil basis. Based on the October 1 enrollment, the amount for elementary school budgets was $140 per student; $150 for middle school budgets, and $160 for high school budgets. There was no additional adjustment for subgroup allocation. According to school committee members, they relied on the superintendent's recommendation for budget development. Student data were not included in their decisions.

In the district's budget booklet, schools described how they used prior fiscal year budgets and the plan for the proposed FY 2006 budget to address student needs. For example, the Barry School described how the school used professional development budget expenses to train the teachers in areas of technology, MCAS item analysis, instructional methods, and curriculum and state frameworks implementation. The district hired Ideal Consulting, an outside literacy consulting group, to provide staff with consultation. The Belcher School had the Project Read program, Guided Reading, Ideal Consulting, and used professional development offerings to train teachers in the Houghton Mifflin math series. The Bowe School staff received training to implement the Instructional Support Team (IST) model, a program designed to assist teachers in using data to design instruction for at-risk students and serve as a pre-referral process. The Bowie School had after-school programs such as MCAS math, technical writing, reading, and computers. The Lambert Lavoie School had Ideal Consulting, after-school enrichment programs, and trained staff in a Responsive Classroom program. The Litwin School implemented new math and ELA

curricula and continued new classroom configuration of "looping" for grades 3 and 4. The Selser School implemented a math curriculum for grades K-5 and provided training through the Massachusetts Math Institute Training. The Stefanik School Council continued to develop its School Improvement Plan, to work with faculty on Performance Improvement Mapping, and to train teachers in Project Read.

3. The district's budget and supplemental funding were adequate to provide for effective instructional practices and to provide for adequate operational resources. The community annually provided sufficient financial resources to ensure educationally sound programs and facilities of quality, as evidenced by a sufficient district revenue levy and level of local spending for education.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administration and principals, the budget and supplemental funding were not adequate for the review period, including FY 2006. The goal during all budget development processes was to avoid losing positions. The district never had layoffs for budgetary reasons; however, vacancies due to retirement sometimes went unfilled. The school district's individual schools had "prior year accounts." These accounts were for prior year bills. When the bills were paid, the district and city allowed the schools to keep these accounts and use them with school committee approval. Reductions occurred in non-direct educational areas such as utilities and maintenance.

Each year, the administration presented its budget request to the school committee, mayor, and city council. Each year, the mayor and superintendent agreed on a number. This amount was above the minimum required local contribution but not the actual requested amount. According to city officials, the city used the minimum local contribution on the local tax base and provided additional funds from other sources that did not impact the citizens. In FY 2005 the city provided the school district an additional $1,709,857 of Medicaid revenue. The city also provided an additional $568,893 in December 2004 for nurses' salaries. The city provided the district with approximately $250,000 of additional funds from a local cable contract for the it to use on

technology. In addition, the city supported the district by funding capital requests, including the construction of a new high school and a new comprehensive high school under construction.

4. The district, as part of its budget development**,** implemented an evaluation-based review process to determine the cost effectiveness of all of its programs, initiatives, and activities. This process was based, in part, on student performance data and needs.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administration and city officials, the school district reviewed its operations for cost effectiveness, although student achievement data were not used for this purpose. They participated in cooperative purchasing for fuel oil through the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. The city and district joined together for photocopier leases. The school officials created in-district special education programs in an attempt to keep students from going to out-of-district placements. The Chicopee Academy was the primary avenue for attempting to keep students in district. District officials stated that the professional development offerings were funded primarily through grants to supplement local spending. At the time of the EQA site review, with the change in the central office administration, the school administration piloted a consolidation of the human resources office with the business office. User fees had been discussed at each budget development cycle and never implemented. These adjustments were primarily based on maximizing dollars. In FY 2004, the district hired an assistant to the superintendent for curriculum and professional development.

5. The district and community had appropriate written agreements and memoranda related to 603 CMR 10.0 that detailed the manner for calculating and the amounts to be used in calculating indirect charges levied on the school district budget by the community.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The city and school department had a written agreement, not dated, regarding the indirect costs paid by the city on behalf of the school district for FY 2006. For “administrative services,” they used the “Per Pupil Administrative Cost Average” of the Department of Education.

For “pupil support services,” defined in the agreement as “all direct and indirect services provided to the School Department by the School Resource Officers Coordinator, the Crime Prevention/Safety Officer and the School Resource Officers,” the costs obtained from the police department were based on the total officer’s base pay, holidays, and incentive pay not reimbursed by the state. This amount was multiplied by the number of days the officer worked in the school.

For “operations and maintenance,” the agreement classified the costs into telephone system charges, central maintenance garage, and parks.

For the telephone charges, the city hall maintenance department provided invoices and a spreadsheet detailing costs and invoices for the school. The central maintenance garage (CMG) provided a letter attesting to the total number of hours that the CMG spent repairing and maintaining school vehicles multiplied by an hourly rate for mechanics in accordance with the Municipal Laborers contract. For parks charges, the city used 10 percent of the total Department of Public Works’ parks maintenance budget approved by the board of aldermen.

For “employee benefits,” the agreement categorized the costs into pension fund share, Medicare tax share, worker’s compensation insurance, unemployment compensation insurance, and medical insurance. For the pension fund share expenses, the retirement office used total school salaries including teacher aides and school lunch divided by the total city salaries to obtain the school’s percentage of total salaries. The office multiplied this percentage by the city’s appropriation for the retirement pension fund derived by the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC) to obtain the district’s share of the appropriation.

For Medicare tax share, the city derived the cost directly from the MUNIS system. It used the prior year actual amounts as a budget estimate with a percentage increase for anticipated pay increases or increases in personnel. They adjusted to actual expenditures prior to submission of the district’s End of Year Pupil and Financial Report.

For worker’s compensation insurance and unemployment compensation insurance, the city estimated costs based on the current year actual costs. The city determined an average monthly

bill and then multiplied it by 12 for an estimate. They determined the actual costs based on the actual bills received prior to submission of the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report.

For medical insurance expenses, the city received an estimated allocation from the city's insurance agent/broker based on current enrollment and rate structure. They used the actual medical costs prior to submission of the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report. The city's treasurer's office made available an itemized list of school employees and associated costs.

For "insurance expenses," the city categorized expenses into property/boiler, motor vehicle insurance, general liability alternative school, and student/athletics accident insurance. The city based the property/boiler expense from its most recent statement of values to determine the percentage of the total school buildings and contents to total city buildings plus contents. They multiplied the total yearly premium by this percentage.

For motor vehicle insurance, the city used the most recent composite rate per vehicle established in its insurance policy. The city multiplied this rate per vehicle by the total number of school vehicles to obtain the total cost. The general liability alternative school expense was based on the total premium cost stated in any endorsements for general liability insurance for alternative schools. They used the premium cost for all student/athletics insurance. Regarding long-term debt, the city used the current debt schedules obtained from the treasurer's office. According to the school district administration, there were no offsets for use of the school facility by city departments.

6. The combination of Chapter 70 Aid and local revenues, considering justified indirect charges, met or exceeded the Net School Spending (NSS) requirements of the education reform formula for the period under examination.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

For the period from FY 2004 to FY 2006, according to Department of Education data, the Chicopee school district exceeded net school spending by $850,113, $564,008, and $209,210, respectively.

7. Regular, timely, accurate, and complete financial reports were made to the school committee, appropriate administrators and staff, and the public. In addition, required local, state, and federal financial reports, and statements were accurate and filed on time.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to the district administration, the school committee received monthly reports on the status of the local budget, revolving accounts, and grants. The principals and administrators with budget authority had access to the MUNIS accounting system and could review their budgets as often as desired. The public had access to the budget information at school committee meetings, or if requested of the administration. The school committee meeting minutes were available at the Chicopee Public Library. The district business office reviewed the local budget to ensure the accuracy of reporting by monitoring the percentage spent compared to the time of year. The district completed and filed the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report and the Final Financial Reports on time within allotted extensions.

8. The district used efficient accounting technology that integrated the district-level financial information of each school and program, and the district used forecast mechanisms and control procedures to ensure that spending was within fiscal budget limits. District administrators were able to regularly and accurately track spending and other financial transactions.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The Chicopee school district and city finance department used MUNIS as their financial accounting technology. All school administrators had access to the system. The district's grants and revolving account records were maintained on the MUNIS system. The business office forecasted expenses by the monthly update report analysis, and it reviewed the balance of the accounts and compared it to the percentage of the fiscal year remaining. The MUNIS system had controls in place to ensure that line items did not exceed the budget. The district had transfer procedures that required approval by the business manager, the superintendent, and the mayor. The city's finance department posted the transfers. The district and individual schools had "prior year accounts." These accounts were for prior year bills. When the district paid all the prior year

bills, the remaining balance was available to the district for use with school committee approval. City and school officials stated that the payroll processes were handled manually. Both reported that a payroll conversion to a computer-based system was in process.

9. The district had a system in place to pursue, acquire, monitor, and coordinate all local, state, federal, and private competitive grants and monitored special revenue funds, revolving accounts, and the fees related to them to ensure that they were managed efficiently and used effectively for the purposes intended.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a grants coordinator in the central office. This department had the responsibility of coordinating the financial management of the district's grants in conjunction with the program managers. The school lunch program was a self-supporting program. The district used the school choice revolving account as a funding source for its budgets and managed the circuit breaker funds in accordance with the regulations governing the account. The district administration and school committee considered user fees in each budget development. Based on this review and the philosophy of the school committee, administration, and community, they never had user fees for any program or transportation. According to city officials, there were no grant findings in the single audits completed by the city's annual audit.

10. The district had a system in place to ensure that state procurement laws were followed, that appropriate staff had MCPPO credentials, and that all assets and expenditures were monitored and tracked to insure efficient and maximum effective utilization. The district also competitively procured independent financial auditing services at least every five years, shared the results of these audits, and consistently implemented their recommendations. All procurement, tracking, monitoring systems, and external audits were accurate, current and timely.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a system in place to ensure purchasing laws were followed. The MUNIS system had a requisition and purchase order system in place that had approval steps from requisition to

purchase order. The city purchasing department reviewed and approved all purchases in the city. A review of a sample of the school district's vendor payments in FY 2006 revealed that the district used quotes, vendor contracts, and purchasing through collaborative organizations.

The Chicopee school district's audit firm was Thomas J. Scanlon and Associates, which was the city's auditor for at least 18 years. The Independent Auditor's Report on Compliance and Internal Control Over Compliance Applicable to Massachusetts School Districts – Unqualified Opinion on Compliance, dated April 14, 2006, had a finding regarding the fact that grants and special funds revenues did not accord with the municipal ledger, and another finding regarding expenditures not reported using modified accrual basis of accounting.

Each year the school district's student activity accounts were reviewed by an independent auditor. The FY 2005 reviews contained findings in accounts regarding reconciliation of accounts to the general ledger and bank statements. The Chicopee High School student activity fund audit finding was that the bookkeeper at the school did not obtain printouts of, or reconcile to, the city's general ledger, and that the school had a passbook account with a balance of $85,717.44. The auditors recommended that the city treasurer receive bank statements or close it to the agency account. According to city officials, they have addressed these findings. There were findings in some accounts regarding excess reimbursements to the checking account. City officials disagreed in part with these findings, stating that they were due to timing issues regarding checks written for major activities such as the prom and field trips. Other findings related to procedures regarding the use of interest in the accounts and procedures for closing out old class accounts after graduation.

11. <u>The district had a formal preventative maintenance program to maximize and prolong the effective use of the district's capital and major facility assets, to ensure that educational and program facilities were clean, safe, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to promoting student learning and achievement.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

District officials stated that there was no formal preventative maintenance program. They stated that the maintenance department functioned using work orders. Some maintenance operations were jointly done with the city. The director of maintenance was professionally licensed.

According to documents, the Patrick E. Bowe School, grades preK-5, built in 1925, renovated in 1970, was listed in "good" condition. It had an enrollment of 438. The Chicopee Academy, grades 6-12, built in 1920, renovated in 1958, was listed in "fair" condition. It had an enrollment of 83. The Szetela Early Childhood School, grade preK, built in 1956, renovated in 1998, was listed in "good" condition. It had an enrollment of 234. The Anne E. Barry School, grades K-5, built in 1963, was listed in "fair" condition. It had an enrollment of 397. The Belcher School, grades K-2, built in 1900, was listed in "fair" condition. It had an enrollment of 225. The Edward Bellamy Middle School, grades 6-8, was built in 1970, and listed in "good" condition. It had an enrollment of 972. The Herbert E. Bowie School, grades K-5, built in 1954, was listed in "fair" condition. It had an enrollment of 405. The Chicopee High School, grades 9-12, was built in 2004. and listed in "excellent" condition. It had an enrollment of 1,186. The Chicopee Comprehensive High School, grades 9-12, was built in 1962. At the time of the EQA site visit, a new comprehensive high school was being built. It had an enrollment of 1,378. The Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School, grades 6-8, built in 1900, renovated in 1995, and listed in "good" condition, had an enrollment of 756. The Lambert-Lavoie School, grades K-5, was built in 1955. It had an enrollment of 280. The district administration listed it in "good" condition. The Robert R. Litwin School, grades K-5, enrolled 360, and was built in 1967. The district administration listed it in "good" condition. The James C. Selser School, grades K-5, was built in 1960. It had an enrollment of 375. The district administration listed it in "good" condition. The Hugh Scott Streiber School, grades K-5, was built in 1958. It enrolled 272, and the district administration listed it in "good" condition. The Gen. John J. Stefanik School, grades K-5, was built in 1970. It had an enrollment of 392. The district administration listed it in "good" condition.

Based on EQA walk-throughs, the examiners noted the following. The Fairview Veterans Memorial Middle School was clean, well lit, and well maintained, and promoted student achievement. In one area, the heat register grate needed repair due to exposed sharp metal. The

Chicopee Comprehensive High School and Chicopee High School were clean, well lit, well maintained and promoted student achievement. The Comprehensive High School showed signs of aging, including grooved stair treads and evidence of leaks and chipping, peeling paint; the district, however, had the building on schedule to be replaced by a brand new facility within six months. The EQA examiners found the Bellamy Middle School clean and well lit. It had worn door edges and the hardware for opening doors was also worn. The Stefanik Elementary School was clean, safe, well lit, and well maintained. The Selser Elementary School, Bowie School, and the Barry School were clean, safe, well lit, and well maintained. The Streiber School had some worn floor tiles in the corridors. The Chicopee Academy was clean, safe, well lit, and well maintained. It had a very secure system for safety, including storage of personal cell phones and radios. All students had their personal bags searched and inspected with a security wand.

12. The district had a long-term capital plan that clearly and accurately reflected the future capital development and improvement needs, including educational and program facilities of adequate size. The plan was reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district administration provided a fiscal year 2006 capital budget requests chart. It included seven project requests totaling $1,343,000. The district provided a description of the request, a reason (either safety or maintenance), an estimated cost, and a rationale for the request. In the fiscal year 2006 budget booklet each school provided a list of capital requests in their budget requests.

13. The schools were secure and had systems to ensure student safety.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district had a safety plan flip chart that each school had. In addition, the city had a citywide crisis plan that included the district. Each school building had locked front doors and a buzzer/bell. Cameras were at each main entrance. The school building's office staff had to unlock the door remotely to allow entry. All schools required sign-in procedures and visitor

passes. In EQA examiner walk-throughs not all staff had visible identification. Some school buildings had staff specifically assigned for safety/security reasons. All staff districtwide had a copy of the school safety plan. Each classroom displayed the safety plan. In Chicopee there was a citywide comprehensive emergency management plan and a district safety committee.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

The proficiency index is a metric used to measure and compare all schools and school districts regarding their performance on the MCAS tests. The proficiency index is a measure of the level of achievement a district, school, grade, or subgroup has made in relation to the 'Proficient' achievement level on the MCAS tests. There are four indices: the Average Proficiency Index (API), the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI), the Math Proficiency Index (MPI), and the Science and Technology/Engineering Index (SPI). The API currently is a weighted average of the EPI and MPI; the SPI will be included beginning in 2007, when passing the STE test becomes a graduation requirement.

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

Percentage of students scoring 200-208 on test x 0 = A
Percentage of students scoring 210-218 on test x 25 = B
Percentage of students scoring 220-228 on test x 50 = C
Percentage of students scoring 230-238 on test x 75 = D
Percentage of students scoring 240 or more on test x 100 = E

The proficiency index equals the sum of A + B + C + D + E = PI

Example: The Anywhere High School had the following results on the 2006 MCAS tests:

12 percent of all students scored 200-208; therefore, 12 percent x 0 = 0
15 percent of all students scored 210-218; therefore, 15 percent x 25 = 3.75
21 percent of all students scored 220-228; therefore, 21 percent x 50 = 10.5
34 percent of all students scored 230-238; therefore, 34 percent x 75 = 25.5
18 percent of all students scored 240 or more; therefore, 18 percent x 100 = 18.0

The average proficiency index is calculated by adding: 0 + 3.75 + 10.5 + 25.5 + 18 = 57.75

The average proficiency index (API) for the Anywhere High School would be 57.75.

The EPI would use the same calculation using the ELA results for all students taking the ELA exam. The MPI would use the same calculation using the math results for all students taking the math exam. The SPI would use the same calculation using the STE results for all students taking the STE exam.

The 100 point proficiency index is divided into six proficiency categories as follows: 90-100 is 'Very High' (VH), 80-89.9 is 'High' (H), 70-79.9 is 'Moderate' (M), 60-69.9 is 'Low' (L), 40-59.9 is 'Very Low' (VL), and 0-39.9 is 'Critically Low' (CL).

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY1997 – FY2006

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY97	7,465	3.1	46,973,859	5.9	18,893,514	25,727,666	14.2	44,621,180	9.5	44,705,342	10.5	84,162	0.2
FY98	7,458	-0.1	48,702,945	3.7	19,831,101	27,623,444	7.4	47,454,545	6.3	47,336,257	5.9	-118,288	-0.2
FY99	7,690	3.1	52,339,147	7.5	20,471,026	31,279,111	13.2	51,750,137	9.1	51,742,045	9.3	-8,092	0.0
FY00	7,370	-4.2	49,791,841	-4.9	21,337,761	32,384,611	3.5	53,722,372	3.8	53,604,809	3.6	-117,563	-0.2
FY01	7,802	5.9	53,554,471	7.6	22,202,302	33,749,961	4.2	55,952,263	4.2	55,711,594	3.9	-240,669	-0.4
FY02	7,778	-0.3	56,290,101	5.1	23,071,371	35,175,026	4.2	58,246,397	4.1	58,321,331	4.7	74,934	0.1
FY03	7,799	0.3	58,831,566	4.5	23,168,041	35,663,525	1.4	58,831,566	1.0	58,891,359	1.0	59,793	0.1
FY04	7,747	-0.7	59,706,512	1.5	23,330,217	36,376,295	2.0	59,706,512	1.5	60,556,625	2.8	850,113	1.4
FY05	7,476	-3.5	59,924,272	0.4	24,202,767	36,376,295	0.0	60,579,062	1.5	61,143,070	1.0	564,008	0.9
FY06	7,513	0.5	63,096,901	5.3	25,483,093	37,613,808	3.4	63,096,901	4.2	63,253,146	3.5	156,245	0.2

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY97	6,293	3,446	5,989	54.8	95.0	95.2	57.5
FY98	6,530	3,704	6,347	56.7	97.4	97.2	58.4
FY99	6,806	4,068	6,728	59.8	98.9	98.9	60.5
FY00	6,756	4,394	7,273	65.0	107.9	107.7	60.4
FY01	6,864	4,326	7,141	63.0	104.5	104.0	60.6
FY02	7,237	4,522	7,498	62.5	103.5	103.6	60.3
FY03	7,543	4,573	7,551	60.6	100.0	100.1	60.6
FY04	7,707	4,696	7,817	60.9	100.0	101.4	60.1
FY05	8,016	4,866	8,179	60.7	101.1	102.0	59.5
FY06	8,398	5,006	8,419	59.6	100.0	100.2	59.5

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g. FY06 enrollment = Oct 1, 2004 headcount).
Foundation budget is the state's estimate of the minimum amount needed in each district to provide an adequate educational program.
Required Net School Spending is the annual minimum that must be spent on schools, including carryovers from prior years.
Net School Spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures and transportation.