



Chicopee Public Schools District Review

Review conducted January 19-24, 2011



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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370

www.doe.mass.edu



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Overview of Level 3 District Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. This review is focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2010-2011 school year include districts in Level 3¹ of ESE’s framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state’s six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. Team members preview selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. The team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

¹ In other words, as Level 3 is now defined, districts with one or more schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide of schools serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a).

Chicopee Public Schools

The site visit to the Chicopee Public Schools was conducted on January 19-20 and January 24, 2011. Because of inclement weather that caused school and district closing on January 18th, the site visit originally scheduled (January 18-21) to last for four days was carried out in three days. Adjustments made to the schedule included having only one interview, on January 18, with city personnel at Chicopee City Hall. The district visit included visits to the following district schools: Edward Bellamy Middle School (6-8); Fairview Veterans Memorial (6-8); Patrick Bowe Elementary (Pre-K-5); Lambert-Lavoie Memorial Elementary (K-5); Stefanik Memorial Elementary (K-5); Selser Memorial Elementary (K-5); Anna E. Barry Elementary (K-5). It was not possible for the team to visit the Chicopee High School (9-12) or the Chicopee Comprehensive High School (9-12), as midterm examinations were in progress. Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2008 to 2010. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

District Profile²

The Chicopee Public Schools serve 7,875 students (2010-2011) in a city with a population of 55,298 according to the 2010 census.³ The city, located in Hampden County 92 miles southwest of Boston, is home to Westover Air Reserve Base. It has a mayor/city council form of government, with the mayor serving as the school committee chair.

The Chicopee School Committee consists of 12 members including the mayor. Two members of the committee serve at large and the remaining nine represent the various wards within the city. The committee meets twice monthly, with its subcommittees meeting at regular intervals. All meetings of the full committee are televised and available for public viewing several times during the week.

The 7,875 students who make up the Chicopee Public School population are served by a total of 13 schools, including 9 elementary schools, 7 with a grade span of K-5, 1 with a grade span of Pre-K-5, and 1 with a grade span of K-2. In addition there is an Early Childhood Center that serves Pre-K students. There are two middle schools for students in grades 6-8. The district has three high schools that offer a wide variety of educational experiences. Chicopee High School (9-12) offers a standard high school curriculum, while Chicopee Comprehensive High School (9-12), in addition to providing a standard high school curriculum, offers opportunities for training in career and technical education. The third high school, known as Chicopee Academy, serves

² Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

³ See the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's "At-a-Glance Community Report" for Chicopee, at <http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/local-information-technology/at-a-glance-community-reports.html#C>.

regular and special education students in grades 6-12 who have not met success in a traditional high school setting.

The present superintendent was appointed five years before the review and has an extensive background in the district, including experience as both a teacher and a principal. During the years since his appointment a few changes have occurred in the central office. The leadership team now consists of an assistant superintendent for student support services; an assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability; a director of budget and human resources; and a director of special education. Information from both school committee and city representatives indicated that there is a collegial working relationship between the district, the school committee, and the city.

The district has taken significant strides in completing a curriculum that formerly consisted of a listing of state framework standards. At this time there are completed curriculum maps for all core subjects. There has been some improvement in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics achievement since 2008 (see Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C); however, student achievement in mathematics lags farther behind state achievement than achievement in ELA, as shown by Tables C1 and C2 as well as C3 and C4. District staff acknowledged a problem with student achievement in math. The district's dropout rate, while improving, is still an issue, and the graduation rate remains problematic.⁴ Most likely contributing to the district's issues with students dropping out and not graduating are its high chronic absence and out-of-school suspension rates.⁵ The number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has recently increased, with approximately 60 percent of the district's students now eligible.⁶ The district at the time of the review did not have an operational strategic plan but was working with a District Improvement Plan. Throughout the review district staff expressed their recognition of the issues facing the district and their view that student achievement would improve.

Table 1 shows that the largest racial/ethnic group in the Chicopee Public Schools is the population of white students, with a percentage in 2010-2011 of 65.2, followed by the district's Hispanic students, at 27.5 percent. While 13.3 percent of the students did not have English as their first language, students with limited English proficiency (English language learners or ELLs) made up 4.7 percent of the student population. The percentage of students from low-income families in the district was 58.4 percent.

⁴ In 2010 Chicopee's annual grade 9-12 dropout rate was 5.5 percent (down from 7.3 percent in 2005), as compared with the state's rate of 2.9 percent; its four-year graduation rate was 68.2 percent, 13.9 percentage points lower than the state's rate of 82.1 percent.

⁵ In 2010 14.2 percent of Chicopee students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to 6.0 percent of students statewide, and 20.4 percent of Chicopee students were chronically absent, compared to 12.9 percent of students across the state. Chronically absent means absent for more than 10 percent of the days a student was enrolled in the district.

⁶ The percentage of district students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch rose from 48.5 percent in 2009 to 60.8 percent in 2010 and 58.4 percent in 2011.

Table 1: 2010-2011 Chicopee Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	235	3.0	First Language not English	1,046	13.3
Asian	115	1.5	Limited English Proficient	369	4.7
Hispanic or Latino	2,168	27.5	Low-income	4,600	58.4
Native American	14	0.2	Special Education	1,317	16.7
White	5,133	65.2	Free Lunch	3,947	50.1
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	19	0.2	Reduced-price lunch	653	8.3
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	191	2.4	Total enrollment	7,875	100.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The local appropriation to the Chicopee Public Schools Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$69,206,195, up 5.97% from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$65,309,323. School-related expenditures by the city were estimated at \$18,974,657 for fiscal year 2011, up 6.96 percent from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$17,740,279. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$65,202,968), expenditures by the city (\$18,374,368), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$18,597,160), was \$102,174,496.

Findings

Leadership and Governance

The school committee assumes responsibility for matters that are better addressed by administrators in accordance, as appropriate, with school committee policy.

School committee agendas and minutes demonstrated that the school committee was making decisions that are better made by administrators in accordance, as appropriate, with district policy. For example, the school committee minutes revealed that the school committee votes on home education plans (agenda for January 5, 2011). The school committee also votes on bids for purchases. For example, the school committee voted on January 6, 2010, to approve a bid for paper products for the school district. This is a responsibility that in other districts is the business manager's, with signatures from the superintendent and the city auditor. A third example of the school committee playing a role better fulfilled by the superintendent acting in accordance with school committee policy is the committee's approval of in-state field trips—for example, on November 17, 2010, a request to allow a small group of students to travel to a two-day conference in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

The school committee votes approval on and the chairperson signs a wide range of individual employment contracts, including contracts with principals; central office administrators such as the director of career and technical education, the supervisor of nurses, and the assistant director of budget and human resources; and central office administrative assistants. According to [Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 59B](#), the superintendent is to appoint principals; [Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 59](#), provides that a superintendent, upon employment by a school committee, shall manage the school system “in a fashion consistent with state law and the policy determinations of [the] school committee,” while the school committee may upon the recommendation of the superintendent “establish and appoint positions of assistant or associate superintendents . . .” It appears, then, that approval by the school committee and signature by the chairperson of individual employment contracts other than those for the superintendent and assistant or associate superintendents puts the school committee in noncompliance with Massachusetts law as it has stood since the Education Reform Act of 1993.

School committees should focus on issues of budget, policy, and student performance. In an interview with five school committee members, however, three of them stated that they had not taken part in the school committee training offered by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), which would have informed them as to their appropriate focus.

The Chicopee School Committee has taken over administrative tasks more appropriately performed by the superintendent and his staff, thus diluting the authority of the superintendent and resulting in less efficiency in the operation of district, while perhaps distracting the

committee from the important budget, policy, and student performance issues that should be commanding its attention.⁷

At the time of the review, the central office administrative team did not include an administrator with a strong knowledge of mathematics content, pedagogy, and assessment to take the lead in improving mathematics achievement, which has lagged farther behind state levels than English language arts achievement.

A review of MCAS results showed the district's mathematics achievement lagging behind the state at all levels, with more of a gap than for its ELA achievement. (See Tables C2 and C4 in Appendix C, as compared with Tables C1 and C3.) For instance, the Composite Performance Index (CPI) gap in 2010 was 5.8 points in ELA but 9 points in mathematics (see Tables C1 and C2). However, as described in the second finding under Curriculum and Instruction below, the review team found that the district had few formative assessments or targeted interventions in mathematics, especially at the elementary level, and insufficient support in mathematics for elementary teachers, there being no elementary math coaches. Elementary teachers reported that there was little direction or support in their teaching of mathematics. At all levels there has been little work done in developing benchmark testing that is independent of the text and aligns with the MCAS frameworks.

The superintendent and the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability said in an interview at the time of the review that there was no one among the district leadership with a particular background in mathematics and no one person in the district taking the lead in math education; they planned to fill a vacant assistantship to the assistant superintendent with someone with a mathematics background to take districtwide responsibility for mathematics.

The district, under the guidance of the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, has developed a strong approach toward the teaching and assessment of English language arts (ELA). One of the key points in developing this plan was the establishment of a districtwide committee for ELA. That committee has guided the work in ELA from kindergarten through grade 12. The assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability was planning on putting the same kind of committee in place for mathematics starting in early 2011. This committee would be a positive start to addressing the district's needs in the area of mathematics; the issues needing attention from it include formative and benchmark testing, professional development, pedagogy, and coaching. Without an emphasis on mathematics from the superintendent and his leadership team, it will be difficult for the district to improve mathematics achievement.

⁷ As described in the first Financial and Asset Management finding below, the district makes little use of data to focus its tight funding on targeted efforts to improve student performance.

The district does not have a strategic plan to guide the long-term work of the district. This lack of direction has led to a District Improvement Plan that indicates several issues to be addressed, but does not lay out realistic goals and a detailed plan for accomplishing them, with timelines, specific measurements to indicate progress, and persons responsible.

The District Improvement Plan for 2010 to 2013 set unrealistic goals:

Goal #1. All students will be Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics by 2013-2014.

Goal #4. All students graduate from high school prepared for success in the 21st century world.

The strategies in the plan are minimal and there is no plan as to how to carry out the strategies. For example, the strategies for goal number 1 are:

Curriculum: Align, design and update pre K-12 ELA/math curriculum and scope and sequence.

Instruction: Standards-based lessons driven by assessments to be used with differentiated instruction.

Assessment: Add ELA comprehension and diagnostic math assessment

The plan does not set out a timeline, identify the staff responsible, or describe how these important items will be accomplished. There is no mention of professional development, coaching, or other ways that teachers would be trained in each of these areas. In addition, the measurements given are not specific. For example, the measurements under the objective (“All students will achieve grade level benchmarks”) for pre-K-2 for Goal #1 are:

ELA: DIBELS, DWB, MELA-O, MAZE, MEPA

Math: HM, AYP

Although the plan lists these tests, it gives no specific scores to be used determine if the objective is being met over the time covered by the plan.

Although district leaders indicated an awareness of attendance problems in the district and said that they were working to address them, the district has not had a systemic approach to improving the high chronic absence and dropout rates (see District Profile and footnotes 4 and 5 above). Though there are attendance specialists at the high school level, when elementary principals were asked who or what was driving how they handle attendance issues, they each said that was something they did themselves with no guidance from anyone else in the district.

The District Improvement Plan does not include enough specifics to inform a long-term professional development plan. As it stands, there are several professional development offerings each year, but the planning is done year by year with no long-range professional development plan. Therefore, not everyone gets trained in a particular method. For example, teachers at the middle school level told the interview team that in ELA, 6th grade teachers had quite a bit of

training, 7th grade teachers received a little training, but 8th grade teachers received almost no training. Teachers did not know of any future plans to provide training to them.

Without a realistic, detailed strategic plan and District Improvement Plan, schools have little to base their School Improvement Plans on. Several of the School Improvement Plans took on the tenor of the District Improvement Plan in that they set goals that are too high to be realistic. Principals in their individual interviews discussed this point, saying that they were continuously working toward higher student achievement, but did not think that their goals were accomplishable.

For true improvement to occur, goals have to be measurable and reachable. Goals need to be easily understood by school employees, the community, and constituency groups so that a comprehensive and realistic plan, with detailed steps for reaching the goals and the measurements for determining progress, can be developed. Without a strategic plan and an adequate and realistic District Improvement Plan, the district does not have the tools it needs to improve professional practice and student achievement.

The superintendent and his leadership team have the support of teachers and administrators in the district.

In many different interviews, district personnel gave recognition to various members of the central office leadership team. Principals said that the superintendent had an open door policy and that they could call him directly without going through his secretary. They reported that the superintendent had high standards for them, but that he worked closely with them. They were satisfied with his goal-setting procedure, in which he met with them in the fall to discuss their goals, in the winter to do a mid-year check on their goals, and in the spring before he wrote their evaluations. The teachers' association grievance chair stated that he worked closely with the human resource director and solved many issues with him before they got to the grievance stage. Teachers told the review team that the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability had worked hard with them to develop a strong approach to ELA. The director of special education told the team that accountability had increased significantly since the current superintendent and assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability came on board. The assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability went on to say that the superintendent wants as little stress across the district as possible, so that when information and data is sent out, it has to be easily understood and ready to be used.

The superintendent and his leadership team have the confidence of the staff and administrators, a great aid in their efforts to make the improvements the district needs in order to raise student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

Chicopee has developed curriculum maps for all core subjects and a process for curriculum renewal that includes appropriate personnel.

The 2007 general report of a review by the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) stated that in 2004 Chicopee's documented curriculum had consisted primarily of "state frameworks learning standards, organized into a timeline by term." The report stated that the district had developed an "ambitious plan for expansion of curriculum documents." The implementation of this plan began with creation of the position of assistant superintendent for curriculum and professional development in 2004 and the hiring of a candidate in the same year.⁸ According to the report, as of the time of the EQA review in 2007 the curriculum documents varied in completeness by level and content area and did not contain all of the elements of a complete curriculum. The district had curriculum maps for mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels and was about to implement a new middle school curriculum in ELA. Additionally, the district had plans to work on a curriculum map for elementary ELA.

In interviews, central office administrators, principals, and teachers told the review team that in the years since the EQA review the district has completed curriculum maps for all core subjects. According to administrators and teachers, the maps were created by grade level teams of teachers working in disciplinary subcommittees under the direction of the district's curriculum leaders. The review team examined the maps and found that they are organized by term to serve as pacing guides, and contain most of the required curricular components in at least minimal detail, including standards from the state curriculum frameworks, resources, essential questions, and assessments. The elementary mathematics maps are based directly on the *Houghton Mifflin Math* program and consist of standards from the strands of the state frameworks organized by term, correlated with numbered lessons from the text.

The kindergarten through grade 12 science maps are arranged by month according to topic (earth science, life science, physical science, and technology) and include framework strands, objectives, associated mathematical skills, and prerequisite skills. The district has also prepared maps for kindergarten through grade 12 social studies, health and physical education, and technology. The high school curriculum maps are amplified by comprehensive course syllabi in all core subject areas.

Few maps in any core subject area contain instructional strategies, although the elementary writing process handbook augments the ELA map with instructional principles and guidelines and recommendations for a successful writing program, in addition to a scope and sequence and rubrics. Central office administrators told the review team that the handbook contains the best practices of the district's most successful writing teachers. The district chose to create a design

⁸ When the incumbent succeeded to the position in 2007, the title was changed to assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, and the subordinate position of assistant for curriculum and professional development was added.

for process writing rather than adopt an off-the-shelf commercial writing program. Administrators added that since process writing has also been instituted at the middle school level, the handbook will be revised to encompass grades 6 through 8. According to administrators and teachers, the district has provided professional development on the writing process at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels to help teachers implement best practices.

Central office administrators told the review team that teachers access the curriculum maps through the district website or are provided paper copies. Principals stated that they expect teachers to use the maps to plan instruction, and that they monitor compliance through periodic reviews of teachers' plan books, informal classroom walkthroughs, and formal observations. In interviews, teachers said that they had participated in developing the maps and told the review team that they refer to them regularly. In classroom observations, the review team confirmed that most lessons were timely according to the appropriate curriculum map.

Both administrators and teachers told the team that since the development and implementation of the maps, students transferring between district schools during the school year experience change in the location but not the content of their academic programs. This consistency has helped the district serve highly mobile students.

According to administrators, the curriculum maps were completed by 2008, and the district recently established a regular curriculum review and renewal cycle, beginning with ELA. Central office administrators told the review team that the standing district ELA committee, consisting of the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, the assistant for curriculum and professional development, middle school ELA coaches, and elementary reading specialists were to conduct the ELA curriculum review in 2011. As of the time of the review this committee had met monthly for at least three years to monitor student progress and identify programmatic strengths and needs.

Central office administrators went on to say that the district planned to create a similar standing committee for mathematics, consisting of the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, the assistant for curriculum and professional development, middle school mathematics coaches, and elementary mathematics liaisons. Administrators described the liaisons as full-time classroom teachers with a strong background in mathematics. The liaisons are paid a stipend for helping to score and interpret the district's mathematics benchmark assessments for their schools, helping teachers plan instruction for struggling students, and recommending resources. According to central office administrators, the district mathematics committee was to begin meeting in February 2011.

Since the EQA review, Chicopee has made substantial progress in developing and substantiating the curriculum and aligning it to the state frameworks in order to ensure student mastery of the standards. The district's maps identify and communicate essential content, and sequence and organize it in a developmentally rational order to facilitate learning. The maps also help to determine the adequacy and proportionality of instructional time.

Chicopee's curriculum maps serve as pacing guides to ensure that instructional content and topics are consistent across grade levels within a school, among schools at the same grade level, and in the same high school course taught by different teachers. The maps are the basis for the district's common formative and summative measures used to identify and address weaknesses in curricular content, scope, sequencing, and emphasis. At the time of the review the district had developed a preliminary cycle for curriculum review and revision and assigned appropriate personnel in order to ensure that the curriculum is current, relevant, and prepares students for further education.

At the time of the review the district had few targeted interventions and formative assessments to inform instruction in mathematics, especially at the elementary level, and there were no mathematics coaches to help elementary teachers improve their instruction.

The 2007 Chicopee district curriculum accommodation plan lists 13 ELA intervention programs at the elementary level, but only 3 mathematics intervention programs, including one designed primarily for students receiving special education services. Central office administrators, principals, and teachers told the review team that there were few supplements to the core kindergarten through grade 6 *Houghton Mifflin Math* program intended to meet the individual needs of struggling students. Consistent with this statement, there was little evidence of individually targeted instruction in mathematics in most of the elementary classrooms observed by the review team: Students rotated through the same small-group and center activities, following introductory whole-group lessons.

Central office administrators told the review team that like many districts, Chicopee gave priority to literacy. They added that there was heavy emphasis at the time on literacy in the state and nation. One principal stated that it was "reading first and math second." When asked why Chicopee selected *Houghton Mifflin Math*, central office administrators told the review team that it was included as a component when the district purchased *Houghton Mifflin Reading* in 2003-2004. They went on to say that although *Houghton Mifflin Math* serves well as the core program, no core program is all-encompassing. According to central office administrators and principals, the district mathematics committee would address gaps and redundancies in the core program and recommend supplements.

Chicopee does not have enough standardized measures to diagnose individual student needs in mathematics and prescribe appropriate instruction. Principals told the review team that the mathematics benchmark assessments were given too infrequently to inform instruction, and that the *Houghton Mifflin Math* chapter tests were more frequent, but not diagnostic. They went on to say that teachers use students' work products and other daily performance indicators to identify students' needs, plan instruction, and monitor student progress; however, this informal non-standardized approach does not permit comparison of results in order to evaluate instructional effectiveness.

Chicopee had recently modified the mathematics curriculum to include more explicit teaching of vocabulary and greater emphasis on written responses, based on an analysis of MCAS test data. One principal stated, and others agreed, that while the district had the capacity to act on

summative mathematics assessment data, it lacked the tools to diagnose struggling students' needs, as well as sufficient compensatory materials.

According to administrators and teachers, elementary teachers did not have regular access to mathematics experts to help them improve their instruction, and struggling elementary students did not always receive direct services from a mathematics specialist. The district appointed a mathematics liaison at each elementary school, but these full-time classroom teachers are not available during the school day to co-teach, model instruction, or provide direct services to students. According to principals and teachers, their primary role is to help teachers score and interpret benchmark assessments and to share strategies with their colleagues at faculty meetings and on professional development days. Principals and teachers also appreciated the plan for the liaisons to attend meetings of the new mathematics committee and report on the outcomes at faculty meetings. In interviews with the review team, elementary teachers said that although they shared promising practices with each other at grade level and faculty meetings, they were largely on their own in meeting the individual needs of students making unsatisfactory progress.

Mathematics coaches at the middle schools and department heads at the high schools consult with teachers and provide demonstration lessons. Middle school coaches also co-teach, help teachers use assessment results to plan instruction, and provide direct services to individual students and groups of students. While there is more direct support in mathematics for teachers and students at the secondary level, according to principals and teachers, there are few supplements to the core programs.

The district adopted the Holt-McDougal series for grades 7 and 8 in 2010. Middle school mathematics coaches, high school department heads, and teachers from both levels participated in a review of programs leading to the selection of the new series. According to the coaches and department heads, this series has a stronger emphasis on written communication of reasoning and problem-solving. Both were identified as weaknesses on the MCAS tests. The lessons also involve greater use of manipulatives and provide a basis for tiered small-group instruction.

At the time of the review Chicopee did not have sufficient targeted interventions for struggling students in mathematics, especially at the elementary level, and there were few mathematics experts to consult with elementary teachers in order to help them to improve their instruction. District performance on MCAS in mathematics has lagged farther behind state performance than in ELA (see Tables C1-C4 in Appendix C). The district has recently formed a mathematics committee to address these concerns. The stakes are high: it appears that many Chicopee students are without the prerequisite skills to study more advanced mathematics and may face limitations both in postsecondary education and in employment in an increasingly technical world of work.

There was strong evidence of fidelity of implementation of the district’s instructional model in the kindergarten through grade 8 classes observed by the team. In most classes, instruction was carefully designed and well-delivered. In many instances, however, instructional expectations lacked rigor, and the instructional methods most commonly employed did not bring students to a higher level of understanding.

In interviews, central office administrators and principals described the district’s kindergarten through grade 8 instructional model, consisting of 10 minutes to activate and focus attention through an independent activity relating current to prior learning; 10 minutes of teacher-led large group instruction; 60 minutes of independent practice during which students rotate to small groups or centers at 20 minute intervals; and 5 minutes to wrap up or summarize through a culminating activity. They went on to say that while there is no written directive requiring teachers to implement the model, the district considers it a best practice and has provided professional development for teachers on the rationale and implementation strategies.

Principals told the review team that they review and reinforce the model at faculty meetings and expect teachers to use it to organize classroom learning time. Principals went on to say that they monitor teacher compliance through informal classroom visits and formal observations. The review team found strong evidence of fidelity of implementation of the model in observations of kindergarten through grade 8 classes. Although there were small variations, such as fewer groupings, shorter activators, and no explicit wrap-up activity, instruction was clearly based on the major components in nearly all of the 77 elementary and middle classrooms observed. Teachers accurately and consistently described the model in interviews with the review team, and many said that the format increases student engagement and provides teachers opportunities to individualize the learning experiences. Central office administrators said that the model is highly efficient, adding that the district would continue to provide teachers with professional development to increase differentiation of instruction during small-group sessions.

Principals told the review team that teachers are encouraged to create focus walls in their classrooms, defined as information displays visible to the students from their seats. These displays typically consist of weekly learning objectives by subject area, as well as useful references such as key vocabulary, spelling words, high-frequency words, number lines, and place value charts. The review team found focus walls in most all of the classes observed. In some classes, teachers oriented the students by referring to the contents of the focus walls. For example, during a reading lesson the teacher pointed to the focus wall and asked students “Which strategy that good readers use are we using now?” In another class, the teacher referred to a pocket chart on the focus wall to resolve student confusion about place value.

The review team observed instruction in 77 district classrooms: 49 at the elementary level and 28 at the middle school level. These classes included 37 ELA, 11 mathematics and 1 science class at the elementary level and 13 ELA, 10 mathematics and 5 science classes at the middle school level. Four of the classes were ELL classes, and three of the classes were special education classes. The review team was unable to observe classes at the high schools because of the cancellation of school on the day the observations were to have taken place and the

administration of high school midterm examinations during all of the remaining days of the site visit.

The observations ranged between 20 and 30 minutes in length. Observers used a standard record form including 14 characteristics of effective instruction grouped under three categories: Organization of the Classroom, General Instructional Design and Delivery, and Higher-Order Thinking. Observers rated the prevalence of these characteristics on a three-point scale, indicating Solid Evidence, Partial Evidence, and No Evidence.

Organization of the Classroom

Under the category of Organization of the Classroom, the review team found solid evidence of a classroom climate characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone and discourse in 98 percent of the elementary level and 93 percent of the middle school level classes observed. Chicopee teachers were positive, encouraging, and courteous. Many told their students that they were confident of their ability to “do hard work,” and gave specific praise to reinforce their work habits and accomplishments. Most teachers handled off-task behavior in an unobtrusive manner, without personalizing. Some had developed a system for dealing with this kind of behavior that did not require words. Teachers also capitalized on their own errors to demonstrate to students that “everyone makes mistakes.” Some used humor effectively to mediate minor student conflicts and to lighten awkward situations without embarrassing students. At mid-year, the classroom routines appeared to be thoroughly engrained, and most students were highly self-regulating. This was especially evident in generally smooth and rapid transitions.

A learning objective for the day’s lesson was solidly evident in 28 percent of the elementary level classes observed and 68 percent of the middle school level classes observed. Although a lesson objective was rarely posted in elementary classrooms, most had a focus wall displaying themes for the week. Teachers periodically referred to the contents of the walls to orient students to the lesson. Some explicitly asked, “What are we doing now, and why?” At the middle school level, the review team found that instruction was deliberate and purposeful in most of the classes where the learning objectives were not explicit.

Observers found solid evidence that available class time was maximized for learning in 88 percent of elementary level and 71 percent of middle school level classes observed. Most teachers preserved instructional time by employing effective and efficient routines. For example, in one middle school class, the teacher explained to students that she would know they were ready when they had cleared their desks, taken out their notebooks, and turned to the next clean page. In an elementary class, the teacher called on a student to explain the rules for moving to another area of the classroom, then counted backwards from 10 to pace students through the transition.

General Instructional Design and Delivery

Many of the characteristics of effective instructional design and delivery were highly prevalent in the elementary and middle school level classes observed. For example, observers found solid evidence of instructional strategies activating students’ prior knowledge in 78 percent of the

elementary level and 79 percent of the middle school level classes observed. Observers found solid evidence of instructional materials consistent with student's developmental level and level of English proficiency in 80 percent of the elementary level and 79 percent of the middle school level classes observed; and presentation of content within students' level of English proficiency and developmental level in 84 percent of the elementary level and 71 percent of the middle school level classes observed.

The number of adults in the classes observed was advantageous. There were at least two adults in 88 percent of the classes observed, and three or more adults in 30 percent of the classes observed. In most of the observed classes, all of the adults worked directly with students in an instructional role.

Observers found solid evidence of instruction including a range of techniques in 58 percent of elementary level classes and 36 percent of middle school classes. The review team saw instruction in the large- and small-group modes, as well as independent learning, in most of the observed classrooms. However, large- and small-group instruction both tended to be teacher dominant, with teachers posing concrete, factual questions and students answering with one-word or short, unelaborated responses. Teachers often accepted these answers, furnishing the missing details themselves without showing students that they were expected to do so.

Higher-Order Thinking

Observers saw few instances of teachers promoting higher-order thinking in the classes observed. They saw solid evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning in only 22 percent of the elementary level and 29 percent of the middle school level classes. In an elementary school mathematics class, the teacher asked a student to verbalize his reasoning by "thinking out loud" as he solved a problem. Following the student's explanation, the teacher asked the class for "other ways to solve the same problem." In a middle school mathematics class, the teacher asked one student to explain how another might have arrived at an incorrect answer and whether that answer was "reasonable or unreasonable." Overall, however, the opportunities for students to explain their reasoning were rare in observed classes.

In interviews, principals told the review team that the scope of the mathematics curriculum constrained teachers from providing more opportunities for students to explain their reasoning and explore multiple methods of problem solution. One principal said that adherence to the pacing guide limited the time available for student reasoning and exploration. Another principal stated that the curriculum was "a mile long and an inch deep," adding that it would be better "to study fewer topics in greater depth."

Observers saw solid evidence of students inquiring, exploring, or problem-solving together, in pairs or in small groups in only 36 percent of the elementary level and 18 percent of the middle school level classes. One example seen was a middle school science class where students extracted main ideas from a chapter on erosion, shared their lists in pairs and then with the entire class as the teacher composed a list on the SmartBoard. The students then revised and condensed the list as the teacher conducted an active discussion about integrating several ideas into one big

idea and weeding the list to eliminate redundancy. Through this process the students came to agreement on a final version.

The review team saw solid evidence of teachers providing opportunities for students to apply new knowledge in only 38 percent of the elementary classes and 11 percent of middle school level classes observed. In an elementary class the teacher reviewed new vocabulary, and challenged students to “see how fast we can use our new words.” In a middle school class the teacher asked students to identify which numbers in an array were prime by applying the rules they had learned. However, these opportunities were uncommon.

Chicopee has developed, staffed, and implemented an instructional model in kindergarten through grade 8 based on promising practices. The model provides a common approach and a structure for individualizing instruction. According to the review team’s classroom observations, instruction was generally well designed and delivered; however, instructional expectations were not consistently rigorous, and the methods typically employed did not foster higher-order thinking. The district has made steady incremental progress in increasing student proficiency (see Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C), but the rate will not likely accelerate until the instructional expectations and strategies are of the same high quality as the instructional model.

Assessment

The Chicopee Public Schools have processes in place to collect, analyze, and disseminate data, implemented by the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, the technology coordinator, data teams, and others.

The district has an assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability whose responsibilities also include the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data. All interviewees said that data collection and analysis was prevalent throughout the district and included staff members at all levels. The district appointed a technology coordinator in 2008–2009 who manages all data generated in the district. In interviewees the technology coordinator said that he maintains extensive data, including not only data available through ESE’s Education Data Warehouse but also the extensive information generated as a result of district assessments. Principals said that they often request student information and that the data coordinator is prompt in fulfilling their requests.

The assistant superintendent said that there is a significant focus on MCAS. Principals get the early results from the Data Warehouse, and then immediately start to review and analyze the data, with further analysis taking place with their school data team. The assistant superintendent said that an analysis is also done at the district level and that the analysis is shared with all principals at a meeting. She said that the district is very transparent and that the scores of all schools and their analysis are shared with all principals. After the 2010 MCAS results were received the assistant superintendent also prepared a comprehensive “State of the District and Schools Report” that was presented to all principals as well as members of the school committee. This exemplary document contained extensive data and discussion relating to accountability

levels, MCAS results, student growth percentiles, comparisons of the district to the state, and reviews of individual schools, and also had a section on how the district was addressing its challenges. A review of School Improvement Plans showed that extensive student data is included in each plan.

All elementary and middle schools had had data teams in place for at least two years at the time of the review. Each of these teams analyzes and shares data with teachers in the school. These teams may be referred to in some schools as data teams, in others as leadership teams or Title I teams. At the Chicopee High School, the principal said that while there are no formal data teams data analysis does take place regularly through the department supervisors. According to the principal, supervisors have ample time to analyze data since they teach only three periods per day. In focus groups high school teachers said they meet every two weeks to discuss data. The principal of the Chicopee Comprehensive High School said that 2010-2011 was the first year that that school had had a data team. Some principals said that school teams were beginning to look at the student growth percentile but that this was not yet a common practice at the school level. In interviews district administrators said they were looking at the student growth percentile and found it to be a valuable tool for measuring student growth. Teachers in focus groups said that principals and data teams shared not only MCAS data but also data collected from the variety of benchmarks administered throughout the school year. Opportunities to discuss this data occur at school level meetings as well as during the common planning times that are in place in some of the schools. Principals and teachers said that after review of the data instruction is adjusted to meet the needs of students; according to principals they knew such adjustment was taking place through supervision and through review of plan books indicating what is being taught in classrooms.

Since 2007-2008 the district has required that an Individual Student Success Plan be maintained for every student in kindergarten through grade 8. All data pertaining to a student is entered electronically into a template that provides information regarding a student's history in the district. Entries include MCAS and benchmark data, support interventions and enrichment activities that have been provided, attendance information, and any other information specific to the student. Teachers are required to enter data at least monthly; if a student has shown the need for progress monitoring data is entered weekly. The assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability monitors plans not only to see the latest information about students but also to determine if teachers are faithful in entering data. The management of the Individual Student Success Plans is the responsibility of the district's technology coordinator, who gave the review team a presentation on these plans. The Individual Student Success Plan is a document that is immediately accessible to provide important current and past information about all K-8 students in the district. Interviewees said that the plans are a great tool for those students who transfer within the district. A similar document is maintained for at-risk students at the high schools.

In interviews school and district leaders discussed programmatic changes that have been made as a result of examining data. A district administrator said that the district had purchased *Interventions* in order to improve math instruction. At the end of the year a review of the program indicated that it was not "giving the district" what it wanted in terms of math

achievement, so it was dropped. But though its math scores have lagged farther behind the state than its ELA scores, the district does not have enough assessments in math (see next finding), and the math text used at the elementary level, the *Houghton Mifflin Math* text, is not in place because of the analysis of mathematics data; it came into use in 2003-2004 as a result of its being made available to the district when the *Houghton Mifflin Reading* text was introduced. At the middle school level the Holt-McDougal mathematics text was in its second year of use in 2010–2011.

Middle school administrators said that as a result of analyzing data they had decided to use a small group model for instruction with paraprofessionals working with small groups. These administrators also said that they had dropped the Read 180 Program because of a lack of impact as evidenced by an examination of data. At the high school administrators said that as the result of data analysis they had established an after-school Writing Center as well as a summer reading requirement. They also said that in an effort to address the low scores in math they had abolished lower-level courses for freshmen and in an effort to inject more rigor into the math program now require all freshmen to take Algebra I.

The district's attention to data has resulted in not only transparent dissemination of data but also extensive analysis by the assistant superintendent, principals, data teams, and, at Chicopee High School, department supervisors. Teachers use this analysis to adjust instruction; for K-8 students and at-risk high school students, they also maintain Individual Student Success Plans with all assessment data and other information about a student's educational history, used for progress monitoring. Programmatic changes have been made at both the school and district levels as a result of the analysis of data; however, the math textbook in place at the elementary level was not adopted as the result of analyzing mathematics data.

The district has implemented a system of regular benchmarking that generally focuses on student achievement in ELA despite the fact that the achievement of district students in mathematics lags farther behind statewide achievement.

The district provided the review team with extensive information about assessments in the district. The results of these assessments are analyzed and used by teachers to plan instruction for students. However, many of the assessments are for ELA; district and school staff do not have enough formative math assessment results to provide the information needed to improve the low mathematics performance at most of the grade levels in the district. (At the same time, administrators and school staff expressed concern that more progress was not being made in ELA given the number of ELA assessments.)

The insufficient number of assessments for math is shown by the measurements for the first goal of the District Improvement Plan 2010-2013, "All students will be Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics by 2013-2014." Objectives, strategies and measurements are listed for each grade span. The measurements for Pre-K-8 for ELA include a variety of assessments while the measurement for math includes only the Houghton Mifflin Adequate Yearly Progress test. At the high school level the only measure listed for math is the MCAS.

The district's resource staff for ELA includes ELA coaches at the elementary level. At the elementary level in math, however, there are only mathematics specialists. These math specialists have full-time classroom teaching assignments, are generally only available after school hours, and are unable to offer any coaching to teachers. More support for teachers is available at the middle and high school levels, where there are math coaches at the middle school level and department heads at the high schools.

A review of the district's list of assessments shows that in reading, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is administered to K-5 students three times a year. For those students who are at risk progress monitoring is carried out up to four times a month. The district has also instituted DIBELS testing at the two middle schools. The Fairview Middle School uses it for thrice-yearly benchmarking for all its students, while the Bellamy Middle School uses the DIBELS for progress monitoring for its at-risk students. According to a district administrator there was a plan to use the DIBELS at the high school, too, for its at-risk students.

The Maze reading assessment is administered three times a year to all students at both the elementary and middle schools. But district administrators said that there was some dissatisfaction with the Maze assessment because it was not providing enough information regarding students' reading comprehension abilities. There was a desire to use the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), but the cost of administering this assessment had prevented its use. The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), another reading assessment, is administered at different elementary grade levels throughout the district, as well as in all three grades at the Bellamy Middle School and in the spring in grade 8 at the Fairview Middle School.

In math, the Houghton Mifflin benchmark tests are administered to all elementary students and the district math benchmarks to all middle school students. All elementary and middle school students are also required to participate in the district's benchmark assessment in writing. High school students take common midterm exams but common assessments are not shared at the high schools. Each high school has developed its own common assessments.

Benchmarking was in progress during the review team's visits to several elementary schools as well as the two middle schools, showing fidelity to the benchmarking schedule. In interviews principals said that all assessment results are made available to teachers in a very short time. In some cases, as with the DIBELS, the information is available the very same day as testing. All assessment data is available through the district's information system with teachers able to log on to retrieve the information at any time.

The district administers benchmark assessments three times a year, and in most cases the results are used for summative purposes. In interviews teachers and principals said that formative assessments were informal in nature and included a review of student class work, including work completed in the small-group centers that are mandatory in the district for elementary and middle schools.

School and district leaders remained concerned about the insufficient number of math assessments and said that they were searching for appropriate math assessments. There were

also plans to convene a mathematics curriculum committee with representation from across the district to provide recommendations for math improvement in the district. At the time of the review, the district was focused on benchmarking in ELA and did not have the assessments in mathematics needed for it to make the substantial improvement in mathematics performance recognized as necessary.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The hiring process for professional staff used by the Chicopee Public Schools is comprehensive and provides the district and schools the opportunity to hire effective teachers and administrators.

When there is a teaching vacancy in the district, the central office determines the feasibility of filling the opening and the director of budget and human resources, in concert with the superintendent, authorizes the advertising of the vacancy. All candidates must submit their credentials electronically through the district's *Schoolspring* software; all principals have direct access to all of the submitted documents. Interviewees expressed the view that the system is very effective because there are a number of filters that can be applied to the applications (highly qualified only, local only, etc.) making the screening process easier to manage. Because Chicopee uses a site-based management model, the screening process used by each school varies. However, each principal interviewed reported having created a comprehensive screening and interviewing process, which gives each school an excellent opportunity to hire effective teachers from the available pool of candidates.

Although the central office encourages principals to hire quality candidates who are lower on the pay scale, all principals interviewed agreed that financial limitations did not deter them during the hiring process from bringing forth the best candidate as the finalist. All principals agreed that they had autonomy in hiring and that they had never been denied a request to hire the individual who in their view best fit the particular needs of their school.

The collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' association has a clause (Article XI E) that states, in part, that "When the decision is made to fill a staff vacancy from the in-service volunteer pool, those teachers requesting assignment to the vacant position will be given first consideration for selection." All principals interviewed agreed that the only time that process had become problematic was when a reduction-in-force situation existed in the district. One principal with several years of experience reported never having felt pressure to take a teacher requesting a transfer, but also reported having found that a change of venue for a teacher oftentimes turns out to be beneficial for both the teacher and the school.

At the time of the review team's visit all of the district's administrators held appropriate licensure, and the progress of the 21 teachers who were on waivers was closely monitored by both the central office and the appropriate principal. Monthly updates were furnished to the principal by a central office staff member, and the district regularly hired "tutors" to assist those staff members who still needed to pass the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL).

Administrative vacancies are processed through the central office, with a committee of administrators, teachers, department heads, and parents taking part in all stages of screening and interviewing the candidates.

The hiring process used by the Chicopee Public Schools is thorough and comprehensive and allows the district to hire effective teachers and administrators who will serve the needs of all their students.

The district supports its newly hired teachers with an effective two-year induction program.

Interviewees said that the Chicopee Public Schools induction program has evolved into a very supportive and effective program in recent years. All newly hired teachers in the district are assigned a mentor who has been trained in the skills necessary to be a supportive colleague. Principals have the responsibility for matching up new teachers with mentors. This process most often matches the mentor and mentee from within the same grade level and/or department, and, importantly, time is allotted in each person's schedule to facilitate conferences between the two to promote professional growth. The induction process includes all new teachers being observed by their mentor several times during the year in a low-key learning experience. Interviewees indicated that there were more than 40 trained mentors in the district and that they held positions at each of the district's schools.

In addition to providing for one-on-one peer mentoring, the district's induction program requires all new teachers to attend and participate as a group in an extensive orientation program at the beginning of the school year, as well as attending regularly scheduled in-service workshops conducted by the central administration. Ten such workshops were held during the 2009-2010 school year. Among the topics covered in the workshops during that year were managing a classroom, motivating *all* students, and recognizing bullying.

The second year of the district's induction program, called "Beyond the Induction Year," is required of all teachers continuing to work in the district. Each teacher again meets with and works regularly with his or her mentor, but the emphasis of the program changes. The second year of the program is devoted to providing a technical and psychological support system for the new teachers, most of whom prepare a "Professional Education Competencies Portfolio" with assistance from their mentors. The completed portfolio, which is divided into four distinct areas of minimum competency: Assessment, Classroom Setting, Curriculum Development, and Instruction, represents fulfillment of the 50 hours of Professional Development Points (PDPs) necessary as part of the requirements for a professional license.

The extensive two-year induction program used by the district is effective in supporting the newly hired teachers and a success at all levels. It can be considered to be one of the major contributing factors to the low teacher turnover rate enjoyed by the district.⁹

⁹ The district's teacher turnover rate was 9 percent in both 2009 and 2010, compared with 12 percent and 11 percent statewide in those years. See the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) for Districts for Chicopee, Leadership/HR/PD tab, at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>.

The evaluation processes for teachers and administrators used at the time of the review closely followed the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership,¹⁰ but for teachers did not always include instructive comments and for administrators were not completed every year. The language in the collective bargaining agreement relative to principals conducting walkthroughs has created uncertainty about how the walkthroughs may be used, limiting their usefulness.

Interviewees, principals and teachers alike, agreed that the evaluation process used by the district for teachers at the time of the review was extensive and completed when required. They also said that a review of personnel folders would reveal that the formal observation/evaluation process closely followed both state and contractual guidelines.

The stated goal of the process was to have all of the district's supervisory personnel (principals, assistant principals, and department heads) have regular personal contact with every teacher they were responsible for, focusing on improving achievement for all students.

The review team examined 45 randomly selected teacher personnel folders during its visit and found that all contained timely evaluations that were aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching. Principals and other supervisors conscientiously indicated the strengths of all their teachers through informative comments in the summative evaluations, but only one-third of the evaluations reviewed had instructive comments designed to point out areas that needed improvement.

In 2007 an important aspect of the supervision/evaluation process was negotiated and added to the collective bargaining agreement for teachers. Appendix B II states in part that "... evaluators are expected to gather information in as many different ways as possible to produce the most complete and accurate picture of the teacher's overall performance. These may include classroom visitations (by advance or contemporaneous notice where the evaluator makes his/her presence known to the teacher) . . ." According to the principals interviewed, this language was supposed to formalize the ability of principals and other supervisors to conduct brief, regular, unannounced classroom visits or "walkthroughs." Since 2007 walkthroughs have taken on two distinctly different forms. The district's walkthroughs are periodically conducted by a team of administrators including some from the central office. These walkthroughs do not include feedback to the teachers whose classrooms are visited. The second type of walkthrough has been regular, sometimes daily visits by the school principal. Problems have arisen, however, because of uncertainty as to the correct interpretation of the language in the collective bargaining agreement. The review team found that each principal handled his or her walkthroughs a little bit differently, and that there was uncertainty as to whether any type of feedback, oral or written, could be given to the teachers visited and whether any information gathered during the walkthroughs could be used in the teacher's summative evaluation. The teachers' association has

¹⁰ These two sets of principles accompanied the regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators at 603 CMR 35.00 that were in force at the time of the review. In June 2011 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace those regulations and the accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.

been involved with a number of grievances over the past few years concerning these questions, on which the language in Appendix B II is silent.

The review team was informed that the successor to the collective bargaining agreement did not have any change in this language even though there was much previous discussion about it. All principals agreed that if the matter could be cleared up, the supervision/evaluation process they use to monitor what is going on in the district's classrooms would be clearer, which could have a positive effect on student learning.

When asked how struggling teachers were assisted, the principals interviewed said that the district encourages these individuals to participate in professional development offerings specifically designed to assist them with management skills and pedagogical strategies, in addition to receiving assistance from colleagues through a peer observation/best practices model. Although there is language in the collective bargaining agreement about teachers being put on improvement plans, principals agreed that this is a "gray area" to most of them and that the practice is not used very often.

The review team examined the personnel folders of all the central administrators and the district's 14 principals. The examination revealed that all the administrators were appropriately licensed and that each had had a comprehensive evaluation written by the superintendent during the spring of 2010.

The superintendent's evaluation of each principal was closely aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership; in each evaluation the superintendent took the time to comment on each of the seven standards as well as numerically rating each area of responsibility. Every evaluation concluded with a narrative concerning the overall effectiveness of the principal. The team noted that although every principal had received an evaluation in 2010 that had not been the case in preceding years. Most principals had not been evaluated every year; some even had three-year gaps between evaluations (before 2010, eight principals had last been evaluated in 2007). All principals agreed, however, that even though they might not have had an annual written evaluation, the superintendent had annually required them to establish school goals and that he met regularly throughout the year with each principal to review the progress of those goals.

All central office administrators had narrative-type evaluations written on their performance in 2010, but, as there were for principals, the review team found that there were gaps in the sequence of what were supposed to be annual evaluations.

A review of the superintendent's personnel folder revealed that he had been evaluated annually by members of the Chicopee School Committee using the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership as a guide. Each evaluation was a comprehensive composite document that had ratings on each area of responsibility and narrative comments from most members of the committee.

The personnel folders reviewed for both teachers and administrators all included 2010 evaluations and followed the Principles of Effective Teaching or Effective Administrative

Leadership. However, only one-third of the teacher evaluations contained instructive comments, and principals and central office administrators were not evaluated every year. The value of evaluations in holding professional staff accountable and improving student achievement is diminished when they are not completed every year and when they do not consistently include instructive comments aimed at improving practice.

The district provides its staff with a variety of professional development offerings, selected annually by both central office and school staff, but their selection is not guided by a long-range professional development plan closely aligned with the District Improvement Plan.

Although Goal #2 of the 2010-2013 District Improvement Plan (DIP) includes targeting professional development “to increase student achievement and staff skills,” the review team was informed by several administrators that no overall long-range professional development plan existed.

The district’s Professional Development booklet states that the major aim of the entire program is to affect student learning. It states that another important aim for the program is not to have a “one-shot and out” type professional development program but rather to have a program that is sequential and sustained in nature.

The professional development program is spearheaded by a committee of administrators and teachers who represent all three levels of the school district. It is the committee’s responsibility to create a professional learning program every year and then to analyze the results of the follow-up teacher surveys collected after each professional development day and revise the next group of offerings accordingly.

All interviewees agreed that the district’s professional development plan and offerings in recent years were generated equally by the central office and the staffs of the schools. Interviewees stated that the final list of offerings during each professional development day had had input from staff. The district annually has set aside three full professional development days before classes commence in September. During the first two days of the program, teachers and administrators have several opportunities to work together in a variety of learning activities. Among the offerings in September 2010 were workshops on the analysis of student achievement data, the confidentiality of student records, civil rights issues, differentiated instruction, and the signs of bullying. The third professional development day in this sequence is entirely site-based, with the offerings varying from school to school.

In addition to the three professional development days in September, the district provides all their teachers the equivalent of another two days of professional development during the school year. The opportunities offered during these days vary from level to level and in some cases from school to school.

“Category” training sessions, to assist classroom teachers in sheltering content for English language learners, have regularly been offered to staff members during the professional development days. At the time of the review team’s visit 32 (5.1 percent) of the professional staff

held ESL certification and another 31 staff members had been trained in all four categories.¹¹ Ninety teachers had received Category 1 training, 140 teachers had been trained in Category 2, 139 teachers had had Category 3 training, and 108 teachers Category 4 training. It was the goal of the central office to have all the district's teachers trained in at least one category by 2013.

An important aspect of the district's professional development plan has been the collaboration and close relationship that exists between the school department and Elms College, located in the city. During the recent past the college has offered programs to enhance the professional lives of the district's teachers. Charging one-half of the going rate to Chicopee Public Schools teachers, the college offers degree programs for a Masters of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) and a Masters in Education (M.A.), as well as a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) program. It has also regularly conducted Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) prep courses for those teachers who have still to pass that test before they receive their professional license. Additionally, interviewees reported that the college has responded to specific needs identified by the district by offering specially-designed graduate credit courses in such topics as teaching middle school mathematics and dealing effectively with autism spectrum disorders.

An examination of ESE data revealed that the amount of money spent on professional development annually per pupil (\$327 in fiscal year 2009 and \$391 in fiscal year 2010) is well over the amount spent per pupil statewide (\$224 and \$226 in those years).¹² The district has used grants to fund some of the amounts spent on professional development, amounts ranging from \$2,118,909 in fiscal year 2008 (\$1,572,181 or 74.2 percent from grants) to \$2,525,435 in fiscal year 2009 (\$1,318,096 or 52.2 percent from grants) to \$3,037,855 in fiscal year 2010 (\$1,327,255 or 43.7 percent from grants).¹³

The professional development program run each year by the district leaves little doubt that district leaders view professional development as an important aspect of the school department's charge. However, without a long-range plan that is closely aligned with the priorities and goals in the District Improvement Plan, it will be difficult to have the type of sequential and sustained professional development program the district is aiming for, one that will result in substantial improvement to student learning and achievement.

¹¹ Category 1 consists of training on Second Language Learning and Teaching, Category 2 on Sheltering Content Instruction, Category 3 on Assessment of Speaking and Listening, and Category 4 (for teachers who teach ELA to ELLs) on Teaching Reading and Writing to ELL Students.

¹² See the DART Detail: Staffing and Finance for Chicopee, Per Pupil Detail 3 Yrs tab, at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>.

¹³ See the ESE reports on fiscal year 2008-2010 expenditures per pupil for Chicopee, available at <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/statistics/>.

Student Support

The district uses a variety of tools to meet most students' needs in general education classrooms.

In Chicopee, the 2007 district curriculum accommodation plan (DCAP) is described as a document designed to provide guidelines for all school personnel in identifying academic learning concerns, as well as concerns about behavior exhibited by students, communicating those concerns to parents, and then working collaboratively to devise strategies for student progress. The DCAP includes a variety of instructional, physical, behavioral, structural, organizational, remedial, and technological accommodations for all three educational levels—elementary, middle, and high school. It lists the professionals at each level who are available for consultation, support, and intervention, specifying the role of each. The creation of the DCAP not only complies with Mass. Gen. Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38Q1/2, but also demonstrates Chicopee's efforts to design formal and informal routes for addressing impediments to student growth and development through early interventions.

The “State of the District and Schools Report” reviewed by the team described the Instructional Support Team (IST) as an initial rollout of Response to Intervention (RTI). Its purpose is to “intervene with underperforming students to promote academic success through a strategic wrap-around approach.” One such team has been established in every school within the Chicopee Public Schools. These teams, appointed by principals, comprise ELA and math academic coaches (math liaisons at the elementary level), counselors, and school administrators. Interviews with district and school leaders indicated that the team configuration could change to include ELL, reading, or behavioral experts, depending on teacher reports and assessment data portraying student needs. Parents, too, are often invited to IST meetings. Once it has been notified of a struggling student and academic data has been collected and analyzed, the IST begins to brainstorm appropriate strategies to help struggling students improve performance. District administrators were clear about the role of the Instructional Support Team: its function is not to determine accommodations for students being educated under an Individualized Education Program (IEP), but to identify necessary changes in instructional approaches in order to retain students in regular education settings while working to eliminate academic deficiencies and detrimental behaviors. Principals told the review team that the IST is an invaluable resource for identifying students who are in danger of “falling through the cracks” and for determining appropriate interventions. Members of the IST also work directly with classroom teachers to monitor the progress of at-risk students. A principal said that the IST “helps teachers keep an eye on students.”

During visits to several elementary schools, review team members found that one way the district supports students is by placing more than one adult in a classroom. Whether their role was regular education teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, ELL teacher, or even student intern, they each participated in teaching. Another practice in elementary schools, which was beginning to be implemented in middle schools, is having a smaller group of students working in centers with adult support. According to interviewees, another response to student

needs is that all students are taught by a three-tiered instructional model: access to core instruction, access to in-class interventions, e.g., Read Naturally, and extended learning time opportunities, which include supplemental services, before- and after-school programs, and summer school. In addition, the district became a participant in federally-funded Race to the Top initiatives in 2010-2011.

Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) are another tool used in the Chicopee Public Schools for students in grades 1-8 who have not shown mastery of skills through benchmark assessments or who are not demonstrating sufficient growth. Once the students are identified, teachers are responsible for inputting student data into the ISSP, which is maintained by the technology coordinator. The ISSP helps staff determine the instructional path for particular students to ensure that their learning needs are being addressed. Within the ISSP, teachers list all interventions that they have used in working with the student. The plan serves as an important resource for keeping track of students' performance and for enlisting outside services, if deemed necessary, to boost the learner's progress. ISSPs are regularly monitored by the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

By its use of such initiatives as the DCAP, the IST, small-group centers, before-and after-school programs, and Individual Student Success Plans and their counterpart at the high school level, Educational Proficiency Plans, the district demonstrates a serious commitment, recognized by principals in interviews with the review team, to addressing diverse student needs within the regular education setting.¹⁴

The district has created an extensive number of student support programs for implementation in schools that choose to use them, but there does not appear to be a systemic approach to making these programs available across the district.

A document supplied to the review team entitled "Examples of Student Support Programs in the Chicopee Public Schools" included pages of district and school initiatives designed to assist staff and students in improving student learning and behavior. The document is evidence of Chicopee school personnel's concern that all students be given a chance to reach their full potential, regardless of their needs. The programs and services available include Title I services during the school year and during summer school, career and technical programs, peer mediation, comprehensive school health, anti-bullying programs, suicide prevention, programs to encourage positive behavior, support in grade transitions, fitness clubs, alternative education options, and many more.

Principals reported flexibility in terms of which support initiatives they adopt and use in their schools, saying that initiatives were selected based on the needs of their particular students. They said that they enjoy the flexibility in being able to make critical decisions for their schools regarding student support initiatives. In general, they agreed that they have what they need to do their jobs, mentioning phenomenal support from district leaders and indicating that help was always a phone call away. They expressed the view that Chicopee looks at the whole child when

¹⁴ The percentage of district students in special education has been below the state level since 2003.

determining programs to address academic and social emotional needs. As one principal put it, in Chicopee people care about kids and want to see them better themselves.

Universal breakfast, non-violent restraint training, and after-school programs at the Chicopee Boys and Girls Club were among those initiatives that all schools have accessed. However, many available initiatives were unfamiliar to some principals and teachers (as learned from interviews and teacher focus groups); these initiatives could be implemented more widely if there were a more systemic design for eligibility and access. It does not appear that the district targets populations who would be best served by specific programs or systematically determines whether all schools have the resources they need. Also, it was unclear whether or not principals had been trained in how to select appropriate student support programs and analyze their effectiveness.

Even with the extensive selection of support programs designed to be wrap-around services for students, Chicopee's graduation, dropout, chronic absence, and suspension rates still remain concerns (see District Profile and footnotes 4 and 5 above). It appears that even though there are many services available, students and families may not always have access to those that are a fit for them. Without training for principals or a systemic design that targets particular populations for eligibility and access to appropriate initiatives among the many available, some very effective programs may go under-utilized by the individuals who could stand to benefit the most.

Financial and Asset Management

The city funds its schools at little more than the level required by the state, and below the state average per pupil expenditure, but the district makes little use of data to focus its tight resources on targeted efforts to improve student performance, particularly for struggling students.

According to ESE data the district's Net School Spending (NSS) for FY2010 was \$74,101,423, approximately 1% above the required level, and similar funding levels were reported for previous years. Its fiscal year 2010 per pupil expenditure of \$12,318 (including grants) was below the statewide per-pupil expenditure of \$13,047. School and city officials confirmed that the city has generally appropriated close to the minimum required to meet net school spending requirements. Administrators reported that tight funding compounded by reductions in Chapter 70 because of the financial crisis resulted in cuts in some budget lines such as school supplies, crossing guards, maintenance, and custodians and limited their ability to purchase up-to-date technology, the GRADE testing program, or supervision, coaching and services for struggling students to strengthen mathematics instruction.

Although the city funds operating expenses at the minimum net school spending required level, the city has funded capital projects for the schools; according to city officials and school administrators approximately \$20 million in building enhancements at the Comprehensive High School were paid for by city bonds with no MSBA assistance. Other capital projects funded by the city included the conversion of a parochial school to accommodate Belcher Elementary

School, parking lot and flooring renovations, and roofing projects. In addition, the district has built two new high schools with 90 percent funding from the MSBA and has a middle school renovation project currently in the pipeline. The city provides a small measure of additional support by allowing the district to keep unspent balances at the end of each year, contributing to what administrators described as a “rainy day fund.”

In spite of tight funding, reviewers found class sizes to be approximately 20 and classrooms staffed with paraprofessionals and specialists in addition to teachers. Administrators reported that retirements have allowed the district to reduce lay-offs by hiring younger, less expensive teachers. The district provides in-house special education programs to reduce the need for more expensive out-of-district placements.

Other economies exercised by the district include using in-house maintenance workers, cooperating with the city and the Lower Pioneer Collaborative to purchase supplies and fuel at better rates, and replacing fluorescent bulbs and ballasts with more energy-efficient ones. City officials stated they were considering sharing some maintenance services in order to save on maintenance contracts.

District documents showed the district received over \$14 million in grants in FY2010. According to administrators, grants fund student and academic support programs in the schools, including mentoring for new teachers, professional development, before and after school programs, MCAS preparation, the high school Striving Readers program, and ELL, reading, and math specialists. Title I services and other grants such as Silber and Striving Readers are allocated to the schools with the neediest populations to provide extra services such as after-school and remedial reading teachers and special programs.

Administrators reported that the district distributes resources to schools on a per pupil basis, rather than on assessment and demographic data. Schools with larger populations of high-need students received the same per-pupil allocation as others, and, with the exception of Title I supports, schools had the same levels of support, academic services, and specialists. Similarly, school and subgroups struggling to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and accomplish other achievement goals have district resources comparable to those allocated to more successful schools or subgroups. In spite of the fact that mathematics scores lag farther behind the state than ELA scores, there were more specialists and assessments in reading than in mathematics. Programmatic changes have been made at both the school and district levels as a result of the analysis of data; for instance, mathematics assessment data was a factor in the decision to replace the middle school mathematics text in 2009. But the district is missing the opportunity to use data to guide development of the budget so as to allocate the resources available in the district to their most needed and most effective uses, to make the most of tight funding.

City and district leaders have good relationships grounded in sound management processes, which benefits the district; a key aspect is that procedures are in place to ensure that expenditures are within budgeted amounts and spending is carefully monitored.

According to administrators, the school committee receives monthly reports on budgets and expenditures for all sources of funding, providing budgeted and actual expenditures and percent

remaining, by line. Some expenditures are encumbered, such as substitutes, contracts for supplies, and purchase orders; salaries and grant purchase orders are not encumbered. Administrators have access to MUNIS, the city and school accounting software, to keep track of their budgets. The grant administrator monitors grant expenditures. Administrators reported that the district has not run a deficit in any recent fiscal year.

City and district officials reported that expenditures are subject to controls at both the district and city levels. Purchase orders must be approved by the business office; city officials also approve all purchase orders to ensure that procurement laws are followed and that there is enough money in the budget; transfers are required if an account will be overspent. A packing slip or other receipt is required for the approval of each invoice, and the city also reviews invoices for accuracy and legal requirements. The city procurement officer works with district officials on bids and contracts for large purchases to ensure that Chapter 30B and other bidding laws are followed. The school committee approves bids, contracts, and warrants for payment.

Salaries and other payments to employees are based on contracts, and are reviewed by the city as well as the district business office for each payroll warrant. Payments for overtime and extra stipends must be approved by the appropriate administrator and are based on union contracts.

City financial records are audited annually, and the audit of 2008-09 expenditures indicated no findings or recommendations for the school department and noted that a recommendation from a prior year had been implemented.

The district's fiscal controls and the transparency of its budget reporting have led to a collaborative relationship with city officials. Allowing the district to carry over surpluses in a rainy day fund, and support of the capital needs of the schools, are examples of benefits to the schools resulting from this relationship.

Recommendations

Note on the delay of this report and the currency of these recommendations:

The finalization of this report has been delayed long past the time the Department recognizes would have been desirable. As a result, the priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.

Leadership and Governance

School committee members should receive more training on the role and responsibilities of the school committee to guide their focus away from matters that are better left to the administration or even assigned by law to the superintendent.

As reflected in school committee meeting agendas, at the time of the review the school committee voted on such matters as employment contracts for a wide range of individuals, bids for purchases, in-state field trips, and home education plans. Approval of this wide range of employment contracts puts the school committee in noncompliance with Massachusetts law; in other cases the matters are best left to the expertise of the administration and may distract the school committee from its proper responsibilities in improving student performance by overseeing the budget, setting goals and policy, and evaluating the superintendent.

The superintendent should work in cooperation with the chairperson of the school committee to help each of the committee members understand the role and responsibilities of a school committee member. At the time of the review several members had not completed school committee training with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC); it would be helpful if all school committee members completed that training, required by Mass. Gen. Laws. c. 71, s. 36A. Further, after all of the members have completed the training, whole group training should be put in place. Sources for whole group training include the MASC in conjunction with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS). Reaching a better understanding of their charge as school committee members will free the school committee to focus on its important work in such areas as policy and budget while leaving other tasks to the educational expertise of the superintendent and his staff, who have been hired to carry them out.

The superintendent should work with the school committee to ensure that sufficient funds are budgeted to support the improvement of mathematics instruction.

At the time of the review the central office leadership team did not include anyone with a particular background in mathematics, and no one person was taking the lead in mathematics education. The district had few formative assessments or targeted interventions in math, especially at the elementary level, few supplementary materials in math, and no elementary math coaches. Elementary teachers reported that there was little direction or support in their teaching

of math. District mathematics scores lagged behind the state at all levels, with more of a gap than for ELA.

It is suggested that the district follow through on the plans it had at the time of the review to hire a person at the central office leadership level to oversee math instruction—a person with a background in elementary or middle school mathematics who understands the need for a conceptual approach to teaching mathematics. This position could be a new one, or a position could be reallocated to this function; the responsibilities should include curriculum development, instructional coordination, development of formative and summative assessments, analysis of assessment results, and professional development for teachers.

With the leadership of the person in this position, working with the district mathematics committee that was also planned at the time of the review, the district should put in place a plan to provide trained support in mathematics in elementary schools—with up-to-date professional development and coaching of teachers in their classrooms as a follow-up to that professional development. When an appropriate benchmark testing system is adopted, there must be staff at the school level with strong mathematics knowledge—for instance math coaches or math trainers—who are able to analyze test results and help teachers understand the implications of the results for what they teach and how they teach it. In addition, the district should purchase supplementary materials for students in the second and third tiers of its three-tiered instructional model, and teachers should be trained on the effective use of these materials.

Careful budgeting by the superintendent and the school committee so that funds can be allocated to a directed approach to improving mathematics education will make possible the development of a strong math program at the elementary and middle school levels that will raise mathematics achievement.

The superintendent should bring a broad base of constituents together and lead them in developing a plan that will guide the work of the school district for the next several years.

At the time of the review there was no guiding document such as a strategic plan and the District Improvement Plan had very broad goals and little focus or planning in specific areas of need. The district should develop a District Improvement Plan that delineates the most important foci for the district in the next several years, sets a timeline, names the person responsible for each item, and sets intermediate and terminal objectives and measurements so that it is clear when each goal is accomplished. Everyone in the district will then be able to use this planning document as the document that will guide his or her own goals from year to year.

The superintendent should put in place a process to develop the plan. The process should include a broad base of stakeholders. The plan should then be shared widely in the community and should become the document that guides all planning in the district. For instance, it should guide the development of the School Improvement Plans and the Professional Development Plan, as well as planning in areas such as special education, education of English language learners, or facilities development. With such a planning document, the district can be assured that everyone understands the direction in which the district is heading and, consequently, that

everyone is setting individual and group goals to move the district in that direction, thus accelerating progress on district initiatives and raising student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The planned district mathematics committee should use research on best practices to improve the district’s formative assessment battery and augment the range of tiered interventions, especially at the elementary level.

Chicopee does not have sufficient standardized measures to diagnose students’ needs in mathematics and prescribe appropriate compensatory instruction. The mathematics benchmark assessments are given too infrequently to inform instruction, and the *Houghton Mifflin Math* chapter tests are more frequent, but not diagnostic. The 2008 National Mathematics Advisory Panel (National Panel) report validated use of formative assessments to improve student learning in mathematics, and recommended that they be used regularly, especially at the elementary level. The National Panel found that the most effective formative measures contained items sampling the major curriculum objectives for the year, aligned with state standards. The review team encourages the district mathematics curriculum committee to research formative assessments in mathematics, perhaps with the assistance of the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) for Chicopee. The district might also consult with other urban districts as sources of ideas on best assessment practices.

Chicopee has few supplements to the core kindergarten through grade six *Houghton Mifflin Math* program with which to provide targeted, deficit-centered instruction for struggling students. In validated studies reviewed by the National Panel, explicit instruction showed “consistently positive results for students who perform in the lowest third of a typical class.” The National Panel defines explicit instruction as teachers providing “clear models” for solving a problem type using an “array of examples,” and “extensive practice” in using newly learned strategies and skills. Explicit instruction also provides students opportunities to “talk through” the decisions and steps they take, as well as “extensive teacher feedback.” The review team encourages the district mathematics committee to research mathematics intervention programs, again perhaps with the assistance of the DSAC.

The district mathematics committee might also research commercial assessment and instruction systems, such as Accelerated Math for Intervention, Mathematics Navigator, and ADD+Vantage Math. These systems provide formative assessments with correlated interventions. Several are recommended by the National Center on Response to Intervention. The mathematics committee might make inquiry of districts using these systems to determine the level of their satisfaction with them.

Improvement of the assessment and intervention components of the mathematics curriculum will assist Chicopee students in acquiring the foundational skills and conceptual knowledge necessary for understanding the mathematics they are learning at their grade level.

Chicopee should consider ways of increasing mathematics consultation to elementary teachers from experts and direct instructional services to elementary students from mathematics specialists.

At the time of the review Chicopee elementary teachers did not have regular access to mathematics experts to help them improve their instruction, and struggling elementary students did not always receive direct services from a mathematics specialist. The mathematics liaisons at the elementary schools were unavailable to co-teach, model, or provide direct services to students during the school day because they are also full-time classroom teachers.

The district may wish to consider releasing trained mathematics liaisons for one block during the school day to work with teachers and students. If releasing the liaisons is logistically difficult or expensive, the district may wish to consider appointing full-time mathematics teachers, at least in grades 3 through 5. These teachers would teach mathematics to several classrooms of students. This provision requires re-assignment of existing staff and is not costly. The district might also consider increasing differentiated professional development in mathematics for all elementary school teachers to augment their instructional knowledge. The National Panel found that the quality and extent of elementary teacher's preparation in mathematics is an "important determiner of students' progress."

The National Panel found that formative assessment and tiered instruction have the potential to improve students' learning, "especially if teachers have additional guidance from experts on using assessment to design and to individualize instruction." By enhancing elementary teachers' background knowledge of mathematics, increasing consultation to them from experts, and providing students instruction by highly trained staff, Chicopee should be able to raise the level of student performance in mathematics.

Assessment

The district should examine the ELA benchmarks that it administers in order to determine whether the data they provide is giving staff the information they need to improve student achievement.

Students in the Chicopee Public Schools undergo a number of assessments during the school year. Most of the assessments focus on ELA and are administered three times during the year; as already noted, the district should acquire suitable assessments in math. At the time of the review, math assessments were linked to the math textbooks used in the elementary and middle school.

District achievement in math lagged farther behind the state than in ELA, but in both subjects the district made incremental progress from 2008-2010 in narrowing the gap with the state (see Tables C1-C4 in Appendix C). Administrators and school staff expressed concern regarding the slow progress being made in ELA even though school administrators were confident that teachers are reviewing assessment results and implementing instruction to meet the needs of students as identified by these results. According to administrators their confidence in this area is

formed by the supervision process in place as well as review of plan books that indicate what is being taught in the classrooms.

The district has many good practices, but at the time of the review student achievement results in ELA did not seem to be commensurate with the assessments in place and the use of the results to inform instruction. Along with providing professional development and supervision for teachers that will help them to raise the level of their instructional expectations and to employ instructional strategies that foster higher-order thinking, the district should evaluate the ELA benchmarks that it administers to see whether they are providing the information necessary to improve student achievement in English language arts.

Human Resources and Professional Development

As it aligns its evaluation system with the state's new educator evaluation model, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system.

The evaluations for both teachers and administrators provided to the review team closely followed the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership that accompanied the regulations on educator evaluation then in force. Evaluations for teachers, however, often did not include instructive comments aimed at improving their practice, and administrators had not had written evaluations completed every year: some principals had had three-year gaps between evaluations.

The new educator evaluation model provides opportunities for school districts to develop and implement

- Professional development for evaluators;
- Training to develop meaningful professional practice and student learning goals;
- Systems to ensure
 - that evaluators have the time and support to carry out the new system with fidelity and
 - that district and school goals are aligned with administrator goals
- Professional development for educators that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process.

Taking advantage of these opportunities will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team's visit.

The language in Appendix BII of the collective bargaining agreement for teachers related to walkthroughs should be clarified so that principals and supervisors have a clear understanding of whether they can give teachers feedback based on these walkthroughs and if so what kind, and whether the information from walkthroughs can be used in a teacher's evaluation.

According to the principals in the district, the language inserted in the collective bargaining agreement for teachers beginning in 2007 (in Appendix BII) was supposed to formalize the ability for them to conduct regular unannounced brief classroom visits or "walkthroughs." Problems arose, however, because of the absence of any indication in the agreement as to whether any type of feedback, oral or written, can be given to the teachers who are visited and as to whether any information gathered during the walkthroughs can be used in the teacher's summative evaluation. The teachers' association has been involved with a number of grievances over the past few years concerning these questions about the walkthrough language.

Clarification of this matter will eliminate uncertainty on the part of principals and other supervisors about how the walkthroughs can be used. The district and the teachers' association are encouraged to work together to come to an agreement on how to interpret or revise the language of Appendix BII in such a way that systems for the improvement of teachers' practice are strengthened.

The district's professional development committee should create a districtwide, long-range, comprehensive professional development plan closely aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP).

Although the district has a professional development committee, an extensive professional development program is provided annually by the district and the schools, and Goal #2 of the DIP includes targeting professional development "to increase student achievement and staff skills," the review team was informed by several administrators at the time of the review that no overall long-range professional development plan existed in the district.

The review team found many positive aspects to the professional development program provided each year to the district's professional staff. However, the creation of a long-range professional development plan directly linked to the District Improvement Plan is essential for effective professional development. The district's Professional Development booklet stated that the aim was to have a sequential and sustained program rather than a "one-shot and out" type of program. Long-range, comprehensive planning will help the district fulfill this aim. Following up on professional development initiatives through the district's supervisory processes (see previous recommendation) will also help fulfill this aim. Evaluation and adjustment of the plan's professional development initiatives as they are carried out, by reference to feedback from supervisors as well as to the analysis of teacher surveys being conducted by the professional development committee at the time of the review, will improve the efficacy of the program even further.

Student Support

The district should develop a systemic, organized approach to educating staff, students, and families—the whole community— about what student support programs are available and how to access them. It should also evaluate which programs are effective and which are not.

Principals are given autonomy in determining the needs of their students and flexibility in selecting which support programs are implemented in their schools. It appears, though, that even with their efforts, some students do not have access to programs that might be beneficial for meeting their particular needs because the program is simply not offered in the school they attend. And even with the extensive selection of support programs available in Chicopee, its graduation, dropout, chronic absence, and suspension rates remained concerns (see District Profile and footnotes 4 and 5 above).

The district should consider reexamining the “Examples of Student Support Programs in the Chicopee Public Schools” document for the purpose of organizing the over 60 programs and initiatives into categories. The entire community should be educated about all of the available support services. Leaders should know how to obtain services for students in their schools and how to guide students and families in accessing and using the services in each category. The district should also devise a process for revisiting all programs and initiatives to determine their usefulness in supporting students, improving their learning, behavior, and attendance. By continuing those that are effective and dropping those that are not, the district will be able to direct its resources in the ways that will make the greatest improvement in students’ attendance, behavior, and learning, as well as their graduation rates.

Financial and Asset Management

The district should make more effective use of its limited resources by using student performance data to evaluate current programs, set priorities, and channel resources to effective interventions and supports for needy schools, students, and programs.

The district distributed resources to schools on a per-pupil basis rather than setting priorities or allocating resources on the basis of data. Schools with higher populations of needy students received the same per-pupil allocation as others, and with the exception of Title I supports had the same levels of support, academic services, and specialists. Similarly schools and subgroups struggling to meet achievement goals had district resources comparable to those in more successful schools or subgroups.

Data is useful when evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs and can help the district set priorities among schools and programs for services and supports such as specialists, coaches, and counseling. By basing resource priorities on data the district can provide better-targeted efforts to improve instruction and support students at risk.

As the district has more limited funding than some other districts, the systematic use of data would be a particularly valuable tool for setting priorities among competing needs and judging the effectiveness of programs.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Chicopee Public Schools was conducted from January 18-21, 2011 by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. Nadine Binkley Bonda, Leadership and Governance

Dr. James McAuliffe, Curriculum and Instruction

Ms. Dolores Fitzgerald, Assessment, Review Team Coordinator

Ms. Willette Johnson, Human Resources and Professional Development

Mr. William Wassel, Student Support

Dr. George Gearhart, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Level 3 Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Chicopee financial personnel: City Treasurer, Assistant City Treasurer, City Auditor and Assistant City Auditor.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Chicopee Public School Committee: Five School Committee School Members, four represented City Wards and one member who served At-Large.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Chicopee Education Association: President, Vice President and Grievance Chairperson.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Chicopee Public Schools: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Accountability, Assistant for Curriculum, Director Human Resources/Budget, Business Manager, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, and Special Education Director. Focus groups with: Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers, and Parent Council.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Chicopee Public Schools: Edward Bellamy (6-8), Fairview Veterans Memorial (6-8), Anna E. Barry (K-5), Patrick Bowe (PreK-5), Lambert-Lavoie Memorial (K-5), Stefanik Memorial (K-5), Selser Memorial (K-5).
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers.
 - The review team conducted 77 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the seven schools visited.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report
 - Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years

- Teachers' contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools Organization chart)
 - District Improvement Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the past year
 - Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
 - Curriculum guide overview
 - K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Program evaluations
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time schedules
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - Classroom observation tools not used in the teacher evaluation process
 - Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
 - Teacher attendance data

- All administrator evaluations and certifications
- Randomly selected teacher personnel files

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 3 review of the Chicopee Public Schools, conducted on January 18, 19, 20 and January 24, 2011.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Monday
January 18 Interviews with town and city personnel.	January 19 Interviews with school leaders; teacher meetings Interviews with principals.	January 20 Interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; School Committee Interviews School Visits to Edward Bellamy (6-8) and Fairview Veterans Memorial (6-8).	January 24 School Visits to: Anna E. Barry (K-5) Patrick Bowe PreK-5) Lambert-Lavoie Memorial (K-5) Stefanik Memorial (K-5) Selser Memorial (K-5) Emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008-2010

**Table C1: 2010 Chicopee and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
by Selected Subgroups, for ELA**

	Chicopee		State	
	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
All Students (3,931)	81.1	45	86.9	50
Asian (66)	83.7	53	89.8	59
African American/Black (129)	78.3	41	76.6	46
Hispanic/Latino (1,097)	72.9	45	73.6	47
White (2,525)	84.8	44	90.5	50
ELL (183)	60.9	52.5	59.8	50
FELL (105)	70	56	80.1	55
Special Education (687)	54.2	36	67.3	41
Low Income (2,511)	77.6	44	76.5	46

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.

2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

3. "ELL" and "FELL" indicate English language learners and former English language learners.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C2: 2010 Chicopee and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
by Selected Subgroups, for Mathematics**

	Chicopee		State	
	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
All Students (3,926)	70.9	45	79.9	50
Asian (66)	85.6	71	89	62
African American/Black (124)	63.1	49	65.1	48
Hispanic/Latino (1,091)	58.5	41	63.9	47
White (2,532)	76.3	46	84.1	50
ELL (183)	56.3	45.5	56.2	53
FELL (106)	55	51.5	73.3	55
Special Education (691)	42.9	39	57.5	43
Low Income (2,503)	65.8	44	67.1	47

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.

2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

3. “ELL” and “FELL” indicate English language learners and former English language learners.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: 2008-2010 Chicopee Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
ELA**

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>
Grade 3—District	42	NA*	43	NA*	60	NA*
Grade 3—State	56	NA*	57	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 4—District	35	45	35	42	34	44
Grade 4—State	49	48	53	50	54	50
Grade 5—District	53	56	54	49.5	49	49
Grade 5—State	61	51	63	50	63	50
Grade 6—District	54	49	57	51	56	46
Grade 6—State	67	50	66	50	69	50
Grade 7— District	48	36	47	39.5	56	35
Grade 7— State	69	50	70	50	72	50
Grade 8— District	55	43	67	52	69	58
Grade 8— State	75	49	78	50	78	50
Grade 10— District	54	NA*	66	31	64	38
Grade 10— State	74	NA*	81	50	78	50
All Grades— District	49	45	53	44	55	45
All Grades—State	64	50	67	50	68	50

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs were not calculated for Grade 10 students until 2009.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C4: 2008-2010 Chicopee Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
Mathematics**

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>
Grade 3—District	48	NA*	42	NA*	62	NA*
Grade 3—State	61	NA*	60	NA*	65	NA*
Grade 4—District	34	39	32	49	34	47
Grade 4—State	49	49	48	50	48	49
Grade 5—District	38	43	38	50	41	53
Grade 5—State	52	51	54	50	55	50
Grade 6—District	44	49	42	48	42	42
Grade 6—State	56	50	57	50	59	50
Grade 7— District	29	45	32	41	37	40
Grade 7— State	47	50	49	50	53	50
Grade 8— District	27	44	32	54	38	60.5
Grade 8— State	49	51	48	50	51	51
Grade 10— District	47	NA*	51	33	53	31
Grade 10— State	72	NA*	75	50	75	50
All Grades— District	38	44	38	46	44	45
All Grades—State	55	50	55	50	59	50

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs were not calculated for Grade 10 students until 2009.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Leadership

1. The school committee assumes responsibility for matters that are better addressed by administrators in accordance, as appropriate, with school committee policy.
2. At the time of the review, the central office administrative team did not include an administrator with a strong knowledge of mathematics content, pedagogy, and assessment to take the lead in improving mathematics achievement, which has lagged farther behind state levels than English language arts achievement.
3. The district does not have a strategic plan to guide the long-term work of the district. This lack of direction has led to a District Improvement Plan that indicates several issues to be addressed, but does not lay out realistic goals and a detailed plan for accomplishing them, with timelines, specific measurements to indicate progress, and persons responsible.
4. The superintendent and his leadership team have the support of teachers and administrators in the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

5. Chicopee has developed curriculum maps for all core subjects and a process for curriculum renewal that includes appropriate personnel.
6. At the time of the review the district had few targeted interventions and formative assessments to inform instruction in mathematics, especially at the elementary level, and there were no mathematics coaches to help elementary teachers improve their instruction.
7. There was strong evidence of fidelity of implementation of the district's instructional model in the kindergarten through grade 8 classes observed by the team. In most classes, instruction was carefully designed and well-delivered. In many instances, however, instructional expectations lacked rigor, and the instructional methods most commonly employed did not bring students to a higher level of understanding.

Assessment

8. The Chicopee Public Schools have processes in place to collect, analyze, and disseminate data, implemented by the assistant superintendent for instruction and accountability, the technology coordinator, data teams, and others.

9. The district has implemented a system of regular benchmarking that generally focuses on student achievement in ELA despite the fact that the achievement of district students in mathematics lags farther behind statewide achievement.

Human Resources and Professional Development

10. The hiring process for professional staff used by the Chicopee Public Schools is comprehensive and provides the district and schools the opportunity to hire effective teachers and administrators.
11. The district supports its newly hired teachers with an effective two-year induction program.
12. The evaluation processes for teachers and administrators used at the time of the review closely followed the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, but for teachers did not always include instructive comments and for administrators were not completed every year. The language in the collective bargaining agreement relative to principals conducting walkthroughs has created uncertainty about how the walkthroughs may be used, limiting their usefulness.
13. The district provides its staff with a variety of professional development offerings, selected annually by both central office and school staff, but their selection is not guided by a long-range professional development plan closely aligned with the District Improvement Plan.

Student Support

14. The district uses a variety of tools to meet most students' needs in general education classrooms.
15. The district has created an extensive number of student support programs for implementation in schools that choose to use them, but there does not appear to be a systemic approach to making these programs available across the district.

Financial and Asset Management

16. The city funds its schools at little more than the level required by the state, and below the state average per pupil expenditure, but the district makes little use of data to focus its tight resources on targeted efforts to improve student performance, particularly for struggling students.
17. City and district leaders have good relationships grounded in sound management processes, which benefits the district; a key aspect is that procedures are in place to ensure that expenditures are within budgeted amounts and spending is carefully monitored.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. School committee members should receive more training on the role and responsibilities of the school committee to guide their focus away from matters that are better left to the administration or even assigned by law to the superintendent.
2. The superintendent should work with the school committee to ensure that sufficient funds are budgeted to support the improvement of mathematics instruction.
3. The superintendent should bring a broad base of constituents together and lead them in developing a plan that will guide the work of the school district for the next several years.

Curriculum and Instruction

4. The planned district mathematics committee should use research on best practices to improve the district's formative assessment battery and augment the range of tiered interventions, especially at the elementary level.
5. Chicopee should consider ways of increasing mathematics consultation to elementary teachers from experts and direct instructional services to elementary students from mathematics specialists.

Assessment

6. The district should examine the ELA benchmarks that it administers in order to determine whether the data they provide is giving staff the information they need to improve student achievement.

Human Resources and Professional Development

7. As it aligns its evaluation system with the state's new educator evaluation model, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system.
8. The language in Appendix BII of the collective bargaining agreement for teachers related to walkthroughs should be clarified so that principals and supervisors have a clear understanding of whether they can give teachers feedback based on these walkthroughs and if so what kind, and whether the information from walkthroughs can be used in a teacher's evaluation.

9. The district's professional development committee should create a districtwide, long-range, comprehensive professional development plan closely aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP).

Student Support

10. The district should develop a systemic, organized approach to educating staff, students, and families—the whole community— about what student support programs are available and how to access them. It should also evaluate which programs are effective and which are not.

Financial and Asset Management

11. The district should make more effective use of its limited resources by using student performance data to evaluate current programs, set priorities, and channel resources to effective interventions and supports for needy schools, students, and programs.