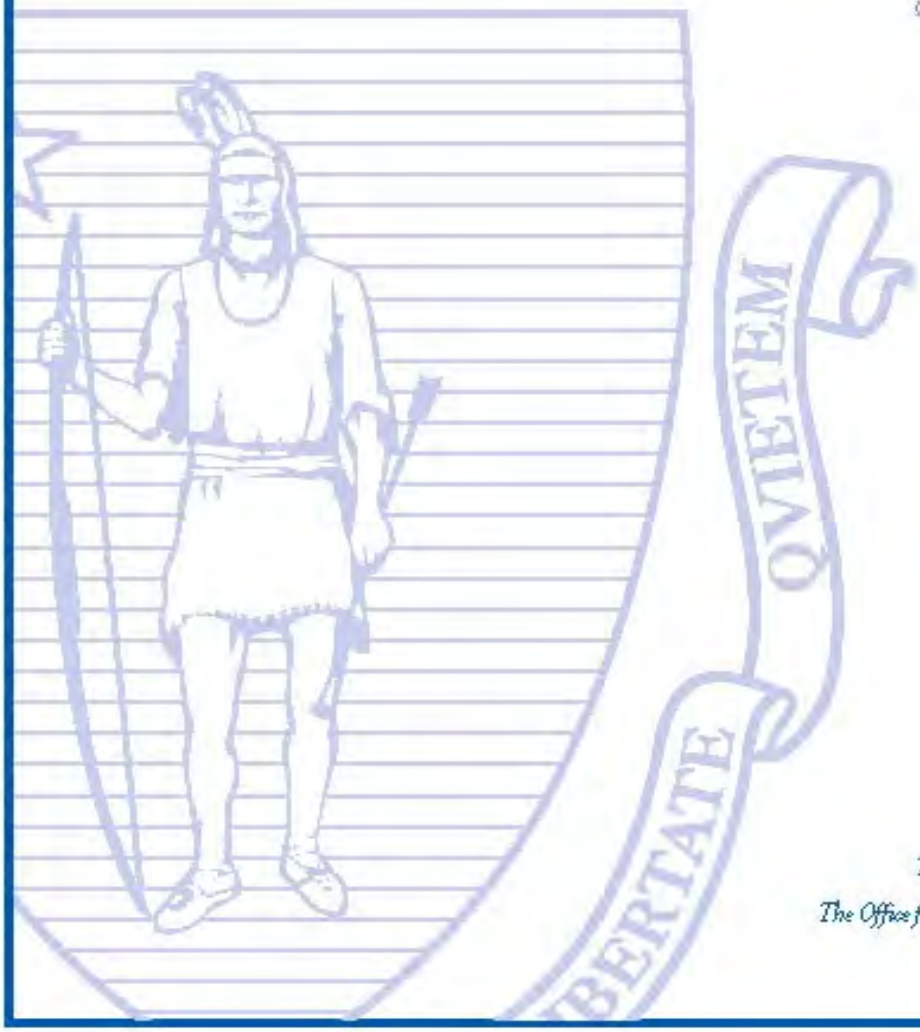
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Erving School Union 28

Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered



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

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of Erving School Union 28, Joan Wickman; the school department staff of Erving School Union 28; and the town officials in Erving, Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined Erving School Union 28 in May 2007. In 2006, with an average proficiency index of 80 proficiency index (PI) points (85 PI points in English language arts and 76 PI points in math), the union was considered a 'High' performing school system based on the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement above the state average for grades K-6. More than half of Erving School Union 28's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

Union Overview

The Erving School Union 28, located in Franklin County in western Massachusetts, is comprised of four rural school districts serving pre-kindergarten through grade 6: Erving, Leverett, New Salem-Wendell, and Shutesbury. All five towns began as farming, lumbering, and/or milling towns. The largest sources of employment within each community are educational, health, and social services, with manufacturing a strong second in Erving and New Salem. Erving is the most blue collar town of the five, with paper mills employing many residents. New Salem and Wendell are the more artistic towns, while Leverett and Shutesbury are the towns most influenced by the colleges in the area, namely the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Each town is governed by a Board of Selectmen/Administrative Assistant (or Coordinator)/Open Town Meeting form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), among the towns in Erving School Union 28, the median family income in 1999 ranged from a low of $47,212 in Erving (rank 317) to a high of $73,333 in Leverett (rank 101), compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the towns had a combined total population of 6,855 with 1,474 school-age children, or 22 percent of the total. Among the towns, New Salem had the lowest population of 929 with 184 school-age children, or 20 percent of the total, and Shutesbury had the highest population of 1,810 with 446 school-age children, or 25 percent of the total. Of the total households in the towns of Erving School Union 28, 35 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 17 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Forty-six percent of the population age 25 years or older in the

five communities held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide. Among the towns, this proportion ranged from 12 percent in Erving to 65 percent in Leverett.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2005-2006 the total enrollment in Erving School Union 28 was 662, with 185 students at Erving Elementary School, 165 at Leverett Elementary School, 165 at Shutesbury Elementary School, and 147 at Swift River School (New Salem-Wendell). The demographic composition in Erving was: 92.4 percent White, 3.2 percent Hispanic, 0.5 percent Asian, 0.0 percent African-American, 0.5 percent Native American, 3.2 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 18.9 percent low income, and 10.7 percent special education. The demographic composition in Leverett was: 81.2 percent White, 5.5 percent Hispanic, 2.4 percent Asian, 0.0 percent African-American, 0.0 percent Native American, 10.9 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent LEP, 17.6 percent low income, and 18.8 percent special education. The demographic composition in New Salem-Wendell was: 90.5 percent White, 4.8 percent Hispanic, 4.1 percent Asian, 0.0 percent African-American, 0.0 percent Native American, 0.7 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent LEP, 29.3 percent low income, and 15.6 percent special education. The demographic composition in Shutesbury was: 84.8 percent White, 7.8 percent Hispanic, 1.2 percent Asian, 0.6 percent African-American, 1.8 percent Native American, 3.6 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent LEP, 6.7 percent low income, and 13.3 percent special education.

In 2005-2006, 91 percent of school-age children in the towns of Erving School Union 28 attended public school. Leverett and New Salem-Wendell offer school choice, and 26 and 10 students, respectively, from other communities attended these schools in 2005-2006. Erving and Shutesbury do not offer school choice.

The Erving School Union 28's administrative team consists of a superintendent, a business assistant to the superintendent, and a special education director. Each school has a principal. Each school district in the union has its own school committee, and representatives from each school committee serve on the Union 28 School Committee (15 members total).

In FY 2006, each district's per pupil expenditure, based on appropriations from all funds, was $12,251 for Erving (rank 83), $12,384 for Leverett (rank 79), $11,734 for New Salem-Wendell (rank 103), and $12,427 for Shutesbury (rank 78), compared to $11,211 statewide for the 328

school districts reporting data. Each of the four districts exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period.

From FY 2004 to FY 2006, Erving's net school spending increased from $2,445,969 to $2,653,864; Chapter 70 aid increased from $245,334 to $257,384; the required local contribution increased from $1,350,316 to $1,696,174; and the foundation enrollment increased from 220 to 241. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 10.0 to 9.7 percent over this period.

From FY 2004 to FY 2006, Leverett's net school spending increased from $1,511,121 to $1,687,631; Chapter 70 aid increased from $217,431 to $223,181; the required local contribution decreased from $1,140,140 to $973,857; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 126 to 115. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 14.4 to 13.2 percent over this period.

From FY 2004 to FY 2006, New Salem-Wendell's net school spending decreased from $1,443,183 to $1,443,112; Chapter 70 aid increased from $595,315 to $602,215; the required local contribution decreased from $631,633 to $579,782; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 149 to 138. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending increased from 41.3 to 41.7 percent over this period.

From FY 2004 to FY 2006, Shutesbury's net school spending increased from $1,531,543 to $1,727,311; Chapter 70 aid increased from $458,403 to $465,653; the required local contribution decreased from $774,777 to $744,787; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 164 to 145. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 29.9 to 27.0 percent over this period.

Context

Erving School Union 28 is a small school union located in western Massachusetts, which serves the towns of Erving, Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell. It is comprised of four school districts: one each for Erving, Shutesbury, and Leverett, and one regional elementary district for New Salem and Wendell. The four elementary school districts each have one school with an enrollment of less than 200, with usually fewer than 20 students per classroom. Six

school committees, one for each of the five towns and one for the union, govern the school union and the four districts. A superintendent leads the union and each district has a school principal. Authority is bifurcated, and given the school union's structure, the superintendent's authority to standardize procedures and programs across all districts is limited. The union central office has a limited staff, which includes a special education director and an assistant to the superintendent for business. Each district is assessed a fee for the operation of the union central office. For the most part, the school union and the districts have received adequate financial resources from the communities to operate the schools and provide a sound education to the students.

EQA examiners found the climate of the schools to be uniformly warm and welcoming, and the students, parents, and teachers all reported a sense of pride and ownership in the schools. Given the small size of each of the towns, the schools are at the center of the communities and parochial. While aware of the security problems associated with schools, resistance was observed by the EQA examiners, albeit at different levels, in each of the districts regarding locking doors and having updated security systems. Although the union is located in rural Massachusetts, it is not far from major highways and large cities and towns nor insulated from issues associated with school security.

Throughout the districts, teachers consistently reported knowing their students extremely well and being familiar with all students within their respective buildings. The intimacy of these small schools led to a lack of formal systems or structures for analysis of student achievement. Rather, it supported a culture of analysis of individual student academic progress.

The EQA Examination Process

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

From May 7-10, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of Erving School Union 28 for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. This examination was based on the

EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the union leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the union. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the onsite visit.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Erving School Union 28 to be a 'Moderate' performing school system, marked by student achievement that was 'Moderate' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Moderate' in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance declined by nearly two PI points in ELA and by one-half PI point in math, which widened the union's average proficiency gap by three percent.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Erving Union 28 participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

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

On average, more than half of all students in Erving Union 28 attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that of K-6 students statewide. More than three-fifths of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), half of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in math, and more than half of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Erving Union 28's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 80 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points greater than that statewide for grades K-6.

Erving Union 28's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 20 PI points.

- In 2006, Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in ELA was 15 PI points, two PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of nearly two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in math was 24 PI points in 2006, three PI points narrower than the state's K-6 average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in STE was 17 PI points, five PI points narrower than that statewide.

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

Between 2003 and 2006, Erving Union 28's MCAS performance showed a slight decline overall, a decline in ELA and in STE, and slight improvement in math.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by two percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by one percentage point. The average proficiency gap in Erving Union 28 was 23 PI points in both 2003 and 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Erving Union 28 showed a decline, at an average of two PI points annually.
- Math performance in Erving Union 28 showed slight improvement over this period, at an average of less than one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of five percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Erving Union 28 had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately four PI points annually over the two-year period.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied among subgroups of Erving Union 28 students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Erving Union 28 in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 17 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students

with disabilities, respectively) and 21 PI points in math (male students and regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Erving Union 28 in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-third of students with disabilities and less than half of low-income students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. Roughly three-fifths of the students in each subgroup attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA but wider in math. For both subgroups, more than half the students attained proficiency.

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

In Erving Union 28, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 25 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 24 to 21 PI points during this period.

- All student subgroups in Erving Union 28 had a decline in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA was students with disabilities.
- In math, all subgroups in Erving Union 28 with the exception of non low-income students showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was low-income students.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on five and 'Needs Improvement' on eight of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

During the period under review, Erving School Union 28 had two superintendents: the former interim superintendent and the former superintendent. For school year 2006-2007, the union school committee hired a new superintendent subsequent to the retirement of the former superintendent. The four districts had fragmented systems of monitoring student achievement; however, the former superintendent began and the current superintendent continued to focus each district on improving student achievement by monitoring student academic progress and analyzing achievement data and sharing them with the teachers.

Also during the period under review, turnover occurred in all five local school committees, as well as the union school committee. While the committees did not have formal mentoring programs in place, veteran members reported offering support to new members. The superintendent met with newly elected school committee members prior to their first meeting to review committee operations and their roles as policymakers and student advocates. Each district school committee as well as the union school committee had a subcommittee for budget and personnel. While the examiners found some evidence that the school committees had reviewed, added, and updated some policies, many policies had dates of 1970. District school committee members interviewed stated they began the process of reviewing policies during the final year of the period under review and it was their intention to continue the process. The union school committee began to look at policies that would cover all four districts in an effort to bring policy uniformity to the union.

The district school committees, the superintendent, and town officials continued to focus on a collaborative culture to ensure that the districts met the needs of all students. The school committees and the town select boards and finance committees met on a regular basis to review the budget needs of both the communities and the schools prior to the adoption of final budgets. School personnel and school committee members interviewed stated that parents and members of

the community became very involved with their schools and advocated for and supported the efforts of the staff and administration.

Both the former superintendent and the current superintendent stated that three of four of the union's districts began to develop District Improvement Plans (DIPs) during the final year of the period under review. In addition, the former superintendent began the process of developing a union DIP, and the current superintendent updated the document. Both superintendents stated that the union school committee embraced the union DIP but never formally voted to accept it. All four districts had school committee-approved, non-standards-based School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in place for all of the years under review, and the review of each SIP took place on an annual basis. During this time, the SIP served as the DIP for each district. During the final year of the period under review, the districts of Erving, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell began the process of developing DIPs, although they did not align with the union DIP; Leverett began developing a DIP in 2006-2007. Analysis of student performance on the MCAS tests varied from district to district, and no formal union system or structure was in place for the analysis of student assessment results. Each district analyzed student data for content and looked at individual scores due to the smallness of each district. The examiners found limited evidence of any structures in place in the districts to look at subgroup achievement data or to share and analyze the data gathered.

Curriculum and Instruction

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on three and 'Needs Improvement' on seven of the ten performance indicators in this standard.

During the period under review, the four independent elementary school districts that make up Erving School Union 28 began the process of aligning, documenting, monitoring, and communicating curricula in the core tested areas. Horizontal alignment was a school-based initiative, not a union-based one. Some vertical alignment existed across grades within the schools and between two of the districts and their receiving middle schools. Documents reviewed and interviews conducted by examiners revealed that the curriculum documents lacked

uniform timelines, resources, instructional strategies, and measurable outcomes, and only listed general assessments.

All the districts in the union allotted time weekly for staff to work on curriculum and, according to interviewees, administrators planned for Job Alike meetings in 2007-2008 so that teachers at the same grade level throughout the union could come together to plan strategies to improve teaching and learning. Each district used different instructional programs for math, ELA, and science. While the districts did not have standards-based report cards, one school had performance indicators on its report cards. Some of the districts were just beginning revisions to their curricula, according to documents reviewed and interviews conducted.

The principal in each district served as the instructional and curriculum leader. According to interviewees, the principals conducted daily walk-throughs, with some more formalized than others. The union did not have a standardized walk-through protocol. The principals conducted contractual evaluations and were working to introduce differentiated instruction, heightened accountability, and technology integrated into instruction, according to interviews and random classroom observations. Principals, in their roles as curriculum leaders, actively monitored teachers' instruction for practices that reflected high expectations.

Inconsistent amounts of time were allocated to the tested core subjects as found in documents reviewed and random classroom observations. According to observations of randomly selected classrooms, the districts averaged a high rate of positive indicators for classroom management and climate. They had an average rate of positive indicators for instructional practices, high expectations, and student activity and behavior. Each school provided an after-school program for homework and/or extracurricular activities.

During the period under review, the staffs in all districts were beginning to use weekly professional development time to analyze the MCAS and other assessment scores and to adjust instruction. According to interviewees, staff ability in all districts was emerging in this area and more staff members were receiving training to conduct data analysis and to use the information to improve teaching and learning for all students. Student achievement data were not yet used to choose or modify the instructional programs used. Staff members conducted some item analysis and they made improvements to their respective curricula, such as more emphasis on open-

response questions in both math and ELA and improvement in teaching of number facts. According to interviewees, the focus during most of the period under review was on qualitative data, or how well students and staff liked a program, rather than on quantitative data, or how well the students improved using a program.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on two and 'Needs Improvement' on six of the eight performance indicators in this standard.

For each of the years under review, the Erving School Union 28 MCAS test data were collected and analyzed at the district level by principals and teachers. The results were also compiled at the union level. Neither the districts nor the union had a formal structure in place for analyzing student achievement data. Some teachers and administrators were trained in TestWiz, but training was spotty and was the result of individual teacher experience with TestWiz outside of the union rather than any coordinated, systemic professional development within the union. Three of the four principals had yet to be trained in TestWiz; their training was planned for 2007-2008. Use of student achievement data to drive decision-making was an emerging practice throughout the union.

Each of the districts used a variety of formative and summative assessments in addition to the MCAS tests. All districts used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), but the use of the TerraNova, the Stanford 9, the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Gates-MacGinitie test, among others, varied by school district. More formative and summative testing was provided to assess students in ELA than in math. Only the New Salem-Wendell district had a standards-based report card issued to students. The report cards of the other three districts were not standards based and were not aligned to the state frameworks and benchmarks. They all varied in their degree of inclusion of quantitative data.

Interviews with administrators and faculty members revealed that teachers regularly evaluated curriculum and instructional practices. Most of the analysis was qualitative in nature and most of the decision-making was consensus driven. Decision-making about programming was mostly determined by community input and the budget. For example, the New Salem-Wendell SIP

identified effective instruction of gifted students as a goal. Parents, administrators, and community members confirmed this during interviews. However, a review of data indicated that none of the grade 4 or grade 5 students and only a single grade 6 student scored in the 'Advanced' category in ELA on the 2006 MCAS tests. In math, 15 percent of the grade 4 and 17 percent of the grade 5 and 6 students scored in the 'Advanced' category.

During the period under review, the curriculum and instructional practices varied across the districts. Administrators reported and a review of documents confirmed few formal policies or practices in place for using student achievement data to evaluate programs or services despite the use of many formative and summative assessments. With the exception of the Title I program, district and union leadership did not routinely use program evaluation results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services. The leadership and faculty of each district both stated that the schools were small enough and they knew the students well enough that most analysis was done on an individual student basis.

The allocation of staff was not based on student need but on discussions between the principal and staff. In addition, the districts did not regularly engage in internal or external audits to determine program effectiveness. Although the New Salem-Wendell district had evaluated its implementation of the Everyday Math program, the evaluation did not include quantitative data to support its findings. However, the union did undergo a DOE Coordinated Program Review (CPR) which it used to set internal goals for the special education department.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on seven and 'Needs Improvement' on six of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

The districts and union had procedures in place for the hiring of teachers and administrators, and advertised vacancies in area newspapers. The new superintendent enhanced the hiring procedures, building on those in place in the four districts, and requested that principals recommend two or three candidates to her for interviews, after which she would consult with the principal. Most of the time the superintendent would honor the principal's choice, but the final decision rested with the superintendent. Principals had the final hiring authority for non-

professional staff in their buildings. The districts formed committees when hiring teachers and the union had hiring committees when hiring administrators. The districts provided licensure data to the EQA which showed that teachers in all districts held the appropriate licensure; however, the union hired two unlicensed principals during the period under review. The union and the principals monitored the progress of teachers toward certification or recertification.

The districts had professional development and mentoring programs during the period under review. The mentoring programs were two-year programs, and all new teachers in the districts had trained mentors, although the districts hired few teachers during the period under review. Teachers and their mentors worked together to plan curriculum and lessons and observed one another's classrooms. No formal mentoring program existed for administrators but the new superintendent indicated that she informally mentored principals.

The districts had two union-wide professional development days, and all the districts had 70-percent days every Wednesday to conduct a variety of activities including professional development. A review of the professional development plans as well as information provided by interviewees showed that analysis of student achievement data and program implementation informed professional development, for the most part. In addition, the districts spent a lot of professional development time on curriculum development. Offerings were not provided for staff to learn or enhance data analysis skills. Each teacher was required to have an individual professional development plan (IPDP) created in collaboration with his/her respective principal. Although limited promotional opportunities existed in the districts because of their small size, teacher retention was not an issue.

Not all administrators received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation methods, although observing teachers in the classroom was the principal method of active supervision. Administrators in all districts performed formal and informal classroom observations to monitor classroom instruction and the implementation of professional development, but the districts did not have protocols for the observations.

The districts did not hold administrators or teachers accountable for student achievement. While principals conducted classroom observations, the union did not comply with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38 that described evaluation requirements. Districts conducted some timely summative

evaluations but not for all staff members. Most of the evaluations were instructive, but did not include recommendations for improvement. The superintendent did not conduct annual evaluations of all administrators in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 38; however, administrators indicated they developed annual goals with the superintendent and discussed progress toward them.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on six, 'Needs Improvement' on two, and not applicable on two of the ten performance indicators in this standard.

Erving School Union 28 offered Title I support services to all of its students requiring additional support at the schools in Erving, New Salem-Wendell, and Shutesbury. Leverett was not eligible for Title I grant assistance, and the district funded an essential skills teacher whose mission was to provide similar support services to students scoring at or near the 50th percentile on the DIBELS. The Erving school district provided an MCAS test support class for students during spring 2007 in response to the Erving Elementary School's failure to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). In addition, Erving provided additional academic time through the elimination of a school recess period in spite of parental disapproval. Leverett provided an after-school homework program funded by parents. Shutesbury offered a similar after-school program, staffed by parents and community members, which provided drama activities and a chess club in addition to a place to do homework. The New Salem-Wendell district had an after-school science program and offered after-school help in mathematics.

The special education director organized special education services across the union. Every special education student was provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with measurable goals, and the progress of these students was monitored at the district and union levels. Very few homeless students were enrolled in the districts, but the principal in each district served as the homeless coordinator. The districts provided transportation services and were able to provide additional services if needed.

The size of the four districts comprising Erving School Union 28 made the concept of subgroups less meaningful than in a larger district. In each district, the population at each grade level was

generally fewer than 20 students. The only subgroups that were large enough to measure were students receiving special education services and/or free or reduced-cost lunch. Students in both groups participated in all appropriate assessments at the same rate as students in the general population—virtually 100 percent. The performance gap between regular education and students with disabilities in both ELA and math in Erving exceeded the state averages. The gaps were smaller than the state averages in Leverett, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell. The main program for accelerated students was at the Swift River School, which allowed students to skip a grade if their academic progress was exemplary.

Both students and faculty within the union maintained very high rates of school attendance. As reported to the DOE, student attendance over the three-year period under review ranged from a low of 93.4 percent to a high of 95.8 percent across the four districts. These numbers compared favorably with the state target of 95 percent, and closely approached or exceeded that target in all cases. Administrators were able to keep track of student attendance easily because of the small size of the districts. Faculty attendance, according to figures supplied to the EQA examiners by the four districts, exceeded 95 percent in Erving, New Salem-Wendell, and Shutesbury and was 93.8 percent in Leverett.

The levels of student retention were less than two percent in all districts in the union. At least two of the districts reported using the Second Step program as a tool to assist in improving school discipline, but all of the districts reported few incidents requiring disciplinary intervention on the part of administrators.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Erving School Union 28 an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the union as 'Satisfactory' on seven and 'Needs Improvement' on six of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

Erving School Union 28 and its member districts all had open budget processes. The union administration first developed the union budget. Each of the four districts that comprised the union contributed toward the union budget based on student enrollment. Each district school committee, in collaboration with administrators, developed the budget with input from the staff and the community. Some examples were provided to the EQA examiners of the use of data to

make budgetary decisions, such as for new textbooks or instructional programs. Overall, however, data did not play a large role in budget development during the period under review.

Staff, technology, and other instructional resources were adequate in each district, according to interviewees. The New Salem-Wendell school district did make budget reductions to meet the financial ability of the two towns to contribute to the regional elementary school budget. Interviewees noted that resources were less adequate in New Salem-Wendell than in the other districts.

For the period under review, the districts did not have access to the union accounting system and had separate financial records. The union business office reconciled with each school district on a monthly basis. The union planned to update its accounting system to a web-based version so all districts could access it.

The financial support from the communities for each district in the union was adequate, according to interviewees. For the period under review, each community contributed above the minimum required local contribution, and each district exceeded its required net school spending for each year of the review period. In the New Salem-Wendell district, each community at times supported the district above the regional agreement amount by contributing additional revenue when the other community had a shortfall. The districts and the union had adequate financial controls to ensure proper procedures for purchasing and the processing of payroll. The districts only reported financial information to the school committees when financial exceptions occurred.

The facilities in the school districts were clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. The buildings were conducive to education. Each community had a capital plan that included some school-related projects. These projects focused on such items as roof repairs and capital equipment purchases. All four elementary schools were renovated since their original construction. Each school district had safety plans; however, each school had varying degrees of safety relative to access to the school. Each school's main entrance was unlocked. Only one school district had cameras. The main offices of the schools did not permit staff to view visitors entering the buildings. The communities had ongoing debates regarding the level of safety and security they wanted in each school.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

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

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

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA subjected the most current state and district MCAS test results to a series of analyses to determine whether there were differences between the mean results of the union's students and those of students statewide or among student subgroups within the union. Descriptive analyses of the 2006 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Erving School Union 28 and the average scores of students in Massachusetts.

To highlight those differences, the data were then summarized in several ways: a performance-level based summary of student achievement in Erving School Union 28; and comparative analyses of unionwide, subject-area, grade, school, and subgroup achievement in relation to that of students statewide, in relation to the union averages, and in relation to other subject areas, grades, and subgroups.

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

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

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

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

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

Achievement

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

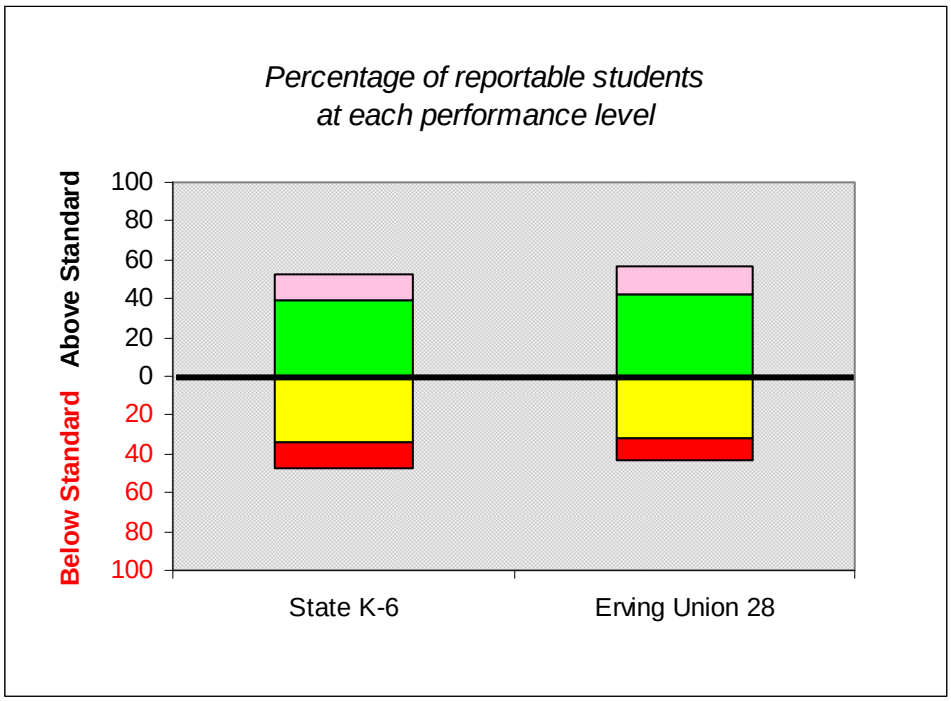
Findings:

- On average, more than half of all students in Erving Union 28 attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that of K-6 students statewide. More than three-fifths of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), half of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in math, and more than half of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Erving Union 28's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 80 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points greater than that statewide for grades K-6. Erving Union 28's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 20 PI points.

- In 2006, Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in ELA was 15 PI points, two PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of nearly two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in math was 24 PI points in 2006, three PI points narrower than the state's K-6 average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Erving Union 28's proficiency gap in STE was 17 PI points, five PI points narrower than that statewide.

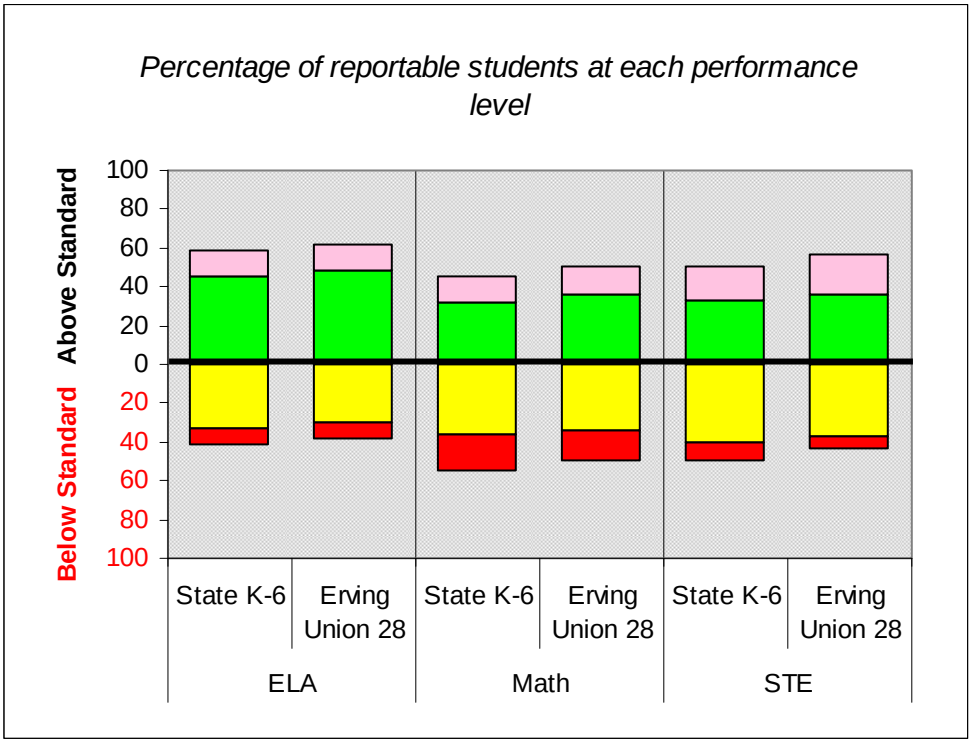
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State K-6	Erving Union 28
Advanced	13	14
Proficient	39	42
Needs Improvement	34	32
Warning/Failing	13	12
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	56
Average Proficiency Index (API)	77.6	80.2

In 2006, 56 percent of Erving Union 28 students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, four percentage points more than that of K-6 students statewide. Twelve percent of Erving Union 28 students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, one percentage point less than that statewide. Erving Union 28's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 80 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points greater than that statewide. Erving Union 28's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 20 PI points.

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



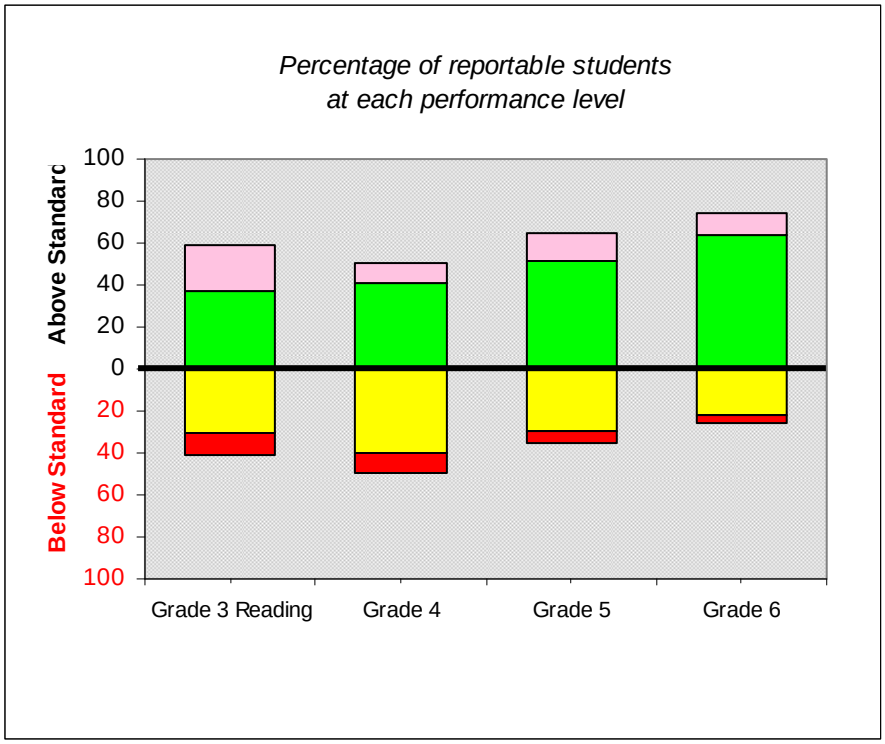
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28
Advanced	13	14	13	14	17	21
Proficient	46	48	32	36	33	36
Needs Improvement	33	30	36	34	40	37
Warning/Failing	8	7	19	16	10	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	62	45	50	50	57
Proficiency Index (PI)	82.6	85	72.7	75.5	77.8	83

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was higher in Erving Union 28 than statewide. In Erving Union 28, 62 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 59 percent of K-6 students statewide; 50 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 45 percent statewide; and 57 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 50 percent statewide.

Erving Union 28 students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Erving Union 28 students in ELA was 85 PI points; in math, it was 76 PI points; and in STE, it was 83 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 83, 73, and 78 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Erving Union 28 students was 15 PI points in ELA, 24 PI points in math, and 17 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 17, 27, and 22 PI points, respectively. Erving Union 28's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of nearly two PI points in ELA and three PI points in math to meet AYP.

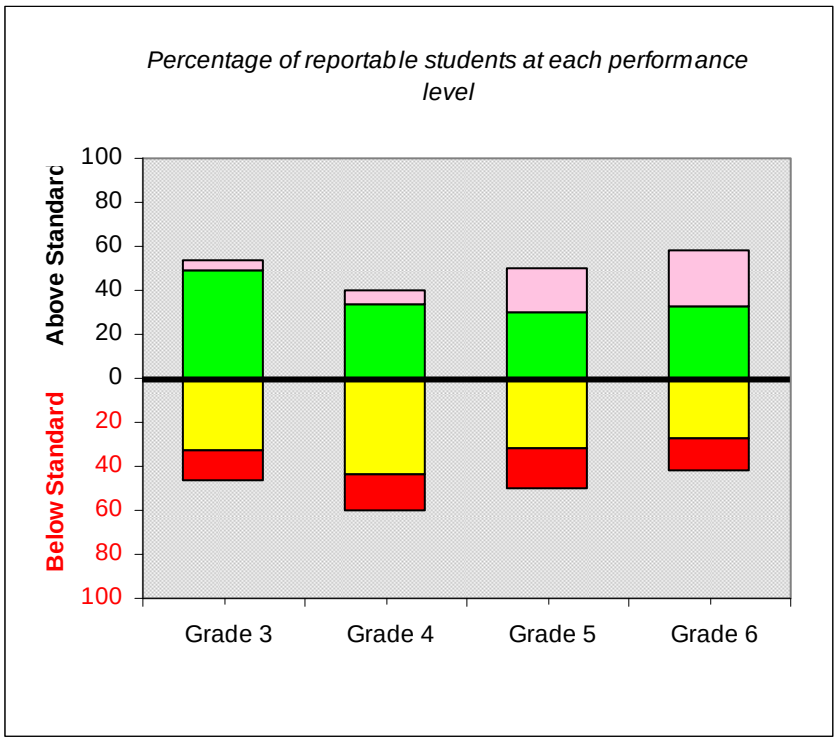
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Advanced	22	9	13	11
Proficient	37	41	52	64
Needs Improvement	30	40	30	22
Warning/Failing	11	9	5	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	50	65	75

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 50 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 75 percent of grade 6 students.

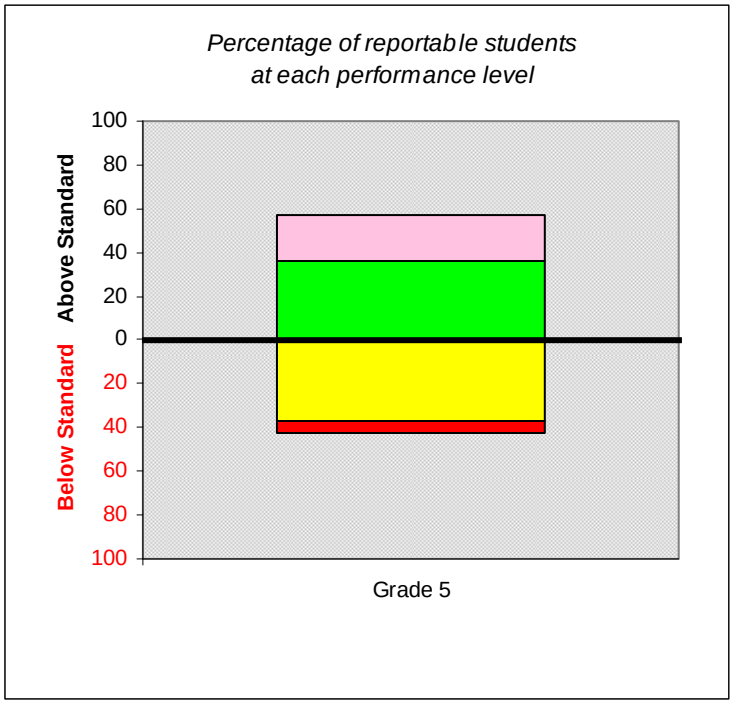
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Advanced	4	7	20	26
Proficient	49	33	30	32
Needs Improvement	32	44	32	27
Warning/Failing	14	16	18	14
Percent Attaining Proficiency	53	40	50	58

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math also varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 40 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 58 percent of grade 6 students.

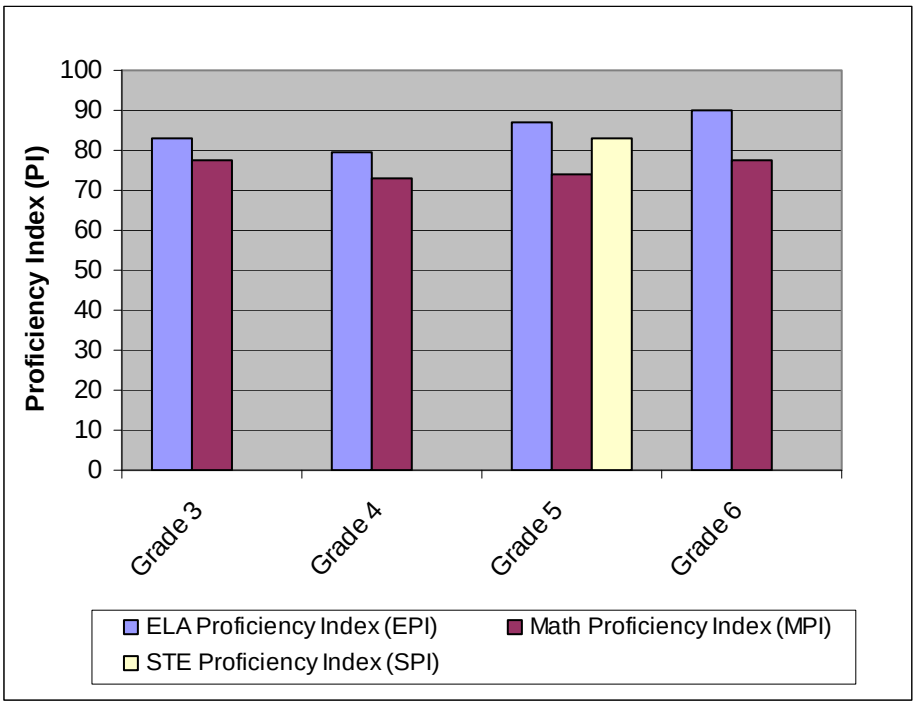
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5
Advanced	21
Proficient	36
Needs Improvement	37
Warning/Failing	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	57

In Erving Union 28 in 2006, 57 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE.

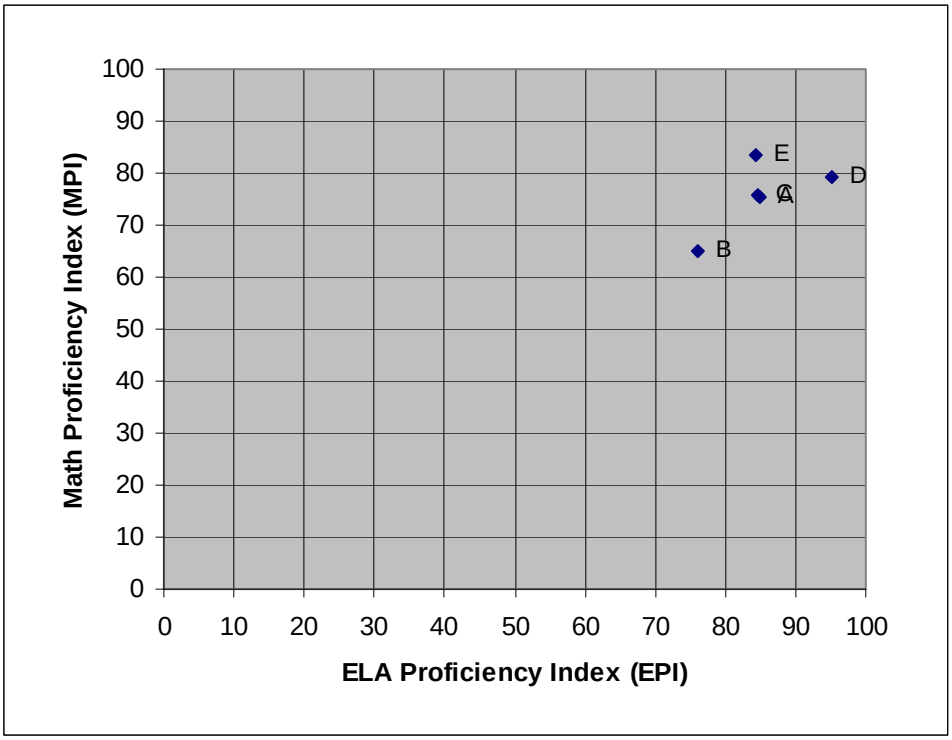
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	82.9	79.7	87.1	89.9
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	77.6	73.0	74.2	77.3
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			83.0	

By grade, Erving Union 28's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 10 PI points at grade 6 to a high of 20 PI points at grade 4. Erving Union 28's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 22 PI points at grade 3 to a high of 27 PI points at grade 4. Erving Union 28's STE proficiency gap was 17 PI points at grade 5.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Erving Union 28	85.0	75.5	637
B	Erving Elementary	76.2	64.9	168
C	Leverett Elementary	84.6	75.9	172
D	Shutesbury Elementary	95.1	79.4	166
E	Swift River	84.2	83.3	131

Erving Union 28's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of five PI points at Shutesbury Elementary School to a high of 24 PI points at Erving Elementary School. Erving Union 28's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 17 PI points at Swift River School to a high of 35 PI points at Erving Elementary School.

Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

- MCAS performance in 2006 varied among subgroups of Erving Union 28 students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Erving Union 28 in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 17 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 21 PI points in math (male students and regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

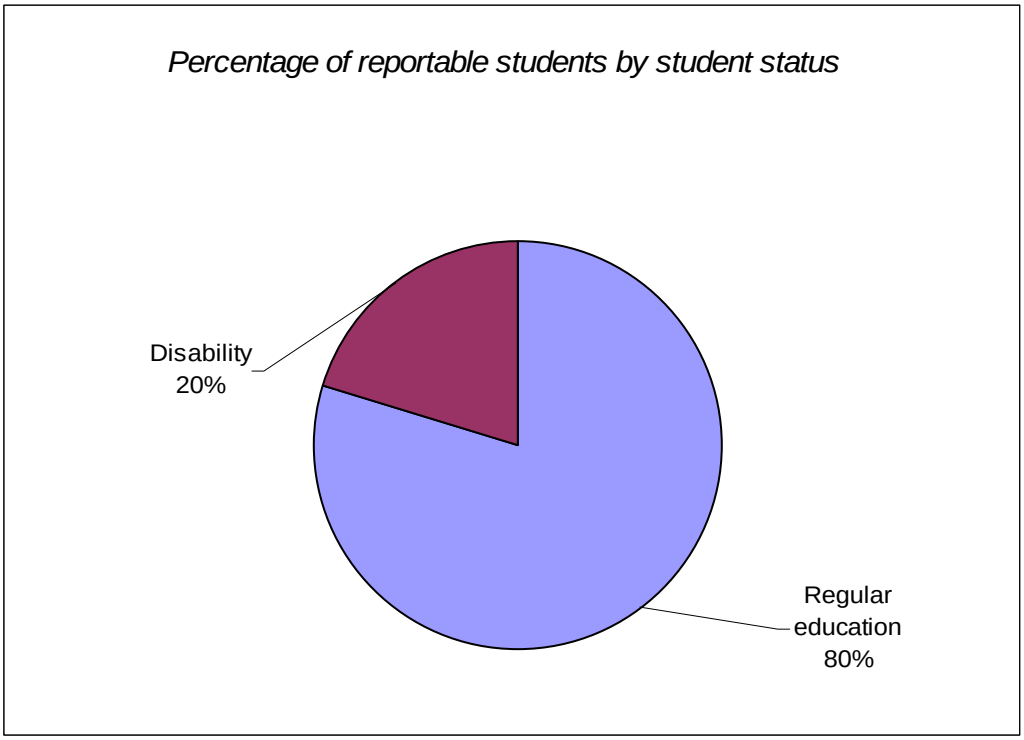
- The proficiency gaps in Erving Union 28 in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-third of students with disabilities and less than half of low-income students attained proficiency.

- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. Roughly three-fifths of the students in each subgroup attained proficiency.

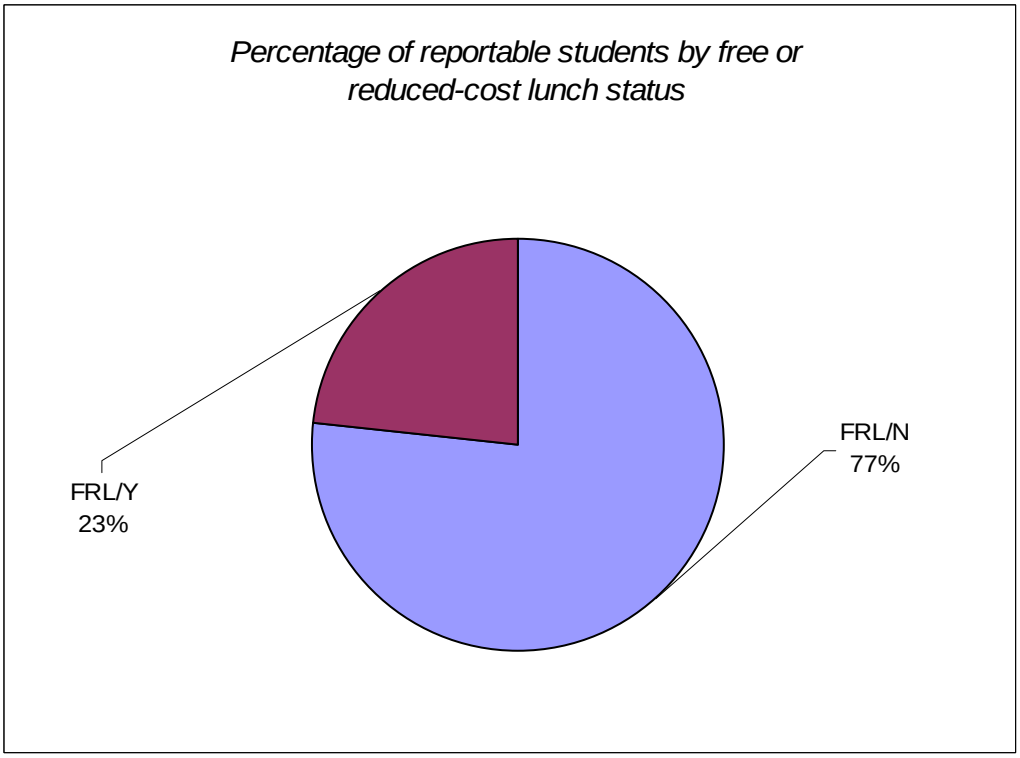
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA but wider in math. For both subgroups, more than half the students attained proficiency.

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

A.



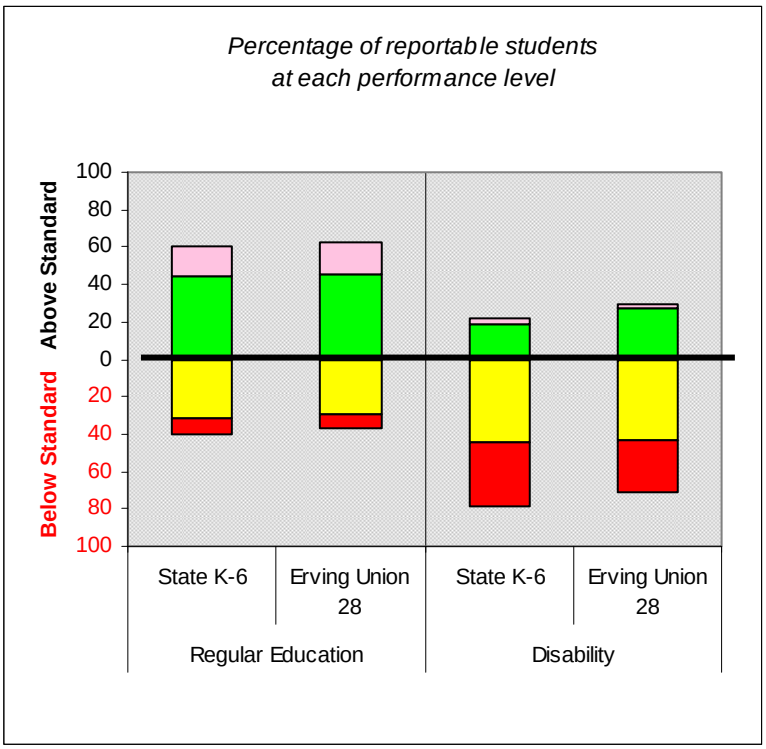
B.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	256
	Disability	65
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	246
	FRL/Y	75

In 2006 in Erving Union 28, 20 percent of the students in the tested grades were students with disabilities and 23 percent were students participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

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

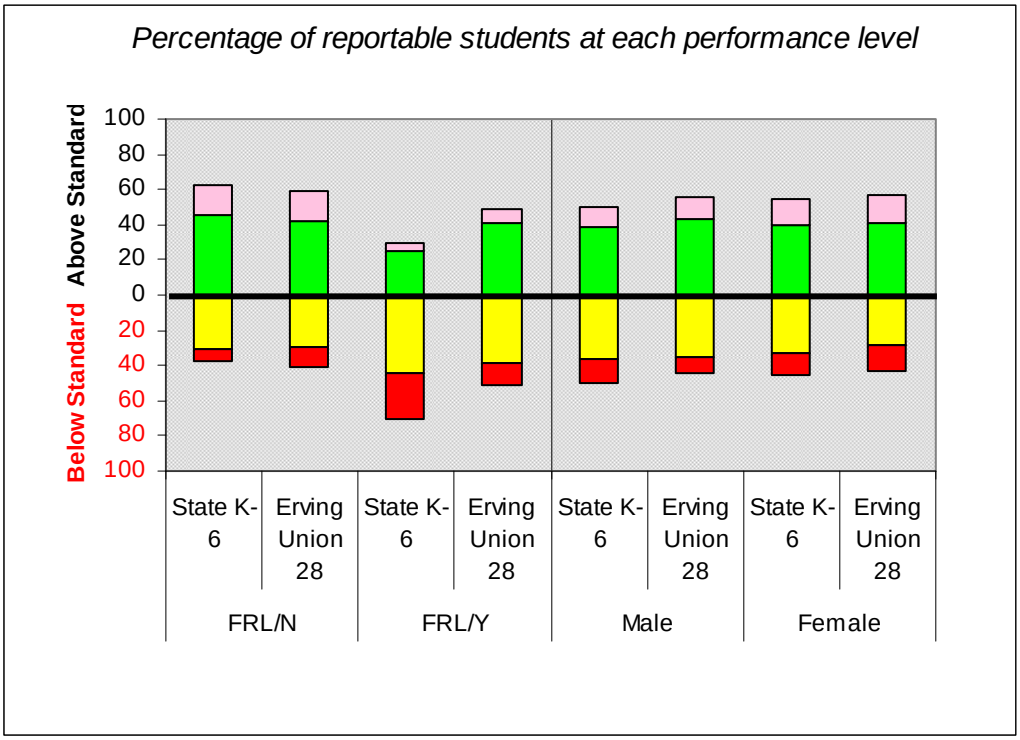


	Regular Education		Disability	
	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28
Advanced	16	17	2	2
Proficient	44	46	19	28
Needs Improvement	32	29	44	44
Warning/Failing	8	8	34	27
Percent Attaining Proficiency	60	63	21	30
Average Proficiency Index (API)	83.2	84.0	56.6	64.9

In Erving Union 28 in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than two times greater than that of students with disabilities. Sixty-three percent of regular education students and 30 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Erving Union 28's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 16 PI points for regular education students and 35 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 19 PI points.

Figure/Table 10: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status and Gender Subgroups, 2006

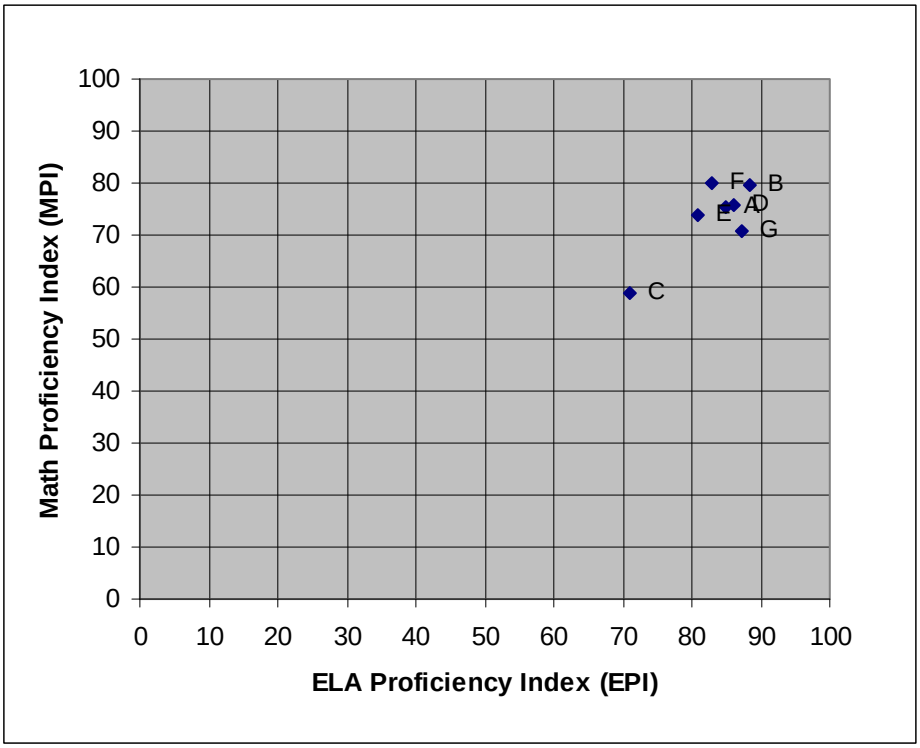


	FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28	State K-6	Erving Union 28
Advanced	17	16	4	7	12	13	15	16
Proficient	45	43	25	41	39	43	40	41
Needs Improvement	30	30	44	39	36	35	33	29
Warning/Failing	7	11	26	13	14	9	13	15
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	59	29	48	51	56	55	57
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.0	81.0	63.2	77.5	76.8	81.3	78.6	78.9

In Erving Union 28 in 2006, 48 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 59 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 22 PI points for low-income students and 19 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was three PI points.

Performance on the 2006 MCAS tests was comparable for male and female students in Erving Union 28, with 57 percent of female students and 56 percent of male students attaining overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 19 PI points for male students and 21 PI points for female students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was two PI points.

Figure/Table 11: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by Subgroup, 2006

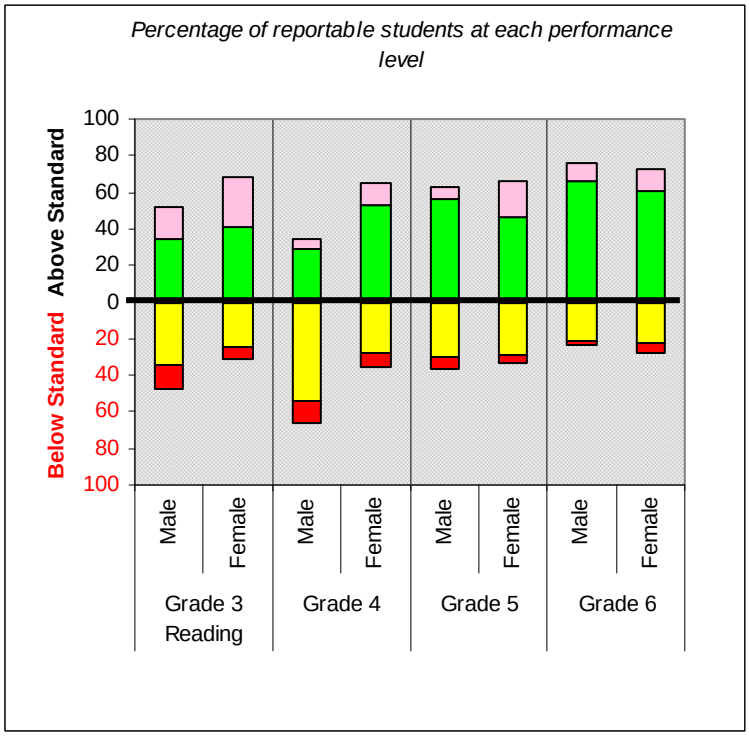


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Erving Union 28	85.0	75.5	637
B	Regular Education	88.4	79.6	511
C	Disability	71.0	58.7	126
D	FRL/N	86.2	75.9	486
E	FRL/Y	81.0	74.0	151
F	Male	82.8	79.9	330
G	Female	87.3	70.6	307

Of the six measurable subgroups in Erving Union 28 in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 17 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 21 PI points in math (male students and regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

The proficiency gaps in Erving Union 28 in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income (FRL/Y) students. The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA but wider in math.

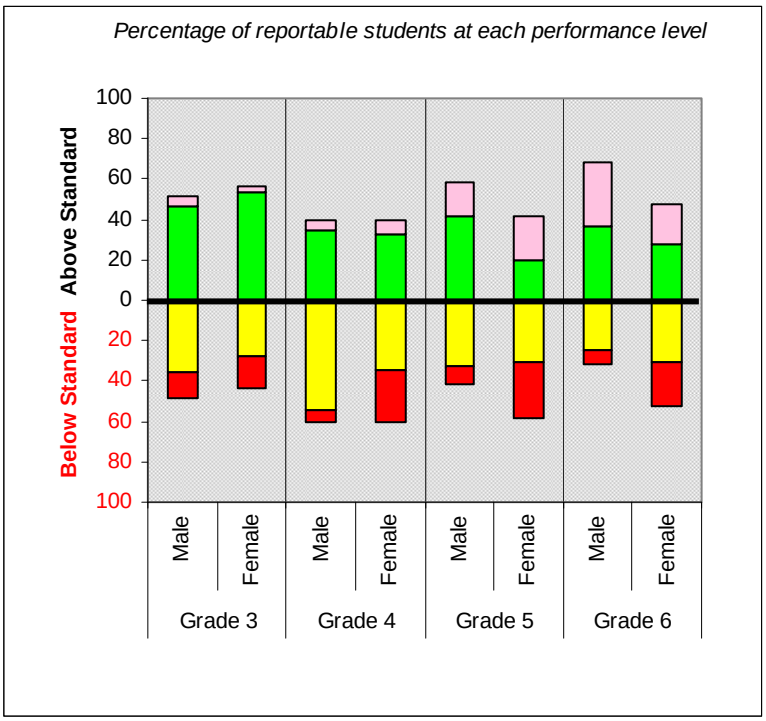
Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	18	28	6	13	7	20	11	11
Proficient	34	41	29	53	57	47	66	61
Needs Improvement	34	25	54	28	30	29	21	22
Warning/ Failing	14	6	11	8	7	4	3	6
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	69	35	66	64	67	77	72

In Erving Union 28 in 2006, female students outperformed male students on all grade-level ELA tests except at grade 6.

Figure/Table 13: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	4	3	6	8	17	22	32	19
Proficient	47	53	34	33	41	20	37	28
Needs Improvement	36	28	54	35	33	30	24	31
Warning/ Failing	13	16	6	25	9	28	7	22
Percent Attaining Proficiency	51	56	40	41	58	42	69	47

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, male students outperformed female students at grades 5 and 6. Female students outperformed male students at grades 3 and 4.

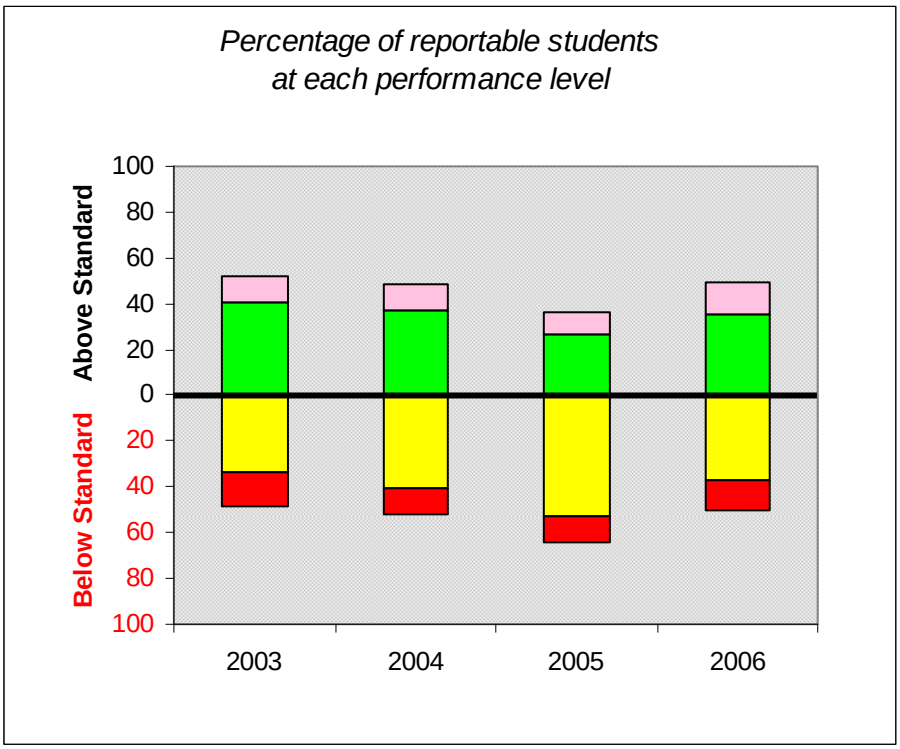
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Erving Union 28's MCAS performance showed a slight decline overall, a decline in ELA and in STE, and slight improvement in math.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by two percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by one percentage point. The average proficiency gap in Erving Union 28 was 23 PI points in both 2003 and 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Erving Union 28 showed a decline, at an average of two PI points annually.
- Math performance in Erving Union 28 showed slight improvement over this period, at an average of less than one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of five percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Erving Union 28 had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately four PI points annually over the two-year period.

Figure 14/Tables 14 A-B: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2003-2006



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	11	11	9	14
Proficient	41	37	27	36
Needs Improvement	34	41	53	37
Warning/Failing	14	11	11	13
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	48	36	50
Average Proficiency Index (API)	77.1	77.4	72.2	76.7

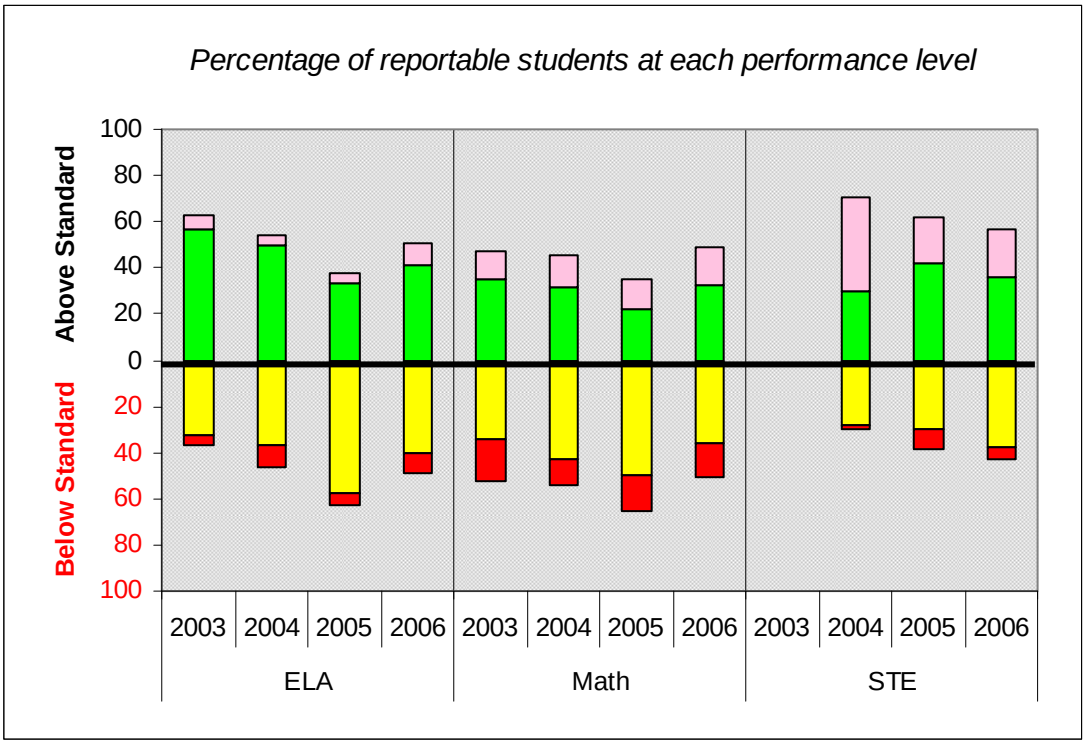
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	25	26	19	32
Proficient	94	87	55	81
Needs Improvement	78	96	109	84
Warning/Failing	33	25	23	30
Total	**230**	**234**	**206**	**227**

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

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests decreased from 52 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 14 percent in 2003 to 13 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Erving Union 28 remained the same at 23 PI points.

Figure/Table 15: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2003-2006



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	6	4	4	9	13	14	13	16		41	19	21
Proficient	56	50	34	41	35	31	22	33		30	42	36
Needs Improvement	32	36	58	40	35	43	50	36		28	29	37
Warning/ Failing	5	9	5	9	18	11	15	15		2	9	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	54	38	50	48	45	35	49		71	61	57
Proficiency Index (PI)	85.5	81.4	74.7	79.7	74.0	75.6	70.5	75.2		90.6	82.7	83.0

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

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 62 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA widened from 14 PI points in 2003 to 20 PI points in 2006.

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining proficiency in math increased from 48 percent in 2003 to 49 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 26 PI points in 2003 to 25 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of five percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Erving Union 28 students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 71 percent in 2004 to 57 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in STE widened from nine PI points in 2004 to 17 PI points in 2006.

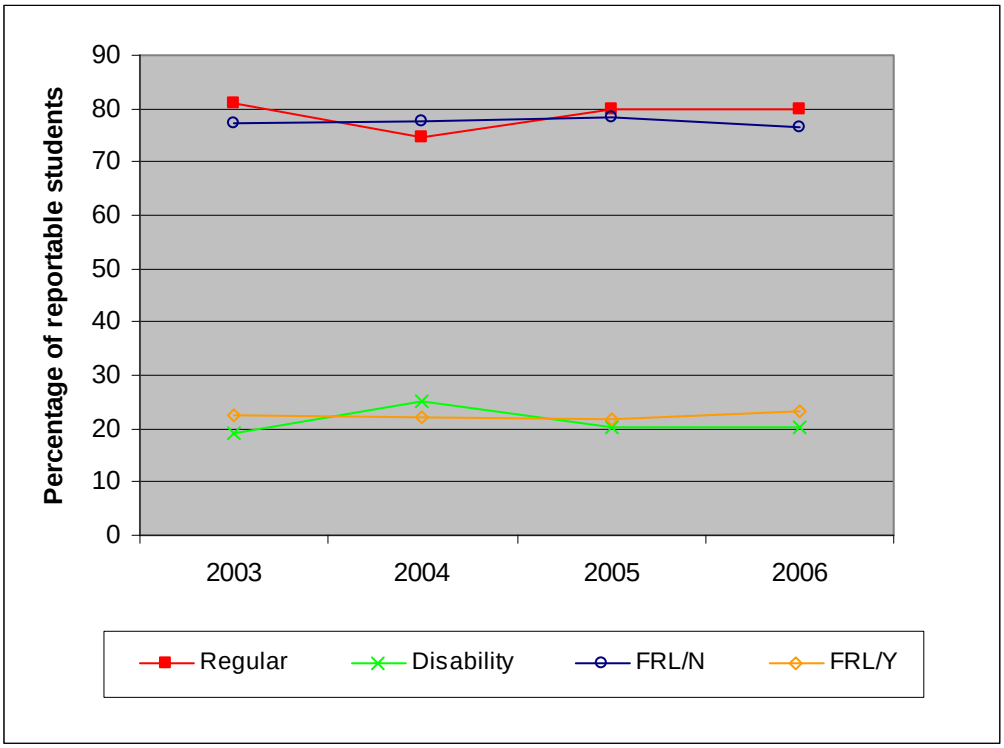
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Erving Union 28, all student subgroups had a decline in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA was students with disabilities.
- In math, all subgroups in Erving Union 28 with the exception of non low-income students showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was low-income students.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 25 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 24 to 21 PI points during this period.

Figure/Table 16: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2003-2006



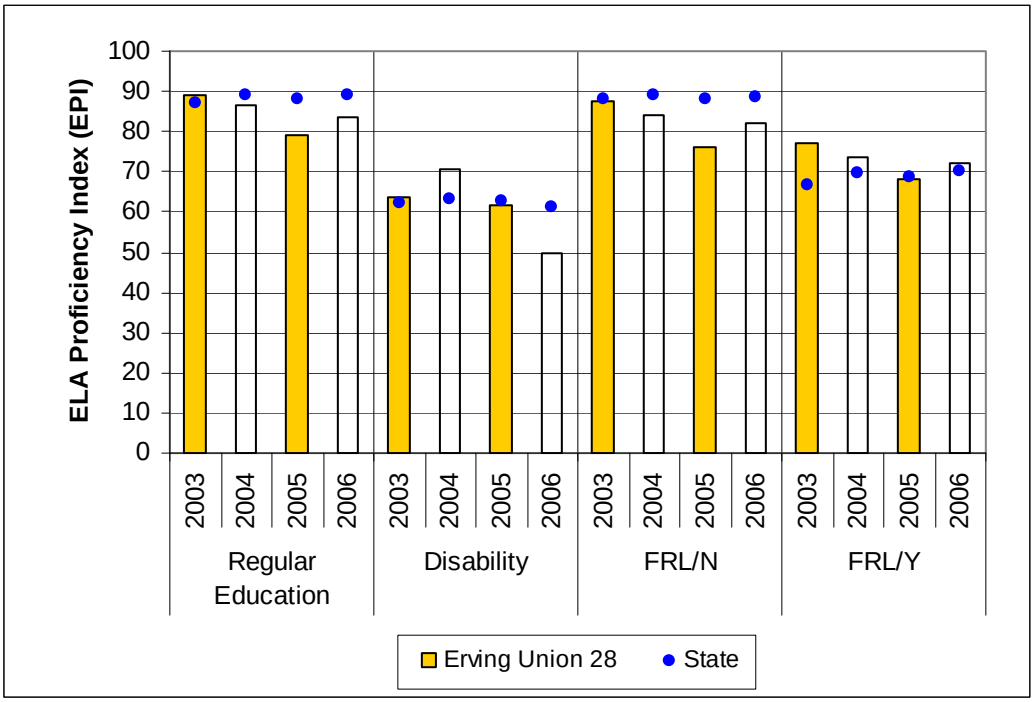
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Erving Union 28	247	301	276	321	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	200	225	220	256	81.0	74.8	79.7	79.8
Disability	47	76	56	65	19.0	25.2	20.3	20.2
FRL/N	191	234	216	246	77.3	77.7	78.3	76.6
FRL/Y	56	67	60	75	22.7	22.3	21.7	23.4

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

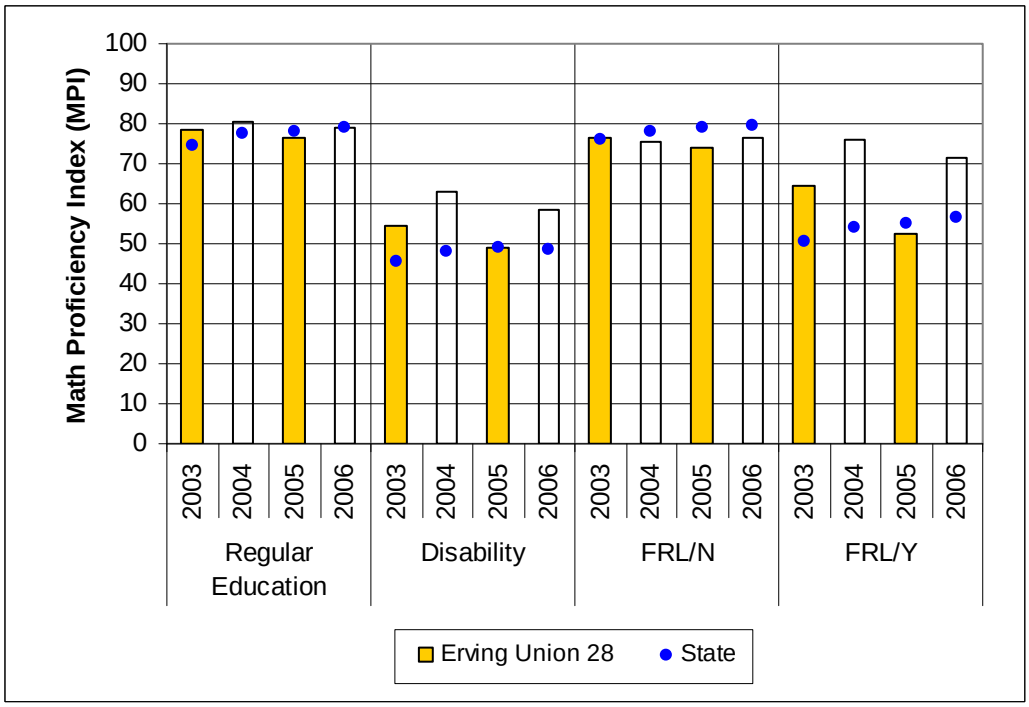
Between 2003 and 2006 the proportions of students with disabilities and of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by approximately one percentage point each.

Figures 17 A, B/Table 17: MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Subgroup, 2003-2006

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



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

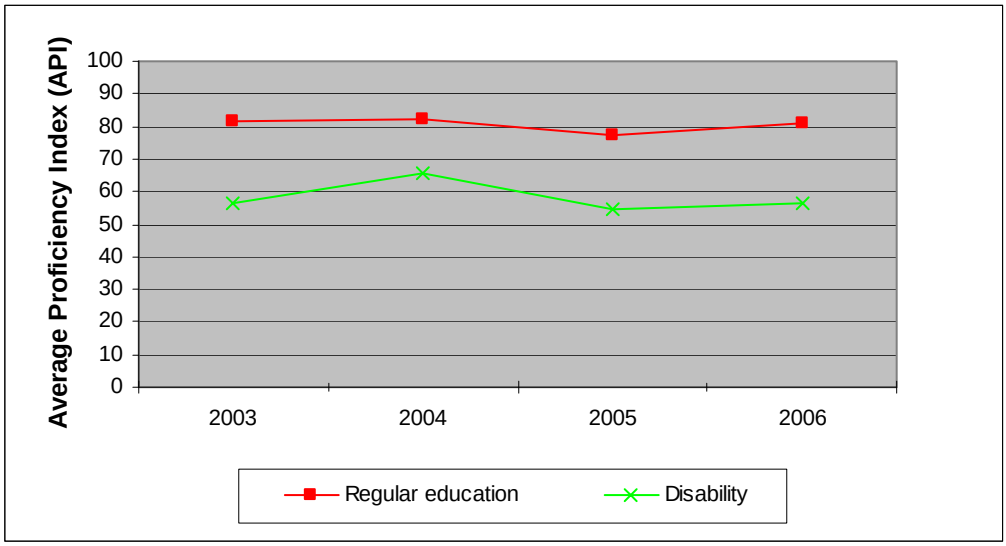


State				Erving Union 28			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	89.2	78.7
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	86.5	80.3
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	79.0	76.6
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	83.7	79.1
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	63.9	54.5
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	70.8	62.8
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	61.9	49.1
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	50.0	58.6
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	87.8	76.5
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	84.3	75.4
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	76.1	73.8
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	81.9	76.3
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	76.9	64.3
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	73.8	76.2
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	68.3	52.6
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	72.1	71.5

In Erving Union 28, all student subgroups had a decline in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA was students with disabilities. In math, all subgroups in Erving Union 28, with the exception of non low-income (FRL/N) students, showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was low-income (FRL/Y) students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 25 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 24 to 21 PI points during this period.

Figure/Table 18: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Student Status Subgroup, 2003-2006

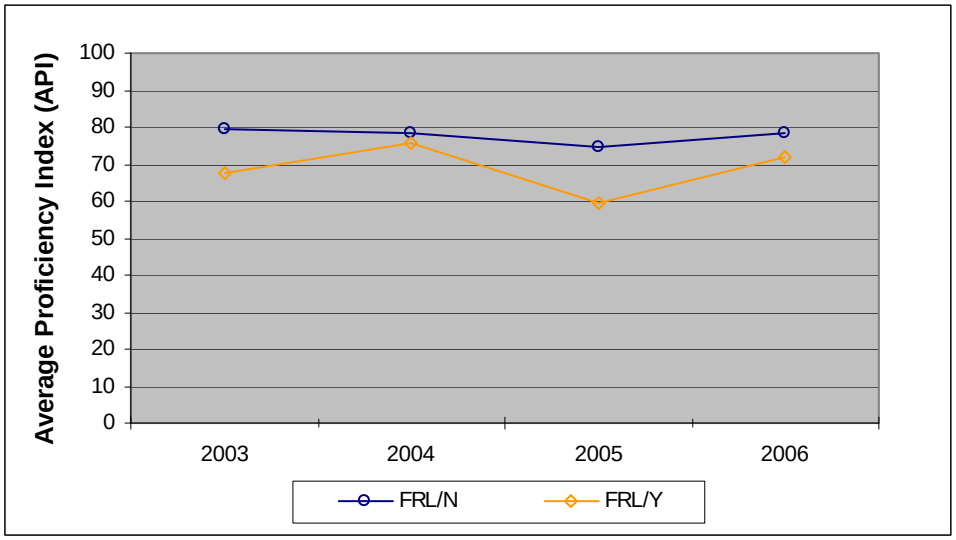


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	81.7	89.2	78.7	70	52
	2004	82.2	86.5	80.3	62	51
	2005	77.5	79.0	76.6	44	42
	2006	80.7	83.7	79.1	58	55
Disability	2003	56.5	63.9	54.5	22	30
	2004	65.7	70.8	62.8	38	30
	2005	54.7	61.9	49.1	19	11
	2006	56.6	50.0	58.6	0	24

Regular education students in Erving Union 28 experienced a slight decline in overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while the performance of students with disabilities remained relatively flat. The average proficiency gap for Erving Union 28's regular education students widened by one PI point; for students with disabilities, it remained at 43 PI points.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities narrowed by one PI point.

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

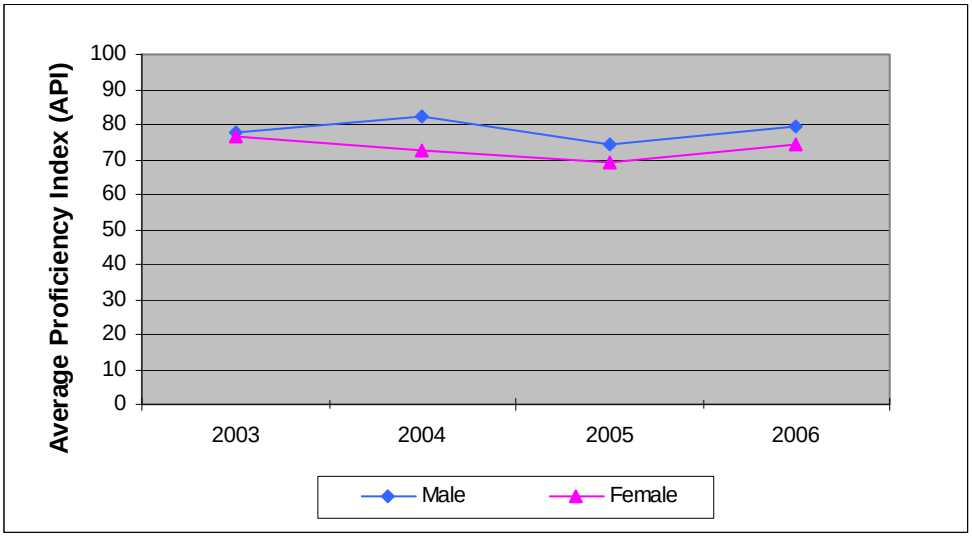


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	79.5	87.8	76.5	69	51
	2004	78.2	84.3	75.4	57	45
	2005	74.7	76.1	73.8	40	39
	2006	78.2	81.9	76.3	57	53
FRL/Y	2003	67.7	76.9	64.3	38	34
	2004	75.4	73.8	76.2	45	49
	2005	59.5	68.3	52.6	27	11
	2006	71.7	72.1	71.5	29	39

The low-income (FRL/Y) subgroup in Erving Union 28 had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while the non low-income (FRL/N) subgroup showed a decline during this period. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 32 to 28 PI points, resulting in an improvement rate of 12 percent. The average proficiency gap for non low-income students widened from 20 to 22 PI points.

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

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



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	77.7	87.9	74.1	68	50
	2004	82.5	84.9	81.3	61	55
	2005	74.6	74.5	74.6	36	38
	2006	79.3	74.3	81.6	34	55
Female	2003	76.4	83.1	73.8	58	45
	2004	72.7	77.8	70.6	47	38
	2005	69.2	75.0	65.3	39	31
	2006	74.2	84.4	68.8	65	43

Male students in Erving Union 28 had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while female students showed a decline during this period. The average proficiency gap for male students narrowed from 22 to 21 PI points, resulting in an improvement rate of seven percent. The proficiency gap for female students widened from 24 to 26 PI points.

During this period, the average performance gap between male and female students widened by three PI points.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

- On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Erving Union 28 participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Erving Union 28	ALL LEVELS	**316**	**321**	**91**
	Advanced	44	46	19
	Proficient	153	116	33
	Needs Improvement	96	108	34
	Warning/Failing	23	51	5
Regular Education	Advanced	43	45	18
	Proficient	133	101	27
	Needs Improvement	67	82	25
	Warning/Failing	10	30	2
Disability	Advanced	1	1	1
	Proficient	20	15	6
	Needs Improvement	29	26	9
	Warning/Failing	13	21	3
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	0	0	0
	Needs Improvement	0	0	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
White	Advanced	40	42	16
	Proficient	141	104	32
	Needs Improvement	85	97	30
	Warning/Failing	21	49	4
Hispanic	Advanced	1	1	1
	Proficient	4	4	0
	Needs Improvement	2	2	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0	1
African-American	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	2	0	1
	Needs Improvement	2	3	2
	Warning/Failing	1	2	0
Asian	Advanced	3	3	2
	Proficient	4	7	0
	Needs Improvement	7	4	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	37	42	15
	Proficient	123	84	29
	Needs Improvement	64	81	23
	Warning/Failing	17	38	4
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	7	4	4
	Proficient	30	32	4
	Needs Improvement	32	27	11
	Warning/Failing	6	13	1
Male	Advanced	17	25	10
	Proficient	76	67	20
	Needs Improvement	56	60	13
	Warning/Failing	14	15	3
Female	Advanced	27	21	9
	Proficient	77	49	13
	Needs Improvement	40	48	21
	Warning/Failing	9	36	2

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	78	0	0
	2004	80	0	0
	2005	75	0	0
	2006	76	77	0
Grade 4	2003	62	63	0
	2004	74	74	0
	2005	83	83	0
	2006	75	75	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	61
	2005	0	0	78
	2006	91	92	91
Grade 6	2003	0	105	0
	2004	0	86	0
	2005	0	40	0
	2006	74	77	0
All Grades	2003	140	168	0
	2004	154	160	61
	2005	158	123	78
	2006	316	321	91

Notes

Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years. The following grades are included in the trend data for 2003-2006 reported in Figures/Tables 14-20 and in the table of n-values by grade and year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4
Math: 4, 6
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5

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

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

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

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

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

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The four districts that constitute the Erving School Union 28 did not have District Improvement Plans (DIPs) for the entire period under review and used annual, non-standards-based School Improvement Plans (SIPs).
- The members of each of the five local school committees received training and understood their responsibilities, but did not have plans to mentor new members and did not use student achievement data on a regular basis to make decisions.
- During the latter part of the period under review, the four districts began to use various sources of achievement data to aid in the development of programs to meet the needs of their students.
- The union school committee evaluated the superintendent in place during the period under review only during the 2004-2005 school year. The evaluation was timely, signed by both parties, and included the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.

- The districts all had safety plans in place that were reviewed annually with the police and fire departments; however, the site visits of all the districts found all buildings easy to enter from multiple points, as evidenced by unlocked doors, including the front doors.
- The school committees, administrative staff, and town officials worked together to ensure strong communication, foster a sense of togetherness, and promote the importance of a strong education for each student.

Summary

During the period under review, Erving School Union 28 had two superintendents: the former interim superintendent and the former superintendent. For school year 2006-2007, the union school committee hired a new superintendent subsequent to the retirement of the former superintendent. The four districts had fragmented systems of monitoring student achievement; however, the former superintendent began and the current superintendent continued to focus each district on improving student achievement by monitoring student academic progress and analyzing achievement data and sharing them with the teachers.

Also during the period under review, turnover occurred in all five local school committees, as well as the union school committee. While the committees did not have formal mentoring programs in place, veteran members reported offering support to new members. The superintendent met with newly elected school committee members prior to their first meeting to review committee operations and their roles as policymakers and student advocates. Each district school committee as well as the union school committee had a subcommittee for budget and personnel. While the examiners found some evidence that the school committees had reviewed, added, and updated some policies, many policies had dates of 1970. District school committee members interviewed stated they began the process of reviewing policies during the final year of the period under review and it was their intention to continue the process. The union school committee began to look at policies that would cover all four districts in an effort to bring policy uniformity to the union.

The district school committees, the superintendent, and town officials continued to focus on a collaborative culture to ensure that the districts met the needs of all students. The school committees and the town select boards and finance committees met on a regular basis to review

the budget needs of both the communities and the schools prior to the adoption of final budgets. School personnel and school committee members interviewed stated that parents and members of the community became very involved with their schools and advocated for and supported the efforts of the staff and administration.

Both the former superintendent and the current superintendent stated that three of four of the union's districts began to develop District Improvement Plans (DIPs) during the final year of the period under review. In addition, the former superintendent began the process of developing a union DIP, and the current superintendent updated the document. Both superintendents stated that the union school committee embraced the union DIP but never formally voted to accept it. All four districts had school committee-approved, non-standards-based School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in place for all of the years under review, and the review of each SIP took place on an annual basis. During this time, the SIP served as the DIP for each district. During the final year of the period under review, the districts of Erving, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell began the process of developing DIPs, although they did not align with the union DIP; Leverett began developing a DIP in 2006-2007. Analysis of student performance on the MCAS tests varied from district to district, and no formal union system or structure was in place for the analysis of student assessment results. Each district analyzed student data for content and looked at individual scores due to the smallness of each district. The examiners found limited evidence of any structures in place in the districts to look at subgroup achievement data or to share and analyze the data gathered.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the 2004-2005 school year, the superintendent, in concert with the administrative team, developed a set of Erving School Union 28 goals that the union school committee embraced but

never officially voted on. The three goals included the importance of staff use of a variety of instructional delivery models, the alignment of the curricula in English language arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science, and the engagement of staff members in activities to improve their pedagogical skills. Timelines and outcomes were included as part of the document, but there was no reference to the use of data or the achievement of students, nor inclusion of measurable goals. During the 2006-2007 school year, the new superintendent, with input from the administrative team, added a fourth goal oriented toward the EQA visit. Interviewees stated that the union school committee shared the document with each district and school council so they could determine if they wanted to weave the union goals into their own goals to have alignment.

In a note to the EQA team dated February 2007, the Erving district stated that a DIP was created during the 2005-2006 school year, but a document was not provided for review by the EQA team. Prior to the 2005-2006 school year, the SIP for Erving Elementary School served as the DIP for Erving. The three goals in it included the continued alignment of the science and social studies curricula, the implementation of best instructional practices to foster creative and higher-level thinking skills, and the continuation of efforts to refine the ELA curriculum by integrating visual arts, music and movement, and technology into it to provide a more comprehensive curriculum. The plan also contained both timelines and outcomes.

The New Salem-Wendell district did not have a DIP for the first two years of the period under review and presented a 2005-2006 DIP to the EQA team that mirrored the SIP for the Swift River School. During the first two years of the period under review, the district used the SIP as the DIP. The four goals in it included the alignment of the curriculum with the state frameworks, the adoption of a standards-based report card, the adoption of Everyday Math, and the adoption of the Second Step social curriculum program. The district was in the process of developing a DIP for the years 2007-2009. Administrators stated the plan would be presented to the school committee for review and adoption.

The Shutesbury district did not have a DIP for the first two years under review and during this period used the SIP for Shutesbury Elementary School as the DIP. The district established a DIP for the 2005-2006 school year, including a mission statement and guiding values. The four goals

included the development of a curriculum guide in each subject area to ensure alignment with the state frameworks; improvement of student achievement in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; the development of a preventative schoolwide discipline plan; and the fostering of positive school climate and communication. The plan also included objectives, measurement of success, and related professional development.

The Leverett district used the SIP for Leverett Elementary School as the DIP for the entire period under review. During the 2006-2007 school year, the district developed a DIP and was planning to draft a mission statement for inclusion in the plan. The six goals included the continued review and revision of curriculum, especially in the area of ELA; differentiated instruction; a cross-grade progress monitoring program for math; the review of the Erving School Union 28 wellness policy; role definition for parents and staff; and the presentation of information regarding a variety of assistive technology tools.

None of the DIPs reviewed by the EQA team were standards based nor did they contain analysis of student data.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school committee structure within Erving School Union 28 included a five-member committee for each of the five towns and a 15-member union committee. The union committee consisted of three members from each of the five local school committees. The towns of New Salem and Wendell each had a five-member committee, with a total of five voting members assigned to the New Salem-Wendell district. The union school committee met on average three to four times a year and was responsible for the establishment of the union budget, the hiring of the superintendent and special education director, and the annual evaluation of the superintendent.

Each school committee member participated in the mandated Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) training and some members of some committees attended the annual MASC convention. In addition, some members of some communities attended local school committee seminars. Interviewees stated that while formal mentoring programs for school committee members did not exist, members conversed on a regular basis. School committee members interviewed stated that new members of the school committees met with the superintendent after an election and received a copy of the policy manual and other materials and had the opportunity to ask questions. In interviews, the former and current superintendents stated they met with all newly elected members as soon as possible after election day. Interviewees stated that all of the committees had turnover in recent years and that veteran members worked with newly elected members to ensure they understood their roles as members of a policymaking board and as student advocates.

The school committee policy manuals for each district in the union provided to the EQA team showed limited revisions and adoption of policies during the period under review. School committee members interviewed acknowledged that all of the manuals needed revisions due to out of date policies still in effect. The union school committee members interviewed stated that a three-member subcommittee was reviewing policies and developing common policies for all four districts. Each school committee received revised policies and voted to adopt or revise them to accommodate the needs of the district. Interviewees stated that during the past two years progress was made in the area of reviewing policies and programs at the union level rather than at the district level. A review of the policy manuals for each district indicated that each district used the same policy in the areas of school councils, SIPs, and wellness.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The four districts all engaged in gathering data during the period under review. All four districts reviewed data and looked for trends and patterns and used item analysis to track the progress of each student. All districts collected, generated, and selected student achievement data on a

regular basis; however, they did not use the information in a highly effective manner nor did the data drive decisions in each of the districts. All four districts looked at formative and summative data, such as those from the MCAS tests and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) at grades K-3, and reviewed open-response question data. In addition, Shutesbury used the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), Leverett and Shutesbury used the TerraNova, and Erving used the Stanford assessment. The districts reported using a number of other devices in individual classrooms to assess student progress.

A review of documents and interviews with administrators and staff members did not reveal any formal system in place in each district regarding the analysis of student data. Each district engaged in MCAS test data analysis on a regular basis and shared all the information with its school committee during regularly scheduled meetings and with parents via school-to-home reports. The superintendent reviewed the MCAS test results of each district as soon as the information arrived and sent individual district results to each principal. The information was then shared with classroom teachers and the results analyzed by grade level. The director of special education reviewed the results of special education students with the principals and members of the staff and worked with each district to make appropriate decisions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each student.

During the period under review, the use of TestWiz occurred on a limited basis due to limited training of staff. Interviewees stated that the special education teacher and computer teacher in the Erving district were currently participating in TestWiz training and would share their expertise with all members of the faculty. The district was considering using consultants to discuss data during professional development time. In Leverett during the period under review, parents wanted higher test scores and teachers began to stress the importance of open-response questions; however, a formal system of aggregated or disaggregated achievement data analysis to improve instruction was not in place. In New Salem-Wendell, staff routinely analyzed math and ELA scores, but as a practice reviewed the results of individual students to determine strengths and weaknesses and progress. The Shutesbury school committee provided a new math series and a full-time math coach after the review of the MCAS data showed a decline in the math scores of its student population.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of documents indicated that each district had a SIP for all of the years under review. Interviewees stated that prior to the 2005-2006 school year, SIPs did not include any reference to student achievement but rather included information relative to material items, such as the need for new playground equipment. During the 2005-2006 school year, the union established a DIP as a reference for the four districts, but did not mandate the alignment of each district SIP with the union DIP. The union DIP called for the review of instructional delivery models, the alignment of the curriculum with the state frameworks, and the improvement of pedagogical skills. During 2005-2006, each district with the exception of Leverett began the process of developing a DIP that would align with the district SIP; Leverett began developing its DIP in 2006-2007. School councils were in place in all four districts and participated in the development and review of each SIP.

The Shutesbury SIP had five goals: the improvement of school climate and culture; the multicultural understanding of teacher and student learning, intergroup relationships, and school organizations; improvement of communication; integration of the creative arts; and the implementation of a sequential and comprehensive mathematics curriculum. The plan called for action steps, timelines, person(s) responsible, indicators of success, and the costs/resources needed.

The New Salem-Wendell SIP had five goals: the alignment of curriculum with the state frameworks; the introduction of a new report card system; the adoption of Everyday Math; the adoption of the Second Step Program; and the development of a vision and policy for integrating technology across grade levels. The plan included action steps, timelines, outcomes, and a mission statement.

The Erving SIP had three goals: the alignment of the science and social studies curricula with the state frameworks; the implementation of best instructional practices to foster creative, higher-level thinking skills; and refinement of the ELA curriculum by integrating visual arts, music and

movement, and technology into the plan. The SIP had action steps, timelines, and outcomes, and also included a mission statement.

The Leverett SIP had five goals: the development of Spanish and music programs; the improvement of outdoor spaces to ensure a stimulating, safe, esthetically appealing area; ensuring behavior and discipline were appropriate and effective; the use of a school survey to aid in the development of the annual SIP; and the importance of community involvement in school programs. The SIP contained objectives, action plans, and an evaluation component.

Interviewees stated that all districts posted upcoming meetings of school councils and that councils met monthly with set agendas. The review of faculty meeting agendas provided evidence that discussion occurred regarding the goals contained within each SIP with all members of each district. A review of school committee agendas showed that administrators discussed the goals of each SIP during regularly scheduled meetings in each district and on occasion revised the SIP. Interviewees in all four districts stated that the districts had placed more emphasis on the importance, development, and implementation of SIPs during the past two years.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees in administrative and budget sessions stated the superintendent and the business assistant to the superintendent worked together and sought information from the principals during the development of the budget for each district. The union worked with each district to determine the costs of utilities and personnel and used previous budget data to determine each cost center. Districts received the amount of money necessary for special education services and, in most cases, the amount of money requested for additional staff and textbooks. Interviewees stated sufficient funding was available in each district. Principals in interviews stated they could advocate for additional resources, such as personnel and textbooks, provided they had supporting data. Interviewees stated that sometimes advocacy rather then the use of achievement data had an

impact when developing budgets and cited the establishment of a gifted/talented program in the New Salem-Wendell district as an example. The principal in each district submitted a budget based on the needs of the entire student body, as subgroups had small numbers of students.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees indicated the budget process began in September when the superintendent and the business administrator met to determine the financial needs of the union central office. The union budget contained the salaries of all central office personnel, supplies and materials, and the maintenance needs of the central office building. The union submitted its budget to each district, which assumed a percentage of the union budget based on enrollment.

The superintendent met with the administrative team, reviewed the budget needs of the union, and reviewed the timelines associated with the development of the district budgets. Principals sought input from staff members and reviewed trends relative to upcoming textbook and staffing needs. During budget development, school administrators worked with town administrators to determine the projected increase in funding allocated to each district. Districts presented the final budget documents to each school committee in December for approval and held public hearings to seek community input. School committee members met with the finance committees and the select boards to review the requests of the school districts and to prepare for the town meetings.

Interviewees stated that use of achievement data had become more important during the 2006-2007 school year, and they were used during the development of budgets. The Erving district funded an MCAS remediation program for spring 2007 when it discovered its school had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP), and it funded an MCAS tutorial program. The review of achievement data led the New Salem-Wendell district to adopt the Six Traits model for ELA and the appropriate supplemental materials. The Shutesbury district introduced Math Investigations as a new textbook series and hired a math coach as the result of a review of achievement data.

Interviewees stated that solid working relationships existed between school officials and town officials, and school committee finance subcommittees met with town officials on a regular basis during the budget season. The school committee advocated for students in meetings with town officials, members of school councils, and parent organizations, and encouraged parents to participate in town meetings and support the needs of the districts.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Evidence in the form of interviews and the review of individual school committee agendas showed that the principal of each district reported annually to the school committee on the attainment of the goals in the SIPs. The superintendent met with principals and reviewed SIPs prior to school committee presentations. All principals, and in some cases members of the school council, presented their SIPs for the upcoming year to the respective school committees in late spring, at which time discussions occurred relative to the rationale behind each goal. Interviewees stated that periodically members of the school committee asked the principal for more information regarding the SIP and how SIP goals affected budget requests.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees stated that the use of aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data did not occur on a regular basis because of the limited number of students at each grade level in each district. Interviewees indicated the review of the individual student results allowed administrators and staff members to monitor progress and look at areas of strength and weakness. One administrator reviewed the scores for males and females to determine any major differences and looked for trends in the frequency of incorrect responses by students in each classroom. All

districts reported that they compared the MCAS test results with the results of other standardized tests in place in the district, and staff members stated "they use standardized tests to confirm what we already know about our students."

Interviewees stated that the use of disaggregated data did not occur, with the exception of special education students' data, due to the small size of subgroups. Each school district was so small that the cohort taking the MCAS tests never exceeded 22 students. Interviewees stated that the numbers of students in subgroups was so small that it was faster and more efficient, in their opinion, to offer individualized services rather than group solutions. All the districts in the union used the results of the DIBELS to identify students who required additional services.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees stated that all of the districts were beginning to use data analysis on a regular basis. During the period under review, each district analyzed the MCAS test data annually, and the information gathered from these analyses allowed for the implementation and/or modification of some programs in some of the districts. Interviewees stated that, while the districts looked at the goals in each DIP/SIP, there was little connection between the goals and the implementation or modification of programs to improve student achievement. Teachers received little training in data analysis, and the turnover in principals, who served as the educational leaders in each district, inhibited consistency in the monitoring of student achievement.

Standards-based DIPs/SIPs were not in place in the districts during the period under review; however, all of the districts reviewed past practice with regard to the establishment of the SIPs and were beginning to include measurable goals in each DIP/SIP. Evidence of this trend included the funding of an MCAS remediation program for spring 2007 and an increase in funding for the MCAS tutorial program in Erving, the adoption of the Six Traits model in New Salem-Wendell, and the adoption of Math Investigations and the hiring of a math coach in Shutesbury.

All of the districts provided after-school support programs for students whose assessment results indicated the need for additional instruction; however, an analysis of the effectiveness of these programs did not occur. The Erving, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell districts all received Title I funding and had appropriate programs in place. The Leverett district did not qualify for Title I assistance but did fund and provide an essential skills program for its students.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Many administrative changes took place in the union during the period under review. The onsite review of the personnel file of the previous superintendent, who served the union from March 2004 to June 2006, produced a school committee evaluation for the 2005-2006 school year that was noted in school committee minutes. All school committee members evaluated the superintendent in accordance with school committee policy, which called for an annual evaluation during the spring of each year to be compiled into one document by the chairperson of the union school committee. The final summative evaluation presented to the superintendent included a discussion of the superintendent's educational leadership, fiscal management, community and public relations, effective leadership of staff, and management and professional skills, and an analysis of performance. The evaluation was timely, included the components of education reform, was informative and instructive, promoted growth and overall effectiveness, and included commendations and recommendations. Each party signed and dated the final evaluation. School committee members stated they opted not to evaluate the superintendent during the last year under review due to the superintendent's retirement. They further stated they did not evaluate the superintendent during 2003-2004 because the superintendent started in March 2004. The evaluation of the current superintendent was to take place on May 14, 2007, and a posted notice provided evidence that this would occur at a union school committee meeting. The union did not have a DIP; therefore, no reference was made to the attainment of union goals.

The review of seven administrator personnel files revealed completed evaluations for one retired principal conducted in 2003-2004, two active principals conducted in 2005-2006, the special education director conducted in 2005-2006, and the business administrator conducted in 2005-2006. With the exception of the business administrator, all of the timely, completed evaluations contained the components of education reform, were informative and instructive, and promoted growth and overall effectiveness. The summative evaluations contained statements related to the attainment of mutually agreed-upon goals, student achievement, and components contained in the SIP. Each party signed and dated the official evaluation. All administrators serving in the district at the time of the review had appropriate and updated certification.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The administrative team of the Erving School Union 28 included a union superintendent who oversaw four school districts, each of which had one school. The principal of each school was the leader of each respective school district. The superintendent, the assistant to the superintendent for business, the special education director, and the district principals met as an administrative team two times per month to review and discuss issues related to the union and the four districts. Interviewees stated that discussion regarding district programs and building issues and the open communication afforded them a great deal of information and helped them to make sound decisions regarding program and district initiatives. Sample agendas items included the budget, SIPs, student data, curriculum articulation, and other administrative issues that needed to be addressed.

Administrative interviewees all stated the superintendent delegated the leadership of each district and program to the assigned administrator. Interviewees stated that committees consisting of teachers, parents, and members of the school councils were established when new staff had to be hired, and they recommended their choices to the principal, who made the final decision and

submitted his/her choice to the superintendent. Teachers' union interviewees agreed that the hiring practices in place were fair and equitable.

The contracts issued to principals and other administrators did not have specific language related to student achievement as part of the hiring or re-hiring process. The new superintendent had instituted new criteria relative to the annual evaluation process that included a survey of staff members, parents, community members, and school committee members on the performance of each building principal and the inclusion of SMART goals that were specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic, and time based. In addition, the superintendent prepared a summary evaluation for each administrator that included the areas of vision, high student performance, safe and orderly schools, quality teaching and learning, effective and efficient operation, and fiscal responsibilities. The superintendent compiled all of the above information and worked with each administrator to develop goals for school year 2007-2008 to include components of the DIP and the SIP of his/her particular district. The superintendent would meet with each administrator during the school year to determine the accomplishment of goals.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

School committee members, the administrative staff, and town officials cited the ability to work together as a great strength during the period under review. Interwoven throughout each SIP was the importance of meaningful parent/community involvement and collaboration. Both the ability of the school districts to produce realistic budgets and to communicate the information to the community added to the credibility of each school district. Each district school committee communicated the needs of the student body and shared information during scheduled meetings with the finance committees and the select boards. In addition, monthly newsletters distributed to parents and available to all community members fostered a sense of togetherness and open lines of communication.

The review of materials provided by the district showed signed teachers' contracts in place for all of the years under review for the four districts. Interviewees stated that each district contract was settled in a timely fashion, and the issue of student achievement or any form of merit pay was not used as a bargaining tool. The Erving Teachers' Association was not affiliated with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and bargained with the school committee independently. All other teachers' unions utilized the services of an MTA representative during contract negotiations. The superintendent worked with each school committee and served as its negotiator during contract deliberations. Each contract was unique to the individual district, including the salary scale.

Members of the teachers' unions and the superintendent stated there was open communication via telephone conversations, e-mails, and regularly scheduled meetings. During the period under review, teachers' union representatives met with the superintendent on a monthly basis. Interviewees stated that if an issue arose, it was discussed as soon as possible and a quick resolution was sought. Grievances were not an issue in any district. All interviewees stated that issues were addressed professionally and solutions attained cooperatively.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Each district had a safety plan in place which the building crisis team reviewed on an annual basis. In each district, the superintendent, principal, school nurse, local police chief, and local fire chief all served on this committee. In the New Salem-Wendell district, a representative of the state police also served on the committee. The makeup of the rest of the committee varied in each district and could include custodians, community members, and/or staff members. Each district had a manual that included emergency phone numbers, general protocols, crisis/emergency intervention procedures, and primary/secondary evacuation areas and routes. The manual was in the office in each school and evacuation routes were posted in some classrooms. The plan was reviewed prior to the start of each school year with all members of the

staff including new teachers and paraprofessionals. In interview sessions staff noted that no protocol was in place to ensure that substitutes were made aware of their role in the case of an emergency and that school plans were not uniform throughout the union. While each plan was in various stages of development, the plans reviewed all had the following components: evacuation, bomb threats, suspicious packages, suicide, death, intruder in the building, bus evacuation, and medical emergencies.

Bus evacuation and fire drills took place in all districts on an annual basis but lockdown drills occurred sporadically, if at all. During the 2006-2007 school year, the Shutesbury Elementary School began to conduct a lockdown drill and staff discovered that it was impossible for the principal to alert all members of the staff due to the fact that no intercom system existed in the building. The school committee and the community authorized the installation of a $25,000 intercom system during the February 2007 vacation break. The New Salem-Wendell district had no intercom system and members of the staff used walkie-talkies to communicate with the office. The current superintendent authored a memo to the Leverett school committee asking that it consider locking the front door of the school. To date no action has been taken relative to this request.

Visits to each school by members of the EQA team found some methods of security in place in some schools, such as a sign-in sheet and the wearing of badges. The Erving Elementary School had a camera in the front lobby. The EQA team found most buildings very easy to enter undetected, front doors unlocked, and no buzzer systems in place. The location of the offices in each school did not give members of the office staff in any district the ability to monitor people entering the building.

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

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Each of the districts had documented curriculum guides, but they needed supplements including more resources, instructional standards, articulation maps, assessments, and regular review cycles.
- The districts had just begun to align the curriculum horizontally within a grade and vertically within a building. The Erving and Leverett districts had begun to meet informally with their receiving middle schools to further align curricula vertically.
- The principals served as the curriculum leaders in their respective buildings and were beginning to provide active support for techniques and methods grounded in research to improve achievement of all students.
- None of the districts had a regular, timely review cycle for their curricula in the tested core content areas.
- Consistency of instructional time allocated to the tested core content areas to focus on improving proficiency of all students was limited within each of the districts.
- The availability of technology was uneven and inconsistent within the districts.

Summary

During the period under review, the four independent elementary school districts that make up Erving School Union 28 began the process of aligning, documenting, monitoring, and communicating curricula in the core tested areas. Horizontal alignment was a school-based initiative, not a union-based one. Some vertical alignment existed across grades within the schools and between two of the districts and their receiving middle schools. Documents reviewed and interviews conducted by examiners revealed that the curriculum documents lacked uniform timelines, resources, instructional strategies, and measurable outcomes, and only listed general assessments.

All the districts in the union allotted time weekly for staff to work on curriculum and, according to interviewees, administrators planned for Job Alike meetings in 2007-2008 so that teachers at the same grade level throughout the union could come together to plan strategies to improve teaching and learning. Each district used different instructional programs for math, ELA, and science. While the districts did not have standards-based report cards, one school had performance indicators on its report cards. Some of the districts were just beginning revisions to their curricula, according to documents reviewed and interviews conducted.

The principal in each district served as the instructional and curriculum leader. According to interviewees, the principals conducted daily walk-throughs, with some more formalized than others. The union did not have a standardized walk-through protocol. The principals conducted contractual evaluations and were working to introduce differentiated instruction, heightened accountability, and technology integrated into instruction, according to interviews and random classroom observations. Principals, in their roles as curriculum leaders, actively monitored teachers' instruction for practices that reflected high expectations.

Inconsistent amounts of time were allocated to the tested core subjects as found in documents reviewed and random classroom observations. According to observations of randomly selected classrooms, the districts averaged a high rate of positive indicators for classroom management and climate. They had an average rate of positive indicators for instructional practices, high expectations, and student activity and behavior. Each school provided an after-school program for homework and/or extracurricular activities.

During the period under review, the staffs in all districts were beginning to use weekly professional development time to analyze the MCAS and other assessment scores and to adjust instruction. According to interviewees, staff ability in all districts was emerging in this area and more staff members were receiving training to conduct data analysis and to use the information to improve teaching and learning for all students. Student achievement data were not yet used to choose or modify the instructional programs used. Staff members conducted some item analysis and they made improvements to their respective curricula, such as more emphasis on open-response questions in both math and ELA and improvement in teaching of number facts. According to interviewees, the focus during most of the period under review was on qualitative data, or how well students and staff liked a program, rather than on quantitative data, or how well the students improved using a program.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Each district developed and was implementing its own curricula in all core content areas. The curricula in all four districts tended to be textbook and program based. While they all contained learning standards and benchmarks, and some resources, they did not all contain articulation maps and measurable assessments.

Erving had articulated curricula in all core content areas that listed by grade the learning standards and benchmarks, as well as general resources and assessments, according to documents examined. Interviewees stated that ELA was the oldest curriculum and needed revision to align with the Write Traits program piloted in grade 2. The science curriculum had overlap between grades when it was first written. The staff tried to fit standards in different places without logic, e.g., rocks and minerals were covered in grade 4 and in grade 2 because "the teacher liked to teach it." The social studies curriculum was just published, the computer curriculum followed

the frameworks, and the district needed more time to complete the arts curriculum, according to interviewees. The district lacked a standards-based report card and did not have pacing guides or curriculum maps. One of the five components of the curriculum documents included generic benchmarks that lacked depth and timelines.

Leverett had curriculum guides in ELA, math, and science that listed by grade the strands, learning standards, benchmarks, and resources, according to documents reviewed. Interviewees said that the district had a standards-based report card since 2003, aligned to the frameworks and articulated with the curriculum. The report cards included performance indicators and were teacher dependent and subjective. No pacing guides existed and the interviewees felt that meeting expectations was more important than pacing instruction.

At New Salem-Wendell, the curricula in ELA, math, and science included by grade the learning standards, general activities, rubrics in math, and articulated vertical alignment to the middle school in science. The district had developed a benchmarked report card connected to the frameworks that was issued three times per year.

At Shutesbury, curriculum guides were in place for ELA, math, and science. These included by grade level an analysis showing a connection from content to skills to assessment. They also included assessment and pacing maps, and listed sample projects, activities, authentic assessments, and resources. The district did not have benchmarked report cards, and the benchmarks were one of six standards in the curriculum guides. The new math program, Investigations, was laden with benchmarks, according to interviewees. Since 2006-2007 was the first year that the district used the Fundations and Investigations programs, staff members had not set a pacing guide since they were learning the curriculum and wanted to work slowly through it, according to interviewees.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, according to documents reviewed and interviews conducted, only initial steps were taken in curriculum alignment, both horizontally at each grade level and

vertically between grade levels and schools. The alignment was not a union-wide initiative and each school conducted its own alignment. There were some plans to have all districts work together in 2007-2008 in a Job Alike program during professional development time to align the curricula in all tested areas. However, interviewees from all districts made it clear to the EQA examiners that they considered themselves independent districts that would set their own curricula and alignment. The districts all used their 70-percent days on Wednesdays to work partly on curriculum alignment during professional development time.

At the Erving elementary district, interviewees said that the staff reviewed all the students' progress in ELA to see if the students had mastered an area, partially mastered it, or merely been exposed to it. From this information, changes in alignment would occur. The staff had not done this as much in math or science. At the end of the school year, teachers met with staff members of the receiving middle school for two days to discuss students. However, no formal system or structure was in place for vertical curriculum alignment.

At the Leverett elementary district, interviewees stated that in the process of developing curriculum and standards-based report cards, many conversations regarding alignment had occurred. The curriculum and report card acted as a scaffold to organize alignment, interviewees stated. The grade 1 teacher was already observing the students and curriculum of the kindergarten class. Thirty-minute grade-level meetings for communication occurred. The teachers told the examiners that they had to take the initiative to visit with the middle school to discuss vertical alignment. They did track their students and found them generally to be in the top of the classes in middle and high school, and this led them to believe that their curriculum was well aligned vertically.

The interviewees at the New Salem-Wendell elementary district said that teachers worked to align curriculum informally during every professional development day, but that alignment was done formally every two years.

At the Shutesbury elementary district, staff told the EQA examiners that the Fundations reading program and the new Investigations math program leant themselves well to aligning curriculum vertically across grades. The latter was used for the first time in 2006-2007. Shutesbury and Leverett staff met with staff at the Amherst district, where Shutesbury and Leverett students

would attend middle school. Shutesbury had chosen to use the Connected Math Program (CMP) at grade 6 instead of the Investigations program, used at grades K-5, since the middle school used the CMP and Shutesbury wanted its students to have a smooth transition.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The principals of each district acted as the curriculum leaders. In interviews, they felt that they were still growing in their roles, as many of them were new to the position. As evidenced by interviews and documents examined, principals or the staff of all districts in the union made little consistent use of quantitative data to improve curriculum. Instead, the staffs stressed the use of and the importance they placed on qualitative data for alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of curriculum. They stressed repeatedly to the EQA examiners the importance of students "liking" programs and teachers "enjoying" teaching certain things. They also told the EQA examiners that the entire staffs were part of the curriculum teams that worked on curriculum, alignment, and consistency every week during their 70-percent days for professional development and annually during their two full days of professional development. The new superintendent was moving the union toward more collaboration and consistency but each district stressed that it was an independent district and valued its freedom to develop its own curriculum, methods, and report cards. All the districts shared one special education director who had been in that position for five years. The director held union-wide meetings to align special education services. The special education director monitored service and curriculum delivery at all the schools and oversaw team meetings, according to interviewees.

The Erving Elementary School principal and staff told the EQA examiners that the smallness of the building was a plus. The staff worked on curriculum and instructional practices under the leadership of the principal.

The Leverett Elementary School staff also felt that the smallness of the building led to more dialogue between the staff and principal on curriculum and best practices in teaching and

learning. The staff felt that qualitative data were important but had begun to view them through the lens of quantitative analysis.

At the New Salem-Wendell district, a lead teacher assisted the principal with curriculum leadership, but this was more for coverage when the principal was out of the building. The principal and whole faculty worked on the curriculum and instructional practices together.

Interviews with Shutesbury staff indicated the importance the district attached to analysis of qualitative data in making curricular decisions. The staff felt that qualitative data were not given their "due" and that quantitative data had overshadowed qualitative data. The principal felt the staff was just the correct size to act as a team in deciding on curriculum with him.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

All the districts used various instructional strategies, techniques, and methods, but they had no focused, systematic rationale for their choices, according to interviewees. No documentation was provided that the districts had reviewed student achievement data in their choice of techniques and methods or in their continuation. The staff of all districts stressed the use of qualitative results repeatedly over the use of quantitative results. A special education director provided leadership in this area but also had many other duties. The principals were the designated instructional leaders in each of their respective districts, but there had been extensive turnover and they all admitted to the examiners that they were still learning their roles.

At the Erving district, grade 1 used Fundations in ELA and grade 2 piloted Write Traits. Interviewees said that they had also ordered the Six Traits of Writing. However, little consistency of curriculum existed across the school. The special education students used Fundations and also Read Naturally and Read Aloud. The district retained a consultant to help the staff work on writing rubrics, interviewees told the EQA examiners. In math, grade 4 students used the Addison-Wesley series and Accelerated Math which provided data collection

and more practice, while grade 5 used Investigations and parts of Singapore Math. Grade 6 used parts of the Addison-Wesley series and parts of Singapore Math, according to interviewees.

At the Leverett district, Guided Reading and the Five Elements of Reading comprised the ELA curriculum. Recently, the staff reported that it had liked Write Traits and wanted to use it. The teachers used Story Grammar Markers to organize literature and writing and had completed a year of professional development on the Six Traits of Writing. When the district was revising the math curriculum in 2004-2005, interviewees said that they conducted a textbook search. They liked the flow of Addison-Wesley and it followed the guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). However, they wanted to put more emphasis on problem-solving and used parts of Investigations. Grades 5 and 6 had an eclectic approach to math using Addison-Wesley, the CMP, and Real Math. In science, the staff members interviewed said that they used Scott Foresman along with activity kits the librarian purchased from the Massachusetts Library Association. The grade 6 students had 90 minutes of lab instruction per week and the other levels had 40 minutes. Special education students had essential skills training with pre- and post-testing.

At the New Salem-Wendell district, Fundations was used at grades K-3. Staff members interviewed said that they used Read Naturally for fluency and comprehension and novels for comprehension as well. Students seemed to be doing better in comprehension than in some other areas, and so interviewees said that they were spending their time in other areas and would later return to comprehension. They used Harcourt Trophies which had a lot of comprehension built into it. The district had no basal but did use Guided Literacy and literacy circles. It also used Spellography and the Six Traits of Writing. In math, staff used the Everyday Math series. The district used Foss science kits for the science curriculum. When the teachers noted that students had difficulties with math facts on the MCAS tests, the principal sent staff members to observe a similar school outside the union that did well in this area. Staff learned that students became successful when they studied their facts more, both at school and at home. The interviewees preferred to use new approaches, such as Read Naturally and Wilson, with special education students rather than new programs.

The Shutesbury district used Fundations and Read Naturally for fluency in ELA. Grades 4-6 had literature-based ELA and Harcourt Brace Trophies for a basal. Interviewees felt that while facts were important, experiences aided comprehension as well. Interviewees stated that they formerly used Everyday Math, but now had switched entirely to Investigations. They had received intensive professional development and a math coach was hired, who was not certified. The series employed many open-response questions. Interviewees said that they used Foss and SCIS science kits at grades K-6. The teachers designed the social studies curriculum. They also used Spellography. In 2007-2008 the district planned to pilot a cross-curricular science/ELA program from the University of California at Berkley.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews with staff and review of documents showed that districts in the union were beginning to analyze data from the MCAS tests and other assessments, create documented curricula, and focus on achievement of all students. However, not all districts had a regular, timely review cycle for all subjects. According to curriculum documents provided to the EQA examiners, the curriculum guides were not recently updated in all districts. However, all districts were moving toward being standards driven and having benchmarked report cards. All districts in the union were working independently on these areas and no union policy regarding curriculum review existed, but the new superintendent was encouraging them to work together in the future. Staff at all schools had 70-percent days on Wednesdays, as well as two full professional development days and summer workshop time, in order to work on curriculum review.

All district personnel interviewed agreed that they had such small cohorts that they did not generally analyze disaggregated achievement data except for special education students. Also, some districts had set goals for enrichment programs for gifted and talented students but they were just in the process of setting criteria for admission. A few students in the union who had mastered the material in a subject at their grade level were allowed to skip a grade. All districts

used the Reading First three-tiered model of remediation in which most extra assistance was offered at the second tier and within the classroom model and in which only a few students required the third tier, or pullout remediation.

The Erving district had created its ELA curriculum in October 2003, its math curriculum in July 2004, and its STE curriculum in November 2005, according to documentation presented to the EQA. Some teachers in Erving claimed that their students did not do as well on the MCAS tests because Erving was a working-class community. This was offensive to the residents, according to interviewees, and the principal said that she would not let them hold on to this allegation since the DOE had no data correlating low socioeconomic status and low MCAS test scores. The poverty rate, as measured by the number of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunch, was dropping. The Erving Elementary School was designated a Title I school, and one paraprofessional offered services to 16 students in the lower grades and one paraprofessional offered services to a few students at grade 4. Students entered the program based on their DIBELS scores and teacher referral, in accordance with federal guidelines.

The Leverett district had a new curriculum in ELA for 2006-2007. Its math curriculum was last updated in November 2005 and its STE curriculum in November 2002, according to documents presented. The staff was moving toward a more scientific analysis of data to aid struggling learners, according to interviews conducted. The staff used the DIBELS at the lower grades to identify students in need of remediation. The district was also adopting math progress monitoring.

The New Salem-Wendell district had ELA, math, and STE curricula which were all produced in 2005. Interviewees said they formally rewrote their curricula every two years. The district had targeted assistance through Title I for both ELA and math using a Title I teacher. In the past, according to interviewees, the district had two essential skills teachers, one for math and one for ELA, but now had one teacher for both. This teacher was certified in the Wilson reading program and ran small group instruction. The district had a bridge between special education and regular education. The special education students used the Fundations program that was designed for use with the Wilson reading program.

At the Shutesbury district, the ELA, math, and STE curricula were updated in 2004-2005, according to documents reviewed. Shutesbury received consolation money after a Reading First grant was taken from it and the teachers had to spend the money by a specified date.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

At the start of the 2006-2007 school year, the new superintendent sent a memorandum asking for all teachers' instructional schedules. She expected all teachers to align with a minimum of 120 minutes of ELA per day (and more in the lower grades) and a minimum of 60 minutes of math per day. However, no consistency existed in time on learning among schools in the union and among teachers within a school, according to schedules examined by the EQA team. In 2007-2008, the superintendent would like to have minimum times in all schools in all subject areas. During the period under review, no formal analysis was conducted of how time on learning correlated to student achievement.

Interviewees from the four districts stated to the EQA examiners that they had all felt parental and community pressure to allow ample time for play and the arts. They felt that there had to be a choice between the academics and these other areas in the development of the whole child. The schools had not used quantitative analysis to measure the benefits of those other areas but instead relied on qualitative data and "knowing the child well" to assess the benefits. The teachers interviewed stated that they felt "pressured" to fit all that parents and the state wanted into the day. They said that they were trying to combine subjects into interdisciplinary units and projects. One teacher combined learning with lunchtime, recess, and clean-up time. All districts met for only 70 percent of the time on Wednesdays to allow teachers to have professional development time and children to have play time, according to interviews and documentation. The superintendent was looking for extended-day school grants but the union did not qualify for the 21st Century grant. However, according to interviewees, some resistance to this existed in the community, since many parents felt that longer days were anti-family.

At the Erving district, the staff was disappointed that 65 percent of the students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' and 'Warning/Failing' categories of the MCAS tests since the staff members said they had worked so hard and had such pride in their school. As a result, the staff eliminated one recess, and parents told EQA examiners that this provided Erving students with less play and exercise time, which they felt was important. The principal asked the staff to allocate 120 minutes to ELA and 60 minutes to math in the lower grades and 90 minutes of ELA and 60 minutes of math in the upper grades and all staff members did this, according to interviews and documents examined. The computer teacher worked with small groups of students, both those who needed remediation and those who needed enrichment. The principal had attended a DOE workshop on open-response questions and the staff incorporated this into the lessons. The principal and a school council member told examiners that they volunteered for 10 weeks after school, twice per week, to tutor students in math. This tutoring was available to all students. Although no late bus was provided, this program achieved a good turnout of approximately 38 students. No data analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the program. Erving funded an MCAS remediation program for spring 2007, since it had failed to meet AYP. In addition, an after-school program was provided, which had a 45-minute homework time component but no certified teacher.

The Leverett interviewees felt that better organization of instructional time was more important than adding time. They said that they had raised their standards in the time available but had not increased time spent on subjects. They stated that their perceived standards-based report card had been "huge" for setting context and expectations, as students, teachers, and parents now knew exactly what was expected for success. The district had an after-school program and some students attended to do homework. It also had special activity days after school and a Project Adventure program.

At the New Salem-Wendell district, the examiners learned from documents and interviews that students had five hours of math and eight to 10 hours of ELA instruction per week. This was the third year for these time allotments. The Everyday Math program was used for the past four years and all students had the program for 60 minutes per day (75 minutes at grade 6). Staff members interviewed said that "they had no plans to extend time on learning since they had increased time to accommodate the Everyday Math program." An after-school, self-funded

program for science and a program for extra help in math were in place. An after-school daycare program known as the Enchanted Forest had a homework component, but it did not have a certified teacher. There was a theater group and an Odyssey of the Mind and Mad Science program.

At the Shutesbury district, students spent 70 minutes per day in the new Investigations math program. Students in the lower grades spent 90-120 minutes per day in ELA and those in the upper grades spent 60-90 minutes per day, according to interviewees. In order to combine several disciplines into one, grade 6 students had to present a portfolio at the end of the year that contained the work for several years in many subjects. After school, instructors from UMASS Amherst ran a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Research Academies for Young Scientists (STEM RAYS) science program. This was the first year of this grant-funded program. Also, community members came in to work with students through the Learning Partners program. Shutesbury had after-school programs in which students participated in various activities, such as chess club and drama, since there was less time in the day to conduct these activities and the parents and staff felt that these were important to education. An after-school daycare program had a homework component, but it was not staffed by a certified teacher.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to observations and interviews with stakeholders in the four districts, the availability and use of technology was uneven and inconsistent and much of the technology was purchased through competitive grants. The union had recently purchased TestWiz to analyze student data. This program worked better with the Macintosh platform used by the union. However, not all staff members were trained in the use of the software and had to rely on others to generate information for them. In June 2007, the superintendent and all principals and their technology directors participated in TestWiz training funded by a Crystal Lite grant. Other staff members recently become involved in the DOE data warehouse project. Interviewees stated that the use of

technology for data analysis was emerging. Assistive technology was available for students, such as the Kerzweil program to read text aloud to dyslectic students. All districts reported that they had the Type to Learn program.

In the Erving district, all teachers had laptops. A computer technician staffed a computer lab. The Leverett district had a TerraNova program to test and analyze math ability. This test was moved to the fall during the period under review so that it would not conflict with the MCAS testing and so that it could be used for a comparison to the MCAS test results. Also, the scores could be used to make a diagnosis for remediation early in the school year. The Leverett parent-teacher organization (PTO) had purchased microscopes for the science classes to use based on the science teacher's recommendation and to provide materials called for in the state science framework.

Interviews with administrators and staff at the New Salem-Wendell district revealed that there was "lots of technology" at the Swift River School funded by grants. The school had a modest computer lab and interviewees felt that they were ahead of the DOE technology framework. The teachers used programs as part of the lessons. Math programs were installed on computers, but they were not used except to illustrate a lesson. The school had movie and digital cameras for presentations. The school used Microsoft Word to print its report cards. Staff took attendance using the PowerSchool program.

The Shutesbury district had received a Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) grant to purchase technology. This was a grant for $16,000 to $25,000 per school and was intended for small schools that did not qualify for federal technology grants. Interviewees said that every class used the computer lab on a regular basis. The 2006-2007 school year was the first year of a five-year technology plan.

Of the 27 randomly observed classrooms, the EQA examiners found the overall student-to-computer ratio was 5.3 for the union. By district, Erving had an average of 4.6 computers for student use in nine randomly observed classrooms; Leverett had an average of 2.0 computers for student use in seven randomly observed classrooms; Shutesbury had an average of 1.2 computers for student use in five randomly observed classrooms; and New Salem-Wendell had an average of 2.5 computers for student use in six randomly observed classrooms.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Based on interviews and a review of documents, the EQA examiners found that the union and school leaders set a tone for high expectations for both teachers' instruction and student achievement throughout the period under review. However, expectations did not always match practice at the classroom level. A random review of personnel files revealed inconsistencies in all four districts regarding compliance with statutory requirements for summative evaluations. All four districts had contractual obligations for observations, but they were not consistently tied to student achievement. All districts employed active supervision techniques, which included daily informal walk-throughs by the principals and the formal written observations/evaluations.

All principals told the examiners that they conducted formal observations every year for non-professional staff and every other year for professional status teachers. Some conducted formal walk-throughs and others conducted informal walk-throughs to monitor instructional practices. Through documents examined and interviews, the EQA examiners learned that teacher and administrator evaluations were indirectly tied to instructional practices, but principals would give plenty of suggestions to teachers based on walk-throughs. When observing a random sample of 27 classrooms, the EQA examiners noted high expectations in 69 percent of the classrooms observed across the union.

At the Erving Elementary School, staff members did not embrace walk-throughs as a means to monitor evidence of good instructional practices, according to interviewees. They did not mind and were obligated to have formal observations conducted. The principal monitored what was occurring in all classrooms due to the smallness of the building, and was working on getting the teachers to do a self-evaluation. While no staff member was on a corrective action plan, the principal had had discussions about teaching and learning with some staff members.

The principal at Leverett Elementary School was aware of and frequently monitored instructional practices and conducted formal walk-throughs. The principal had a form that was filled out, photocopied, and put in the teacher's box right after the walk-through. These walk-throughs

were in addition to the contractually required formal observations. The principal learned at a legal conference that a district had to lay out expectations prior to the principal doing formal observations. The principal at the New Salem-Wendell district reviewed all report cards prior to sending them home to look for any patterns in classrooms.

At Shutesbury Elementary School, the principal and math coach conducted walk-throughs to monitor instruction in the new math program. These were not formalized, since the teachers were recently trained in the program in 2006-2007, according to the principal. The principal stated that, as part of the walk-through observation, they asked students what they were learning rather than ask the teachers what they thought they were teaching.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The analysis of data from formative and summative student assessments to monitor instruction and teacher performance was just emerging in the four districts. Each district was just beginning to use these data to make decisions regarding resources, professional development, and support to improve and maintain high levels of instructional quality and delivery. Principals received the MCAS test data at administrator meetings. The principals and a few staff members were trained in TestWiz and the district had recently purchased TestWiz for use with the Macintosh computer platform. The data were reviewed for strengths and weaknesses in the aggregate, since the cohort numbers were small. Staff members interviewed said that the principals and teachers knew all students well and focused more on the individual students' strengths and weaknesses rather than those of a total subgroup of students. Only special education students were reviewed as a group as well as individually. The union was starting to use MCAS and other assessment data to plan curriculum and professional development and purchase resources. However, interviewees stated they relied, for the most part, on qualitative over quantitative data.

At the Erving district, the staff had just slowly begun to analyze data. The special education teacher and the computer teacher were receiving TestWiz training. Until recently, staff members stated they had used subjective feedback on student performance to inform instruction. The staff members said that they now used approximately three days or eight percent of their 70-percent professional development days to use data to inform instruction. Stanford 9 assessments were administered in grades 3-6 for information to use at parent conferences. The interviewees said that they were analyzing data from the DIBELS and STAR Reading in ELA and from AIMSWeb in math. Interviewees felt these assessments were of high quality for formative assessment and progress monitoring. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that they felt well staffed and every class had a paraprofessional.

At the Leverett district, the interviewees said that they used about 30 percent of their 70-percent days analyzing data to inform instruction, professional development, and purchase of resources. The use of the DIBELS and GRADE formative testing to inform educational decision-making was the start to a greater use of data, according to interviewees. Interviewees said that the staff had started to administer TerraNova tests in the fall to compare the results with those from the MCAS tests and to make an early diagnosis for remediation. They felt that the MCAS summative assessments came too late in the year to help inform instruction for the current school year. As for resources, the teachers felt that they were fortunate to work in a community that valued education. They felt that they had many supplies and plenty of professional development.

The New Salem-Wendell district used the MCAS tests as a summative assessment and the DIBELS for grades K-3 as a formative assessment three times per year for the past five years. The staff used a Fluharty screening test for kindergarten. The principal analyzed the MCAS test scores and provided them to the faculty. Teachers looked for surprises, such as a good student who did poorly. Since students had a lot of pressure to do well on the tests, the teachers stated that they had to play down the importance to lessen the anxiety. Teachers saw that the wording of questions could affect students' answers and so they used the same type of wording in class. They also noticed by analyzing data that students needed help in math facts and so teachers instituted one-minute math sheets. Staff members reported to the EQA examiners that they felt that they had ample supplies and had not been turned down for any professional development

that they could justify. Analysis of data helped them get funding to purchase materials for the Six Traits of Writing program.

At the Shutesbury district, the principal analyzed the summative MCAS data to present to the staff. Any items that 80 percent of the students got correct were considered strengths and any items that 70 percent or less of the students got correct were considered weaknesses. The principal found weaknesses in vocabulary and open-response questions in ELA and in measurement and patterns in math, and wanted the teachers to use this information to improve their instruction. The principal broke the faculty into groups by grades K-2, 3-4, and 5-6 to analyze data and inform instruction, such as rephrasing questions. Staff members interviewed said that they had plenty of supplies, and the analysis of test data helped them secure funding for the new Investigations math program and the hiring of a math coach.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed 27 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted in each of the union's four elementary school districts. In total, the EQA examiners observed 11 ELA classrooms, 11 math classrooms, and five classrooms of other subjects.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 97 percent of the classrooms observed across the entire union. By district, positive indicators of classroom management were

evident in 94 percent of the classrooms in Erving, 96 percent in Leverett, 100 percent in Shutesbury, and 100 percent in New Salem-Wendell.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that require the use of higher-order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it should be age-appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged. The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 75 percent of the classrooms observed across the union. By district, positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 68 percent of the classrooms observed in Erving, 84 percent in Leverett, 82 percent in Shutesbury, and 70 percent in New Salem-Wendell.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 69 percent of the classrooms observed across the union. By district, high expectations for students were evident in 61 percent of the

classrooms observed in Erving, 64 percent in Leverett, 85 percent in Shutesbury; and 71 percent in New Salem-Wendell.

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were observed in 68 percent of the classrooms across the union. By district, indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 60 percent of the classrooms observed in Erving, 81 percent in Leverett, 63 percent in Shutesbury, and 64 percent in New Salem-Wendell.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 93 percent of the classrooms observed across the four districts in the union. By district, positive indicators of climate were evident in 85 percent of the classrooms observed in Erving, 95 percent in Leverett, 100 percent in Shutesbury, and 94 percent in New Salem-Wendell.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Total	11	11	5	27	15.1	0.6	130	77	5.3

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Total					
Total observations	105	182	74	109	75
Maximum possible	108	243	108	161	81
Avg. percent of observations	97%	75%	69%	68%	93%

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

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Each district administered a wide range of assessments to measure student progress across all grade levels. However, the use of student achievement data varied from district to district and teacher to teacher.
- During the period under review, all four districts within the union collected, analyzed, and disseminated the MCAS data to staff, parents, and community members.
- The Title I program for the union effectively used a range of assessments to monitor student achievement, inform program decision-making, and evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instructional practices.
- Each district in the union effectively required all students to participate in all assessments.
- Student report cards varied across the districts; only New Salem/Wendell had a standards-based report card.
- The districts did not use student achievement data to maximize staff effectiveness, prioritize goals, or allocate resources in a systemized and structured manner.

Summary

For each of the years under review, the Erving School Union 28 MCAS test data were collected and analyzed at the district level by principals and teachers. The results were also compiled at the union level. Neither the districts nor the union had a formal structure in place for analyzing student achievement data. Some teachers and administrators were trained in TestWiz, but training was spotty and was the result of individual teacher experience with TestWiz outside of the union rather than any coordinated, systemic professional development within the union. Three of the four principals had yet to be trained in TestWiz; their training was planned for 2007-2008. Use of student achievement data to drive decision-making was an emerging practice throughout the union.

Each of the districts used a variety of formative and summative assessments in addition to the MCAS tests. All districts used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), but the use of the TerraNova, the Stanford 9, the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Gates-MacGinitie test, among others, varied by school district. More formative and summative testing was provided to assess students in ELA than in math. Only the New Salem-Wendell district had a standards-based report card issued to students. The report cards of the other three districts were not standards based and were not aligned to the state frameworks and benchmarks. They all varied in their degree of inclusion of quantitative data.

Interviews with administrators and faculty members revealed that teachers regularly evaluated curriculum and instructional practices. Most of the analysis was qualitative in nature and most of the decision-making was consensus driven. Decision-making about programming was mostly determined by community input and the budget. For example, the New Salem-Wendell SIP identified effective instruction of gifted students as a goal. Parents, administrators, and community members confirmed this during interviews. However, a review of data indicated that none of the grade 4 or grade 5 students and only a single grade 6 student scored in the 'Advanced' category in ELA on the 2006 MCAS tests. In math, 15 percent of the grade 4 and 17 percent of the grade 5 and 6 students scored in the 'Advanced' category.

During the period under review, the curriculum and instructional practices varied across the districts. Administrators reported and a review of documents confirmed few formal policies or

practices in place for using student achievement data to evaluate programs or services despite the use of many formative and summative assessments. With the exception of the Title I program, district and union leadership did not routinely use program evaluation results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services. The leadership and faculty of each district both stated that the schools were small enough and they knew the students well enough that most analysis was done on an individual student basis.

The allocation of staff was not based on student need but on discussions between the principal and staff. In addition, the districts did not regularly engage in internal or external audits to determine program effectiveness. Although the New Salem-Wendell district had evaluated its implementation of the Everyday Math program, the evaluation did not include quantitative data to support its findings. However, the union did undergo a DOE Coordinated Program Review (CPR) which it used to set internal goals for the special education department.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, all the districts in the union continuously collected a wide range of student achievement data. These data varied from district to district and included data from both formative and summative assessments. The use of the data was pervasive but inconsistent across and within the districts. All districts collected and analyzed the MCAS test data across the content areas and grade levels. All districts also regularly administered the DIBELS to some of their students and used this information to evaluate student achievement, make some programming decisions, such as Title I eligibility, and assess some instructional practices. All districts issued report cards at least twice a year to parents with one elementary school sending home three report cards per year. Only New Salem-Wendell used a standards-based report card at the time of the EQA visit.

Review of documents and interviews with teachers and administrators did not reveal any formal districtwide system or structure in place for the analysis of student assessment results. However,

both faculty and administrators reported discussing the MCAS test results at the district level and further analyzing the data both by individual student and by test item. Additional questioning by EQA examiners revealed that the use of data was fragmented and inconsistent across districts. Classroom observations and interviews revealed to the EQA team a culture of viewing students in a holistic manner without a focus on quantitative data analysis. Several administrators and many teachers commented about how they "knew the children" and "understood what was best for students." According to interviewees, teachers reached conclusions about student learning and instructional practices based upon how they "felt."

Because of the small student populations, faculty and administrators at all four schools reported that they looked at item analysis and results of individual students. Faculty and administrators stated that they did not really look at results of subgroups. They correctly noted that the numbers of students at each performance level in each grade within each school were too small to be statistically significant.

Administrator interviews and a review of documents, including the professional development plan, revealed no union-wide system or policy for training faculty and staff in data analysis. Some teachers in one school received TestWiz training. One of the four principals was trained in TestWiz prior to coming to the district. The other three principals were planning to receive training during 2007-2008. The districts' professional development calendars did not reveal any formal training or staff development in the effective use of student assessment data to inform decision-making.

The districts had a formal, consistent system in place for using the DIBELS for students in grades K-3 at each of the four elementary schools. These data were collected regularly, shared widely, and used to make decisions about Title I services. They were used to evaluate Title I programming, monitor student progress in the classroom, and assess and modify instructional practices. Several administrators commented that the DIBELS data were well received by the teachers, and now some teachers were looking for similar data to monitor math instruction.

Erving teachers used the DIBELS, TerraNova, and MCAS test results to look at student progress and achievement. The DIBELS was used for progress monitoring for all students and to determine Title I services for students in grades K-3 in ELA. Title I services were delivered in

reading only. Teachers reported using the information to make changes in flexible grouping for reading and to modify instructional practices. This was confirmed by classroom observations. The Stanford 9 was administered to students in grades 3-6. Interviews with administrators and faculty indicated that student achievement data were shared with parents and classroom teachers. Classroom teachers reported that the data were helpful in understanding their children, but emphasized that they were only one piece of information. No formal system or structure was in place to ensure that the data were correlated with other measures of student progress, or used to evaluate curriculum or drive instructional practices in a systemic manner. Interviews with teachers and administrators in Erving did not reveal that professional development in data analysis was provided.

In the New Salem-Wendell, interviews and review of district documents did not reveal any formal system or structure in place to use the MCAS test data to drive curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices. Faculty and administrators reported evaluating student progress through individual item analysis of the MCAS test results for individual students. In addition, New Salem-Wendell administered the DIBELS to all students in grades K-3. This information was used in a formative and summative manner to inform classroom instruction. It was also used to determine eligibility for Title I services and as a component to referral to student assistance teams. The WADE assessment was used in grades 4-6 to assess student reading ability. Review of documents and interviews with faculty, parents, and administrators revealed inconsistent formal quantitative data analysis to drive decision-making to improve student achievement in the New Salem-Wendell district. While many decisions were made by committee consensus and qualitative analysis, data were often used but unrecognized. Examples of this included the evaluation of a successful school science fair. Initially school council members denied using data, but when pushed to explain why they felt it was such a good program, they noted that more than two-thirds of the school population attended and parent surveys were positive. Similarly, the New Salem-Wendell faculty performed an evaluation of math scores and used student data to evaluate the Everyday Math program. The district identified areas of weakness using the MCAS test data and made curriculum and instructional changes. In addition, the faculty created data-driven questions for future research. Instructional practices were identified as an area in need of data-driven decision-making, and suggestions regarding schoolwide standardized math testing were made.

Review of documents and teacher interviews revealed that in Leverett faculty and administrators analyzed many different formative and summative student assessment documents to determine student achievement. Faculty and the principal at Leverett Elementary School reported that student achievement data were analyzed on an individual student basis. Cohorts were also monitored as a class progressed through the school, and curriculum and instructional modifications were made on an individual student basis. The Leverett district administered the MCAS tests to all children in grades 3-6. The district administered the Gates-MacGinitie test of reading to children in grades 4-6. The TerraNova was administered to grade 3-6 students. Teachers reviewed the results of these assessments and shared them with parents. Interviewed teachers uniformly reported making instructional changes based on these formal assessments, but there was no formal system or structure in place to make these changes and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes. Rather, teachers reported a focus on the individual child, and creating instructional and curriculum changes to meet the needs of the child. The district administered the DIBELS to all children in grades K-3 to monitor the progress of students in ELA. Observations and interviews revealed the teachers used this information to create flexible reading groups, drive classroom instruction, and provide intervention and support services.

The Shutesbury district administered the MCAS tests, and used the DIBELS, the GRADE, the TerraNova, and a Reading Probe for students in the upper grades. Interviews with teachers revealed a strong belief in the knowledge of the teachers' assessment of student progress to drive decision-making. Some teachers went as far as stating that they did not need tests to provide information; they were concerned with the whole child. Classroom observations in Shutesbury exhibited a low level of differentiated instruction, particularly when compared with other districts in the union.

2. <u>District and school leadership required all students to participate in all appropriate assessments.</u>

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, both DOE documents and interviews supported the fact that school principals effectively required all students to participate in all assessments including, but

not limited to, the MCAS tests and the DIBELS. Participation in the MCAS testing was at or near 100 percent for all students in all grades tested in all districts in the union.

In Erving, Leverett, and New Salem-Wendell, 100 percent of every subgroup participated in all content area MCAS tests in 2006. Shutesbury also ensured that 100 percent of its students were present for the MCAS tests. This was particularly impressive when members of several communities, administrators, and faculty members all noted a strong community opposition to any type of standardized testing as recently as a few years ago. As one principal stated, "It used to be that they kept their kids home during the MCAS, now they all want to know why we aren't doing better!"

School and district leadership reported communicating assessment schedules and encouraging attendance at all formal assessments. A review of school and town newsletters and the union website indicated that all included information about the upcoming MCAS tests. Parents were well informed of the range of assessments offered by the districts. The districts placed calendars and announcements in district and town newsletters. Individual schools communicated to parents about standardized test schedules through both schoolwide and classroom newsletters. Testing information was also available on all school websites.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, each district within Erving School Union 28 had a separate reporting instrument to share student progress with parents. Only the report cards for New Salem-Wendell were standards based. Neither interviewees nor a review of the documents revealed a union-wide or district-specific system to measure the attainment of goals, progress, or effectiveness of programs. Curriculum and instructional practice varied significantly from district to district; however, none of the districts had a formal system or structure in place to measure the programmatic effectiveness of curriculum. The exception to this was the union Title

I program. Title I used formal assessments such as the DRA, the DIBELS, and the GRADE to monitor student progress, measure the effectiveness of instructional programs, and monitor curriculum. Clear, quantitative boundaries for services were provided based on student assessments and decisions were regularly revisited to ensure the lowest-scoring students were receiving support.

The Erving district issued report cards to parents twice a year. The child's classroom teacher who gave marks, such as "PN" for "Progressing Nicely" or "P" for "Making Significant Progress," completed these. The district provided no clear definition of what "nicely" or "significant" meant in the context of grade-level benchmarks or student skill acquisition. The report card further indicated the "potential ability" a child had for academic development without any information about how this potential was assessed or evaluated. Report cards were not aligned to the state frameworks or benchmarks, but included areas of assessment, such as conduct and effort for each content area.

The New Salem-Wendell district issued grade-level report cards three times each year. These report cards were aligned with the state frameworks and were standards based. They clearly communicated benchmark skill acquisition to the parents, and these were the same skills clearly stated in the state frameworks. Teachers and administrators reported evaluating students' MCAS test scores in the context of the classroom report cards.

The Leverett district issued two report cards per year to parents, in January and June. The progress reports were not standards based nor were they aligned with the state frameworks. Students were assessed in five stages from "Not Understanding" to "Advanced Understanding." Areas of assessment included "challenges self as reader." Interviews with administrators and faculty indicated that the report cards were developed by teachers to reflect the expectations at each grade level. Teachers and parents reported that the report cards were supplemented with a wide range of ongoing, open, and consistent communication between parents and school officials.

Shutesbury also issued report cards twice each year. These communicated how a student was progressing as measured by a teacher's assessment and expectations. The information was neither quantitative nor clearly aligned with the state frameworks. The report cards were

generated by the teachers in the building, were reflective of teacher expectations, and driven by student achievement as perceived by a teacher. The report cards had no place to communicate standardized test scores.

The school union did not have a union-generated reporting instrument or a formal system or structure in place to measure the attainment of goals, progress, or effectiveness. Few assessment reports were focused on student achievement in a clearly defined, quantitative manner. The Erving SIP did not contain measurable goals, benchmarks for progress, or measures of effectiveness based on student achievement. New Salem-Wendell did not tie goals to student achievement as measured by any quantitative data. Neither the Shutesbury nor Leverett SIPs were focused on improving student achievement by a prescribed, measurable amount.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the districts used the MCAS test results to measure student progress. Both teachers and administrators were working to ensure effective and thorough analysis of each student's MCAS test results. These results were compiled at the union level, shared with each principal, brought back to the schools, and disseminated to the teachers. Most faculty members interviewed reported looking at the MCAS test results and using the information in the classroom. Overall, however, a review of the documents and information gleaned from interviews and classroom observations revealed a teacher-dependent system to measure student progress. School leadership did not regularly use local benchmarks to measure student progress. Rather, the leadership relied on discussion and consensus to arrive at the root cause of problems.

During the period under review, only one district in the union, New Salem-Wendell, had a standards-based report card. A review of the curriculum did not reveal clearly defined, framework-aligned benchmarks across the content areas or across the grade levels in any district within the union. The assessment included in the curriculum was vague and included examples

such as “teacher created test.” No clear content area or grade-level, skill-based assessment across the content areas or throughout the districts existed to measure student progress.

Each district did use a variety of assessment tools to measure student progress. These assessments varied from district to district and even grade to grade. The sheer number and variation of formal assessments, combined with both faculty members and administrators stating that they had limited, if any, training in data analysis, resulted in inconsistent and fragmented use of assessment tools to measure student progress. For example, the Erving district consistently used the DIBELS to measure the literacy of all students. This assessment was conducted on a regular basis and the results were communicated to all teachers. However, Erving had no formal way to measure student achievement in mathematics.

The New Salem-Wendell district looked at student test results in mathematics over two years using both formative and summative assessments. District staff compared the results of student unit tests in Everyday Math with the MCAS test results and concluded that the increased time on learning math combined with the change and consistency of curriculum was leading to an increase in student scores on the MCAS tests in math.

Leverett used a variety of formative assessments to monitor student progress. Throughout the district, the results of all formal assessments were analyzed by a group of classroom teachers or individual teachers and were clearly communicated to other staff members in the school as well as to parents. Faculty and administrative interviews as well as a review of documents indicated that the dissemination of student achievement data was accomplished in an informal, ad hoc manner. Outside of the MCAS test analysis, limited formal systems were in place to ensure a timely and appropriate dissemination of the wide range of student achievement data that were collected.

Almost all teachers in all the elementary schools reported that they were well informed about their students’ progress, ability, and benchmark achievement. They repeatedly pointed to the small size of the schools and the stability of the population as allowing them to get to know their students, making formal assessments less effective than their own understanding of student needs and learning styles.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews with district and school leadership, as well as a review of district documents, did not provide evidence of the use of student assessment results or other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional programs. While the districts in the union had a plethora of assessment tools, use of the data was inconsistent and primarily teacher driven. No evidence was provided of a structure in place to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs.

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that throughout the union, teachers used a mixture of curriculum and instructional materials to deliver standards-based content. When asked about decision-making regarding instructional programs, teachers reported that experience, feeling that they "knew what children needed," and informal conferences with coworkers were the tools used to assess instructional programs. Little evidence was provided of quantitative analysis of student assessment results to drive decision-making.

Interviews, classroom observations, and a review of documents revealed that the union's special education department consistently and effectively used reading assessments such as the DRA and the DIBELS to monitor the progress of students, assess instructional effectiveness, and evaluate the Wilson Reading Fundations program. These data were used to determine eligibility for Title I services, to track the progress of students receiving the services, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional practices.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, interviews with the district and union leadership and a review of the documents revealed little evidence of internal audits or assessments to inform the effectiveness of program implementation and service delivery systems. Interviewees reported that teachers drove decisions about curriculum and instructional programs, and assessments were conducted in a qualitative, discussion-based format. While each district within the union had its own protocol and culture for evaluation and decision-making, all four districts relied on qualitative individual student analysis for the most part. None of the districts had a policy or procedure for formal internal audits of programs.

The New Salem-Wendell district provided evidence of evaluating the implementation of Everyday Math, but it was a narrative with no formal analysis of student achievement. Rather, the document stated, "The causes of this improvement in math achievement are difficult to pinpoint, but many staff members would like to credit the Everyday Math program."

The union did undergo a DOE Coordinated Program Review which the union used to set internal goals for the special education department. This audit noted the consistent use of student achievement data to drive instruction, a point that was both noted in a review of the documents and confirmed in interviews with the EQA team.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews with district and school leadership, as well as a review of the documents, did not reveal that student achievement data were used to maximize effectiveness in assigning staff, prioritizing goals, and allocating time and resources. Administrators noted, and faculty members confirmed, that staff assignment was driven by consensus of faculty members in discussion with administrators. This was true across all four districts within the union.

Each district had a separate teachers' contract and all contracts contained language about reduction in force. However, due to the small size and informal culture of each district, interviewees reported that these decisions were consensus based. Similarly, all four districts reported that teacher classroom assignments were made based on student population, teacher tenure, and discussion. While principals all noted they had the final say on staff assignment, all shared the fact that the decisions were made in consultation with the faculty and staff.

It is interesting to note that the tenure of most teachers in the districts was lengthy. One teacher who suffered a reduction in force was with the school for 15 years and was the junior person in the school.

None of the teachers interviewed felt that they were unable to acquire needed resources for their classrooms. All noted multiple sources for the provision of resources, including the PTO, the community, and the school budget. In one group of teachers interviewed, less than half the participants raised their hands when asked if they had spent personal funds to supply their classrooms. The districts made financial decisions based on the perceived needs of students and teachers.

Time allocation was teacher dependent across the districts and across the grades. During the period under review, classroom teachers made their own schedules and handed them into the administration. The examiners found no evidence of district- or school-based requirements for time on learning tied to particular content areas. There was little evidence that each district's item analysis of the MCAS test scores was connected to time, resource, or staffing allocations.

None of the four districts consistently or formally used student assessment data to prioritize goals or allocate resources. While all districts within the union reported having sufficient resources to acquire materials, decision-making about which materials to purchase was informal. Rather, districts depended upon a teacher bringing something back from a conference or someone on the faculty learning about a promising new practice. This information was shared, discussed, and tried before being widely adopted.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews with administrators and teachers and an examination of the documents revealed that union leaders did not routinely use program evaluation results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services during the period under review. District leaders did not provide evidence that student achievement data, or other pertinent data, were used to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs or services. Interviews with faculty and administrators and a review of documents revealed that during the period under review, decision-making regarding programs and services was informal, ad hoc, and experiential. This was true across all four districts and across grade levels and content areas. Nearly all faculty interviewed reported that decisions concerning curriculum, instruction, programs, and services were made on a consensus basis. Several examples were provided of discounting data in making programmatic decisions during the period under review. Erving had no consistent math curriculum across the grade levels and the faculty had no perceived need for one. However, both the faculty and administration were surprised to learn that at every grade level at least half of the students were failing to meet the state benchmarks for content-level competency in mathematics.

During the last year under review, as well as school year 2006-2007, the New Salem-Wendell district spent a great deal of resources on gifted education. A review of the data revealed that a single student in the elementary school scored in the 'Advanced' category in mathematics and a handful of students did so in ELA; yet, resources, time, and effort were directed to creating a gifted education program.

The exception to the lack of effective, formal use of data to make decisions regarding programs and services was the Title I program. Services were provided in three of the four districts and services were based on student performance on the DRA and the DIBELS. The assessments were used to monitor student progress and evaluate curriculum and instruction. Interviews with Title I teachers revealed the student achievement data were also used to modify instruction.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The four districts provided and funded professional development programs for staff and a mentoring program for new teachers.
- The districts did not consistently provide professional development based on student achievement data, or staff or program evaluations.
- The districts did not provide professional development sessions in data analysis skills.
- The districts and the union had hiring practices and procedures in place for teachers and administrators and applied for waivers to the DOE for uncertified staff.
- All four districts had school crisis and/or safety policies, procedures, and practices, and safety committees; however, some district plans were under review and in a draft format, which limited organized staff emergency and safety training.
- No district performed all teacher evaluations in compliance with the education reform statute. The superintendent during the period under review did not evaluate administrators annually.

Summary

The districts and union had procedures in place for the hiring of teachers and administrators, and advertised vacancies in area newspapers. The new superintendent enhanced the hiring procedures, building on those in place in the four districts, and requested that principals

recommend two or three candidates to her for interviews, after which she would consult with the principal. Most of the time the superintendent would honor the principal's choice, but the final decision rested with the superintendent. Principals had the final hiring authority for non-professional staff in their buildings. The districts formed committees when hiring teachers and the union had hiring committees when hiring administrators. The districts provided licensure data to the EQA which showed that teachers in all districts held the appropriate licensure; however, the union hired two unlicensed principals during the period under review. The union and the principals monitored the progress of teachers toward certification or recertification.

The districts had professional development and mentoring programs during the period under review. The mentoring programs were two-year programs, and all new teachers in the districts had trained mentors, although the districts hired few teachers during the period under review. Teachers and their mentors worked together to plan curriculum and lessons and observed one another's classrooms. No formal mentoring program existed for administrators but the new superintendent indicated that she informally mentored principals.

The districts had two union-wide professional development days, and all the districts had 70-percent days every Wednesday to conduct a variety of activities including professional development. A review of the professional development plans as well as information provided by interviewees showed that analysis of student achievement data and program implementation informed professional development, for the most part. In addition, the districts spent a lot of professional development time on curriculum development. Offerings were not provided for staff to learn or enhance data analysis skills. Each teacher was required to have an individual professional development plan (IPDP) created in collaboration with his/her respective principal. Although limited promotional opportunities existed in the districts because of their small size, teacher retention was not an issue.

Not all administrators received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation methods, although observing teachers in the classroom was the principal method of active supervision. Administrators in all districts performed formal and informal classroom observations to monitor classroom instruction and the implementation of professional development, but the districts did not have protocols for the observations.

The districts did not hold administrators or teachers accountable for student achievement. While principals conducted classroom observations, the union did not comply with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38 that described evaluation requirements. Districts conducted some timely summative evaluations but not for all staff members. Most of the evaluations were instructive, but did not include recommendations for improvement. The superintendent did not conduct annual evaluations of all administrators in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 38; however, administrators indicated they developed annual goals with the superintendent and discussed progress toward them.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to interviewees, including the former superintendent, the four districts and the union had policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of staff. According to the former superintendent, all four districts created committees of various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, members of the school committee, and members of the school council, who reviewed applications and interviewed candidates for administrative and teacher positions. Interviews with principals from all four districts indicated that all of the districts used a shared team approach to hiring, even for support personnel, such as custodians. The director of special education participated on hiring teams for special education teachers. The principals indicated that they checked references. They also stated that during the period under review they only referred potential candidates to the union superintendent if they were unsure about hiring the candidate. The new superintendent asked that two or three candidates be recommended to her for interviews, after which she would consult with the principal. The superintendent usually honored the principal's choice, but the final decision was made by the superintendent. District principals had the final hiring authority for non-professional staff members. Interviewees indicated that the union central office advertised for positions for all four districts, mostly in the local area newspapers. The Shutesbury and Erving teachers' contracts had specific language

related to vacancies and postings and the determination of teacher qualifications by the principal and superintendent. The New Salem-Wendell teachers' contract included general language related to job postings, and the Leverett teachers' contract included no such language.

In 2006-2007, the new superintendent provided the four districts with an updated hiring process. Some of the procedures in the process were prior practices in the four districts during the period under review. According to a review of the document describing this process, it included a discussion with the superintendent regarding the criteria for the incoming candidate; who to contact in the central office to place the advertisement for the position; and how to create an interviewing committee and structure an interviewing process, gather and review application packets, screen applications, collect Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), and hold interviews. The document described a procedure for sending the top two or three candidates to the superintendent for a second round of interviews. The superintendent would interview candidates and consult with the principal about the selected candidate. Most of the time the superintendent would honor the principal's choice, but she could overrule the principal. The superintendent made the final hiring decision for professional status teachers, and the principals made the final hiring selection for non-professional staff.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of information relative to licensure provided by the Erving district for 2005-2006 on EQA Attachment D showed that of the 16 staff included in the Erving Teachers' Association contract, all 16 held the appropriate license. Information included in a review of documents indicated that the present principal of the Erving Elementary School held the appropriate certification. Although only one paraprofessional worked in a Title I position, all 11 paraprofessionals met the federal definition of 'highly qualified.'

A review of information relative to licensure provided by the New Salem-Wendell district for 2005-2006 on EQA Attachment D showed that of the 12 staff included in the Swift River Teachers' Association contract, all 12 held the appropriate license. Information included in a review of documents indicated that the present principal of the Swift River School held the

appropriate certification, but in 2005-2006 the certification was pending. Although no paraprofessionals worked in a Title I position, all six paraprofessionals met the federal definition of 'highly qualified.'

A review of information relative to licensure provided by the Shutesbury district for 2005-2006 on EQA Attachment D showed that of the 16 staff included in the Shutesbury Teachers' Association contract, all 16 held the appropriate license. Information included in a review of documents indicated that the principal of the Shutesbury Elementary School held the appropriate certification. The district employed nine paraprofessionals; seven met the federal definition of 'highly qualified' and none worked in a Title I capacity or program.

A review of information relative to licensure provided by the Leverett district for 2005-2006 on EQA Attachment D showed that of the 17 staff included in the Leverett Teachers' Association contract, all 17 had the appropriate licensure, but one teacher was not licensed in the area in which he/she taught. Information included in a review of documents indicated that the present principal of the Leverett Elementary School held the appropriate certification. The district employed six paraprofessionals; five met the federal definition of 'highly qualified' and none worked in a Title I capacity or program because the school was not a Title I school

Interviewees indicated that the superintendent, along with administrative support personnel, worked collaboratively with principals to monitor licensure status and to determine if the district needed to file for a waiver. Interviewees indicated that principals monitored IPDPs relative to teacher certification requirements.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to information provided to the EQA through interviews, the district and union administrators met to discuss the licensure status of staff members and to apply to the DOE for waivers, if needed. According to information provided by the union administration, the union

filed for waivers for unlicensed principals during the period under review. According to interviewees, principals monitored the licensure status of staff members through a review of IPDPs to support teacher recertification. Interviewees stated that all four districts had mentoring plans and provided teachers new to the district with a mentor.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to interviewees, including the former and current superintendents, and a review of documents provided by the district, all four districts had mentoring programs for new teachers. The superintendent provided to the EQA a document entitled Teacher Induction Plan, dated March 2004, and stated that all four districts used the same mentoring plan and had trained mentors. The induction plan included goals, a strategy to communicate information about the mentoring program, the program components, roles and responsibilities of key participants, and the confidentiality policy. The mentoring plans included support for both teachers new to the field of education and teachers new to the districts. Examples of goals for the mentoring program included providing structure and support for new teachers, and promoting collegiality and retention.

According to interviewees, the union had a general staff orientation due to the low number of new staff hired during the period under review. However, the induction plan included the typical agenda for a new teacher orientation program. Examples of agenda items included an introduction to the mentor program, an overview of evaluation standards and procedures, a tour of the school, and an overview of professional development opportunities. At orientation meetings, new teachers received copies of the induction plan, the SIP, a student handbook, curriculum alignment documents, the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, a school calendar, an Erving School Union 28 directory, and a list of school committee members and scheduled meetings. The mentoring plan described a support team that included at a minimum the principal and the mentor. Examples of mentoring activities included working together to plan curriculum

and lessons and observing each other's classrooms. The district had mentors trained through the local collaborative. Interviewees indicated that mentors received stipends. A review of the teachers' contracts for the four districts indicated that only the Erving teachers' contract had a specific article related to mentor teachers, which included specific language related to mentor duties and responsibilities. The contract indicated mentor teachers received a $600 stipend for each mentee annually.

No formal mentoring program was in place for administrators, but interviewees indicated that administrative teams met regularly to discuss issues and problems. The new superintendent indicated that she mentored principals and that she had a mentor assigned by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of professional development plans in all four districts for the period under review indicated that the districts did not provide workshops for administrators or staff on learning or improving data analysis skills to address student achievement. Interviewees indicated that "pockets" of staff had received training in different areas of data analysis, such as in TestWiz or in the analysis of the DIBELS results. One interviewee indicated that staff needed more training in data analysis. Interviewees indicated that the union and districts conducted aggregate data analysis and that little disaggregated data analysis occurred because subgroups were so small. Many staff focused on the fact that small school enrollments allowed teachers to focus on individual students.

The need to provide a wide array of data analysis professional development programs was exacerbated by the plethora of different formative and summative assessment data collected by the four districts at different grades, according to a review of the districts' testing schedules. For example, in Shutesbury assessments the district administered included the DIBELS, the GRADE, the MCAS tests, the Terra Nova, and reading probes at various grade levels. In New Salem-

Wendell, assessments administered included the MCAS tests, the DIBELS, the DRA, unit tests, and math inventories. In Leverett, assessments included the DIBELS, the MCAS tests, and the TerraNova. In Erving, assessments included the MCAS tests, the DIBELS, the Stanford 9, and various unit tests.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The four districts that make up Erving School Union 28 had small staffs. According to a review of DOE teacher data, Erving had 14 teachers in 2004-2005, 15 teachers in 2005-2006, and 15 teachers in 2006-2007. Leverett had 18 teachers in 2004-2005, 19 teachers in 2005-2006, and 19 teachers in 2006-2007. New Salem-Wendell had 15 teachers in 2004-2005, 13 teachers in 2005-2006, and 13 teachers in 2006-2007. Shutesbury had 17 teachers in 2004-2005, 17 teachers in 2005-2006, and 14 teachers in 2006-2007. A review of documents and information provided by interviewees showed that the districts had policies and procedures in place to hire effective personnel, and the new superintendent enhanced these policies in 2006-2007. Due to the size of each district's teaching staff, limited promotional opportunities were available to teachers, although interviewees indicated districts had lead-teacher and teacher-in-charge positions. Teachers also had opportunities for sabbatical leave.

The districts had mentoring and professional development programs for teachers. All teachers had IPDPs, which the EQA examiners reviewed in a random selection of teacher evaluations. The Shutesbury teachers' contract included language that allowed the school district to grant teachers up to three credits annually for "unusually substantial professional development activities," such as conducting professional workshops, curriculum development work, or work in a professional organization. The contract had language that stated the teacher would work with the principal to develop a professional growth plan, which may include course work, attendance at workshops, or visits to other schools or classrooms. The contract also had

language that indicated the school committee would pay the cost of tuition for any specific course that the school committee required the teacher to take.

The Leverett teachers' contract had language that stated the teacher would work with the principal to develop a professional growth plan, which may include course work, attendance at workshops, or visits to other schools or classrooms.

The Erving teachers' contract included language that allowed the school district to grant teachers up to three credits annually for "unusually substantial professional development activities," such as conducting professional workshops, curriculum development work, or work in a professional organization. The contract had language that stated the teacher would work with the principal to develop a professional growth plan, which may include course work, attendance at workshops, or visits to other schools or classrooms. The contract also had language that indicated the school committee would pay the cost of tuition for any specific course that the school committee required the teacher to take. In addition, $1,500 was available for teachers to take courses toward recertification.

The New Salem-Wendell teachers' contract had language that stated the teacher would work with the principal to develop a professional growth plan, which may include course work, attendance at workshops, or visits to other schools or classrooms. The contract had language that indicated the school committee would pay the cost of tuition for any specific course that the school committee required the teacher to take. The contract included teacher performance standards and a section on professional growth, which outlined six ways to grow professionally, such as completing activities related to certification and recertification, sharing work and ideas learned with other teachers, and participating in schoolwide and outside workshops and courses to improve competence.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of documents and information provided by interviewees indicated the district had professional development plans in place during the period under review as required by statute. However, the districts did not consistently provide professional development based on student achievement data, or staff or program evaluations.

A review of the Shutesbury 2004-2007 professional development plan indicated the district had professional development on curriculum mapping, the implementation of the Harcourt Trophies program, differentiated instruction, and reading instruction. The Leverett district 2005-2006 professional development plan included sessions on the Six Traits of Writing and open-response/expository writing. The Erving 2004-2007 professional development plan included sessions on the Second Step program and the Investigations math program. In addition, Erving teachers had sessions on open-response questions and poetry as a result of the school not making AYP. The New Salem-Wendell 2004-2006 professional development plan included sessions on Everyday Math and Wilson methodologies. Interviewees stated they had DIBELS and Fundations training.

Erving expended $50,483 in 2005-2006 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding; Leverett expended $33,105 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding. Shutesbury expended $38,043 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding. New Salem-Wendell expended $45,019 on professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding. The structure of professional development in the union and the four districts included two district/union-wide days and what interviewees referred to as “70-percent” days. All four districts had 70-percent days on Wednesdays when the schools closed early and teachers met to discuss a variety of topics. The two district/union-wide days usually occurred in October and March. According to the former superintendent, administrators met in early summer to develop the professional development needs of the districts. In October, the regional collaborative held “low incidence” professional development, and in March each district had a full day to hold professional development activities important to that district.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of data and information provided by interviewees indicated that during the period under review, the districts supported changes in program offerings or changes made due to analysis of data through professional development offerings that provided teachers with the skills needed to effectively deliver programmatic offerings or modify classroom instruction. Each principal was the primary staff person responsible for monitoring the implementation of program changes and classroom instruction, although mentors and the director of special education helped principals support the teaching staff. Principals used formal and informal classroom walk-throughs, the formative and summative evaluation processes, and the IPDP development process to monitor implementation of professional development, program changes, and progress toward teacher certification and recertification requirements. Not all principals received Research for Better Teaching (RBT) training to learn how to support teachers in the classroom. Examples of instructional program changes that occurred during the period under review included the implementation of the Everyday Math program and the Second Step program in New Salem-Wendell; the implementation of the Investigations math program in Erving; the implementation of the Six Traits of Writing in Leverett; and provision of Wilson Fundations training in Shutesbury.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Evaluation procedures were in place in administrator contracts, but a review of a personnel files indicated the superintendent did not evaluate all administrators annually during the period under

review. Language in section 16, Supervision, of the standard principals' contract stated, "The Principal's work will be subject to supervision by the Superintendent of Schools who will evaluate that work annually." The former superintendent indicated that the evaluation of administrators was goals based, but not directly tied to compensation. Principals had different contract lengths and received varying raises from year to year, based on individual circumstances. Interviewees indicated that the compensation was not related to student achievement for either the principals or the superintendent. The current superintendent developed an annual administrative evaluation process that included managerial observations, surveys, goals, data collection to support goals, interviews, and portfolio questions. The process included the six knowledge and skills areas for evaluations including vision; high student performance; safe and orderly schools; quality teachers, administrators, and staff; effective and efficient operation; and fiscal responsibilities.

The EQA team reviewed evaluations included in the personnel files of eight administrators employed in the district during the period under review, including the former superintendent. Two administrators were new to their positions and no evaluation was required at the time of the review. During the period under review, not all administrators received annual evaluations in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, in that none of the administrators received annual evaluations. However, the evaluations performed were informative, followed the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and, for the most part, included recommendations. The administrators signed all evaluations.

The contract of the superintendent of schools did not include language relative to evaluation. The school committee evaluated the former superintendent once during the period under review.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of the teachers' contracts for the four Erving School Union 28 districts and information gleaned from interviewees indicated that all four districts had a professional growth evaluation process in place during the period under review, which required the evaluation of a teacher with professional status every two years and a teacher with non-professional status annually.

A review of the Erving teachers' contract stated that the goals of the evaluation of professional personnel included the identification of strengths and weaknesses, the importance of professional growth, and the maintenance of the effectiveness of educational programs. Each teacher would work under the direction of the principal to establish a professional growth plan. The contract included a goal of two annual formal classroom observations and other informal classroom observations. A review of the New Salem-Wendell teachers' contract showed that the purpose of the evaluation was to promote professional excellence, enhance the effectiveness of the educational program, recognize teacher strengths, identify areas needing improvement, and establish plans to assist a teacher in becoming more effective. The contract stated that classroom observations "will be included as part of the basis for evaluating the work of classroom teachers." A review of the Leverett teachers' contract showed that school administrators were to observe non-professional status teachers informally and formally at least twice annually and administrators should observe professional status teachers informally and formally to the extent needed to attain professional growth. A review of the Shutesbury teachers' contract noted that a professional growth plan might include course work, attendance at workshops, visits to other schools and classrooms, and other professional development activities.

A review of the evaluations of a random sample of nine professional and non-professional status teachers from Shutesbury showed limited alignment with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, in that a summative evaluation was not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status or every year for a teacher with non-professional status. One file included no summative evaluations, and not all evaluations observed in files followed the Principles of Effective Teaching. Although staff signed the evaluations and summative evaluations were informative, they were not instructive in that they did not include recommendations for improvement.

A review of the evaluations of a random sample of 10 professional and non-professional status teachers from Leverett showed limited alignment with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, in that summative evaluations were not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status and every year for a teacher with non-professional status. Not all evaluations observed in the files followed the Principles of Effective Teaching, and evaluations were not instructive in that they did not include recommendations for improvement.

A review of the evaluations of a random sample of four professional and non-professional status teachers from New Salem-Wendell showed limited alignment with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, in that summative evaluations were not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status and every year for a teacher with non-professional status. Evaluations included the components of education reform, but did not include recommendations for improvement.

A review of the evaluations of a random sample of 11 professional and non-professional status teachers from Erving showed limited alignment with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, in that summative evaluations were not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status and every year for a teacher with non-professional status. Most evaluations did not follow the Principles of Effective Teaching or include recommendations for improvement. Three teachers had no evaluations. Interviewees indicated that the district did not hold teachers explicitly accountable for student achievement results, and that the district provided professional development and mentoring programs to support struggling teachers.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of teachers' contracts from the four districts for the period under review and information from interviewees indicated that administrators had systems of formative evaluation to monitor and implement district and school programs; however, the districts did not have protocols for conducting classroom observations. Interviewees stated they looked for

differentiation, clear objectives, the purpose of the lesson and how the teacher accomplished it, the appropriate lesson level, and how the lesson connected to the Massachusetts frameworks. In addition, a review of teacher and administrator summative evaluations showed that, for the most part, principals and the superintendent did not perform timely summative evaluations and wrote informative but not prescriptive evaluations. Evaluations, for the most part, did not follow the Principles of Effective Teaching or the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.

However, interviewees stated principals conducted informal walk-throughs of classrooms, as well as formal classroom observations allowed by contract. The current superintendent initiated managerial observations as part of the revised administrator evaluation process. A review of the Erving teachers' contract showed the contract included a goal of two formal classroom observations each year and other informal classroom observations. A review of the New Salem-Wendell teachers' contract showed that classroom observations "will be included as part of the basis for evaluating the work of classroom teachers." A review of the Leverett teachers' contract showed that school administrators should observe non-professional status teachers informally and formally at least twice annually and administrators should observe professional status teachers informally and formally to the extent needed to attain professional growth. A review of the Shutesbury teachers' contract showed no reference to classroom observations.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The districts in the union linked employment, supervision, and professional development processes and supported them with appropriate levels of funding. The districts had practices, policies, and procedures in place relative to staff employment and hiring procedures. While the superintendent recognized the autonomy of the four districts to develop personnel needs as well as the authority of the principals to control the hiring of school staff, the new superintendent supported the districts by publishing and implementing a standardized, enhanced, multi-step hiring process that built on the past hiring practices of the four districts. In addition, a review of the districts' teachers' contracts showed that the Shutesbury and Erving contracts had language

connected to vacancies and postings and the determination of teacher qualifications by the principal and superintendent. The New Salem-Wendell teachers' contract included language relative to job postings, but the Leverett teachers' contract included no such language.

The four districts all had professional development and mentoring plans during the period under review. Each district had an administrative/supervisory staff that included a principal. The Erving School Union 28 central office, which supported the four districts, included one superintendent, a special education director, a business assistant to the superintendent, and several administrative staff members. During the period under review, each district had a stable teaching staff.

During the period under review, all four districts met net school spending requirements. According to a review of DOE documentation, Erving expended $50,483 in 2005-2006 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding; Leverett expended $33,105 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding. Shutesbury expended $38,043 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding. New Salem-Wendell expended $45,019 for professional development, including teacher salaries and grant funding.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

All four districts had school crisis and/or safety policies, procedures, and practices, and safety committees, in place at the time of the review; however, some district plans were under review and in a draft format. As a result, the districts had limited organized staff emergency and safety training. The districts provided the EQA examiners with safety and/or emergency plans. The Shutesbury, Erving, and New Salem-Wendell districts had a sign-in/sign-out sheet in the main office of the school buildings. The Leverett school did not have a sign-in sheet. Staff members did not wear identification badges. Until 2006-2007, two of the districts did not have intercom systems to notify personnel schoolwide of emergencies. The Shutesbury district installed a

system in 2006-2007, but the New Salem-Wendell district did not. All four districts had unsecured front doors in the schools, and many district school committee and community members struggled with the issue of locking the front doors of the schools. Two districts had unsecured side doors.

Town public safety officials had reviewed the Shutesbury school safety plan. The plan included procedures for emergencies such as bomb threats, fires, or bus accidents. Interviewees indicated the school had a safety meeting with the parents in the fall. The fire route was posted but not in all classrooms. Substitute teacher folders included emergency procedures. The school practiced fire, bus, and lockdown drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan, but substitute teachers and volunteers did not, according to interviewees.

The Erving district had a document entitled Emergency Procedures, which public safety personnel reviewed and, according to interviewees, would be revamping in 2006-2007. The plan included procedures for such emergencies as earthquakes, explosions, and lockdowns. Not all staff members had a copy of the plan and the school did not display it prominently in the classroom. The school practiced fire and bus drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. When entering the school, the examiners had to identify themselves. The main entrance to the school had a camera, which became functional in 2007. According to a document provided to the EQA, no official plan was in place to communicate emergency procedures to substitutes; however, in a small school the staff knew when substitutes were present and would take action immediately to assist that person. The district worked with the local police department to gain knowledge about sex offenders living and working in Erving.

The New Salem-Wendell district had an emergency procedures document that public safety personnel had reviewed. Interviewees indicated that the district had worked on the plan for two years. The school had no intercom system during the period under review, and the two towns had to agree on funding the capital expense. Teachers had walkie-talkies in the classroom for emergencies. Included in the plan were procedures for emergencies, such as missing child, bomb threat, and fire. The school practiced fire, bus, and reverse evacuation drills. Substitute teachers and volunteers were not included.

The Leverett district had an emergency procedures document that public safety personnel had reviewed. Included in the plan were procedures for emergencies, such as evacuation, fire, and bomb threat. The school practiced fire, bus, and evacuation drills and had faculty meetings to address new emergency procedures. Every room had a substitute folder that included emergency procedures. Teachers received training in first aid every year and in CPR every other year. The EQA examiners had to wear a visitor pass when they visited the school.

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

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- Districts in the union were just beginning to use student achievement data to measure the effectiveness of learning and to define the need for and the effectiveness of support programs.
- Despite the use of various assessments, professional development on instructional strategies, and the presence of support programs, the percentage of students attaining proficiency on the MCAS tests varied widely across the union.
- Districts in the union had multiple support programs in place to help students requiring assistance attain proficiency on the grade 4 MCAS ELA test.
- Each district within the union had fair and equitable policies and practices in place to encourage students to accept responsibility and treat others well, and to reduce discipline referrals in the school buildings.
- Transition practices across the union were uniform and efficient, and ensured that all students transitioned smoothly from grade to grade and school to school.

Summary

Erving School Union 28 offered Title I support services to all of its students requiring additional support at the schools in Erving, New Salem-Wendell, and Shutesbury. Leverett was not eligible for Title I grant assistance, and the district funded an essential skills teacher whose mission was to provide similar support services to students scoring at or near the 50th percentile on the DIBELS. The Erving school district provided an MCAS test support class for students during spring 2007 in response to the Erving Elementary School's failure to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). In addition, Erving provided additional academic time through the elimination of a school recess period in spite of parental disapproval. Leverett provided an after-school homework program funded by parents. Shutesbury offered a similar after-school program, staffed by parents and community members, which provided drama activities and a chess club in addition to a place to do homework. The New Salem-Wendell district had an after-school science program and offered after-school help in mathematics.

The special education director organized special education services across the union. Every special education student was provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with measurable goals, and the progress of these students was monitored at the district and union levels. Very few homeless students were enrolled in the districts, but the principal in each district served as the homeless coordinator. The districts provided transportation services and were able to provide additional services if needed.

The size of the four districts comprising Erving School Union 28 made the concept of subgroups less meaningful than in a larger district. In each district, the population at each grade level was generally fewer than 20 students. The only subgroups that were large enough to measure were students receiving special education services and/or free or reduced-cost lunch. Students in both groups participated in all appropriate assessments at the same rate as students in the general population—virtually 100 percent. The performance gap between regular education and students with disabilities in both ELA and math in Erving exceeded the state averages. The gaps were smaller than the state averages in Leverett, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell. The main program for accelerated students was at the Swift River School, which allowed students to skip a grade if their academic progress was exemplary.

Both students and faculty within the union maintained very high rates of school attendance. As reported to the DOE, student attendance over the three-year period under review ranged from a low of 93.4 percent to a high of 95.8 percent across the four districts. These numbers compared favorably with the state target of 95 percent, and closely approached or exceeded that target in all cases. Administrators were able to keep track of student attendance easily because of the small size of the districts. Faculty attendance, according to figures supplied to the EQA examiners by the four districts, exceeded 95 percent in Erving, New Salem-Wendell, and Shutesbury and was 93.8 percent in Leverett.

The levels of student retention were less than two percent in all districts in the union. At least two of the districts reported using the Second Step program as a tool to assist in improving school discipline, but all of the districts reported few incidents requiring disciplinary intervention on the part of administrators.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Teachers and administrators agreed that Erving School Union 28 was just beginning to use aggregated and disaggregated data analysis to adjust instruction and policies for at-risk populations. During the period under review, districts in the union expended most of their assessment analysis energy reviewing the MCAS test results, which they used to guide strategies for the improvement of test-taking skills, including responding to long-composition and open-response questions, and to identify other general trends affecting all students. One administrator stated, “We use standardized tests to confirm what we already know about the students,” or to identify students who achieved substantially better or worse than expected. Teachers in the four districts that comprised the union received little training in data analysis, and expressed little perceived need for it.

Each school within the union was part of a separate district with individual practices and policies. Each district had limited enrollment. Thus, student cohort groups and subgroups taking the MCAS tests were also small. The principal of one school stated that as part of the analysis process, gender differences among assessed students were reviewed, and then trends in frequency of incorrect responses by student were analyzed. Other sources of data collected included the DIBELS in all districts and the GRADE in Shutesbury. Limited subgroup analysis occurred beyond the special education subgroup. Numbers of students in the subgroups were so small that it was more efficient to offer individualized services rather than group solutions. However, all districts used the results of the DIBELS to identify students who required additional services. Erving, Shutesbury, and New Salem-Wendell offered Title I services. Leverett did not qualify for Title I support, but provided support for students using the services of a locally funded essential skills teacher, who used Title I assessments, guidelines, and report formats.

The union had a special education director who worked with the four districts to review special education achievement data. Students receiving special education services met measurable annual goals based upon Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and the districts based modifications on the specific needs and progress of students. The union used various types of assessment systems to determine progress towards IEP goals and to design interventions. Administrators explained that the union's districts used the same series of assessments, with the addition of Woodcock-Johnson and resources from the University of Oregon website, to provide additional monitoring of the progress of special education students. The union used AIMSWeb to track progress of students receiving special education services, and both the Leverett and Erving districts planned to expand the participation in AIMSWeb for 2007-2008.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

All districts within the union used the DIBELS as a formative assessment. All districts used the MCAS tests as a summative assessment. Beyond that, each district had different approaches to formative and summative assessment.

In Erving, for example, administrators reported that no assessments other than the DIBELS were used for formative assessment. The district revealed plans to use AIMSWeb as an online tracking tool to improve the management of assessment results for students and their progress in support programs. The Erving district used a series entitled Math Coach to provide support for children. Administrators reported that the failure to make AYP on the 2005 MCAS tests provided the impetus to the staff to begin thinking about support programs. In Erving, interpretation of the DIBELS results identified students eligible for Title I services.

The Leverett district used the MCAS tests and the TerraNova as summative assessments. Teachers used assessments such as the Meisels Elementary School Screening Inventory for pre-kindergarten screening. The district developed individual student success plans (ISSPs) for students scoring below the 50th percentile on any assessment, and included a menu of options for providing assistance. Leverett was the only union district that was not eligible for Title I funding. Instead of a Title I teacher, however, it employed an essential skills teacher, who used Title I assessment techniques and support procedures to provide services for the students.

Shutesbury used the GRADE for summative assessment purposes in reading and language. Administrators also cited end-of-unit examinations common to the Investigations program in mathematics as well as assessments provided with the Read Naturally program. Each grade 6 student completed a portfolio to demonstrate growth over time. Administrators also cited the use of portfolios as an assessment methodology. Title I services were available for students who were determined to be in need, and the district used the MCAS tests as a summative assessment to determine student achievement.

New Salem-Wendell reported that it used unit assessments, the Foss Kit assessments for science, the DIBELS, and the DRA as formative assessments. The district used the MCAS tests as a summative assessment. The district staff kept informed about student achievement in all assessments over time using Progress Monitoring. In addition, teachers used the MAZE

comprehension test; administrators projected its use for all schools in the union during 2008-2009.

Union students receiving special education services received additional assessments to monitor progress and ensure individual performance goal achievement. These included the Wilson WADE for phonics, the DIBELS, the MAZE, and the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI). In all cases, children who qualified for special education had assessment results translated into individual goals that were included in IEPs and regularly monitored by special education teachers.

All four districts in the union provided after-school support programs for students funded by parents, from traditional co-curricular activities, such as chess club and drama, to homework assistance. All districts provided Title I or equivalent "essential skills" services. Following its failure to achieve AYP, the Erving school began an MCAS remediation program in spring 2007.

Despite these interventions, in Erving 40 percent of all students failed to reach proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests. This was 12 percentage points less than the state average for grade K-6 students. The situation was better in the other three districts in the union. In Leverett, 59 percent of the students attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, seven percentage points more than that of K-6 students statewide. In 2006, 58 percent of New Salem-Wendell students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests, six percentage points more than that of K-6 students statewide. In Shutesbury, 68 percent of the students attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, 16 percentage points more than that of K-6 students statewide.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The districts had support programs in place for reading during the early part of the period under review. Union districts used the DIBELS to determine which students qualified for Title I intervention or support from the essential skills teacher in Leverett. Normally, students scoring

below the 50th percentile qualified for Title I services, but the districts often provided assistance to students in the 49th or 48th percentiles. All schools in the union used child study teams, which Shutesbury referred to as a peer assistance team.

According to administrators, beginning in 2005 grade K-3 students received three-tier support services. Tier I intervention included phonics and phonemic awareness assistance from the Title I teacher using the Wilson Fundations program. In Leverett, the essential skills teacher worked with all grade 1 students as well as students identified for additional assistance using the DIBELS and the QRI. A 0.6 FTE ELA teacher delivered Tier II interventions in Shutesbury, while in New Salem-Wendell an Orton-Gillingham certified reading teacher provided Tier II interventions. Teachers provided Wilson reading support and coordinated these services with the Wilson Fundations program used in the regular education curriculum.

Administrators in the Erving district reported that the staff implemented Wilson Fundations "irregularly" at grades K-2. Upper grades used literature to teach comprehension and vocabulary. Often, teachers used Read Naturally for special education students, but there were no documented criteria for this practice, and teachers did not use it in all cases.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

All four districts helped students make effective transitions from one school, grade level, or program to another. Each district was unique, but surprisingly similar. At New Salem-Wendell, students transitioned into the pre-K class through the REACH program. Administrators reported this transition to be easier on the children. At both Shutesbury and New Salem-Wendell, parents and preschool teachers met in both spring and fall prior to a March enrollment for the following year. School visits were encouraged, and they were scheduled to allow for individual attention to student needs. At the higher grades, a "Jump-up Day" was scheduled on the final day of school, when students went to the next grade, and the upper-grade students returned to their previous class for a reunion with last year's teacher. Visit days to the Mahar Middle School

were scheduled annually for students from New Salem-Wendell, and to the Amherst Regional Middle School for students from Shutesbury.

In Leverett, preschool began during the second week of school. Home visits for all entering children were conducted the previous spring, and the district arranged student visiting days at the school. Included as part of the transition process was a routine speech and language screening. A screening process using the Meisels Elementary School Screening Inventory was part of the kindergarten registration process. Between kindergarten and grade 1, teachers were involved in transition meetings that were formal for students with IEPs and informal for all others. The district scheduled a visit day for grade 6 students to go to the Amherst Regional Middle School, and held a Jump-up Day on the final day of school for all other students.

In Erving, the district held a preschool visit day, orientation evening meetings, and then a screening day in the fall. During 2007-2008, administrators planned to hold screenings earlier in the school year so that children requiring services could begin them sooner. The district used two 70-percent days for transition planning. For grade 6 students, a representative from Great Falls Middle School in the Gill-Montague school district visited to speak to students, and a visit day to the school was planned for the students. The district assigned the math coach as the transition planner for the district, and the district assigned a music teacher as the transition planner for special education students.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Each of the districts had fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices in place to reduce discipline referrals, grade retention, suspension, and exclusions. Efforts at building discipline systems within the union varied widely. In Shutesbury, the principal tried to build a reward system for good behavior; the small number of students requiring such support allowed this creative approach. Ten minutes of game playing with the principal was the usual reward. In both Leverett and Erving, the Second Step program was in place. The focus of Second Step was to turn the mentality around from “me” to “my friend,” and the emphasis was on empathy and

problem-solving. In Erving, the district sponsored a program in Safe Touching offered by the school psychologist. Leverett also used the Safe Touching program. All districts had limited in- and out-of-school suspensions and retentions during the period under review.

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

Rating: Not Applicable

Evidence

There were no dropouts reported from Erving School Union 28, which serves grades K-6.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The experience of the districts with homeless students was limited. Leverett reported one homeless student during 2005-2006. Administrators recalled other homeless students, but could not recollect actual numbers. In each district the principal served as the homeless coordinator. All reported that, although the district provided transportation services to homeless students in the past, few other services were provided. Administrators reported that they were prepared to provide such services as home tutoring, counseling services, and duplicate textbooks if students required them, but most services provided to date were for students placed in foster homes for transport back to the sending district. In those circumstances, both the union and the district to which the student was returning shared transportation costs.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, student attendance figures varied across the union. In Erving, according to numbers reported to the DOE, the student attendance rate was 95.5 percent in 2003, 95.7 percent in 2004, 95.8 percent in 2005, and 89.1 percent in 2006. All of those figures except

for 2006's figure exceeded the state's 95 percent guideline. When questioned about the anomalous figure in 2006, administrators suggested the possibility of a reporting error and produced attendance figures reported for the school lunch program that were more consistent with the previous three years, at 95.9 percent.

In Shutesbury, the numbers reported were 95.0 percent for 2003, 95.1 percent for 2004, 94.7 percent for 2005, and 94.2 percent for 2006. Once again, the difference between district attendance figures and statewide averages was minimal.

For New Salem-Wendell, the numbers were 93.2 percent for 2003, 94.1 percent for 2004, 94.4 percent for 2005, and 93.4 percent for 2006. Once again, numbers compared favorably to statewide averages.

In Leverett, students attended at the rates of 95.3 percent in 2003, 95.6 percent in 2004, 95.2 percent in 2005, and 94.6 percent in 2006. In Leverett's case, as well as that of the other districts, principals reiterated the difficulty of tracking attendance percentages with a small student population, pointing out the relatively large effect of a small number of families with school attendance issues.

In all cases, principals were able to follow attendance diligently because of the close and immediate nature of the relationships they shared with staff and support personnel. Individual districts made telephone calls to parents of students not in attendance.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators reported that staff attendance was not a problem. Data for the 2005-2006 school year that the districts submitted indicated the following.

District	Number of teachers	Days of long-term absence	Days of short-term absence	Days taken for professional development	Days taken for military or jury duty	Days taken for other reasons	Average days absent including PD	Average days absent excluding PD	Faculty attendance rate
Shutesbury	22	0	101	51	1	40.5	4.75	3.62	95.25
Leverett	27	52	130.75	65.25	5	55	6.17	3.94	93.83
Erving	24	0	106	47.5	2.5	38	4.37	3.40	95.63
New Salem-Wendell	19	0	78	50.5	0	17	4.14	2.82	95.86

Teacher attendance exceeded 95 percent at all schools within the union with the exception of Leverett Elementary School. Even with professional development days included, the average number of days absent reached a high of six days in only one district (Leverett) of the four.

In the event of short-term teacher absence, experienced and trained substitute teachers were used in all of the districts. Administrators reported that substitutes were over 21 years of age and possessed at least a bachelor's degree. On the rare occasion when long-term substitute teachers were required, in the memory of all interviewees, the district was able to secure the services of a recently retired teacher.

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

Rating: Not Applicable

Evidence

Since each independent district was so small, the cohort of students at each grade level was fewer than 20 students, and subgroup populations were substantially smaller than that. There was a "skip-a-grade" program in New Salem-Wendell, allowing students to accelerate progress based upon exemplary student achievement, but in 2005-2006 it included only one student. Due to small population numbers, proportionate subgroup representation was not yet an issue requiring a union response.

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

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Each community in Erving School Union 28 contributed above the minimum required local contribution, and resources were adequate throughout the union.
- The budget process was open and participatory, but the use of student achievement data in budget development was just beginning in the districts.
- The school districts in the union had internal controls to ensure adherence to procurement laws and proper payroll procedures.
- Reporting of financial information to the school committees was minimal; only financial exceptions were reported.
- The use of an evaluation-based review process to determine program effectiveness was limited in all districts. Some review was conducted of the cost of school lunch programs.
- Each school district had safety plans; however, procedures were not consistent and districts varied in their degree of safety regarding locked doors.

Summary

Erving School Union 28 and its member districts all had open budget processes. The union administration first developed the union budget. Each of the four districts that comprised the union contributed toward the union budget based on student enrollment. Each district school committee, in collaboration with administrators, developed the budget with input from the staff and the community. Some examples were provided to the EQA examiners of the use of data to make budgetary decisions, such as for new textbooks or instructional programs. Overall, however, data did not play a large role in budget development during the period under review.

Staff, technology, and other instructional resources were adequate in each district, according to interviewees. The New Salem-Wendell school district did make budget reductions to meet the financial ability of the two towns to contribute to the regional elementary school budget. Interviewees noted that resources were less adequate in New Salem-Wendell than in the other districts.

For the period under review, the districts did not have access to the union accounting system and had separate financial records. The union business office reconciled with each school district on a monthly basis. The union planned to update its accounting system to a web-based version so all districts could access it.

The financial support from the communities for each district in the union was adequate, according to interviewees. For the period under review, each community contributed above the minimum required local contribution, and each district exceeded its required net school spending for each year of the review period. In the New Salem-Wendell district, each community at times supported the district above the regional agreement amount by contributing additional revenue when the other community had a shortfall. The districts and the union had adequate financial controls to ensure proper procedures for purchasing and the processing of payroll. The districts only reported financial information to the school committees when financial exceptions occurred.

The facilities in the school districts were clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. The buildings were conducive to education. Each community had a capital plan that included some school-related projects. These projects focused on such items as roof repairs and capital equipment purchases. All four elementary schools were renovated since their original construction. Each

school district had safety plans; however, each school had varying degrees of safety relative to access to the school. Each school's main entrance was unlocked. Only one school district had cameras. The main offices of the schools did not permit staff to view visitors entering the buildings. The communities had ongoing debates regarding the level of safety and security they wanted in each school.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to the union administration, the budget process used for the Erving School Union 28 was the same for the communities of Erving, Leverett, Shutesbury, New Salem, and Wendell. The budget development process began in September. The school administration informed the school committees of this fact and requested from the committees any priorities that they wanted in the next year's budget. In each district, the administrators developed the budget. They brought the budget proposals to the school committees in October. As the budget deliberations continued, the union business office updated the personnel budget by moving the existing staff along salary schedules. The principals in each community reviewed this information for accuracy and used it in their budget development. The business office reviewed the operational expenses, such as utilities and fuel, as well as special education expenditures. The union administration developed the union budget first. The administration provided the districts with their respective shares of the union budget. The districts factored these figures into their budget development process. They presented the union budget and the district budgets in December and January. The school administrators typically held two meetings with the finance committees and select boards; the first meeting was a programmatic discussion and the second meeting was to discuss any issues from the first meeting.

A review of the district budget documents included the following information. The documents compared the amended FY 2004 budget, the actual FY 2004 budget, and the budgeted FY 2005

and FY 2006 figures, with the FY 2005 and FY 2006 difference. The documents included explanations of the share of the union expenses and reasons for increases or decreases in the union expenses. Each district budget document included a section describing the "drivers" for the FY 2006 budget. This section described the components of the increases in salaries and the changes in operational expenses. Each budget had a fact sheet that included a narrative of the FY 2006 budget, including statistical trends from FY 2003 to FY 2006 and enrollment trends.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Union administrators stated that the use of data in the budget development process was an issue that the union began to address in 2006-2007, and was not a systemic process used by the districts to determine budgetary needs. However, some examples were cited of the districts reviewing data and purchasing new programs as a result. According to the district administrators, when Erving did not make AYP, the district funded an MCAS remediation program for spring 2007. The Shutesbury district purchased the Investigations math program and hired a math coach. The New Salem-Wendell school district adopted the Six Traits of Writing for ELA. Some districts in the union purchased new textbooks.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews, district administrators, teachers, and parents stated that each district had adequate resources. District administrators stated that Erving, Leverett, and Shutesbury had more adequate resources than the New Salem-Wendell district. A district administrator stated that

New Salem-Wendell was more "close to the bone." Interviewees stated the New Salem-Wendell district had to reduce the budget in FY 2007 by approximately $110,000. The Leverett FY 2006 budget used $50,000 of school choice reserves as a funding source.

According to district documentation, the Erving Elementary School had an average class size of 18, with a low of 13 and a high of 24 students. The Leverett Elementary School had an average class size of 16, with a low of 13 and a high of 19 students. The Shutesbury Elementary School had an average class size of 18, with a range of 11 to 23 students. The New Salem-Wendell school district had an average class size of 18, with a range of 13 to 23 students.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administrators, the use of an evaluation-based review process to determine program effectiveness was limited. Interviewees indicated that some analysis was conducted on school lunch programs. Each year during the period under review, districts, in collaboration with the union, reviewed the school lunch programs and raised the prices a nominal amount. District administrators cited some examples in which resources were reallocated to address a need, such as one-on-one aides for students or the development of enrichment programs, such as the Ropes course in Leverett.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The towns of Shutesbury, Erving, and Leverett did not have a formal written agreement for the indirect costs. According to district administration documents, each town used the "safe harbor method" to calculate the indirect costs, using the DOE per pupil rate for administrative costs, by

identifying specific costs and using ratios for town officials' salaries. The New Salem-Wendell school district was a regional school district; therefore, no written agreement was required.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to the DOE, from FY 2004 to FY 2006, the Erving school district exceeded net school spending by $850,319, $649,544, and $700,306 each fiscal year, respectively.

According to the DOE, from FY 2004 to FY 2006, the Leverett school district exceeded net school spending by $153,550, $200,662, and $490,593 each fiscal year, respectively.

According to the DOE, from FY 2004 to FY 2006, the Shutesbury school district exceeded net school spending by $298,363, $408,540, and $516,871 each fiscal year respectively.

According to the DOE, from FY 2004 to FY 2006, the New Salem/Wendell school district exceeded net school spending by $216,235, $216,360, and $261,115 each fiscal year, respectively.

An example of community support for the schools was found in the New Salem-Wendell school district. During the period under review, the town of Wendell had voted the budget in accordance with the regional agreement parameters. The school district administrators presented a budget that required additional funds. Because the town of New Salem was experiencing financial constraints, the town of Wendell voted to provide the additional funds requested. This collaborative practice had occurred in the past with New Salem providing the additional funding for Wendell.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administrators, the school committees did not receive regular financial reports. The administrators discussed and presented financial information if an exception was needed, such as a change in programming or staffing done during the year. Administrators in each district did not have access to the union's financial accounting system. The union business office reconciled on a monthly basis with each district's financial records, and provided monthly line item reports to the school administrators.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The union administration used Compusense as its financial accounting system. At the time of the EQA site visit, the union was in the process of upgrading to the web-based version with the intent of installing it in each district. For the period under review, the districts did not have access to the system and had their own set of financial records. The union business office reconciled with each school district on a monthly basis. The individual districts kept their own financial records. Four times per year, the union business office prepared a projection to the end of the year.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to union administrators, the school districts pursued grants with assistance from the union administrators. The union managed and monitored grants and special revenue funds on

the Compusense accounting system. District revolving accounts were managed on the union financial accounting software in conjunction with the town finance offices. The districts did not charge user fees.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to district documents, the towns of Erving, Leverett, and Shutesbury did not have annual audits due to their size. The New Salem-Wendell regional district used Melanson Heath and Company as its auditor. The FY 2006 audit for New Salem-Wendell, dated September 29, 2006, cited current year issues, such as obtaining approval for encumbrances and appropriate oversight regarding approval of encumbrances. It also cited the district for the need to properly report travel stipends. The district was in varying stages of addressing prior year management letter issues. A review of district purchasing records revealed that the district practiced sound purchasing procedures.

The union business official had MCPPO training. Payroll systems in the union and districts were in place to ensure adequate controls with review and approval of time cards and time sheets. The union provided paraprofessionals and aides with a yearly contract amount and adjusted it for exceptions rather than manual input of hours worked.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

District and union administrators stated that the districts did not have a formal preventative maintenance program. Preventative maintenance was contracted out to private contractors. According to the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability Attachment E, Facilities Inventory, the Erving Elementary School, grades pre-K to 6, was constructed in 1973 and renovated in 2005. Administrators described the facility as in "very good" condition. The Leverett Elementary School, grades pre-K to 6, was constructed in 1950 and renovated in 2000. Administrators described the facility as in "very good" condition. The Shutesbury Elementary School, grades pre-K to 6, was built in 1970 and renovated in 1992. Administrators described the facility as in "very good" condition. The Swift River School for New Salem-Wendell, grades pre-K to 6, was constructed in 1976 and renovated in 1989. Administrators described it as in "very good" condition.

Based on EQA walk-throughs, the examiners noted the following. The Swift River School was clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. The size of the classrooms was adequate for education. The school had empty classrooms that the district used for small group or one-on-one instruction. The hallways were clean. The front door was not locked and there were no cameras. The other exterior doors of the building were locked. The Shutesbury Elementary School was clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. The environment promoted student achievement. The Erving and Leverett elementary schools were clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. According to examiners, the Leverett Elementary School library was impressive, with floor-to-ceiling windows and beautiful views. It was clean and comfortable and conducive to learning.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to district and town administrators, the districts did not have formal, long-term capital plans. Each district recently renovated its school and maintained the facility in good condition. The districts submitted capital requests to each town for consideration, focusing primarily on

capital equipment. For example, in FY 2007, the town of Leverett funded $116,820 for capital improvements to its school for various window replacements and upgrades. New Salem-Wendell had a capital plan that extended from FY 2002 to FY 2009. In FY 2006, the district resealed the school's roof, replaced the carpet with linoleum in the hallways, and did stucco repair and caulking.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Visits to each school by members of the EQA team found some methods of security in place in some schools, such as a sign-in sheet and the wearing of badges. The Erving school had a camera in the front lobby. The EQA team found most buildings very easy to enter undetected, front doors unlocked, and no buzzer systems in place. The location of offices in each school did not allow members of the office staff to monitor people entering the building in any district. The districts provided the EQA examiners with documented safety plans and/or emergency plans. District administrators stated that each school district was in the process and in varying stages of review and revision of these plans.

A review by the EQA examiners of the school facilities revealed the following. Each school's front door was unlocked. All other doors of each school were locked. The Shutesbury, Erving, and Swift River schools had a sign-in/sign-out sheet in the main office. The staffs did not wear identification badges.

The Shutesbury Elementary School had a crisis plan that was reviewed by public safety personnel. The plan was not prominently displayed in each classroom. The fire route was not posted in all classrooms. The school practiced fire, bus, and lockdown drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. Substitute teachers and volunteers did not.

The Erving Elementary School had a crisis plan that was reviewed by public safety personnel. The plan was not prominently displayed in each classroom. The school practiced fire and bus drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. Substitute

teachers and volunteers did not. When entering the school, the examiners had to identify themselves. The main entrance to the school had a camera.

The Swift River School had a crisis plan that was reviewed by public safety personnel. The plan was not prominently displayed in each classroom. The school practiced fire, bus, and lockdown drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. Substitute teachers and volunteers did not. Each EQA examiner had to wear a visitor pass.

The Leverett Elementary School had an emergency procedures document that public safety personnel had reviewed. Included in the plan were procedures for such emergencies as evacuation, fire, and bomb threat. The school practiced fire, bus, and evacuation drills and had faculty meetings to addresses new emergency procedures. Every room had a substitute folder that included emergency procedures. Teachers received training in first aid every year and in CPR every other year. The EQA examiners had to each wear a visitor pass when visiting the school.

Some of the schools had backpacks that the supervising staff took to recess. These packs included first aid equipment and two-way radio communication devices, and some schools had a boat horn if needed for potential wildlife encounters.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

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

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY1997 – FY2006

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY97	866		4,642,322		3,106,720	1,246,745		4,353,465		5,041,345		687,880	
FY98	873	0.8	4,785,881	3.1	3,286,361	1,467,563	17.7	4,753,924	9.2	5,133,216	1.8	379,292	8.0
FY99	829	-5.0	4,708,945	-1.6	3,433,342	1,553,547	5.9	4,986,889	4.9	5,304,986	3.3	318,097	6.4
FY00	808	-2.5	4,739,826	0.7	3,656,599	1,646,798	6.0	5,303,397	6.3	5,916,484	11.5	613,087	11.6
FY01	780	-3.5	4,719,495	-0.4	3,795,658	1,783,298	8.3	5,578,956	5.2	6,282,205	6.2	703,249	12.6
FY02	766	-1.8	4,933,988	4.5	4,074,420	1,895,604	6.3	5,970,024	7.0	6,626,771	5.5	656,747	11.0
FY03	731	-4.6	4,762,741	-3.5	4,168,930	1,895,604	0.0	6,064,534	1.6	6,945,505	4.8	880,971	14.5
FY04	659	-9.8	4,424,184	-7.1	3,896,866	1,516,483	-20.0	5,413,349	-10.7	6,931,816	-0.2	1,518,467	28.1
FY05	639	-3.0	4,432,767	0.2	4,142,796	1,516,483	0.0	5,659,279	4.5	7,134,385	2.9	1,475,105	26.1
FY06	639	0.0	4,530,616	2.2	3,994,600	1,548,433	2.1	5,543,033	-2.1	7,511,918	5.3	1,968,885	35.5

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
FY97	21,483	5,937	23,095	26.9	93.8	108.6	24.7
FY98	21,965	6,998	23,327	30.7	99.3	107.3	28.6
FY99	22,759	7,853	25,406	33.0	105.9	112.7	29.3
FY00	23,360	8,305	29,034	34.7	111.9	124.8	27.8
FY01	24,048	9,592	32,098	37.8	118.2	133.1	28.4
FY02	25,622	10,488	34,523	38.4	121.0	134.3	28.6
FY03	26,047	10,890	37,963	39.8	127.3	145.8	27.3
FY04	26,820	9,631	42,136	34.3	122.4	156.7	21.9
FY05	27,675	10,359	45,170	34.2	127.7	160.9	21.3
FY06	28,276	10,584	48,057	34.2	122.3	165.8	20.6

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