



## **Everett Public Schools District Review**

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Review conducted April 30–May 3, 2012

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# Overview of District Reviews

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## ***Purpose***

The goal of district reviews conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to support districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of systemwide functions using ESE's six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.**

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school year include districts that were in Level 3<sup>1</sup> (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

## ***Methodology***

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

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

# Everett Public Schools

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The site visit to the Everett Public Schools was conducted from April 30–May 3, 2012. The site visit included 32 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 60 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted focus groups with 8 elementary and 11 middle-school teachers. The focus group for high-school teachers was not held because of a miscommunication about the scheduling of the focus group. The team also conducted visits to the district’s 7 schools: Webster (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), English (pre-kindergarten through grade 8), Whittier (pre-kindergarten through grade 8), Keverian (kindergarten through grade 8), Lafayette (kindergarten through grade 8), Parlin (kindergarten through grade 8), and Everett High School (grades 9–12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2009–2011. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team’s suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

## ***District Profile<sup>2</sup>***

Bordered on the north by Malden, on the east by Revere, on the southeast by Chelsea, on the south by the Mystic River, and on the west by Somerville and Medford, Everett is a growing, densely populated city in Middlesex County consisting of approximately 3.5 square miles with a population of nearly 42,000 residents. Despite its size and density, the city maintains many open spaces and parks. Everett is situated four miles north of Boston with proximity to interstate highways, public transportation, working ports, and Boston Harbor. The city is a distribution center for the Northeast produce industry, and home to many energy providers and Whidden Hospital, a major local employer. The March 2012 Everett unemployment rate of 6.5 percent was only slightly above the state rate of 6.4 percent.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, Everett has experienced a population increase of nearly 10 percent since 2000. Historically, Everett has been a working class community and a gateway for immigrants. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, approximately 22 percent of Everett residents are foreign born without U.S. citizenship and approximately 11 percent of Everett families are at the poverty level, compared with the statewide rate of 7 percent. The city has 672 public housing units and 411 section 8 subsidized rental units, according to the latest Department

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<sup>2</sup> Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

of Housing and Community Development data. The estimated median family income in 2009 was \$50,524, compared with the statewide median income of \$64,081.

Everett has enjoyed a highly successful football tradition beginning with a national high school football championship team in 1914. Everett teams have made 13 Division I state championship game appearances since 1996 and have won nine times. Many Everett graduates have gone on to play collegiate football at Division I colleges and some have had careers in the National Football League, including Jim Del Gaizo and Pat Hughes.

Everett has a mayor/city council form of government with the mayor serving a two-year term. The city council is bicameral with a seven-member board of aldermen consisting of one member from each of the city's six wards and one alderman-at-large and a common council consisting of three members elected per ward. In November 2011, a ballot measure was approved to amend the charter by creating an 11-member city council to replace the two-tiered, 25-member city council. This and related changes, such as extending the mayor's term from two to four years, will be phased in starting in September 2013. Both city and school officials told the review team that a smaller council would streamline city government and make it more efficient and effective.

The Everett superintendent was in his twenty-third year of service as superintendent and his forty-sixth year in the district at the time of the review. The leadership team consists of two assistant superintendents, one of whom has primary responsibility for business and finance, the curriculum director, the special education director, the Title I director, the lead teacher of the pre-kindergarten program, and seven principals.

### *Enrollment*

Tables 1a and 1b show student enrollment by race/ethnicity and special populations for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years, respectively.

**Table 1a: Everett Public Schools  
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations  
2010–2011**

<b>Selected Populations</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Percent of State</b>	<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Percent of State</b>
<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>6,142</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>---</b>	African-American/Black	1,115	18.2	8.2
First Language not English	2,791	45.4	16.3	Asian	313	5.1	5.5
Limited English Proficient*	715	11.6	7.1	Hispanic/Latino	1,995	32.5	15.4
Special Education**	1,003	16.0	17.0	White	2,615	42.6	68.0
Low-income	4,266	69.5	34.2	Native American	36	0.6	0.2
Free Lunch	3,530	57.5	29.1	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	0.1	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	736	12.0	5.1	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	64	1.0	2.4
<p>*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.”</p> <p>**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.</p> <p>Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data</p>							

**Table 1b: Everett Public Schools  
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations  
2011–2012**

<b>Selected Populations</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Percent of State</b>	<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Percent of State</b>
<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>6,371</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>---</b>	African-American/Black	1,155	18.1	8.3
First Language not English	3,028	47.5	16.7	Asian	321	5.0	5.7
Limited English Proficient*	777	12.2	7.3	Hispanic/Latino	2,212	34.7	16.1
Special Education**	1,010	15.6	17.0	White	2,536	39.8	67.0
Low-income	4,849	76.1	35.2	Native American	37	0.6	0.2
Free Lunch	4,179	65.6	30.4	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	6	0.1	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	670	10.5	4.8	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	104	1.6	2.5
*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.” **Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data							

According to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) data, total enrollment increased by 17.15 percent in Everett from 5,438 students in 2007 to 6,371 students in 2012 (data not in a table). As described in other sections of this report, steady increases in the school population have strained district capacity and resources. During the visit of the review team, a city council coalition consisting of representatives of the board of aldermen and the common council was formed “to study enrollment growth and identify possible solutions to deal with this costly problem.”

Over the six-year period from 2007 through 2012, the race/ethnicity and special population proportions of the total school population shifted, altering the demographics substantially: The low-income subgroup increased by 22 percent, the Hispanic/Latino subgroup increased by 13 percent, and the limited English proficient subgroup (referred to in this report as English language learners) increased by 3 percent. Concurrently, the white subgroup decreased by 18 percent (data not in a table). According to administrators and town officials, the district is struggling to provide services to a growing and changing population of students with greater and different needs.



## *Finances*

Table 2 shows Everett's expenditures, Chapter 70 state aid, and net school spending from fiscal year 2010 through fiscal year 2012. Total expenditures from all funding sources increased by only \$84,000 from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011, although enrollment increased by 4%. Chapter 70 aid increased 14.6% in fiscal year 2011, and 12.9% in fiscal year 2012. The increase was partially offset by the end of federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) so adding together Chapter 70 and ARRA, the increase was effectively 5.1% in 2011 and 10.7% in 2012. Actual net school spending increased more slowly, and was 6.45% above required in fiscal year 2010, 4.0% the following year, and projected to be only 1.6% above in fiscal year 2012 (before a mid-year additional appropriation discussed in the finance section below.) In fiscal years 2010 and 2011, actual expenditures from local appropriations were slightly higher than estimated.

**Table 2: Everett Public Schools  
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending  
Fiscal Years 2010–2012**

	FY10		FY11		FY12
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
<b>Expenditures</b>					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	51,641,311	52,325,714	54,604,260	55,039,760	54,186,360
by municipality	22,749,629	22,459,485	22,923,326	22,236,506	23,699,451
Total from local appropriations	74,390,940	74,785,199	77,527,586	78,276,266	77,885,811
From revolving funds and grants	---	13,492,036	---	10,085,028	---
Total expenditures	---	88,277,235	---	88,361,294	---
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	33,241,384	---	38,091,277	42,993,143
Required local contribution	---	25,931,368	---	25,957,484	25,027,814
Required net school spending**	---	59,172,752	---	64,048,761	68,020,957
Actual net school spending	---	63,000,468	---	66,594,999	69,140,820
Over/under required (\$)	---	3,827,716	---	2,546,238	1,119,863
Over/under required (%)	---	6.45	---	4.0	1.6
<p>*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.</p> <p>**Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.</p> <p>Sources: FY10, FY11 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.</p> <p>Data retrieved on September 20, 2012.</p>					

Overall, since 2007 the gap between district ELA and math MCAS scores and those of the state has been decreasing. For example, in 2007 in ELA the overall percentage of students scoring proficient or higher was 48 percent compared to the state proficiency rate of 66 percent (data not in a table). In 2011 in ELA, the overall percentage of students scoring proficient or higher was 57 percent compared to the state proficiency rate of 69 percent (see Tables C1 in Appendix C). In both subjects, over the five test administrations from 2007–2011 proficiency rates for “all students” have been improving: 9 percentage points higher in ELA and 11 percentage points higher in math.

However, Everett's students lagged behind their peers statewide in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10 in ELA and in grades 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10 in math. Median SGPs in ELA and math were in the moderate range at every grade level, except for grade 7 where student growth was low in ELA in 2010 and in math in 2010 and 2011. Areas of concern include chronically low math achievement in grades 7 and 8 (see the second Curriculum and Instruction finding) and a large gap between the proficiency rates of students with disabilities in Everett and those of their peers statewide (see the second Student Support finding).

## ***Findings***

### **Leadership and Governance**

**The Everett Public Schools are coping with rapidly growing enrollment, including students with diverse needs such as students from low-income families. The school committee and superintendent have made strides in establishing a positive learning environment and appropriate student support systems including a pre-kindergarten program and a variety of after-school and dropout-prevention programs.**

#### *United Focus on a Positive Learning Environment*

According to interviews and documentation, the school committee and superintendent are united in their focus on providing the best possible learning environment for all Everett students. The district's Strategic and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are based on ten elements for student success. Individual SIPs are adjusted annually, stress student learning, and are formally approved by the school committee. Certain district and school goals and student activities and accomplishments are regularly communicated to the community.

#### *District Challenges*

In an interview with the review team, the superintendent described the challenges that the district faces, including rapid growth and demographic changes. For example, district enrollment increased by more than 900 students between 2007 and 2012. In interviews, school committee members said that students with disabilities, students from low-income families, and English language learners are enrolling in Everett in increasing numbers.<sup>3</sup> They added that high student mobility was a challenge.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Pre-Kindergarten Program*

As an integral part of setting the conditions for student success, the district is committed to a tuition-free pre-kindergarten program. Full integration of students with and without disabilities is a key component of this program. According to administrators, the district's special education department uses the pre-kindergarten program as a means to identify students suspected of having disabilities and to initiate the special education process. The program is also a source of support for English language learners. Administrators told the review team that the district

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<sup>3</sup> ESE data shows that from 2007 to 2011 the percentage of students with disabilities in Everett increased from 15.0 percent to 16.0 percent; the percentage of students from low-income families increased from 53.7 percent to 69.5 percent; and the percentage of ELLs increased from 8.7 percent to 11.6 percent.

<sup>4</sup> ESE data shows that mobility in Everett is substantially higher than statewide; for instance, in 2011 the churn rate in Everett was 19.4 percent compared to 9.5 percent statewide; the intake (transfer-in) rate in Everett was 12.0 percent compared to 4.2 percent statewide; and the stability rate in Everett was 87.2 percent compared to 95.5 percent statewide. For information on these rates see the reports on the ESE website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/mobility/>.

followed up on the findings in a 2010 Coordinated Program Review (CPR)<sup>5</sup> conducted by ESE by hiring additional staff and brought its ELL and special education programs into full compliance with regulation.

#### *District's Commitment to Student Learning*

The district's commitment to creating a clean, caring, positive environment for student learning was evident in multiple interviews. In visits to the schools, the review team was impressed with the condition and maintenance of the facilities. The superintendent has committed to providing a social worker in each school and student safety and security are clear priorities. The schools provide a wide variety of after-school programs on-site for students. MCAS support is available in every school for struggling students. A health center located at the high school serves students and families and the high school offers credit recovery and alternative education programs to prevent students from dropping out.

#### *District and Community Pride*

The district makes a concerted effort to celebrate student success. In an interview, parent council representatives told the review team that the district recognizes student accomplishments and that this has made a difference in their lives. Student successes in academics, sports, and the arts are regularly celebrated at school committee meetings, and in a specific line item the district budget allocates resources for publicizing student accomplishments in the media.

In several interviews, it became clear that a great sense of pride pervades the district in its efforts to help all its students succeed and achieve and to share their successes with the community. School committee members stressed that MCAS tests success and a "great education" were high priorities. The superintendent told the review team several times that he and district staff are dedicated to meeting the challenges of a growing population and providing for diverse student needs.

With a rapidly growing and changing population, it is clear why the school committee and superintendent have devoted resources and developed programs to strengthen foundations and provide support systems to promote student success. The review team found a unified commitment to building a strong environment for student learning. These efforts are essential for maximizing the learning potential of all Everett's students.

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<sup>5</sup> The 2010 CPR about the Everett Public Schools may be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2010/0093.pdf>.

**Strategic planning, curriculum development, instruction, assessment, teacher evaluation, and professional development are in development, but are insufficiently developed and unlinked.**

#### *The Strategic Plan and the School Improvement Plans*

The district's fiscal year 2011 Strategic Plan was developed with the help of an external consultant and incorporates the individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The individual SIPs are similar because they are based on ten common elements. In addition, the director of curriculum consults with the principals on district priorities. Nevertheless, there are distinct differences in the plans. For example, the kindergarten through grade 8 and grades 9 through 12 plans contain different modes and frequencies for formative and summative assessment. The superintendent told the review team that the SIPs are developed by each school and brought to the school committee by the principals for review and discussion. School committee members said that there is a "general correspondence" between the SIPs and the Strategic Plan. The superintendent told the review team that the process needs some improvement. There are no timelines or benchmarks for the goals in the SIPs and the professional development plan is not linked to the Strategic Plan. In an examination of the SIPs the review team found no clear common priorities.

#### *Curriculum and Instruction*

Several interviewees told the review team there were wide variations in curricular content and instruction across the district's schools and levels. Curriculum alignment and vertical articulation were described by interviewees as "works in progress." No formal curriculum review process exists. The district does not have a commonly understood definition of high-quality instruction, and instructional strategies need further development. The review team's classroom observations indicated little evidence of high-quality instructional practices such as promotion of student engagement, and higher-order thinking, small-group work, and tiered instruction.

#### *District Data Specialist and District Data Committee*

Everett has engaged a district data specialist and established a district data committee to support principals and teachers. The superintendent and assistant superintendents told the review team that data would enlighten curriculum development and revision. According to administrators, the ultimate goal was to create professional learning communities to facilitate the use of data to drive instruction and address data-based findings. Teachers' association representatives said that while teachers were provided data they did not know how to use it. In interviews, principals concurred that teachers needed training in data analysis. Interviewees said that high-school teachers needed training on formative assessment. According to interviewees, there is currently little use of data to evaluate programs.

#### *Early Adopter of the ESE Educator Evaluation Model*

The district volunteered to be an early adopter of the ESE educator evaluation model. Interviewees said that unlike the new evaluation system, student performance is not a component

of the present district teacher evaluation process. Principals told the review team that the transition to the new evaluation system would likely be difficult, especially for high-school teachers. Teachers' association representatives anticipated that the process would be a challenge for veteran teachers.

### *Professional Development*

The district provides significant time and resources for professional development, but needs a more targeted approach. Teachers' association representatives said that individual school professional development programs do not have focus. Principals said that the professional development program was not based on a needs assessment and that there were time constraints on the after-school professional development program. In a focus group, teachers said that professional development would be more effective if it were related to student needs by grade level. District administrators said that professional development for teachers should include more training in data analysis and implementation. Many interviewees said that the district needed to create a matrix to organize a comprehensive professional development program.

### *Conclusion*

While the Everett school committee, superintendent, and staff have established some of the components to raise student achievement in the district, these components are not networked into a system. Strategic planning, instruction, assessment of programs, teacher evaluation, and professional development are insufficiently developed and unlinked. The district does not have infrastructure to complete and connect these systems in order to ensure that they function effectively.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

**Most curriculum documents do not have essential components such as resources, instructional strategies, and assessments, and the curriculum is not fully aligned vertically and horizontally.**

### *Curriculum in Kindergarten through Grade 8*

The curriculum documents in Everett consist of maps for kindergarten through grade 8 and guides for grades 9 through 12. The monthly K–8 English Language Arts (ELA) maps include essential questions, mastery skills, and higher-order thinking assessments. The ELA maps have no instructional strategies, and resources are included only for grades 6 through 8. The K–8 mathematics maps include an introductory “Overarching Goal for the Year” as well as monthly learning standards, essential questions, thinking-level objectives, mastery objectives, thinking-level assessments, mastery-level assessments in grades 7 and 8, vocabulary, and resources. There are no instructional strategies. The K–8 science maps include an overall state standard, “All Skills of Inquiry Strands,” as well as essential questions, mastery skills, and higher-order thinking assessments. No instructional strategies and resources are provided. Many of the maps

include two to three higher-order thinking assessments; however, there are no common assessments, formative or summative, to provide evidence of skill acquisition and mastery.

### *Curriculum in Grades 9–12*

The grades 9 through 12 guides at the high-school level include most of the following components: department mission statement, expectations for student learning and by grade level, essential questions, thinking-level objectives, mastery-level objectives, instructional strategies, assessments, texts, and resources. A recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges review of the high school found that the curriculum guides had a common format with some variations. Specific references to the state frameworks were not provided in some domains. Interviewees said that pacing guides were under development in 2011–2012, incorporating the Common Core standards, and the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) was assisting the district with this initiative. The review team observed posted schoolwide learning expectations in most high-school classrooms, but it was not clear how these were used because they were not referenced in high-school course-catalogue outlines or curriculum documents.

### *Curriculum Alignment*

According to administrators and teachers, the curriculum is aligned horizontally in kindergarten through grade 6 and vertically in grades 7 through 12 through an informal process. One of the action steps in the district's Strategic Plan is to "reconfigure curriculum committees and work to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment." Currently, the K–6 curriculum is aligned across the grade levels through grade-level monthly meetings led by elementary school principals. Interviewees said that monthly departmental meetings in grades 7 through 12 contribute to the vertical alignment of the curriculum, but there were problems with the smooth articulation from grade 6 to grade 7 and from grade 8 to grade 9.

The curriculum documents examined by the review team were comprehensive and substantive. For example, one document consisted of 145 pages. However, the format for the documents varied and some essential components were missing, such as links to the frameworks, instructional strategies, common assessments, and in some cases, suggested resources. The K–8 curriculum maps did not have instructional strategies to help teachers know how to teach the curriculum.

### *Conclusion*

Everett is devoting professional development time to alignment of the district curriculum with the state frameworks. Many teachers, especially those new to the district, have not been trained in data analysis. Such training would promote the district's ability to use assessment findings to develop and revise student learning expectations. Without a uniform format for curriculum documentation including all essential components, training in and opportunity to use data analysis to identify and address student needs, and specific timelines and identified staff to review and revise the curriculum, it will be difficult for the district to meet the students' diverse learning needs.



**Student achievement in mathematics as measured by the MCAS test is chronically low in grades 7 and 8. Insufficient supervision in math, less time devoted to math instruction at the middle-school level than at the elementary level, unaligned curriculum between grades 6 and 7, insufficient curriculum review, and an absence of common assessments in math hinder improved student achievement.**

*Absence of Formative Data*

According to ESE data, during the four test administrations from 2008 to 2011, more than one third of both grade 7 and grade 8 students in Everett scored within the *Warning* level on the MCAS tests in mathematics. In interviews, administrators and teachers told the review team that they relied mostly upon anecdotal data and direct observation to assess student performance and needs because there were no common mathematics assessments in grades 7 and 8. According to administrators and teachers, the school data teams review an item analysis of the MCAS results annually, but there is little further discussion at the district level about how well the curriculum promotes student learning in mathematics. An absence of formative data hinders these discussions. When asked by the review team about the effectiveness of the Holt mathematics series at the middle-school level, interviewees were unable to provide any substantive evidence. The district has not formally evaluated the Holt program, and does not have the required evaluation strategies and tools.

*Absence of a Process and Tools to Analyze Data and Evaluate Programs and Decreased Instructional Time in Math*

Interviewees said that the absence of a mathematics department chair and of consistent supervision and coaching of teachers, and the decrease in the instructional time for mathematics from 300 to 400 minutes per week in grade 6 to 225 minutes per week in grades 7 and 8 have contributed to low student performance. Teachers of grades 7 and 8 mathematics are monitored or “facilitated” by two teacher leaders, one at each grade level, neither of whom supervises or evaluates teachers. According to interviewees, two mathematics teacher leaders are released from their regular teaching duties once each month to coach teachers; however, teachers and administrators said that this provision was inadequate. According to interviewees, the alignment of the mathematics curriculum between grade 6 and grade 7 takes place through an informal, *ad hoc* process and there is little direct and regular communication between grade 6 and grade 7 teachers.

As described below in the first Assessment finding, although Everett has begun to focus increasing attention on improving its student assessment practices, it does not have common assessments in mathematics, a formal data analysis process, and program evaluation strategies and tools. There are fewer instructional minutes devoted to mathematics at the middle-school level than at the elementary level and middle-school teachers have inconsistent supervision and coaching support. Without a leader in mathematics with responsibility for supervision and evaluation of teachers, development of common assessments; and review and revision of the

curriculum, it will be difficult for the district to improve student performance, especially at the middle-school level.

**There is little district infrastructure to support curriculum development and renewal, including defined leadership roles, systematic plans, and processes with timelines.**

Everett does not have a centrally directed process for curriculum development and revision. When asked about curriculum leadership in the district, interviewees said that the elementary principals and the curriculum director are the curriculum leaders for kindergarten through grade 6 and the high school department chairs are the curriculum leaders in grades 9 through 12. Teachers told the review team that principals attempt to provide curriculum oversight in grades 7 and 8. They added that decisions are usually “run by the assistant superintendent in charge of this area.”

According to interviewees, elementary principals in coordination with the curriculum director are in charge of textbook adoption, and elementary lead teachers help to choose the pilot programs for their schools. At the high school, department chairs make curricular and programmatic decisions.

Everett has adopted programs in ELA and mathematics. The elementary ELA curriculum is based on the Harcourt Trophies program in kindergarten through grade 6, the Pearson Prentice Hall Literature program in grades 7 through 10, and Keys to Literacy in grades 4 through 9. The elementary mathematics curriculum is based on the Harcourt Math program in kindergarten through grade 6 and Holt Courses 1 and 2 in grades 7 and 8. In addition to the common ELA program, the elementary schools use a variety of other programs that differ from school to school. For example, the Lafayette and English schools are piloting Laying the Foundation, an advanced placement course preparatory program. The Keverian School is piloting the Bay State Reading initiative in 2011–2012. One elementary school is using the Links program and three elementary schools are using Writer’s Express in grade 4.

According to the district’s Strategic Plan, core subject curricula, “...will be revisited annually to fully incorporate the Learning Standards of the Frameworks into curriculum both horizontally and vertically”; however, the district does not have a formal curriculum development and renewal process and standard procedures for evaluating the adequacy of adopted programs. Interviewees referred to an “ongoing” review taking place informally at grade-level and departmental meetings, but this process is decentralized and does not have cohesiveness and coherence. The district also relies on grade-level and departmental meetings to align the curriculum; while this structure serves to some extent for horizontal alignment it cannot accommodate vertical alignment which requires teacher representation from multiple grade levels. The district does not have infrastructure and a formal plan for vertical alignment of curricula, particularly at the critical junctures between grades 6 and 7 and grades 8 and 9.

In Everett, curriculum development, review, and revision are decentralized, informal processes conducted by grade-level, school-based teams at the elementary level and departmental teams at the high-school level. Curriculum leadership is diffuse rather than focused and the process for

decision-making is unclear, even to those within the district. The Strategic Plan refers to a governing curriculum council, but interviewees said that this was a desire and not yet a reality. The curriculum is determined to an extent by experimentation with pilot programs, rather than through data analysis and research. Student achievement is unlikely to improve in the absence of more centralized direction and of a plan and timeline for review and revision of the curriculum with specific timelines and responsibilities.

**The district does not have a shared definition of high-quality instruction. The format for lesson planning varies by school and there is little common planning time for most teachers. In observed classes teachers were prepared and classroom content was age and grade appropriate. The range of instructional practices in observed classes was limited and there was little evidence of research-based best practices.**

#### *Definition of High-Quality Instruction*

When asked by the review team about the definition of high-quality instruction in Everett, interviewees' responses varied. Some said that the district did not have an explicit definition while others described certain aspects such as engagement, classroom management, meeting students' needs, and data-driven instruction. Teachers told the review team that they were using flexible grouping strategies to meet a range of student needs. According to the evidence from classroom observations and interviews with teachers and administrators, there is no common understanding of best instructional practices. District documents refer to differentiated instruction, common planning time, professional learning communities, tiered instruction, higher-order thinking skills, small-group settings, and data-driven curriculum. In observations, however, many of these characteristics were not evident.

#### *Common Planning Time and Lesson Plans*

Administrators and teachers said that there was very little common planning time for teachers to review student achievement data and develop lessons together. According to administrators, common planning time varies from school to school. In some schools without common planning time, teachers voluntarily use some of their personal preparation time for this purpose. According to the Strategic Plan, Everett was developing professional learning communities in 2011–2012; but there was little reference to them in interviews and administrators said that they were under development. According to interviewees, walkthroughs were conducted in most elementary schools; however, under the terms of the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, to be used as part of a teacher's evaluation an observation must be at least 20 minutes long and must be preceded by a pre-conference and followed by a post-conference, which precludes making references to walkthroughs in evaluations.<sup>6</sup> Teachers throughout the district submit lesson plans regularly, some weekly and some bi-weekly. Principals or assistant principals review and endorse the plans in kindergarten through grade 6, and department chairs and

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<sup>6</sup> The collective bargaining agreement with teachers (see "Teacher Evaluation Process") is available at <http://educatorcontracts.doemass.org/view.aspx?recno=80>.

principals review and endorse the plans in grades 7 through 12. The lesson plan design varies from school to school, and there are few common elements.

### *Observations*

The review team observed instruction in 75 district classrooms: 35 at the elementary level (kindergarten through grade 6), 19 at the middle-school level (grades 7 and 8), and 21 at the high-school level (grades 9 through 12). The observations averaged 20 minutes in length. All review team members used ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standards-based teaching and learning to record their observations. The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objective, use of class time, content learning, instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, instructional pacing, student thinking, student groups, and use of student assessments. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form.

In all the classroom observations conducted by the review team, it was evident that teachers were prepared and classroom content was age and grade appropriate.

### *Classroom Climate*

In the domain of classroom climate, clear behavioral expectations and respectful relationships between teachers and students were evident in 94 percent of the observed classes.

### *Learning Objective*

In the category of learning objective, the team found evidence of posted or verbalized learning objectives in 74 percent of the elementary-level, 58 percent of the middle-school-level, and only 38 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. Some teachers posted an essential question such as "How are a square and a triangle similar and different?" instead of a learning objective such as "Students will be able to determine the difference between two shapes using mathematics related vocabulary." Both direct the teacher, but only the objective is measurable and can be used by the teacher to assess the effectiveness of the lesson, and by the students to assess what and how well they have learned. Research indicates that students' self-evaluations are the most powerful assessments.

### *Use of Class Time*

In the category of use of class time, teachers were prepared, explained instructions, and had established routines for smooth transitions in 81 percent of the elementary-level, 68 percent of the middle-school-level, and in 68 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. For example, in one observed class, students completing a circuit of an electric current were provided with all necessary materials, and the transitions from small-group work to independent work and from independent work to whole-group instruction were smooth.

### *Content Learning*

In the category of content learning, student engagement with content through a variety of instructional strategies was evident in only 16 percent of the middle-school-level and 24 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. Students were not disruptive, but appeared passive and apathetic. For example, in one observed class the teacher stood at the front of the room and explained the concept of volume of cylinders while students sat listening. As the teacher lectured and demonstrated the concept, students were required to participate only by answering a few questions posed by the teacher. This mode is sometimes referred to as “chalk and talk.” In contrast, in one observed class, the teacher had students perform calculations using their journal entries to support their findings. This teacher also used kinesthetic and visual modalities to clarify the lesson. This teacher’s style, however, was not the norm in observed classes.

The review team found evidence of students participating in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness in only 3 percent of the elementary-level, 5 percent of the middle-school-level, and 9 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. In almost all observed classes, students were all doing the same thing despite the diversity of the student population. The learning in most classrooms was exclusively in the auditory mode, but research shows that students learn best through multiple modalities, including visual and kinesthetic.

### *Instructional Techniques*

According to data from the observations, whole-group instruction was highly common in Everett classrooms. The review team observed whole-group instruction in 68 percent of all observed classes. In terms of various instructional techniques, few teachers had students use Smart Boards to show their thinking. The review team did observe some teachers who served as facilitators, by questioning, probing and encouraging students while checking for understanding and circulating around the room.

### *Activation of Higher-Order Thinking*

In the category of higher-order thinking, students were observed to be generating questions in just 5 percent of both the middle-school-level and high-school-level classes observed. Students were observed to be forming predictions, developing arguments, or reflecting on their own thinking and progress in very few Everett classrooms. A notably good example of higher-order thinking was observed in one high-school class in which students interpreted a film and then provided an analysis of the content. In another class, students were asked to interpret a passage read to them by the teacher. In another high-school-level class, students rated their own work with an open-response rubric. However, these practices were uncommon.

### *Instructional Pacing*

Instructional pacing was appropriate in 79 percent of the elementary-level, 66 percent of the middle-school-level, and 43 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. Observers noted less time on task in some high-school-level classes and an absence of urgency.

### *Student Thinking*

In the category of student thinking, students were observed to be expressing their ideas and thinking, in 56 percent of the elementary level, 32 percent of the middle-school-level, and 19 percent of the high-school level-classes observed. Observers found evidence of students engaged in structures that advance their thinking, such as “think-pair-share” or “turn-and-talk,” in 41 percent of the elementary-level, 16 percent of the middle-school-level, and 9 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. Overall, the review team found that teachers did most of the talking and very few student voices were heard. Most classes were teacher directed and centered. For example, in one middle-school class, the teacher had the students read their homework responses derived from the textbook and told them that they were doing a “good job.” A lesson on respiration had no provision for lab work, or even a simple balloon-blowing demonstration. The teacher explained the concept verbally without using supplemental materials, handouts, schemas, or diagrams.

### *Use of Student Assessments*

In the category of student assessments, teachers used at least one informal assessment in 33 percent of the elementary level, 30 percent of the middle-school-level, and 25 percent of the high-school-level classes observed. Teachers were observed to be adjusting instruction based on informal or formal assessments in only 9 percent of the high-school-level classes observed and students were observed to be revising their work based on feedback given by the teacher in only 19 percent of the high-school-level classes visited. The review team observed one teacher moving throughout the class, checking for both understanding and completion, and adjusting instruction for individual students. A few teachers were observed to be using an “exit ticket” to assess student understanding of the lesson toward the end of class. This technique gave the teachers feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction.

### *Conclusion*

In its observations of classes the review team saw few promising research-based instructional strategies, such as fluid grouping, differentiated instruction, tiered instruction, student-centered learning, and informal assessment in regular use by Everett teachers. Everett articulates the need for these components in its Strategic Plan; however, these strategies were not observed by the review team to a significant extent. Everett will be unable to increase student achievement in a diverse population without common use of best instructional practices.

## **Assessment**

**Since 2010–2011, the district has begun to focus increasing attention on improving its student assessment practices, programs, and procedures, particularly in kindergarten through grade 8.**

### *Student Assessment a Priority Need*

Key district documents, including the 2011–2012 Strategic Plan and the School Improvement Plans of Everett’s seven schools, identify assessment as an area in need of significant attention. The Strategic Plan indicates that specific improvements to data collection and dissemination policies, data-based decision-making practices, and data-analysis competencies and applications are priority needs across the district. In addition, it states that the Strategic Plans of the district and individual schools should be “coordinated to provide integrated use of internal and external resources.” The Strategic Plan further indicates that district systems for school support and intervention should be established to “ensure the capacity to collect, analyze, share and use data to drive decision-making” and to “coordinate assessment district-wide” in order to create a “unified data collection” system across all the district’s schools and grade levels.

### *District and School Data Teams*

Through interviews with administrators and teachers, and a review of numerous relevant district and school documents, the review team found evidence that progress has been made, particularly at the elementary level, in advancing the assessment goals articulated in the Strategic Plan. Interviewees explained that with support from the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC), the Everett Public Schools created a district data team in September 2010. This team’s work is based on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s District Data Team Toolkit, which is designed around a theory of action that provides a foundation for data use. According to the district data team’s 2010–2011 summary report, the purpose of the team is to “create and sustain a culture of inquiry and data use in order to improve instruction and student achievement.” Subsequently, during the 2011–2012 school year school-based data teams were created in the district’s seven schools.

Administrators explained that each of the school-based data teams has representatives on the district data team and that members of all teams have received some data-analysis training provided either through the DSAC or from Research for Better Teaching. Members of the district data team said that the team has thus far focused much of its attention on mathematics, analyzing student MCAS performance data in the aggregate and by school, in hopes of developing strategic responses to the district’s low student achievement results, especially in grades 7 and 8. Although the team has made some recommendations, such as grade-level professional development in mathematics, it appears that its work is still in the preliminary stages. According to its 2010–2011 summary report, for example, the district data team’s next steps are as follows: continue the Everett data team, determine specific areas of focus, continue to investigate the data and root causes, investigate initiatives that will give us the greatest impact on student performance, and form subcommittees to look at various topics.

### *Progress in Collecting K–8 Student Performance Data*

The district has made some progress in its efforts to collect more and better student performance data. According to principals, agreement was reached to add the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to the district’s K–8 standard assessment battery, which includes the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Some elementary schools have also adopted or are piloting other standardized assessments that include Key Math, Think Central, Fast ForWord, Success Maker, and Scholastic Quarterly Inventory. Test results data are now more readily accessible to teachers through the district’s X-2 student information system and expanded Data Warehouse.

Elementary school teachers and administrators told the review team that enhanced data collection and use is enabling them to more accurately identify student learning strengths and needs, that analysis of data is an increasing focus of grade-level teacher team meetings, and that more appropriate interventions, supports, and groupings are thereby facilitated. The review team noted, however, that progress thus far has been limited primarily to kindergarten through grade 8. At Everett High School, with the exception of MCAS tests and common mid-term and final examinations, which according to teachers do not have any consistent or substantial data analysis review procedures, there was little evidence of comparable efforts or concrete plans to systematically collect and examine relevant student performance data, make it readily accessible to staff, and use it monitor student performance, improve curriculum and instruction, or determine individual needs.

### *Collecting Data to Evaluate Program Effectiveness*

The district has also begun to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of some of its programs and services. For example, during the 2010–2011 school year the district conducted a “School Climate” survey, an extensive undertaking that focused on the educational climate within the schools. Parents, staff, and students were invited to complete a detailed online survey that addressed numerous aspects of the school and educational environment. These included: academic preparation, student support, school leadership, faculty relations and support, parent engagement, safety and behavior, and school operations. Survey results were subsequently made available through the websites of the district as well as of each of its schools. In the fall of 2011, the district administered an “Opening of the Schools” survey to all Everett’s teachers and administrators. The survey generated a staff response rate of over 70 percent, and the results, which were disaggregated by individual school, provided the professional community with the opportunity to evaluate key processes and procedures surrounding the opening of schools and to give relevant, timely feedback to central office administrators and district leaders. A full report of findings was subsequently distributed to all staff.

### *Conclusion*

Despite the fact that much essential work clearly remains to be done, during the two years preceding the review the district has demonstrated recognition of the need to develop significantly improved student assessment practices and procedures and has begun to develop



some of the infrastructure and key components necessary for it to ultimately achieve the important assessment goals articulated in its Strategic Plan.

**Despite efforts to improve assessment policies and practices, the district currently does not have a comprehensive, unified, centrally coordinated K–12 assessment system with the capacity to continuously collect and analyze relevant data and use it to effectively monitor student progress, improve classroom instruction, and evaluate academic programs and services.**

#### *Efforts to Advance Assessment Goals*

Although efforts are being made within the district to advance the assessment goals articulated in the Strategic Plan, progress has been slow and uneven. Much of the work being done to improve assessment policies and practices does not have central planning and coordination. The Strategic Plan focuses much attention on the need to develop and coordinate districtwide assessment practices and procedures, but neither directly assigns leadership responsibility or authority for doing so, nor establishes specific strategies or measurable timelines for its implementation. The role and direction of the district data team remains unclear and undefined. Its strategic goals and objectives, operational mission, and scope of authority are unclear. Members of the data team were uncertain whether their committee’s function was to be advisory, consultative, or directive and they acknowledged that at present there is no formal articulation or coordination between the data team and the seven school-based data teams. Further, both teachers and administrators indicated that because little professional development training has been provided, teachers have limited proficiency in data analysis.

#### *School-Based Approach to Change*

In the absence of a centralized, carefully coordinated process with a well-defined, unified set of policies and procedures, the district appears to rely on an essentially decentralized, site-based approach to implementing change. Initiatives, including those for assessment and curriculum, often emerge primarily from and are embedded in the individual schools rather than being generated or coordinated at the district level. For example, principals are authorized to introduce or pilot new assessment programs in their own schools without a clear or uniform protocol for program evaluation or subsequent districtwide implementation. One principal described the schools as functioning more like independent “silos” with their own differing sets of assessment policies, practices, and procedures, rather than integrated components of a unified and fully coordinated system. School and district leaders acknowledged that this absence of coordination creates operational inefficiencies and slows the rate of progress and change.

#### *Reliance on Summative Assessments*

In addition, interviewees reported that the district relies extensively on the student performance data generated through the three standardized, primarily summative assessments (MAP, DRA, and Gates-MacGinitie) administered at intervals of generally only one to four times annually, in kindergarten through grade 8. They explained that there is currently an absence of common

benchmark and formative curriculum-based testing in every subject area and grade level. Consequently, the district's capacity to generate and continuously collect student performance data that is comprehensive, timely, and reliable is limited, as is their corresponding ability to use data to improve instruction, modify curriculum, measure academic progress, and meet student needs.

#### *Situation at the Time of the Review*

Since 2010–2011, the district has made continuous progress in improving some of its assessment policies and practices (see the second Curriculum and Instruction finding); however, the process has been relatively slow and inefficient and the results have been uneven and uncoordinated. Despite the creation of several key components, such as the district and school data teams, and the Strategic Plan's clearly stated intentions to do so, the district has not yet created a comprehensive, standardized, and centrally coordinated K–12 assessment system. Such a unified, integrated system is an essential mechanism for the development of consistent, clearly defined policies and uniform practices for the expanded and continuous collection and analysis of a wide range of student performance data. It will provide school leaders and staff with the tools needed to more accurately monitor student academic progress, make appropriate and timely improvements to classroom instruction, curriculum, support services and programs, and most importantly, to create improved learning opportunities and outcomes for every student in the Everett Public Schools.

## **Human Resources and Professional Development**

**Teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Most teachers were evaluated too infrequently, and the evaluations that were completed did not encourage either the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. Everett is engaged as an early adopter of the ESE educator evaluation model.**

#### *Administrators' Evaluations*

The review team examined the evaluations of all 19 school and district administrators and 42 randomly selected teachers from all seven district schools. The administrative evaluation procedure was not aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership formerly in effect.<sup>7</sup> The review team found that administrator evaluations were generic and largely formative in nature. There was no summative component. In addition, these evaluations did not have adequate supporting evidence, sufficiently detailed documentation, and explicit and direct connection to the goals in the district's Strategic Plan or School Improvement Plans. Of particular concern to the review team was the absence of specific and meaningful suggestions

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<sup>7</sup> The Principles of Effective Teaching accompanied the regulations on evaluation of teachers and administrators (at 603 CMR 35.00) that were in effect through the 2010-2011 year; on June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to substitute a new set of regulations on the evaluation of educators.

and recommendations intended to promote professional growth, improve teaching and learning, and enhance overall effectiveness.

### *Teachers' Evaluations*

The teacher evaluation procedure in Everett's collective bargaining agreement did not conform with M.G.L. C71 Section 38, which requires that teachers without professional status be evaluated at least once each year and teachers with professional status be evaluated at least every other year. According to Everett's teacher evaluation procedure, teachers without professional status were evaluated annually with 1-3 observations each year. According to the procedure, before conducting a formal observation, administrators must provide teachers notification. These observations were preceded by a pre-observation conference and followed by a post-observation conference. The teacher evaluation procedure did not have a summative component and did not require recommendations for professional development.

Professional status teachers were evaluated in the first year of a three-year evaluation cycle. In the second year, they identified an improvement goal aligned with the Strategic Plan and their School Improvement Plan. An administrator reviewed the status of the goal with the teacher at the end of the academic year; however, there was no formal determination on the accomplishment of the goal. In its review of a sample of teacher evaluations, the review team found that teachers in only two of the seven schools had aligned their goals with the Strategic Plan and School Improvement Plans. For the third year of the evaluation cycle, the teachers' collective bargaining agreement describes a continuation of the informal professional growth phase begun in year two, at the end of which the teacher provides the supervisor with his or her own evaluation of the achievement of the goals the two of them set. The collective bargaining agreement does not provide for any observations for years two or three.<sup>8</sup> In interviews, teachers told the review team that their evaluations contained little feedback and were not helpful in improving their instruction. They added that they did not know how well they were meeting professional expectations because their evaluations were based only on announced classroom observations and did not encompass all their professional work.

### *Situation at the Time of the Review*

Everett has not had rigorous and comprehensive evaluation procedures for both administrators and teachers. The review team found little evidence that the teacher evaluation procedure was designed to enhance teacher competencies, provide them with assistance and support, and hold them accountable for teaching and learning. Administrators told the review team that they rely more on informal walkthroughs, that they are unable to document, to assess the effectiveness of instruction.

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<sup>8</sup> See Article 9 and "Teacher Evaluation Process" at <http://educatorcontracts.doemass.org/view.aspx?recno=80>.

**The professional development program in Everett is largely site-based rather than centralized. While the district-determined program is based on the priorities of the Strategic Plan and is well organized and delivered, the site-based program does not have focus, continuity, and explicit connection to district priorities and goals.**

#### *District-Determined Professional Development Program*

The curriculum director is responsible for the district-determined professional development program in Everett. In 2011–2012, the district conducted a “Teachers’ University” on two full days in September and November 2011. The topics included the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation, NEASC evaluation planning, and the Common Core of Learning. The district published fall and winter catalogs of teacher-presented professional development programs offered after school, on Saturdays, and during school vacations. The district organized and directed monthly K–8 horizontal grade-level meetings intended to align the ELA and mathematics curricula with the Common Core of Learning and sponsored other sessions in fulfillment of Strategic Plan priorities, including training in data analysis through the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC). In interviews, teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the value and relevancy of the district-determined professional development program.

#### *School-Based Professional Development*

Monthly school-based professional development is determined primarily by the principals and varies widely from school to school. For example, English focused on student progress, Lafayette focused on coteaching and differentiating instruction, Keverian focused on Open Circle, Whittier focused on analysis of MCAS tests performance, and Webster focused on formative assessment. In interviews, teachers told the review team that school-based professional development did not have thorough planning, continuity, and explicit alignment with the Strategic Plan. They added that school-based professional development sessions were loosely organized and directed and said that minutes were neither required nor kept. According to the School Climate Survey, 31 percent of the teachers responding were highly dissatisfied with school-based professional development.

#### *Professional Development Required by the Teachers’ Collective Bargaining Agreement*

The teachers’ collective bargaining agreement requires teachers to complete 25 hours of professional development in addition to the two “Teacher University” days and monthly school-based sessions. The district sponsors 10, 90-minute professional development sessions on Thursday afternoons to help teachers fulfill this obligation. Teachers told the review team that traffic congestion made it virtually impossible for them to arrive punctually at the school sites where the sessions were held, reducing the allotted professional development time by up to 20 minutes. Principals told the review team that teachers who fulfill the 25-hour requirement by subscribing to approved external courses and workshops are excused from the Thursday sessions. They went on to say that the impact of these sessions was greatly reduced when not all of the appropriate teachers were in attendance.

## *Conclusion*

Everett has made a strong effort to require and provide professional development. The district-determined program is based on Strategic Plan priorities and is well organized and delivered. The monthly school-based sessions and 25-hour provisions are diffuse, loosely organized, and of inconsistent quality. The district has many of the components of effective professional development, including time allocations and requirements; however, the school-based programs and 25-hour provisions do not have focus. Professional development is ineffective when it is not closely aligned with district and school priorities.

## **Student Support**

**Although not comparable to statewide rates, Everett's dropout and four-year cohort graduation rates compare favorably with those of similar districts. Everett has strong procedures for identifying students at risk and effective alternative-education and credit-recovery programs.**

### *Dropout and Graduation Rates*

While Everett's dropout and graduation rates for 2011 (see Table 3 below) do not compare with statewide rates, among districts with similar characteristics according to ESE criteria, Everett has

- the second highest four-year cohort graduation rate for 2011
- the sixth lowest dropout rate for 2011
- the second lowest dropout rate for 2009 and 2010 (data not in a table)

**Table 3:  
Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rates for Everett  
and Comparable Districts 2010–2011**

District	Four-Year Graduation Rate	District	Dropout Rate
State	83.4	State	2.7
<b>Everett</b>	<b>75.2</b>	<b>Everett</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Quincy	85.8	Quincy	2.3
Pittsfield	74.1	Pittsfield	3.1
Malden	74.6	Malden	3.6
Lowell	69.6	Lowell	8.1
Chicopee	69.7	Chicopee	5.5
Lynn	68.6	Lynn	4.6
Brockton	69.4	Brockton	6.0
Revere	70.6	Revere	4.2
Boston	64.4	Boston	6.4
Chelsea	54.6	Chelsea	5.8
<i>Source: ESE data</i>			

### *Teacher Assistance Teams*

In interviews with the review team, principals, counselors, and program directors described procedures and programs intended to lower dropout and increase graduation rates. According to interviewees, principals report monthly to the assistant superintendent for business and pupil personnel services on the progress of students in danger of repeating the year and students with excessive absence because these students are considered at high risk of dropping out. Their needs are discussed by school-based teacher assistance teams (TATs) consisting of the principal, counselor, teacher representatives, specialists, and in kindergarten through grade 8, the students' parents. Principals, teachers, and counselors said that the TATs review referred students' attendance and behavior records, assessment results, and grades. The TATs arrange for the provision of relevant regular education program interventions, including provisions such as targeted remedial instruction, personal counseling, and family assistance through the services of the adjustment counselor assigned to each school. The TATs refer students for an immediate evaluation under the special education law when a disability is suspected, or when regular program modifications have not produced expected improvement after a trial period of no longer than six weeks.

### *Alternative Education and Credit-Recovery Programs*

Everett High School offers alternative-education and credit-recovery programs to prevent students from dropping out. Central office administrators and counselors told the review team that the Success Academy was created in 2006 to meet the needs of students with poor grades, deficient credits, high rates of absence, and problems with self-regulation and compliance. The program offers small-group instruction, rendered by certified teachers, in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies, and individual and group counseling. Students also subscribe to electives outside the program and gradually are phased back into mainstream core subject area classes under the guidance of the program staff, which consists of four teachers and a guidance counselor. According to interviewees, 40 to 60 students, primarily in grades 10 through 12, are accommodated annually in the Success Academy.

Everett allows credit-deficient students to make up one or two courses each summer through a credit recovery program conducted by high school staff. Tuition is on a sliding scale. Central office administrators did not have a record of the number of students who rectified failures through the credit-recovery program, but all interviewees said that many stayed in school and graduated with their classes through this program, adding that it offered hope and a way forward.

### *High Student Mobility*

Central office administrators, principals, and counselors told the review team that although they had not conducted a formal analysis of the dropout population, mobile students accounted for a large proportion of the district's dropouts. Citing anecdotal evidence, they said that some immigrant families live temporarily with relatives until they find more suitable housing in

another community and others return to their countries of origin recurrently or permanently.<sup>9</sup> They added that family circumstances and changes in parental employment are also causes of high mobility. .

### *Commitment and Support of Staff*

Administrators, counselors, and teachers told the review team that Everett staff are personally committed to helping students stay in school and graduate. They cited many examples of administrators, teachers, counselors, and coaches, many of whom reside in Everett, extending themselves by tutoring students before and after school, securing resources for impoverished families, offering students encouragement and support, and recognizing and celebrating their accomplishments.

### *Conclusion*

Compared to the rates of communities with similar characteristics, Everett's dropout and graduation rates are relatively favorable. The district has a systematic procedure for identifying students at risk and effective alternative-education and credit-recovery programs. Although Everett has implemented strong procedures for identifying students at risk and effective dropout-prevention programs, it has not conducted a formal analysis to identify the characteristics and unmet needs of dropouts and mobile students in order to refine and improve services to them. This may jeopardize continuous progress in improving these rates.

**The district is evolving toward a progressive full-inclusion model for students with disabilities in order to improve their proficiency rates. This model has strong central office support, but there are challenges with having an adequate number of educators and supports, including common planning time. As a consequence, implementation currently varies widely from school to school, from grade to grade within a school, and even from class to class within a grade.**

### *Proficiency Rates*

There is a large gap between the proficiency rates of students with disabilities in Everett and those statewide. Between 2009 and 2011, that gap did not narrow. According to MCAS test data between 2009 and 2011, the share of Everett students with disabilities who scored proficient or higher in ELA was between 13 and 15 percent. In contrast, during this same time period, the statewide proficiency rates in ELA of students with disabilities were between 28 and 30 percent.. There was also a large gap in the proficiency rates of students with disabilities between the district and the state in mathematics. In Everett, between 2009 and 2011, the proficiency rates in math were between 7 and 9 percent, as compared with statewide rates in math proficiency between 20 and 22 percent.

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<sup>9</sup> But under ESE procedures, though students who move out of state are coded as dropouts when the school district does not know whether they are now enrolled in another school, students who move to another Massachusetts community who enroll in school are not counted as dropouts. See guidance on coding dropouts at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/guidelines.html>.

### *District's Commitment to Full Inclusion*

Central office administrators told the review team that the district is committed to full inclusion of students with disabilities. In interviews, the superintendent and other central office administrators said that isolating students from the mainstream is detrimental to their academic, social, and emotional development. One administrator told the review team that “the days of segregating special education students were over,” and that “teachers should be competent to teach all of the students and held accountable for doing it.”

Several administrators said that support services such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy should be rendered in regular education classrooms rather than in separate therapy rooms in order to normalize the experience for students with disabilities and broaden the application of these services to all students. This approach is consistent with Goal 5.2 of the district's Strategic Plan dated 2011–2012, which states the intent to “improve access to inclusion through reorganization of the special education department service delivery model into an integrated services model reflecting inclusion settings and learning centers.” In interviews with the review team, principals, program directors, and teachers showed an understanding of this goal and recognized that it had strong central office support. Special educators interviewed by the review team were enthusiastic about this goal and eager to move ahead.

In interviews, program directors, principals, and special educators described a variety of inclusive models, but it was clear that there were inconsistencies from school to school, from grade to grade within a school, and even from class to class within a grade. At the high school, special and regular education teachers coteach certain core courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies in classes that include students with and without disabilities. This had been the model for at least six years preceding the review. According to interviewees, some K–8 schools had a coteaching model, but they were only in certain classes and at certain grade levels. For example, the English School had a cotaught fourth grade class that was observed by the review team. In other schools, special education inclusion teachers served a number of students at various grade levels by assisting regular education teachers in their classrooms during the ELA and mathematics blocks. In some schools, other students joined students with disabilities for appropriate instruction rendered by a special educator in a reverse inclusion model. In other schools, classroom teachers worked with paraeducators under the indirect supervision of a special educator.

Administrators and special educators told the review team that while coteaching is the model of choice, there are insufficient personnel to implement it exclusively throughout the district. Consequently, principals and special education administrators design the model of service provision in each school annually, considering such factors as the number of students with disabilities in the school, the nature and severity of their needs, and the availability of special and regular education staff. Compromises are required in order to do the greatest good for the greatest number.



### *Challenges with Common Planning Time*

There are also challenges around common planning time. Principals, teachers, and special educators told the review team that high school coteachers have no common planning time and often do not have the same personal planning period. At the elementary schools, coteachers have the same personal planning period but no additional time for common planning. Inclusion and regular program teachers do not have a scheduled meeting time. Despite these constraints, principals said that teachers often meet before and after school on their own time, although there was no way to mandate the practice.

### *Professional Development to Support Inclusion*

Interviewees told the review team that the district needed to offer targeted professional development on providing for individual differences in order to support inclusion. Principals said that teachers have the competency but do not always have the instructional repertoire to accommodate learning style differences. They went on to say that some teachers were better prepared than others to meet a variety of student needs. They added that teachers also needed training on how to collaborate in coteaching partnerships and participate in professional learning communities.

### *Transitioning Some Students from Out-of-District Placements to District Programs*

The district is also attempting to increase its capacity to provide in-district programs for the approximately 137 students currently served in out-of-district placements. Special educators described a careful process for transitioning selected students from out-of-district placements to district programs. The process, which is conducted by the out-of-district coordinator who is trained as a social worker, consists of multiple planning meetings with staff from the external program and the receiving district school. It culminates in a phased integration of the student into the district program. The coordinator works closely with the parents throughout the process, arranges flexible round-trip transportation from the external program to the district, closely monitors the student, and identifies and resolves any adjustment problems. Interviewees said that this measured approach has been highly successful and that the staff responsible for this process has earned the confidence of parents, out-of-district program providers, and district personnel.

### *Challenges to Successful Full Inclusion*

Everett has a strong philosophical commitment to full inclusion, a progressive approach consistent with research on best practices, but the implementation is largely determined by the availability of resources and personnel in each school. Generally the district does not have supports such as common planning time and targeted professional development. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the kind and quality of service provision. Strong central office endorsement is necessary but insufficient to ensure successful inclusion.

**The attendance rate in Everett is lower than the statewide rate. Despite close monitoring of student attendance, Everett High School has high rates of chronic student absence, especially for students in grade 12. The high school is gradually increasing the number of credits required for graduation in an effort to reduce absence; however, a lenient attendance policy and low expectations for student learning may also contribute to the rate.**

In 2011, Everett had an attendance rate of 93.8 percent compared with a statewide rate of 94.7 percent. The 2011 rates of chronic absence<sup>10</sup> at Everett High School were: 22.8 percent in grade 9, 22.2 percent in grade 10, 26.2 percent in grade 11, and 33.5 percent in grade 12, compared to the state rates in 2011 of 19.6 percent, 18.0 percent, 19.4 percent, and 20.8 percent, respectively.

#### *Attendance Policy at the High School*

The attendance policy described in the student handbook allows three days of class absences per quarter for classes that meet daily (fewer for those that meet less regularly) unless a waiver is granted for reasons such as a death in the family, religious holidays, authorized school-sponsored events, court appearances, military obligations, illness (with a doctor's note if the student is at the absence limit), and other reasons deemed appropriate by the administration. Students are able to "buy back" up to two absent days per term by completing a form stating their intention to "buy back" a day, attending school for six consecutive days without being tardy or having disciplinary problems, and completing all assigned work. Under the provisions of this policy, a student could potentially miss a lot of school days annually by exhausting the 12 absences allowed under the policy and adding additional days through waivers and then "buying back" days.

#### *Attendance Officers, Guidance Counselors, Classmasters, and Teacher Assistance Teams*

According to administrators, the district has three attendance officers, one of whom is a retired police officer. In addition to determining residency, through the X2 student database the attendance officers identify students who are frequently absent and develop a priority list of students, based on the number of absences in descending order. The attendance officers schedule and hold parent conferences at the elementary level to determine the causes of student absences and develop appropriate improvement strategies. At the high-school level, they confer only with students. Guidance counselors told the review team that the attendance officers work closely with them to improve student attendance and take the lead in filing Child in Need of Services petitions and 51-A reports, whenever necessary, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services. The classmaster assigned to each grade also works directly with students who are frequently absent. They work in close consultation with guidance counselors and the Teacher Assistance Teams (see the first Student Support finding).

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<sup>10</sup> A student is defined as chronically absent if that student is absent more than 10 percent of the 180 days in the school year.

### *Chronic Absence at the High School*

When asked about the reasons for the rates of chronic absence at the high school, administrators and counselors responded that because only 90 credits have been required for graduation, students often satisfied this requirement as juniors and needed only to pass senior English to graduate. At 33.5 percent, chronic absence is especially an issue for grade 12. Everett is in the process of increasing the credits required for graduation. The class of 2015 must earn 105 credits, and the class of 2016 must earn 115 credits. According to guidance counselors and administrators, with the new requirements students must take and pass four years of English, mathematics, science, and social studies and additional electives in order to graduate.

In addition to the low number of required credits and lenient policy toward absences, there appeared to be low expectations in the observed classrooms. The review team saw teacher-centered instruction characterized by low expectations for student learning, an absence of rigor, little opportunity for higher-order thinking, and limited student participation and engagement in many of the high school classes observed. Students not being engaged and challenged may also contribute to high rates of absence. In a school climate survey dated April 2011, only 72 percent of high school students agreed with the statement, “I am challenged by the work at school.”

### *Conclusion*

Everett High School has high rates of chronic absence compared with the state, especially in grade 12, despite close monitoring of student attendance by counselors, attendance officers, and classmasters. The attendance policy is too lenient to reduce absence, and the expectations for student learning were low in many classes observed by the review team, possibly contributing to the number of absences. Everett is in the process of increasing the credits required for graduation, but the district has not yet adequately identified and addressed the root causes of high student absence.

## **Financial and Asset Management**

### **The district has a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures.**

According to interviews and documentation, Everett has a set of financial processes and operating procedures that are consistently followed throughout the district. The district’s revolving accounts are audited regularly by the city. The review team found that the district’s payroll warrants, accounts payable warrants, grant warrants, expenditure reports, and budget reports to the school committee reflected sound business practices.

The district’s financial affairs are tracked using Micro-Budget software, while the city uses Vadar software as well as a payroll services company. Incompatibility of software programs, coding differences, and the independent payroll process makes it challenging for the district’s financial personnel to make required submissions in the formats preferred by city officials.

Each month, the school committee reviews a “burn rate” report. The “burn rate” report provides the school committee with tracking of budget to actual expenditures against the expected rate of expenditure. The report shows original appropriations, deposits made, adjusted appropriations, encumbered monies, expenditures year-to-date, and available balances remaining.

In interviews with the review team, city officials stated that the district was cooperative and timely in making required submissions. City officials added that communications between the assistant superintendent for business and members of his support staff was often conducted via email and through telephone calls. A Memorandum of Agreement between the Everett Public School Department and the City of Everett, signed and dated in December 2011, specifies expenditures related to education to be included in the ESE End-of-Year Financial Report.

To build the annual district budget, the superintendent said the common practice is to determine the minimum net school spending requirement and Chapter 70 funding, and meet with the city officials to review the city’s budget for its expenditures related to education. School principals and school councils come before the school committee to present their needs. The school committee’s finance subcommittee reviews costs and needs and presents their recommendations to the full school committee. Public hearings are conducted, and the budget is approved by the school committee and submitted to city officials. The superintendent explained that the district maintains one centralized budget rather than providing each school with a separate appropriation.

**The district needed \$2,000,000 in supplemental funding from the city to cover unbudgeted personnel costs in fiscal year 2012.**

Despite a generally sound set of financial processes and operating procedures, the district has a projected deficit of \$3,000,000 in fiscal year 2012 for unbudgeted personnel costs. The superintendent attributed the unanticipated costs to increased enrollment and efforts to comply with the corrective action plan based on the 2010 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) findings. The district made budget reductions totaling \$1,000,000 without decreasing personnel, but requested \$2,000,000 of supplemental funding from the city in January 2012 to cover the balance of its deficit. There was controversy between the city and the district over the hiring of unbudgeted personnel, and a divergence of opinion between the district and the city as to when the city was provided notice of the need for the supplemental funding. School committee members told the review team that the superintendent had made them aware of the need for funding as early as September. They said that the mayor had been informed orally sometime in October, but there was no written documentation of this. City officials told the review team they become aware of the deficit in December. After deliberation, the city council and board of alderman voted unanimously in January 2012 to provide the district with \$1,500,000 from the city’s budgetary fund balance with the understanding that the city would seek to provide an additional \$500,000 from municipal Medicaid reimbursements at a later date if needed.

In order to comply with the CPR findings, the district added 53 additional employees including 28 teachers, 2 unassigned teachers, 16 teacher aides, 5 translators, and 2 full-time clerks. Recognizing that this supplemental funding was a one-time infusion from the city, the

superintendent told the review team that many positions would likely be considered for elimination in fiscal year 2013 in order to bring the budget into balance.

The City of Everett expected its remaining debt of \$7,000,000 for school construction and renovation to be paid off in fiscal year 2013. The school district has a balance of \$137,000 remaining on debt incurred in HVAC equipment, also to be paid off in fiscal year 2013. Administrators told the review team that a meeting was scheduled with city officials to discuss capital planning.

The unusual need to return to the city for supplemental funding in fiscal year 2012 indicates that the city and district did not plan for the program changes required by the CPR. Enrollment has been increasing steadily<sup>11</sup>, indicating that planning for such increases is required.

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<sup>11</sup> Student enrollment rose from 5,613 in 2008-2009 to 5,889 in 2009-2010 (increase of 276) to 6,142 in 2010-2011 (increase of 253), before rising to 6,371 in 2011-2012 (increase of 229).

## **Recommendations**

*The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.*

### **Leadership and Governance**

**While Everett continues to provide a positive learning environment for its growing and diverse student population, the review team encourages the district leadership to take strong steps to improve planning, curriculum development and renewal, assessment, evaluation, and professional development.**

The district fiscal year 2011 Strategic Plan was developed with the help of an external consultant and incorporates the individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The individual SIPs are similar because they are based on 10 common elements; however, there are no timelines or benchmarks for the goals in the SIPs and the professional development plan is not linked to the Strategic Plan. No clear common priorities were apparent in the SIPs.

There are wide variances in curricular content and instruction across the district's schools and levels. Curriculum alignment and vertical articulation were described as "works in progress," and no formal curriculum review process exists. Everett has engaged a district data specialist and established a district data committee to support principals and teachers. The ultimate goal is to create professional learning communities to facilitate the use of data to drive instruction and address data-based findings; yet, teachers need more training to analyze data. There is currently little use of data to evaluate programs. There is no commonly understood definition of high-quality instruction, and instructional strategies need further development. The district provides significant time and resources for professional development, but professional development needs a more targeted approach and individual school professional development programs do not have focus and centrality.

The district should set specific priorities within the Strategic Plan to enhance student learning. Correspondence between the Strategic Plan and the schools' plans should be tightened. Priorities centered on classroom instruction and student learning could be established by the district leadership for the annual SIPs. The review team encourages the district to put in place timelines and benchmarks for all plans and to evaluate them for their contributions toward student success.

A curriculum with all essential components should be completed. Such a comprehensive curriculum would guarantee program alignment across schools and levels and vertical articulation. A common definition of quality instruction and an emphasis on active and differentiated learning would improve students' everyday classroom experience.

The district's commitment to data-driven improvement is a work in progress that will support classroom instruction with a focus on teaching and learning. Teachers and principals have stated their readiness to use data, and also their need for training and more assessment instruments. Teachers could especially profit from training on the use of formative and summative assessments. Training in data analysis is vital to improving student growth.

Meaningful staff evaluation will provide a foundation for professional growth. Staff evaluation tied to student results is critical to strengthening the instructional process. Everett is an early adopter of the new ESE educator evaluation model, which supports this paradigm for constant improvement. Training for the transition to that system was an immediate priority at the time of the review. As a participant in the Race to the Top grant program, Everett is required to implement a new system of educator evaluation consistent with the new state system during the 2012-2013 school year. In taking advantages of the opportunities provided by the new model, Everett will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team's visit.

Targeted professional development is a linchpin to bring all these pieces together. Everett already provides significant time and resources for training. Establishing a professional development matrix with quality staff training unified around curriculum depth and improved classroom instruction and assessment of student work is essential to raising student achievement.

Strong district leadership can provide the vision and direction to realize these improvements. The alignment and networking of these critical instructional support systems is a challenging task, but it is important that these key components be integrated effectively to support student achievement.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

**The district should consider appointing a leader to assess the effectiveness of the mathematics curriculum, especially at the middle-school level, to supervise and evaluate teachers, and to help teachers design common assessments and analyze data. A review of the middle-school level mathematics curriculum should include an assessment of the adequacy of the program and materials and the time allocated for instruction in mathematics.**

During the four test administrations from 2008 to 2011 more than one third of both grade 7 and grade 8 students in Everett scored within the *Warning* level on the MCAS tests in mathematics. The district was unable to provide substantive evidence of the effectiveness of the Holt mathematics series at the middle-school level because it did not have the required evaluation strategies and tools. Inconsistent leadership, supervision, and coaching and a decrease in instructional time from grade 6 to grades 7 and 8 have all likely contributed to low student performance in mathematics.

The district should consider appointing a mathematics leader with primary responsibility for determining the effectiveness of the mathematics curriculum, supervising and evaluating

teachers, helping teachers design common assessments, and assisting teachers with data analysis. This leader and district curriculum personnel should analyze the adequacy of the time allocated for mathematics in grades 7 and 8. The district should also consider formalizing communication between grade 6 and middle-school level teachers to facilitate the student transition from grade 6 to grade 7. The mathematics curriculum in Everett could be improved with the appointment of a leader with deep content knowledge to supervise and evaluate teachers, help develop common assessments and interpret their results, and direct the development and continuous review of the mathematics curriculum.

**The district should develop a definition of high-quality instruction, including components such as communicating clear learning objectives, activating higher-order thinking, using flexible groupings, connecting to prior knowledge, differentiating instruction, actively engaging students, varying instructional modalities, providing students with feedback in relation to the goal of the lesson, and assessing student understanding. The district should also develop a scheme for lesson design with certain common components.**

According to interviews with teachers and administrators and evidence from classroom observations, Everett staff do not have a common understanding of best instructional practices. Although the district has provided professional development on such topics as differentiation of instruction, tiered instruction, and data analysis for instructional planning, implementation of these practices was observed to be limited.

The review team recommends that Everett provide targeted professional development on best practices followed by supervision and evaluation. Mentoring and coaching help teachers to adopt new practices and techniques; however, ultimately, teachers must be held accountable for changing their practices and implementing the methods and techniques that they learn through district professional development.

Teachers throughout the district submit lesson plans regularly; however, the design varies from school to school, and there are few common features. In interviews, teachers discussed some components of effective lessons, but they lacked an overall scheme. The district should consider adopting a scheme with defined components such as:

- balancing whole-group, small-group, and individual work;
- reinforcing effort and celebrating ongoing success;
- giving students periodic feedback on learning goals;
- asking students to keep track of their own progress;
- posing questions that help students identify what they already know about the content;
- providing direct links between new and old content and ways of organizing content;
- introducing new content using pictures and pictographs in lower grades, and symbols, graphic representations, physical models, and dramatic enactments in the upper grades;



- helping students review, practice, and apply content;
- asking students to revise and correct errors in thinking and representations;
- assigning homework and in-class activities that require students to practice skills and processes;
- asking students to compare, contrast, classify, and create metaphors and analogies; and
- engaging students in projects that require them to generate and test hypotheses through completion of tasks that include problem-solving, decision-making, inquiry, analysis, and invention.

Teachers must understand and implement best instructional practices and have a framework for designing effective lessons. Improving the quality of instruction in Everett is critical to raising student achievement.

## **Assessment**

**The district is encouraged to expand and accelerate its efforts to create a comprehensive and fully coordinated K–12 assessment system that has the capacity to**

- **collect and effectively analyze a wide range of relevant data and**
- **use it to continuously monitor student progress, improve classroom instruction, and evaluate academic programs and services.**

The district has begun to make improvements to its student assessment practices and procedures; however, much of the work has been more school-based than centralized and focused largely on kindergarten through grade 8, with less progress noted at the high-school level. As a result of this absence of coordination, the rate of improvement across the district has been relatively slow and uneven. A district data team was established in 2010–2011, and school-based data teams were subsequently created in each of Everett’s seven schools the following year. The district data team does not have a written description of its mission or role, a well-defined internal structure, strategic goals or objectives, or clearly articulated responsibilities. Further, no formal interface or coordination between the district data team and individual school-based teams has been developed. Consequently, each team operates essentially independently rather than as an integral part of an organizational unit. Many Everett administrators and teachers were unclear about who in the district was primarily responsible for leading the data initiative and how it is to be accomplished.

The review team believes that the district data team has the potential to serve as the proper and primary vehicle to lead the district’s efforts to achieve this central strategic goal, the development of a comprehensive, coordinated, and fully unified K–12 assessment system. Consequently, the district data team should be fully empowered to do so and provided with the authority, resources, and support necessary for it to carry out its mission successfully. Further, the review team recommends that the role and functions of the individual school-based data

teams be carefully coordinated with the core programmatic objectives developed by the district data team and aligned with its operational strategies. This will help ensure that the district's overarching assessment goals will be implemented uniformly and consistently in every school. It will also create a mechanism to provide faculty in all grades and content areas, including the high school, with embedded, timely, and ongoing support in data collection and analysis methodologies.

After the district has determined its design, composition, and operational characteristics and it is fully operational, the district data team should create and maintain a comprehensive, unified, centrally coordinated K–12 assessment system. Every school in the district, including the high school, should use a comprehensive and balanced system of common formative, summative, and regular benchmark assessments, both standardized and locally developed. This battery of common assessments should have the capacity to effectively and continuously monitor the academic progress of every student toward the achievement of well-defined learning objectives.

Formal opportunities should exist for teachers and administrators in all schools, grades, and content areas to meet regularly throughout the school year to compile, disaggregate, and analyze student achievement data. School administrators and faculty should collaboratively and continuously monitor achievement data in order to accurately measure student progress and make appropriate adjustments to classroom instruction, timely decisions about support services and interventions, and needed improvements to the curriculum.

Teachers should be provided with convenient access to the results of all student performance testing, as well as other relevant academic and demographic data. All members of the school community, including the school committee and parents, should be routinely provided with appropriate information generated by expanded and improved assessment programs and practices.

District and school leaders should use student assessment results, demographic data, and other pertinent information as a basis for all aspects of decision-making, including the development of district and school improvement plans and the evaluation of educational programs and services. Faculty and administrators should be provided with targeted and ongoing professional development training in the collection, analysis, and application of student performance data, so that these competencies can be embedded in all grade levels and content areas.

A fully unified and comprehensive assessment system, constructed in this way, developed under the leadership of the district data team and overseen by it, will produce a wide range of benefits in the district's schools. The expanded and continuous collection and systematic analysis of student achievement data will enhance classroom instruction, inform curriculum revision, improve academic programs and services, strengthen decision-making, and expand progress monitoring capacity across the district. Ultimately, it will result in significantly increased learning opportunities and outcomes for students in the Everett Public Schools.

## **Human Resources and Professional Development**

**The Everett Public Schools should centralize, focus, and reformat its current professional development plan to be more systemic and cohesive.**

The curriculum director is responsible for the district-determined professional development program in Everett. Teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the value and relevancy of the district-determined professional development program. Monthly school-based professional development is determined primarily by the principals and varies widely from school to school. According to the School Climate Survey, 31 percent of the teachers responding were highly dissatisfied with school-based professional development.

The collective bargaining agreement requires teachers to complete 25 hours of professional development in addition to the 2 “Teacher University” days and monthly school-based sessions. The district sponsors 10, 90-minute professional development sessions on Thursday afternoons to help teachers fulfill this obligation. Traffic congestion made it virtually impossible for teachers to arrive punctually at the school sites where the sessions were held, reducing the allotted professional development time by up to 20 minutes. Teachers who fulfill the 25-hour requirement by subscribing to approved external courses and workshops are excused from the Thursday sessions. The impact of these sessions is greatly reduced when not all of the appropriate teachers are in attendance.

In order to create a more effective, systematic model of professional development, the district should

- centralize all professional development through the office of the curriculum director,
- survey teachers through an annual needs assessment to help determine professional development topics,
- align all professional development topics with the Strategic Plan and School Improvement Plans; and
- develop a matrix for categorizing professional development topics by area and grade span to serve as a tracking mechanism and help to align the offerings and implement the program efficiently.

The district should consider ways of making the 25-hour obligation for teachers more targeted to accomplishment of district priorities and more productive. The district should reconsider whether external courses taken by teachers are (1) equivalent substitutes for in-district professional development and (2) will have an impact on practice if teachers attend them in isolation, without the peer and supervisory reinforcement that can accompany in-district professional development. Without strong evidence that external professional development directly addresses district priorities and will contribute to teacher, team, and school improvement, the district should dedicate teacher time and resources to professional development activities that will have a greater likelihood of improving teaching and learning. Also, district sessions should be scheduled

to begin at times that the teachers can reasonably be expected to arrive. The district should empower a representative professional development committee to help plan the annual program.

The district allocates time and resources for professional development. Revision of the program will make it more cost effective and beneficial for teachers and students.

## **Student Support**

**The district should look into what students are dropping out and determine the extent to which its dropout rate is affected by student mobility.**

As described in the Student Support findings, in 2011 Everett had the sixth lowest dropout rate and the second highest four-year cohort graduation rate among 10 districts with similar characteristics; in 2009 and 2010 it had the second lowest dropout rate among these 10. Everett has strong procedures for identifying students at risk and Everett High School offers alternative-education and credit-recovery programs to prevent students from dropping out.

Central office administrators, principals, and counselors told the review team that although they had not conducted a formal analysis of the dropout population, mobile students accounted for a large proportion of the district's dropouts. Citing anecdotal evidence, they said that some immigrant families live temporarily with relatives until they find more suitable housing in another community and others return to their countries of origin recurrently or permanently. However, under ESE procedures, though students who move out of state are coded as dropouts when the school district does not know whether they are now enrolled in another school, students who move to another Massachusetts community who enroll in school are not counted as dropouts.<sup>12</sup>

The review team encourages Everett to look into the question of what students are dropping out and what proportion of students coded as dropouts are students who have moved out of state whose enrollment status the district does not have information on. This research will give the district a more exact idea of the extent to which student mobility affects its dropout rate, as well as informing the planning of targeted programs and services to reduce dropout rates and improve graduation rates.

**The review team commends Everett on its philosophy of inclusion. In order to improve implementation, the review team recommends more consistent provisioning, common planning time for special and regular educators, and targeted professional development to increase teachers' repertoire of instructional methods and collaboration skills.**

Everett is committed to full inclusion of students with disabilities for whom this is appropriate based on a strong belief, expressed by central office administrators and many others, that isolating students from the mainstream is detrimental to their academic, social, and emotional

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<sup>12</sup> See guidance on coding dropouts at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/guidelines.html>.

development. The district is also attempting to increase its capacity to provide internally for students currently served outside of the district through a careful process of transitioning selected students from these placements to district programs.

There are however, some apparent problems with the implementation and provisioning of this philosophy. Inclusion models vary widely from school to school, from grade to grade within a school, and even from class to class within a grade. While coteaching is the model of choice, there are insufficient personnel to implement it exclusively throughout the district. Consequently, principals and special education administrators design the model of service provision in each school annually considering such factors as the number of students with disabilities in the school, the nature and severity of their needs, and the availability of special and regular education staff. Compromises are required in order to do the greatest good for the greatest number.

High school coteachers have no common planning time and often do not have the same personal planning period. At the elementary schools, coteachers have the same personal planning period, but no additional time for common planning. Inclusion and regular program teachers do not have a scheduled meeting time.

Everett teachers have the competency, but not always the instructional repertoire to accommodate learning style differences. The district has not provided sufficient professional development to support inclusion. Some teachers are better prepared than others to meet a variety of student needs. Teachers also need more training on how to collaborate in coteaching partnerships and participate in professional learning communities.

The review team encourages Everett to continue its progressive efforts to provide for students with disabilities in the mainstream by increasing the range of differences that teachers can accommodate in the regular education program. This entails providing support for classroom teachers. In order for this approach to be successful, the district must create a more consistent model of inclusion, provide common planning time for regular and special educators, and offer professional development to help teachers collaborate and learn to use research-based instructional methods and practices. These improvements would help the district reach a high level of implementation.

**The review team recommends that Everett High School review its attendance policy to determine how well it promotes regular attendance, and provide professional development and supervision to help high-school teachers increase challenge and engagement in their classes.**

The 2011 rates of chronic absence at Everett High School were: 22.8 percent in grade 9; 22.2 percent in grade 10; 26.2 percent in grade 11; and 33.5 percent in grade 12, compared to 2011 state rates of 19.6 percent, 18.0 percent, 19.4 percent, and 20.8 percent, respectively. The Everett High School attendance policy allows three days of class absence per quarter for classes that meet daily unless a waiver is granted for reasons allowed by the policy. Students are able to “buy back” up to two absent days per term by completing a form stating their intention to “buy back” days and fulfilling certain conditions. Under the provisions of this policy, a student could

potentially accumulate a high number of absences annually by exhausting the 12 absences allowed and adding days through waivers and the “buy back” provision.

When only 90 credits were required for graduation, students often satisfied the requirement as juniors and only needed to pass senior English to graduate. Everett is therefore increasing the credits required for graduation: the class of 2015 must earn 105 credits and the class of 2016 must earn 115 credits.

In many of the high school classes visited the review team observed teacher-centered instruction characterized by low expectations for student learning, absence of rigor, little opportunity for higher-order thinking, and limited student participation and engagement. Students not being engaged and challenged may contribute to high rates of absence. In a school climate survey dated April 2011, only 72 percent of high-school students agreed with the statement, “I am challenged by the work at school.”

The review team recommends that the district review the effectiveness of its attendance policy and consider reducing the quarterly absence allowance and the days subject to the “buy-back” provision. The review team strongly encourages the district to provide teachers professional development on increasing the expectations for student learning and to help them to develop and conduct student-centered lessons with multiple opportunities for participation. The district should also provide coaching and active supervision to ensure that teachers are practicing what they learn in professional development. These actions may help to reduce the high rates of chronic absence at the high school, and improve dropout rates and graduation rates further.

## **Financial and Asset Management**

**The district is encouraged to develop improved financial forecasting strategies to better determine the funding required because of the ongoing trend of increases in student enrollment, and to prepare a detailed plan for meeting the requirements of the recent CPR.**

Student enrollment in Everett rose from 5,613 in 2008-2009 to 5,889 in 2009-2010 (an increase of 276) to 6,142 in 2010-2011 (an increase of 253), before rising to 6,371 in 2011-2012 (an increase of 229). By developing financial forecasting strategies that better prepare the district to project enrollment increases in the annual budget request to the city, the superintendent and school committee should be more able to provide strong justification, clear definition and improved communication of its needs to city officials. Clear documentation of program changes needed to meet the requirements of the CPR, and of student needs more generally, should also improve district planning and communication with the city.

## Appendix A: Review Team Members

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The review of the Everett Public Schools was conducted from April 30–May 3, 2012, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. Russell Dever, Leadership and Governance

Mary Eirich, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Assessment

John Moretti, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. James McAuliffe, Student Support, review team coordinator

Dr. William Contreras, Financial and Asset Management

## Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

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### District Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Everett financial personnel: mayor, chief of staff, budget director, acting city auditor, and city treasurer.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the School Committee: chairman, vice chairman, and seven members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Everett Teachers' Association: president, vice president, secretary, and two members of the executive board.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Everett Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, two assistant superintendents, one of whom has primary responsibility for business and finance, the curriculum director, the special education director, the Title I director, and seven principals.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Everett Public Schools: Webster (pre-kindergarten through grade 3), English (pre-kindergarten through grade 8), Whittier (pre-kindergarten through grade 8), Keverian (kindergarten through grade 8), Lafayette (kindergarten through grade 8), Parlin (kindergarten through grade 8), and Everett High School (grades 9–12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with teachers. The team interviewed 8 elementary teachers, and 11 middle-school teachers. The focus group for high school teachers was not held because the district did not notify the teachers of the time and location.
  - The review team conducted 75 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the seven schools visited.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:
  - Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
  - Data on the district's staffing and finances.
  - Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).
  - District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions,



collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.

- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

## Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the Everett Public Schools, conducted from April 30–May 1, 2012.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
April 30 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' association.	May 1 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (Everett High, Webster) observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with parents.	May 2 Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (Whittier, Lafayette, Keverian, Parlin); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; school committee interviews.	May 3 School visits (Everett High School, English, Webster, Lafayette, Keverian); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

## Appendix C: Student Performance 2009–2011

**Table C1: Everett Public Schools and State  
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)<sup>13</sup>  
2009–2011 English Language Arts**

	2009		2010		2011	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP
<b>All Grades—District</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>
All Grades—State	67	50	68	50	69	50
<b>Grade 3—District</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>NA*</b>
Grade 3—State	57	NA*	63	NA*	61	NA*
<b>Grade 4—District</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>56</b>
Grade 4—State	53	50	54	50	53	51
<b>Grade 5—District</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>45</b>
Grade 5—State	63	50	63	50	67	50
<b>Grade 6—District</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>49</b>
Grade 6—State	66	50	69	50	68	50
<b>Grade 7—District</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>42</b>
Grade 7—State	70	50	72	50	73	50
<b>Grade 8—District</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>60</b>
Grade 8—State	78	50	78	50	79	50
<b>Grade 10—District</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>48</b>
Grade 10—State	81	50	78	50	84	50
<p>Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.</p> <p>*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>						

<sup>13</sup> “Student growth percentiles” are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student’s MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see “MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide” and other resources available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>.

**Table C2: Everett Public Schools and State  
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)  
2009–2011 Mathematics**

	2009		2010		2011	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Advanced/ Proficient</b>	<b><i>Median SGP</i></b>	<b>Percent Advanced/ Proficient</b>	<b><i>Median SGP</i></b>	<b>Percent Advanced/ Proficient</b>	<b><i>Median SGP</i></b>
<b>All Grades—District</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>
All Grades—State	55	50	59	50	58	50
<b>Grade 3—District</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>NA*</b>
Grade 3—State	60	NA*	65	NA*	66	NA*
<b>Grade 4—District</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>48</b>
Grade 4—State	48	50	48	49	47	50
<b>Grade 5—District</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>
Grade 5—State	54	50	55	50	59	50
<b>Grade 6—District</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>58</b>
Grade 6—State	57	50	59	50	58	50
<b>Grade 7—District</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
Grade 7—State	49	50	53	50	51	50
<b>Grade 8—District</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>50</b>
Grade 8—State	48	50	51	51	52	50
<b>Grade 10—District</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>40</b>
Grade 10—State	75	50	75	50	77	50
<p>Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.</p> <p>*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>						

**Table C3: Everett Public Schools and State  
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)  
for Selected Subgroups  
2011 English Language Arts**

	Everett Public Schools			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	<b>CPI</b>	<i>Median SGP</i>	<b>CPI</b>	<i>Median SGP</i>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>3,016</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>50</b>
African-American/Black	550	78.2	48	77.4	47
Asian	140	88.9	67	90.2	59
Hispanic/Latino	945	78.3	52	74.2	46
White	1,330	84.2	48	90.9	51
ELL	282	55.8	55	59.4	48
FELL	212	80.2	68	81.7	54
Special Education	575	60.1	43	68.3	42
Low-Income	2,274	79.2	49	77.1	46
<p>Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.  2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.  3. "ELL" students are English language learners.  4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.  Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>					

**Table C4: Everett Public Schools and State  
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)  
for Selected Subgroups  
2011 Mathematics**

	Everett Public Schools			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	<b>CPI</b>	<i>Median SGP</i>	<b>CPI</b>	<i>Median SGP</i>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>3,021</b>	<b>70.7</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>50</b>
African-American/Black	555	65	41	65	47
Asian	140	86.8	66.5	89.5	64
Hispanic/Latino	947	68.2	51	64.4	46
White	1,327	73.3	42	84.3	50
ELL	285	51	58	56.3	52
FELL	209	72.1	60	75.1	53
Special Education	583	49.8	34	57.7	43
Low-Income	2,280	68.7	47	67.3	46
<p>Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.  2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.  3. "ELL" students are English language learners.  4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.  Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>					

## Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

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### ***Finding Statements:***

#### **Leadership and Governance**

1. The Everett Public Schools are coping with rapidly growing enrollment, including students with diverse needs such as students from low-income families. The school committee and superintendent have made strides in establishing a positive learning environment and appropriate student support systems including a pre-kindergarten program and a variety of after-school and dropout-prevention programs.
2. Strategic planning, curriculum development, instruction, assessment, teacher evaluation, and professional development are in development, but are insufficiently developed and unlinked.

#### **Curriculum and Instruction**

3. Most curriculum documents do not have essential components such as resources, instructional strategies, and assessments, and the curriculum is not fully aligned vertically and horizontally.
4. Student achievement in mathematics as measured by the MCAS test is chronically low in grades 7 and 8. Insufficient supervision in math, less time devoted to math instruction at the middle-school level than at the elementary level, unaligned curriculum between grades 6 and 7, insufficient curriculum review, and an absence of common assessments in math hinder improved student achievement.
5. There is little district infrastructure to support curriculum development and renewal, including defined leadership roles, systematic plans, and processes with timelines.
6. The district does not have a shared definition of high-quality instruction. The format for lesson planning varies by school and there is little common planning time for most teachers. In observed classes teachers were prepared and classroom content was age and grade appropriate. The range of instructional practices in observed classes was limited and there was little evidence of research-based best practices.

## **Assessment**

7. Since 2010–2011, the district has begun to focus increasing attention on improving its student assessment practices, programs, and procedures, particularly in kindergarten through grade 8.
8. Despite efforts to improve assessment policies and practices, the district currently does not have a comprehensive, unified, centrally coordinated K–12 assessment system with the capacity to continuously collect and analyze relevant data and use it to effectively monitor student progress, improve classroom instruction, and evaluate academic programs and services.

## **Human Resources and Professional Development**

9. Teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Most teachers were evaluated too infrequently, and the evaluations that were completed did not encourage either the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. Everett is engaged as an early adopter of the ESE educator evaluation model.
10. The professional development program in Everett is largely site-based rather than centralized. While the district-determined program is based on the priorities of the Strategic Plan and is well organized and delivered, the site-based program does not have focus, continuity, and explicit connection to district priorities and goals.

## **Student Support**

11. Although not comparable to statewide rates, Everett’s dropout and four-year cohort graduation rates compare favorably with those of similar districts. Everett has strong procedures for identifying students at risk and effective alternative-education and credit-recovery programs.
12. The district is evolving toward a progressive full-inclusion model for students with disabilities in order to improve their proficiency rates. This model has strong central office support, but there are challenges with having an adequate number of educators and supports, including common planning time. As a consequence, implementation currently varies widely from school to school, from grade to grade within a school, and even from class to class within a grade.
13. The attendance rate in Everett is lower than the statewide rate. Despite close monitoring of student attendance, Everett High School has high rates of chronic student absence, especially for students in grade 12. The high school is gradually increasing the number of credits required for graduation in an effort to reduce absence; however, a lenient attendance policy and low expectations for student learning may also contribute to the rate.



## **Financial and Asset Management**

14. The district has a sound set of financial processes and operating procedures.
15. The district needed \$2,000,000 in supplemental funding from the city to cover unbudgeted personnel costs in fiscal year 2012.

## ***Recommendation Statements:***

### **Leadership and Governance**

1. While Everett continues to provide a positive learning environment for its growing and diverse student population, the review team encourages the district leadership to take strong steps to improve planning, curriculum development and renewal, assessment, evaluation, and professional development.
2. The district should consider appointing a leader to assess the effectiveness of the mathematics curriculum, especially at the middle-school level, to supervise and evaluate teachers, and to help teachers design common assessments and analyze data. A review of the middle-school level mathematics curriculum should include an assessment of the adequacy of the program and materials and the time allocated for instruction in mathematics.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

3. The district should develop a definition of high-quality instruction, including components such as communicating clear learning objectives, activating higher-order thinking, using flexible groupings, connecting to prior knowledge, differentiating instruction, actively engaging students, varying instructional modalities, providing students with feedback in relation to the goal of the lesson, and assessing student understanding. The district should also develop a scheme for lesson design with certain common components.

### **Assessment**

4. The district is encouraged to expand and accelerate its efforts to create a comprehensive and fully coordinated K–12 assessment system that has the capacity to
  - collect and effectively analyze a wide range of relevant data and
  - use it to continuously monitor student progress, improve classroom instruction, and evaluate academic programs and services.

### **Human Resources and Professional Development**

5. The Everett Public Schools should centralize, focus, and reformat its current professional development plan to be more systemic and cohesive.

### **Student Support**

6. The district should look into what students are dropping out and determine the extent to which its dropout rate is affected by student mobility.
7. The review team commends Everett on its philosophy of inclusion. In order to improve implementation, the review team recommends more consistent

provisioning, common planning time for special and regular educators, and targeted professional development to increase teachers' repertoire of instructional methods and collaboration skills.

8. The review team recommends that Everett High School review its attendance policy to determine how well it promotes regular attendance, and provide professional development and supervision to help high-school teachers increase challenge and engagement in their classes.

### **Financial and Asset Management**

9. The district is encouraged to develop improved financial forecasting strategies to better determine the funding required because of the ongoing trend of increases in student enrollment, and to prepare a detailed plan for meeting the requirements of the recent CPR.