



Gloucester Public Schools

Review of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of Low-Income Students

Review conducted March 14–17, 2011

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370
www.doe.mass.edu



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner

Date of report completion: November 2012

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public.

We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Inquiries regarding the Department's compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148 781-338-6105.

© 2012 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."

This document printed on recycled paper

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

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

www.doe.mass.edu



Table of Contents

Overview of Differentiated Needs Reviews: Low-Income Students.....	1
Purpose	1
Selection of Districts	1
Key Questions	2
Methodology	3
Gloucester Public Schools.....	4
District Profile	4
Findings	8
Key Question 1: To what extent are the conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?	8
Key Question 2: How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?	13
Recommendations.....	28
Appendix A: Review Team Members.....	34
Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule.....	35
Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008–2010	40
Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements.....	45

Overview of Differentiated Needs Reviews: Low-Income Students

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking a series of reviews of school districts to determine how well district systems and practices support groups of students for whom there is a significant proficiency gap. (“Proficiency gap” is defined as a measure of the shortfall in academic performance by an identifiable population group relative to an appropriate standard held for all.)¹ The reviews focus in turn on how district systems and practices affect each of four groups of students: students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students (defined as students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2011 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to improvement in achievement for students living in poverty (low-income students) in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the improvement in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirement of Chapter 15, Section 55A to conduct district reviews and is part of ESE’s program to recognize schools as “distinguished schools” under section 1117(b) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which allows states to use Title I funds to reward schools that are narrowing proficiency gaps. Exemplary district and school practices identified through the reviews will be described in a report summarizing this set of reviews.

Selection of Districts

ESE identified 28 Title I schools in 18 districts where the performance of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has recently improved. These districts had Title I schools which substantially narrowed proficiency gaps for these low-income students over a two-year period: schools where the performance of low-income students improved from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 in English language arts or mathematics both in terms of low-income students’ Composite Performance Index (increased CPI in the same subject both years and a gain over the two years of at least 5 points) and in terms of the percentage of low-income students scoring Proficient or Advanced (at least one percentage point gained in the same subject each year).² As

¹The term “proficiency gap,” originally coined by Jeff Howard, a member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, was adopted in 2010 by the Board’s Proficiency Gap Task Force. BESE Proficiency Gap Taskforce. April 2010. *A Roadmap to Closing the Proficiency Gap*.

²To be considered, a school had to be a Title I school and had to have been recognized as a 2010-2011 Commendation School (for narrowing proficiency gaps, high growth, or exiting NCLB accountability status). In addition to having an increase in CPI and proficiency rate in English language arts or mathematics both years, the school could not have experienced a decline in CPI or proficiency rate either year in either subject; had to meet the 2010 AYP participation rate and attendance or graduation rate requirements; and had to have had at least 40 low-income students tested each year from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010.

a result of having these “gap-closer” schools, districts from this group were invited to participate in this set of reviews aimed at identifying district and school practices associated with stronger performance for low-income students.

Key Questions

Two key questions guide the work of the review team.

Key Question 1. To what extent are the following conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. School Leadership (CSE #2): *Each school takes action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a well-designed strategy for accomplishing a clearly defined mission and set of goals, in part by leveraging resources. Each school leadership team a) ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school’s mission and strategies, b) supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, c) uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development, and d) focuses staff time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective management of operations and use of data for improvement planning and management.*

2. Consistent Delivery of an Aligned Curriculum (CSE #3): *Each school’s taught curricula a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions, and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course).*

3. Effective Instruction (CSE #4): *Instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs. It also ensures that instruction focuses on clear objectives, uses appropriate educational materials, and includes a) a range of strategies, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students’ developmental levels and learning needs; b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning. Each school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice.*

4. Tiered Instruction and Adequate Learning Time (CSE #8): *Each school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the district ensures that each school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.*

5. Social and Emotional Support (CSE #9): *Each school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that*

reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.³ Students' needs are met in part through a) the provision of coordinated student support services and universal breakfast (if eligible); b) the implementation of a systems approach to establishing a productive social culture that minimizes problem behavior for all students; and c) the use of consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management techniques that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning.

Key Question 2. How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews explore six areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.** The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that are most likely to be contributing to positive results, as well as those that may be impeding rapid improvement. Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. A four-to-six-member review team, usually six-member, previews selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit in the district, spending about two to three days in the central office and one to two days conducting school visits. The team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the six areas listed above.

³ The behavioral health and public schools framework was developed by the Task Force on Behavioral Health and Public Schools pursuant to c. 321, s. 19, of the Massachusetts Acts of 2008.

Gloucester Public Schools

This site visit to the Gloucester Public Schools was conducted from March 14–17, 2011. The site visit included visits to the following district schools: Beeman Memorial (K–5), East Gloucester (K–5), Plum Cove (K–5), Veterans Memorial (K–5), West Parish (K–5), O’Maley Middle (6–8), and Gloucester High (9–12). Beeman Memorial (Beeman) was identified as a “gap-closer” for its low-income students, as described above. Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2008–2010. 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 Profile⁴

Gloucester has a Mayor-Council form of government in which the mayor is a member of the school committee, although not its chair. The school committee has seven members.

The city has eight schools, one pre-kindergarten (Milton L. Fuller); five elementary schools each with kindergarten through grade 5 (Beeman, Memorial, East Gloucester, Plum Cove, Veterans Memorial, and W. Parish); one middle school with grades 6–8 (Ralph B. O’Maley); and one high school for grades 9–12 (Gloucester High). The school district’s total enrollment for the 2010–2011 school year was 3,203, a decline since 2006 of 600 students.

As is noted in Table 1 below, Gloucester’s students are 91.9 percent White, 3.4 percent Hispanic or Latino, 1.4 percent Asian, 1.2 percent African-American, 1.2 percent Multi-Race Non-Hispanic, and 0.3 percent Native American. 33.7 percent of the district’s students are Low-Income; 26.4 percent receive Free Lunch, and 7.4 percent receive a Reduced-Price lunch. 21.9 percent of the students receive special education services; 2.2 percent are limited English proficient (LEP), and for 4.0 percent of the students their First Language is not English.

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

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

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	37	1.2	First Language not English	129	4.0
Asian	44	1.4	Limited English Proficient	72	2.2
Hispanic or Latino	108	3.4	Low-income	1,081	33.7
Native American	10	0.3	Special Education	714	21.9
White	2,945	91.9	Free Lunch	844	26.4
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	22	0.7	Reduced-price lunch	237	7.4
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	37	1.2	Total enrollment	3,203	100.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 2 below lists the percentages of limited English proficient, special education, and low-income students for each school in the district. As the table indicates, two elementary schools, Beeman Memorial with 42.3 percent and Veterans Memorial with 65.5, have higher proportions of low-income students than the other three.

During the 2007–2008 school year, the district reorganized its elementary schools into a “neighborhood schools” configuration. The result was that the percentage of students from low-income families at the Beeman Memorial went from 10.2 percent in 2006–2007 to 30.9 percent in 2007–2008. According to interviewees, following the reorganization some parents moved their children out of the school. The percentage of students from low-income families has risen since 2007–2008; at the time of the site visit, it was 42.3 percent. At Veterans Memorial, the enrollment of low-income students rose to 65.5 percent. Both these schools received new principals.

Table 2: Comparison of State, Gloucester Public Schools, and All Gloucester Schools by Selected Populations: 2010–2011 (in Percentages except for Total Enrollment)

	Total Enrollment	Low-Income Students			Limited English Proficient Students	Special Education Students
		All	Eligible for Free Lunch	Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch		
State	955,563	34.2	29.1	5.1	7.1	17.0
Gloucester	3,203	33.7	26.4	7.4	2.2	21.9
Beeman Memorial	286	42.3	36.7	5.6	5.2	15.4
East Gloucester	262	34.0	26.7	7.3	0.0	15.6
Gloucester High	1,052	28.8	22.1	6.7	1.2	21.1
Milton L Fuller	65	30.8	27.7	3.1	0.0	52.3
Plum Cove	221	22.6	18.1	4.5	0.0	10.4
Ralph B. O'Maley Middle	695	33.7	24.6	9.1	2.7	22.7
Veterans Memorial	238	65.5	52.9	12.6	8.0	25.6
W. Parish	384	28.1	21.4	6.8	1.6	18.8

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

During the 2010–2011 school year, there was an interim superintendent in place since the previous superintendent had departed for another district. At the time of the site visit, the school committee had appointed the next superintendent and he was involved in transitional activities. The district had two assistant superintendents, one for teaching and learning and one for operations and central services. At the district level there were also a director of special education, a chief financial officer, and a human resources officer. Both assistant superintendents had been in place for a number of years, while the chief financial officer was in his second year.⁵

The local appropriation to the Gloucester Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$33,716,246, down from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$35,771,881. School-related expenditures by the city were estimated at \$13,230,304 for fiscal year 2011, a significant increase from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$6,597,998 due to the transfer of operations and maintenance expenditures to the city, a new regional school assessment, and new charter school tuition expenses.

⁵ The new superintendent assumed his duties in May 2011. In spring 2012 the two assistant superintendents both retired, along with the director of special education. The position of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, now called the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, has been filled by a former elementary school principal. The position of special education director was also filled from within the district. The chief financial officer at the time of the review left and was replaced; the new person has the title director of finance and operations, with the operations piece being added because the position of the assistant superintendent for operations and central services was eliminated.

In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$35,855,652), expenditures by the city (\$9,001,975), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$6,250,136), was \$51,107,763. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was \$39,611,019.

Findings

Key Question 1: To what extent are the conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

With the direction and support of the principal, Beeman teachers have taken a series of steps leading to a collaborative focus on the needs of individual students.

The Beeman principal assumed the position at the beginning of the 2008–2009 school year. The prior year, the district had re-organized its elementary schools as neighborhood schools. As a result of this redistricting, the population of students from low-income families at Beeman increased from 10.2 per cent to 30.9 percent. A number of parents moved their children from Beeman to other district schools, or schools in other districts.

In an interview, school leaders told the review team that early in 2008–2009 Beeman sent a team to a week-long district workshop conducted by Research for Better Teaching (RBT) on improving learning through the use of data. In the same year, the principal scheduled common planning time for grade level teachers, and the newly formed data team encouraged teachers to use the time to analyze the results of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE); Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE); and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In small grade level meetings, teachers began to discuss their students' needs and to share strategies on how to "get across the bridge" from what the data revealed about student needs to addressing them. According to interviewees, these meetings marked the beginning of teacher collaboration: Teachers were working with each other to help students succeed.

The review team found that the principal encouraged collaborative discussion, and teachers expressed the view that they were valued members of the Beeman team. The principal developed a cohesive group of teachers with whom she worked collaboratively to shape a coherent approach to the work of the school. According to the review team's analysis of teacher and parent interview responses, satisfaction and contribution levels were high.

The work was challenging. For example, interviewees told the team that the Beeman special education coordinator invited teachers to join a summer study group where teachers and specialists explored how to address a variety of instructional needs revealed by a close examination of student performance data. Fourteen staff members and the principal joined the group. According to interviewees, they came to understand that Response to Intervention (RTI) was the process to follow. This meant that the school needed to offer instructional interventions tailored to meet students' needs.

At this point, teachers had a limited repertoire of interventions. Two important developments followed the first summer study group: First, some teachers created a leveled library of trade books the school had acquired from a closed elementary school in order to help teachers match instructional materials to students' reading levels. Second, the school began to utilize personnel and the schedule to increase the benefits to students and teachers. In a non-categorical model, the

school assigned paraprofessionals to address the needs of special education students and other students with similar needs, crossing the boundary between special education and general education. The school also scheduled music, art, and physical education in ways that maximized the opportunities for classroom teachers to work with students and each another.

According to the leadership team, study groups of 15 teachers convened over three summers, and the study groups continued to meet monthly during the school year to formally check in with one another. Teachers demonstrated increasing openness to seeking assistance for particularly challenging students and acknowledged that no one had all of the answers. The school psychologist and the district behavior specialist also participated in these discussions, and it became clear that the special education coordinator had a particular talent for scheduling students for interventions.

As a key part of the school's effort to focus its attention on the needs of all students, the principal and teachers drafted a school improvement plan. This plan followed the district's recommended format, but the content was specific to the school. The Beeman school improvement plan includes very clear descriptions of student needs articulated in specific language and professional development for individual staff members intended to help them to provide high quality services to Beeman students.

In interviews, the principal and leadership team stated that teachers took advantage of the excellent professional development offered by the district, and the review team found evidence that Beeman teachers frequently participated in the district's programs. Individual teachers told the review team that the principal supported them whenever they expressed a need for a particular kind of professional development.

In an interview, the principal said that although teachers were collaborating with each other and demonstrating a focused commitment to meeting students' needs, they lacked a program that made connections for them and provided more extensive options for interventions. In response to this need, the principal received district permission to apply for a Bay State Reading Institute (BSRI) grant. The grant was awarded in July 2010. Out of concern for her teachers and students the principal independently sought and received access to a program that differed from the established district approach to elementary ELA. Approval of this approach from district administrators and school committee members came gradually as they recognized the power of the Scott Foresman *Reading Street* program and its appropriateness for the Beeman student population.

When she accepted the position, the principal assumed responsibility for addressing the needs of the large proportion of students from low-income families assigned to the school. She took advantage of the district's support and training for building data teams and created a culture in which teachers familiarize themselves with the data and then undertake the challenge of finding ways to address the instructional needs revealed by the data. A problem-solving approach developed over time with a substantial number of teachers searching for answers through the summer study groups and the increasingly open collaborative discussions of appropriate strategies for meeting specific student needs. The principal had high expectations for student

growth and teacher dedication and ingenuity. She evaluated the appropriateness of the district's elementary ELA program and eventually took the step of applying for grant funding of a reading program that she determined would be more effective for her teachers and her students.

Teachers addressed students' needs through data analysis, selection of appropriate interventions, and revision of schedules and expectations to offer interventions. During the period from 2008-2010, the achievement of the school's students from low-income families improved (see Tables C3 and C4). The principal and her teachers have made solid progress in addressing the needs of students from low-income families by becoming a focused community of learners with distributed leadership.

The balanced literacy approach was inadequate to meet the needs of all the students at Beeman. This approach was difficult to implement, since teachers had to develop their own lessons from a variety of resources. Adoption of a core program helped teachers to provide for individual differences.

The Beeman principal was appointed in 2008, a year after the district changed the configuration of the school from grade 2 through grade 5 to kindergarten through grade 5 in a redistricting of the elementary schools. The district has a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading at the elementary level, including a guided reading component. In guided reading, teachers meet with small groups of students, generally grouped according to ability and use leveled books for instruction. The balanced literacy approach also includes word study, comprehension strategies and writing. The school has leveled readers for guided reading and in focus groups teachers said that numerous other resources were available to them.

Phonics instruction is provided using the Fountas-Pinnell model. In interviews, district administrators said that all elementary teachers have been trained in writer's workshop. However, since the district does not have an established writing curriculum, teachers devise their own strategies for providing appropriate written language instruction to students. In addition, teachers administer several assessments including the DIBELS, DRA and GRADE. From an analysis of these results teachers plan instruction to meet the instructional needs of students.

The district has also developed a language arts/literacy guide for kindergarten through grade 5 (revised August 2010) that provides information on how to manage a balanced literacy approach. In interviews, district administrators said that additions are made to the guide as new research becomes available.

In interviews, the principal told the review team that given the large number of resources that teachers were using to plan instruction she believed they needed a core program with "everything under one umbrella" so that they "would not have to make all the connections" themselves and could take advantage of the variety of resources offered within the program.

Beeman teachers and the principal had been involved in study groups during three summers to create a Response to Intervention Program (RTI) to meet the needs of all students in the school. These study group discussions persuaded the principal that the guided reading approach was not providing a program to best meet the needs of the students under the RTI model. She expressed

the view that the reading curriculum needed a core program with vocabulary and comprehension embedded so that teachers would not have to consult a wide variety of resources to plan instruction. This led her to apply for a BSRI grant, and the school was awarded a grant in July 2010. Under the terms of the grant, Scott Foresman *Reading Street* became the school's new core reading program. The principal explained that even an excellent teacher would not be able to provide the same excellence that this program provides.

There was no immediate district acceptance of the value of Beeman's new reading program. In interviews, some district administrators said that the *Reading Street* program was not full enough and that the district was taking a step backwards by using a prescriptive reading program. They added, however, that it was fine for Beeman to try the program.

The principal's decision to institute a core reading program rather than continuing to use the balanced literacy approach was the result of a two-year analysis of the work required for teachers to draw upon a wide variety of resources to develop meaningful, appropriate instruction. The balanced literacy approach was proving to be a hindrance to the implementation of a smooth running and productive RTI program. The introduction of the Scott Foresman reading program provided the ingredients necessary for a comprehensive reading program intended to increase the achievement of all the students at Beeman.

Beeman has instituted both a child-study team and a learning center to systematically address students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

The child study team (CST) is one of the major ways that Beeman addresses students' academic, social, and emotional needs. In interviews with district administrators and teachers the review team found a highly organized and consistent process for identifying students in need and connecting them to appropriate supports both within and outside the classroom.

The Beeman CST protocol sets forth the purpose and composition of the team; referral procedures; targeted interventions; and the monitoring system. The protocol also contains forms to document each step of the CST process. The protocol describes the CST as "the teacher's primary means for accessing supports and related services for the academic, emotional, social and behavioral needs of a student in his or her classroom." The protocol states that the CST team consists of a core permanent team including the principal, school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, special education teacher, and the classroom teacher who provides the initial referral. Others may also be invited to participate, including the occupational therapist, physical therapist, literacy specialist, paraprofessionals who support students' behavioral programs, classroom teachers, and parents.

The review team determined through interviews that the Beeman uses a data-driven process to refer students and track their progress. The CST expects the referring teacher to have reviewed assessments of the referred student's progress such as the DIBELS and GRADE, tests, curriculum-based measures, classroom observations, student work samples, and running records. Before making a referral to CST, the teacher is expected to have implemented some interventions and to have contacted the parents. If the teacher determines that the student requires support beyond the interventions already implemented, he or she describes the results of

the interventions on a CST request for assistance form. Copies of the form are then given to the school psychologist who acts as the case manager and the classroom teacher or special education teacher who acts as the data specialist. The data specialist compiles the baseline data of quantitative and qualitative assessments. After an initial analysis of the problem, the case manager convenes the team and facilitates the CST meeting.

The CST meets weekly for forty minutes. Additional meetings may be convened based upon student needs and staff schedules. At the meeting, the permanent team and other invited staff review the data and develop hypotheses about why the student is not succeeding. The team then comes to consensus on both an intervention (support) plan and a monitoring plan that specifies the data that will be used to document student progress. The teacher is expected to execute this plan for eight to ten weeks. The case manager visits the classroom weekly to both monitor the implementation of the plan and to assess its effectiveness. The CST is reconvened eight to ten weeks after the initial meeting to review student progress and to make any appropriate adjustments.

In interviews and focus groups, both administrators and teachers stated that the learning center has had a significant impact on improving student achievement. The teacher responsible for the learning center has a strong academic background and certification and experience as a special education teacher. The learning center serves only students in special education and focuses on academic rather than behavioral issues. If behavior becomes an issue for a student in the learning center, the student is removed in order to maintain an academic environment. According to a district specialist, the Beeman principal and teachers have maximized the usefulness of the learning center by not relegating its function to behavior. According to interviewees, Beeman has had success in using behavioral paraprofessionals for student interventions. When a student is disruptive, a paraprofessional works individually with the student. Administrators and teachers told the review team that paraprofessionals have training in a number of behavior management strategies. Both teachers and administrators told the review team that this use of paraprofessionals has contributed to a positive school climate that promotes learning and high achievement. According to district leaders, the clear distinction between academic and behavioral support at Beeman was not maintained in all of the district elementary schools.

Both district administrators and teachers expressed great confidence in the child study team and the learning center and identified them as two of the primary reasons the school has made gains in the achievement of students from low-income families. The child study team and the learning center are institutionalized practices at the school and essential components of the Beeman success story.

Key Question 2: How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

The absence at the time of the review of a current operative district improvement plan (DIP) or strategic plan led to inconsistencies in the school improvement plans (SIPs).

In interviews with the review team, school committee members, the former superintendent, the interim superintendent, and other administrators commonly acknowledged that the strategic plan for 2007–2009 had not been updated. In a memo to the school committee dated September 9, 2009, the former superintendent suggested a process for reviewing and updating the strategic plan. According to the same interviewees, updating of the plan was subordinated to the in-depth and extended search for a new superintendent upon the announcement of the departure of the superintendent, and a focus on creating a more comprehensive budget development process during the 2010–2011 school year.

The former superintendent acknowledged that he had had difficulty initially interesting the school committee in developing and promoting a strategic plan, and as a result, “it didn’t have much in the way of legs,” and it became “Farmer’s plan.” School committee members interviewed by the review team stated an intention to revise and update the strategic plan and said that the process had already begun, with an expected completion date of June 2011. They added that the school committee also expected to engage in setting goals with the incoming superintendent in conjunction with the revision and updating of the five-year strategic plan. Chief among those goals would be an emphasis on improving teaching and learning.

The review team found a disparity between goals in the district 2007–2009 Strategic Plan, and current SIPs. For example, while the strategic plan goal had a goal of 90 percent of the students reading at or above grade level by 2010, there were a variety of literacy goals in the SIPs. The 2010–2013 East Gloucester SIP set a goal of 80 percent of the students reading at grade level by 2012. The West Parish, SIP set various improvement targets on the DIBELS and the MCAS tests by grade level. The 2010-2011 Veterans’ Memorial SIP set a number of reading goals on various assessments by grade level. The student performance goals of the 2011–2013 Plum Cove SIP on the DIBELS were identical to those in the West Parish SIP, but the Plum Cove SIP had higher long-term goals for students on the MCAS tests. In 2011 the reading goal in the Beeman SIP was “to increase DIBELS scores in Low Risk category by 10% in grades 1 and 2 and to increase MCAS ELA Advanced/Proficient scores by 10% in grades 3, 4, and 5.” The most recent SIP for the O’Maley Middle School (dated January 19, 2010) and the 2010–2014 Gloucester High School SIP have reading goals identical to the strategic plan goal of 90 percent of students reading at or above grade level.

At the time of the review, the interim superintendent stated in an interview that all of the SIPs would be presented to the school committee before the end of April 2011. Unlike previous SIPs the current plans do not have as much budgetary detail and do not detail financial initiatives.

This new design was intended to promote each school and improve communications with the city.

Based on an examination of the 2009 strategic plan and the SIP for each school and interviews with administrators and school committee members, the review team has found little evidence of a centrally coordinated district planning process. As a consequence, centralized planning neither advanced nor impeded the improvement in student performance at Beeman. The team also found that the extensive variations in the literacy goals of the SIPs have implications for the equitable treatment of students in the district.

The school district did not have a system for evaluating the effectiveness of personnel and programs.

In interviews with members of the school committee, administrators, principals, teachers and representatives of the teachers' association, the review team found a frequently expressed concern of maintaining financial support for the schools. At the same time, there was an acknowledgment that the focus on expenditures and sources of revenue substituted, almost exclusively, for an emphasis on recognizing the qualitative dimension of the operation of the school district.

In interviews with the review team, principals expressed concern about the absence of a teacher evaluation system that both (a) led to improved instruction and (b) held teachers accountable for improving their performance. Some principals expressed the view that the absence of a process for comprehensively describing teacher performance sometimes led to the inappropriate awarding of professional status. However, despite the clearly articulated need for an effective tool for the evaluation of personnel as an integral component of a collective bargaining agreement, interviews with the previous superintendent and the interim superintendent combined with conversations with the teachers' association indicated recognition of a "cordial" relationship between the administration and the association. Talks between the parties were held monthly and grievances were minimal and resolved at the lowest level.

Interviewees agreed that the district lacked a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of new and established programs. This meant that the district could not and did not make budget decisions about maintaining or eliminating programs based upon their effectiveness. When the annual concerns for financial sustainability of the district were added to the picture, the district found itself making program decisions based on the availability of funds. This led to conclusions voiced by administrators and teachers in interviews that initiatives sustained by grant monies were the driving force of programs adopted by the district. These same interviewees expressed the hope that the district would maintain important initiatives such as data driven decision-making, not subject to regular program evaluation and not grant funded, and that it would not succumb to fiscal constraints.

The result of the absence of an evaluative framework for personnel and programs, along with the possibility that a program could be replaced because of the absence of continued funding, is that the district is not equipped to determine the effectiveness of its personnel and its programs. Without this capacity, the district will find it difficult to determine which teachers and which

programs will best serve its students, and its initiatives to improve student achievement in the district will likely not see powerful results.

Many curricular elements were established in Gloucester, but at the time of the review there was little overall coordination of the kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum.

An assistant superintendent is responsible for the kindergarten through grade 12 district curriculum. The additional district level curriculum personnel include a kindergarten through grade 8 mathematics program leader and a kindergarten through grade 12 district literacy specialist. At the high school, program leaders are responsible for the curriculum in their content areas. In interviews, the review team found an articulated belief in the district is that the state Frameworks constitute the curriculum and there is therefore no need to reinvent the wheel and produce a district curriculum. District personnel expressed the view that curriculum development at all levels should focus on the creation of common units by teachers.

There is no systemwide kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum committee. Rather there is a kindergarten through grade 5 literacy committee and a kindergarten through grade 5 mathematics and science committee. Interviewees told the review team that the district formerly had a curriculum consulting committee, but it was dissolved in the 1990s, then reconvened. However, after four unproductive meetings, the decision was made that it was easier to work with dedicated people in specific content areas. According to interviewees, these elementary committees meet only three or four times during the year; but district grade-level teams meet monthly and sometimes discuss the curriculum. Interviewees stated that in 2010–2011 the grade level teams have worked more on the development of a standards-based report card rather than on the curriculum.

Interviewees told the review team that the mathematics and science curricula at the elementary level are strong and well-established. The curriculum for each of these content areas is based largely on a published program. The district uses *Investigations* for elementary mathematics and there is an accompanying district pacing guide that is aligned to *Investigations* and the state curriculum framework. This guide includes some assessments, and interviewees said they were developing more. In science, the *Scott Foresman Science Program* is the curriculum for kindergarten through grade 8. A review of the program showed a pacing guide with alignment to the state curriculum framework and assessments.

According to administrators the core middle school mathematics program is *Scott Foresman Mathematics* with supplementary materials including *Groundworks* and *Nimble with Numbers*. Interviewees stated that they found that the core program was not strong enough to prepare students for the MCAS tests, so teachers supplement the program with units. The review team examined a descriptor of units prepared for grade 7. A district administrator said that the middle school has been working on units and was “ahead of the curve” in unit development. Eligible students take Algebra in grade 7 and grade 8. According to the middle school principal, the science program is also enhanced by the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Coalition (STEM). A consultant from STEM works with middle school science teachers.

Administrators at both the elementary level and middle school expressed concern about literacy. At the elementary level, the literacy curriculum is based on guided reading and uses leveled books. Interviewees said the program provided a number of tools for kindergarten through grade 5 literacy. Elementary schools have book rooms where books are leveled according to student needs. One principal said, “We have strategies for kindergarten through grade 5 literacy, but teachers struggle to develop their own lessons and units.” Another principal said that there were a number of resources, but teachers had to put them together and make the connections. Interviewees also expressed concern about the literacy curriculum at the middle school. One administrator said that teachers do not want a scripted curriculum, but are calling for more continuity, support, and training.

Beeman discontinued the guided reading approach in favor of the Scott Foresman *Reading Street* Program under a BSRI grant. Veterans Memorial will begin to use *Reading Street* in 2011–2012, and in interviews, other elementary principals said they were considering moving to this reading program as well. A central office administrator agreed that guided reading was not a full enough program and other administrators expressed the view that teachers needed a more prescriptive literacy program. Another district level interviewee said that a better balance was needed between phonics instruction and comprehension strategies because teachers were “married to phonics.”

The district produced a teacher’s guide to the components of literacy in kindergarten through grade 5 and in some instances through grade 6. The guide lists all of the assessments that are administered as well as helpful information about the reading process. Literacy standards are appended at the end of the document. Interviewees also said that any new research is brought forward through a study group or a professional development offering.

The high school was cited for the absence of a completed curriculum in 2009 by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In interviews, high school program leaders said there was no common English curriculum and that until the work began on units, teachers were using only the state curriculum framework. According to the high school SIP, unit writing has been an ongoing project at the high school. According to interviewees, teachers at the high school have been writing units for the past eleven years. Interviewees stated that progress was being made with the units and that teachers were posting them on a computer program entitled, Curriculum Connector. However, thus far only one of the mathematics units posted has been reviewed by the teachers in the department and cleared for general use.

High school English units have been entered in the Curriculum Connector program, but no cross-referencing has been done. Program leaders said that there was some teacher resistance to developing and using common units because teachers realize their instruction will have to change. However, some progress is being made. A review of selected completed units provided to the review team showed that the template contained essential questions, content, skills, assessments, lessons, essential understandings, and a reference to the standard.

Interviewees stated that there was no established kindergarten through grade 12 writing curriculum, although some teachers have been trained in writer’s workshop. In addition,

interviewees stated that the practice of administering students a district-wide writing prompt had been abandoned in 2005. The district reinstituted writing prompts in 2009-2010 and administers one in the fall and one in the spring. Teachers administer the prompt and score their own students' responses. Interviewees said that the plan for 2010–2011 had been for district scoring, but that the plan had been delayed. In 2011–2012, teachers will again score responses for students in their own classes.

A number of interviewees told the review team that there was an absence of vertical alignment in the district curriculum, especially in literacy. Some said that the pacing guides at the elementary level and middle school have aided in the alignment of mathematics and science. According to interviewees, teachers are focused on their grade level curricula and are frequently unaware of what students have already learned and what is ahead. Interviewees said that teachers in one elementary school looked at what precedes and follows their grade level curriculum in a workshop during the previous summer. But interviewees said that there is little time to discuss vertical alignment and the discussions vary from school to school.

The district has some established curriculum elements, but does not have a coherent kindergarten through grade 12 direction to develop a horizontally and vertically aligned curriculum. Curriculum developed at individual schools and in individual classrooms may not follow the state curriculum framework, or correspond or align with curriculum in other classrooms and schools. The separate established elements do not provide the district with the systematic approach to curriculum development, implementation, and revision that are necessary for appropriate instruction and continued student achievement.

Classroom observations revealed that the quality of instruction varied widely from classroom to classroom.

The review team observed instruction in 41 classes at the three levels in Gloucester; 21 at the elementary; 10 at the middle school and 10 at the high school. The classes included 12 ELA classes, 8 mathematics classes, and 1 science class at the elementary level; 4 ELA classes, four mathematics classes, one science class, and one social studies class at the middle school; and four English classes; three mathematics classes, and three MCAS prep classes at the high school.

Observations in the classrooms ranged from 20 to 25 minutes and in a few cases there were 30 minutes of observation time. The review team used the standard Instructional Inventory Record that is used for classroom visits in all districts. The form includes 14 indicators that are divided among three categories. These categories include Organization of the Classroom; Instructional Design and Delivery/ General and Instructional Design and Delivery, and Higher Order Thinking.

The first three indicators in the Instructional Inventory Record deal with Organization of the Classroom and in this category the review team found that in 90 percent of the classrooms there was solid evidence that the climate was characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. Students usually were able to move from group to group with ease and in nearly all classrooms students were attentive and teachers and students exhibited respectful behaviors.

A learning objective was solidly observed in only 28 percent of the classes, and in 46 percent of the classrooms there was no evidence of a posted learning objective nor was an objective referred to. There were agendas/schedules posted in many classrooms, but generally no objectives. The absence of posted objectives was of special interest to the review team as some school leaders in interviews had predicted there would be evidence of posted objectives.

The review team found solid evidence of available class time being maximized for student learning in 63 percent of the classrooms. There was partial evidence in 37 percent of the classrooms. In elementary classrooms students moved from center to center quickly and were able to settle in and perform required tasks. In many cases, when reviewers were present for the beginning of the class, instruction began less than a minute after students had entered the room.

Categories about Instructional Design include teachers using a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. There was solid evidence in 54 percent of the classrooms about the use of a variety of instructional techniques and partial evidence in 29 percent of the classrooms. Direct instruction was the model most often seen in classrooms. However, there was solid evidence of students working together in small groups or in pairs in 41 percent of the classrooms. There was partial evidence about this manner of grouping in 37 percent of the classrooms.

Observers found solid evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning in 46 percent of the classrooms while partial evidence was found in 37 percent of the classrooms. In an elementary classroom a teacher asked a student to “finish the thought you’re on.” And in another elementary classroom the teacher asked “Give me a statement about the graph.” However, in less than 50 percent of the classrooms, students were not called upon to articulate their thinking and reasoning.

There was solid evidence in only 32 percent of the classrooms about higher order questioning where questions required students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. In elementary classrooms teachers asked questions such as, “How do we illustrate 4 x 3?” In another elementary classroom a teacher asked a student to “give me a comparative statement.” And in still another elementary classroom a teacher asked students, “Does anyone have a connection to the story?” In a high school English class, students were asked, “What was the author trying to convey?” However, there was partial evidence of this type of questioning in 59 percent of the classrooms.

The review team saw solid evidence of opportunities for students to apply new knowledge and content in only 46 percent of the classrooms and partial evidence in 24 percent of the classrooms. There was solid evidence of teachers checking for student understanding in 56 percent of the classrooms and partial evidence in 34 percent of the classrooms.

The quality of instruction determines the extent of student learning. The review team found that the organization of the classroom in the Gloucester Public Schools varied, with a substantial number of classes with a positive classroom climate. However, in the majority of classrooms no objective was posted, nor was there reference to one. In the area of higher-order thinking, there was solid evidence of some higher-order questions being asked in only 32 percent of classrooms,

and in only 46 percent of classrooms was there solid evidence that students had an opportunity to articulate their thinking and reasoning. These opportunities promote students' understanding of concepts and of themselves as learners.

Teachers and schools were at various stages of using data to plan, differentiate, and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

Gloucester administers a number of standardized assessments in addition to the MCAS tests including the DIBELS, GRADE, GMADE, and DRA. The results are made available to principals and circulated to teachers. Systematic comprehensive dissemination of assessment information has recently begun at the elementary level and is in the planning stages at the middle school and high school. In 2010–2011, the district began to use a software program to track individual student progress on each. At the time of the site visit, the district had recently trained most elementary teachers to use assessment information. The district plans to add students' *Investigations* unit test scores and perhaps their standards-based report card ratings to the software program. Interviewees told the review team that at the time of the site visit, elementary teacher use of the tracking program varied widely. Middle school and high school teachers were not yet been trained to use the program, although the district anticipated training them.

At the elementary level, principals and a team of teachers from each of the five schools received RBT training on the formation of data teams and the concept of data-driven instruction. In the first year, individual schools chose to focus on either ELA or mathematics, but interviewees said that some schools are further along than others in the effective use of data teams. A middle school team had recently completed the training. Interviewees told the review team that while middle school mathematics teachers closely analyze MCAS data, a schoolwide data team had not yet been established. The high school had not yet received the training, but plans to have a data team eventually.

According to the RBT model, data team members analyze assessment results at data team meetings and discuss them further with their colleagues at grade level or departmental meetings. In interviews, teachers agreed that they were more likely to understand the value and significance of assessment results when they were analyzing them in small groups, when their own students' results were on the table, and when other teachers who taught the same grade and content were part of the discussion. However, scheduled common planning time varied across the district. At the elementary level, teachers had 30 minutes each week in a few schools. Teachers in some elementary schools had no planning time. In general, the opportunities for elementary teachers to analyze assessment results in small groups were limited.

At the middle school level, teams of teachers planned together three times per week and interviewees made it clear to the review team that middle school mathematics teachers met regularly to analyze assessment results, especially the results of the MCAS tests. Teachers told the review team that the GMADE results were used primarily for making placement decisions. There was little evidence that teachers other than mathematics teachers used middle school planning time for designing instruction based on assessment results. Only one of the departments

at the high school had common planning time and the time high school teachers had available for planning beyond their day-to-day teaching was used to write curricular units.

The next step in delivering instruction based on individual student needs requires that teachers receive support in determining the most appropriate strategies to use. Teachers need to have a repertoire of interventions to address a variety of needs. More broadly, beyond the individual teacher, the principal and the entire staff need to assess the intervention needs of students across the school and organize the schedule so that teachers have the time and flexibility to deliver the interventions.

Some elementary schools and some middle school teachers are beginning to base instruction on available assessment data, but not all the elements are in place to ensure that this is the districtwide practice. Not all of the elementary schools have the structure and programs to implement data-driven instruction. As a result, some schools are farther along than others. At the middle school level, data analysis takes place in some departments, based on a somewhat limited set of assessments. The process for dissemination, review, and analysis of data is not yet systematic at the high school. Some district schools and teachers are moving toward data-driven instruction, while others are not yet equipped to move in that direction.

The district did not have a human resource system that linked recruitment, hiring, professional development, and evaluations to hiring standards in alignment with its instructional and leadership priorities.

The review team examined a district document entitled, Gloucester Public Schools Goals and Initiatives Regarding Teaching and Learning. This document contains descriptions of initiatives by the district teaching and learning leadership team including goals, workshops, grant-funded professional development programs, school-based and district curriculum offerings, and expectations for team members, schools, and student learning. The document covers the six year period from 2006 through 2011.

Despite the district's detailed documented efforts to put in place the ideas described in this document to improve student achievement, there is no evidence of any district attempt to systematically reach out to potential candidates for teaching or administrative positions who have successfully implemented these core ideas. For example, despite a new emphasis on using data to improve student achievement, the review team found no evidence in district documents or interviews that the district made an effort to recruit and hire competent data users for administrative and teaching positions. In addition, the review team found that with an increasing ELL population in the district, the district had not mounted an outreach effort to attract trained candidates to satisfy the need for such teachers.

In an examination of administrators' and teachers' personnel files, the review team found almost no evidence that competency in the use of data or successful teaching experience was considered in hiring decisions. Teaching candidates are not required to present written or video portfolios. Only documentation of the candidate's educational and employment history and letters of recommendation are required.

New teachers must enroll in a two-year mentor program, but the review team found in interviews that the program does not include training in data analysis. There are no incentives in district policies or protocols to attract qualified, experienced teachers in difficult-to-fill positions. In fact, 22 teachers are teaching without proper active licenses. Of these, only two are on waivers. Administrators told the review team that the district reminds teachers when they need to renew their licenses, but there are no safeguards to prevent employees from continuing to receive pay and benefits while employed without the proper license for their positions.

The hiring process for teachers in the district is a series of relatively independent actions that are not driven by, connected to, or in alignment with approved district screening and interview protocols, policies, or administrative regulations. According to interviewees, when a vacancy occurs a request is forwarded to the central office. The central office processes the request and posts the position. According to interviewees, there is no alignment check with the job description on file at that time. As a result, the district's job description file is not updated to reflect current conditions and needs.

The review team found that there are no district regulations or standards for screening applications or interviewing candidates. The central office sets a closing date, and posts the vacancy notice in predetermined locations in the district. The position may also be advertised the position in the newspapers. Applications are received either by the central office or the school in which the position is located. After this, principals manage the teacher hiring process using their own judgment and applying their own standards to screen and interview the candidates. Teachers may also participate in both the screening and interviewing. Any training of potential screeners and interviewers is provided at the school by the principal.

No personnel file examined by the review team contained information about the employee's performance in the selection process. There were no completed rating forms, candidate recommendations, or records of contacts with former employers. A final recommendation with supporting materials is provided to the superintendent, but there was no evidence of an assessment of the successful candidate's potential to support the instructional and organizational priorities of the district in the files examined by the review team. Each file contained a completed application, three letters of reference, and payroll information.

New teachers are assigned a mentor and their names are recorded on the district evaluation calendar. Central office administrators review documents submitted periodically in compliance with the district's evaluation schedule.

Central office administrators are well informed about the history of and steps in the hiring procedure, but have no role in deciding whether applicants meet district entry-level standards beyond licensing and CORI checks. The district has no standards-based framework to assess teaching effectiveness in its hiring processes. According to interviewees, the district has no policy protocols, employability standards in school committee policy, or screening and interviewing training modules. Most administrative positions are filled from within, although in recent years there have been some exceptions.

The hiring process is a series of events rather than an organized system. Disconnected human resource and professional development components result in wide variations in instruction and in student learning across classrooms and schools. This jeopardizes fulfillment of the district's stated goal of improving the achievement of all its students.

The district administrator and teacher evaluation processes did not meet the requirements of 603 CMR: 35.00.

The review team examined the personnel files of all administrators, except for the current interim superintendent who had not been formally evaluated because of his temporary status. The administrative evaluations were mostly informative, but did not follow the timelines and framework of 603 CMR 35.00.⁶ Only one was instructive, providing clear performance expectations for the administrator.⁷ There was no evidence that the evaluations were connected to the accomplishment of either the school or district improvement plan goals. The review team also found variations in the frequency of administrators' evaluations. Some were evaluated annually and others were not. The review team found that the completed evaluations were running commentaries that did not comply with the content requirements or timelines of 603 CMR 35.00. The evaluation system for administrators in the district had been out of compliance with state law before the 2007 report by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), and according to interviewees no substantive changes had been made since that time.

The review team found that the teacher evaluation system was also not in compliance with 603 CMR 35.00's content requirements and timelines. Designed and implemented in 2000, the system was described in a document containing a preamble, philosophy, various forms and calendars, and a list of indicators and evidence samples to be used by evaluators in the four-year cycle. It incorporated professional development event tracking in its calendar, but substituted this listing of professional development for a written evaluation.

No form in the evaluation packet provided to the review team contained any standards, ratings, or rubrics to inform the district about levels of teaching performance. However, one summative form was used in one high school department. Using the RBT model as a guide, the evaluator rates information from classroom observations according to a six-point scale under five performance categories.

The negotiated evaluation process is designed to produce a summative evaluation for teachers without professional status in each of their first three years. According to the review team's examination of personnel files, this has taken place. While the process was in alignment with the annual evaluation requirement for teachers without professional status, the four-year cycle for

⁶ As they existed before June 2011, when the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace the previous regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership at 603 CMR 35.00.

⁷ "Informative" means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. "Instructive" means that the evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

professional status teachers was not in compliance with existing regulations at 603 CMR 35.00. The evaluation process for professional status teachers spans a four-year cycle with one summative evaluation within the four years.

As a response to the 2007 EQA report the superintendent at the time authorized use of a one-page summative form in place of an observation summative report. This form contained no standards, ratings, or observational data, and required only a signature to complete. The form consisted of summative commentaries on five general areas: classroom teaching; contributing member of the staff; communications with parents and community; routine administrative duties and obligations; and professional growth as an educator. These categories are not in alignment with the regulations, and there are no standards of effective teaching or ratings in the evaluation contents. Because of the substitution of this document for a written evaluation in the summative year a large number of teachers had not been observed even once every four years. This practice was not in compliance with either 603 CMR 35.00 or the collective bargaining agreement.

The review team's examination of personnel files showed that the district did not have a process for identifying levels of teaching performance—for distinguishing excellent teaching from good teaching or good teaching from marginal or ineffective teaching. The review team examined 69 randomly selected personnel files of current teachers. Documents entitled "Summative" and "Professional Growth" and a number of other forms were analyzed. Summative documents, except for the single-page summative form described previously, contained some running commentaries, but almost no instructive comments. No summative document contained any recommendations for professional development to improve instruction.

In an emerging period of accountability for teachers, the review team found the district to be without the tools to support its efforts to improve teaching and learning. Its current evaluation process for teachers was inefficient and unsupportive of district efforts to promote its stated goals of improving instruction and student learning. The team found that district teacher and administrator evaluation systems both continued to be out of compliance with existing regulations. Such nominal evaluation systems are not capable of identifying quality teaching or of tying in high-level professional development to support quality teaching. Evaluations as conducted did not support the district's efforts to ensure that students get the high quality education described in its Goals and Initiatives for Teaching and Learning.

A robust and deliberate professional development program was jeopardized by teachers' limited role in the planning and wariness about committing their time without a collective bargaining agreement in place.⁸

Through an examination of documents and interviews with administrators, teachers, and union leaders, the review team found that Gloucester offers an extensive professional development

⁸ According to information received from the superintendent in fall 2012, a collective bargaining agreement for the new evaluation system mandated by the revision of 603 CMR 35.00 in June 2011 was tendered at the beginning of the summer of 2012. The teachers' association and the administration agreed to "pilot" ESE's model contract language (with some modifications), rubrics, and forms for the 2012–2013 school year.

program. The district also allocates \$50,000.00 annually for tuition re-imbursement for college courses. The documents examined by the review team described three years of district-supported workshops and courses on topics related to teaching and administrative responsibilities including curriculum development and data usage. Teachers are awarded in-service credits for participation. In some cases, substitutes are hired to release teachers for training in certain common topics. District professional development days are tightly scheduled and training time is allocated in the school calendar under the collective bargaining agreement. In addition to district level professional development, the schools schedule workshops and professional development opportunities to address contemporary concerns, such as bullying and sex education.

Three factors inhibit the success of the district's professional development plan: First, until recently most professional development offerings took place outside of the school day, reaching only the teachers who chose to attend. In interviews, administrators stated that only 15 to 20 teachers regularly took advantage of these workshops. Recently, the district has begun to offer workshops during the school day by using substitutes to cover teachers' classes.

The second factor is that teachers are not involved in decisions about professional development. The professional development committee had teacher representatives at the time of the site visit, but was not going to include teachers in 2011–2012. Many teachers interviewed by the visiting team expressed the view that they had no voice in centralized professional development planning and that their contributions to district successes were not recognized or valued. In interviews with the review team, administrators indicated understanding that these were the teachers' feelings.

The lapsed collective bargaining agreement may be a third factor. After three years of memoranda of understanding and no salary increases, the review team heard teachers expressing increased feelings of powerlessness. In interviews, teachers expressed frustration about not having a collective bargaining agreement, skepticism about a positive agreement in the future, and wariness about committing their time under the circumstances, given the level of training required to support new initiatives.

Gloucester underwrites an extensive professional development program and offers teachers opportunities to participate in a variety of workshops and courses. The provision of substitutes during the school day to allow teachers to attend professional development is an expensive option that has an impact on the continuity of classroom instruction. The planning of professional development does not include the craft knowledge of classroom practitioners, limiting the relevancy of the topics. And the absence of a current collective bargaining agreement had made teachers wary about time commitments for professional development.

The district has not fully developed or implemented a plan to systematically support teachers in the development and use of tiered interventions in the classroom.

Although principals in interviews acknowledged that tiered interventions are a district priority, they added that teachers receive very little explicit training on how to develop or implement tiered interventions in the classroom.

According to interviewees, when the district provided training through RBT on how to analyze student data and identify gaps in student learning, each elementary school formed a data team. Principals told the review team that the district made the assumption that teachers, led and supported by the data teams, could develop and implement tiered intervention strategies to address these newly identified gaps. Principals went on to say that teachers required more structured support for the implementation of tiered interventions and that programs such as the Scott Foresman *Reading Street* were successful because they provided “embedded tiered intervention support.” Principals added that when they shared these concerns with the district, they faced resistance, and some felt that the district was not open to this feedback. When asked about professional development about tiered interventions, a principal described the problem in the following way: “Right now there doesn’t appear to be a willingness on the district’s part to listen to problems related to rolling out a particular initiative. There’s an assumption that if the district provides professional development, teachers will be able to use a particular strategy. We need to develop a feedback process where the district hears our concerns regarding professional development needs.”

Interviews with district administrators and principals revealed competing assumptions about district and school responsibilities: district administrators said that the principals were responsible for providing the appropriate school-based follow-up, while the principals said that the district should provide structured follow-up. These competing assumptions have contributed to the problems in instituting tiered instruction district-wide. The review team’s classroom observations confirmed that tiered interventions are not yet a regular part of teachers’ daily practice. Unless the district addresses this issue in a systematic and thoughtful way, schools will continue to struggle in addressing the needs of individual students.

The district did not provide adequate support for English language learners (ELLs).

The review team found that an ESL teacher was responsible for the intake, assessment, and placement of all ELLs in the district. In addition, that same teacher is responsible for classroom support for all ELLs in kindergarten through grade 8. While district administrators, principals, and school staff lauded the efforts of this individual, it was widely acknowledged by interviewees that this level of support was not adequate to meet the unique learning needs of ELLs. Currently the ESL teacher serves 72 ELLs. This teacher reports directly to a district administrator, who acknowledged that the teacher is solely responsible for overseeing all district ESL services.

Compounding this limitation is the absence of required professional development for general education teachers in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). Administrators stated that teachers were recently offered category one training, but no further training has been offered or is planned. Not only are ELLs underserved in terms of ESL teacher support, but they are also in general education classrooms where teachers are ill-equipped to address their unique linguistic needs.

Given this combination of insufficient availability of ESL teachers and inadequate professional development for mainstream classroom teachers working with ELLs, the implication is that these

students will not see the growth and increase in student achievement they are capable of. The district is not providing ELLs with the support they require.

The fiscal year 2012 Gloucester school district budget development was a collaborative and transparent process providing school committee members, central office administrators, and principals with an understanding of the financial conditions of the district. This budget document provided greater detail and clarity than in previous years and was helpful to city and school officials in making the necessary financial decisions by school and program.

The fiscal year 2012 budget development process was described in interviews with school committee members, central office administrators and school principals as a participatory process led by the interim superintendent. Preliminary discussions began in the fall of 2010 between the interim superintendent and the chief financial officer (CFO) to identify major variables, that is, revenues and expenditures that are expected to change significantly in fiscal year 2012. Those that are expected to significantly impact the fiscal year 2012 budget include the loss of \$890,699 from the expiration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, increases in salary steps and levels, health insurance cost increases, and an increase in special education services. Facilities maintenance, utilities and tuitions to a newly opened charter school were included in the city budget projections.

According to interviews with administrators and a review of the budget document dated March 2, 2011, district and school leaders met during December and January to review school and program budget requests. After many meetings with individuals and groups, the superintendent established a level service budget in the amount of \$35,209,301, an increase of 5.04 percent from the fiscal year 2011 district budget. The two hundred and sixty-five page budget document provided budget and planning reports, budget analysis, and detailed line item expenditures by function, school, and department. The review team saw that the budget documents for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 had minimal reports and analysis, and no detailed line item expenditure reviews. In interviews, city officials and school committee members told the review team that they welcomed the increased level of budget detail because it enables them to make informed decisions, and praised the open process which provided more transparency and trust than in prior years.

Beeman was slated for an \$80,446 (5.82 percent) increase, primarily in salaries. The Veterans Memorial Elementary School, originally slated for a \$139,244 (12.15 percent) increase, was the only school to exceed the Beeman increase. Beeman had no change in the number of teachers from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011 in order to keep class sizes in grade 4 and grade 5 at a level that took into account the proportion of students from low-income families. No analysis of this decision is presented in the document; however, grade 4 and grade 5 student-teacher ratios were projected at 17.7:1 and 17.5:1 respectively. These ratios are the lowest in the district with a city-wide average of 22.1:1 and 21.4:1.

In interviews, the interim superintendent, CFO, and school committee members said that they knew the proposed fiscal year 2012 level services budget with an increase of 5.04 percent was not feasible in light of anticipated revenues. In addition, a press release issued from the office of

the interim superintendent between March 7 and March 16, 2011, indicates central office administrators and school principals began meeting over several weeks to develop “least harmful” cuts to bring the budget close to level funding. The interim superintendent empowered school leaders to conduct a collaborative process to reduce the fiscal year 2012 budget with the least harmful impact on teaching and learning.

Principals described this process as a difficult team effort that enabled them to become more knowledgeable of the budget development process and the reasons for budget reductions. School leaders said in interviews that the initial detailed budget development process was helpful in these deliberations and enabled them to recognize the particular importance of elementary school class size and support staff.

Between March 2 and March 16, 2011, as a result of meetings with district and school administrative leaders, the school committee building and finance sub-committee, and the full school committee, reductions totaling \$849,875 were made to the proposed fiscal year 2012 level services budget. At the March 16, 2011 meeting, attended by the finance review team members, the school committee voted a \$34,367,426 fiscal year 2012 budget of \$684,752 (2.04 percent) above the adjusted fiscal year 2011 budget. This proposal was to be presented at the March 31, 2011 required public hearing.

One area in which the new budget document did not provide greater clarity was in presenting staffing patterns, though it did show that salary costs represented approximately 70 percent of the total budget. Fiscal year 2010 through fiscal year 2012 funding levels for school staffing and non-salary expenditures were shown in summary but not in the supporting detail. This information was requested by the review team in order to determine the impact of funding levels on staffing and non-salary expenditures. Since enrollment was projected to decrease by 5 percent in fiscal year 2012, from 3,307 students to 3,138 students, the impact on staffing needed to be made clear. In the proposed fiscal year 2012 level services budget, non-salary expenses were reduced by \$77,000 or 9 percent. One special education teacher position was eliminated. In contrast, with virtually level student enrollment in fiscal year 2011, 3.4 full-time equivalent (FTE) regular teacher positions and 2.3 FTE special education teacher positions were added, though paraprofessional positions were reduced by 5.9 FTE. For fiscal year 2011 the Beeman budget had a reduction of \$33,000 or 40 percent in non-salary expenses, and additions of a 0.4 FTE regular education teacher, 3 FTE specialist teachers, and a 0.5 FTE literacy coach. Paraprofessional positions were reduced by 2.2 FTE.

The budget and planning reports, budget analysis, and detailed line item expenditures by function, school, and department provided in the fiscal year 2012 budget document brought about a significant change in the budget development process. School principals gained knowledge and insight into their school budgets and how they roll up into the district budget. The additional budget detail has provided justification for budget decisions and added a degree of credibility that will improve the budget deliberations with the city.

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.

The district should continue its efforts to develop and implement a districtwide improvement plan that can be used as the basis for aligning and supporting individual school improvement plans. The outcome of this effort has the potential to serve as a unifying element in creating a cohesive kindergarten through grade 12 system.

The superintendent informed ESE after the review that the district has since put a district improvement plan (DIP) in place. Stress should be placed on the importance of ensuring that the DIP supports and is aligned to the school improvement plans (SIPs) and is used actively to help district and school improvement efforts. DIPs and SIPs should be used to track implementation of initiatives, identify successes and challenges during implementation, and make mid-course corrections.

At the time of the review the district had a strategic plan for 2007–2009 that had not been updated, and the goals in the SIPs did not always match the strategic plan’s goals. According to interviewees, updating of the strategic plan had been subordinated to the in-depth and extended search for a new superintendent, and a focus on creating a more comprehensive budget development process during the 2010–2011 school year. School committee members interviewed by the review team stated an intention to revise and update the strategic plan and said that the process had already begun.

Many of the goals and objectives in the original plan were sound and addressed many of the concerns of the review team. Among these goals and objectives were the following: developing a coherent pre-kindergarten through grade 12 system, implementing best instructional practice at all grade levels, creating an alignment between planning and budget development, supporting schools in the development of data-driven improvement plans and instructional strategies, negotiating employment contracts which meet the objectives of the district, and ensuring that evaluation arrangements for all staff are appropriate and meet requirements.

By making sure that the SIPs are aligned with its updated districtwide improvement plan, the district will begin the necessary steps to establish a cohesive system and lay a firm foundation for integrated decision-making with a focus on improvements in teaching and learning.

In continuing work toward a complete curriculum, the district should ensure systemic curriculum coordination and provide for horizontal and vertical alignment.

The strategic plan for 2007–2009, still partially in use at the time of the review, stated that the district must ensure that all students have access to a curriculum characterized by purpose, engagement, breadth, balance, depth, and rigor, and which articulates the state curriculum frameworks. A review of developed curricula made clear that the district relied heavily on the state curriculum frameworks to act as a curriculum rather than developing a district curriculum aligned to the curriculum frameworks. The district had some curriculum elements in place, but

the system was incomplete, resulting in curriculum gaps, which deprive students of instruction that allows them to perform to their fullest potential. And all three levels of the district were working separately in developing curriculum.

At the elementary level, the mathematics and science curricula were based on *Investigations* and the *Scott Foresman Science Program*. Members of the curriculum committees had developed the mathematics guide, consisting of resources and assessments, several years before. The middle school had been working outside of the curriculum committees and teachers had produced units of study in mathematics. The high school was cited in the 2009 NEASC evaluation for the absence of a complete curriculum; according to its SIP, the high school had been working on the development of units for many years. The work at the high school was the responsibility of program leaders and teachers in each department. According to the program leaders, many units had been written, but few reviewed, and in many cases the units were not in use.

While the district had an assistant superintendent who was responsible for kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum, there is an absence of coordination among all levels, particularly in ELA. Not only was curriculum work at the elementary level, middle school, and high school uncoordinated, there was also little vertical articulation of the existing curriculum, and teachers were frequently unaware of what students had already learned. Interviewees said that there was not sufficient time for staff to address this issue, with discussions varying from school to school.

In the past the district had a kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum committee, but it was disbanded and replaced with elementary literacy and mathematics committees. This committee arrangement did not allow for membership from the middle school and high school. Also, according to interviewees the elementary committees only met three to four times during the year. This meant there was almost no system-wide coordination of curriculum.

In continuing its efforts to develop the curriculum, the district should provide for systemwide coordination of those efforts and align the curriculum both vertically and horizontally.

To enable teachers to provide students with data-driven instruction, the district should expand its system for collection and dissemination of assessment information to be a complete, districtwide system, and support and monitor the development of data teams in each school by means of a district data team.

At the time of the review the district had established some of the elements that teachers need to implement data-based instruction. Schools administered a range of assessments, and the district had begun to disseminate assessment results in a more systematic way by introducing a software tracking program at the elementary level. The district had just finished training elementary teachers to use the program (with use varying widely by individual teacher). Plans were in place to extend the program to the middle school and high school. This meant that teachers at these levels did not have the same capacity to review and analyze student assessment results.

The district had also provided professional development on the use of data to improve instruction for administrators at the elementary level and middle school, along with a team of teachers from each school. After the professional development on data analysis the district's plan was for each

school to establish a data team to help the remaining teachers in the school plan data-based instruction. There were data teams at all five elementary schools, and mathematics teachers at the middle school were planning instruction based on MCAS results. However, the middle school did not yet have a data team formally in place, and high school teachers had not yet received training in the use of data.

Many gaps needed to be filled for the district to have the necessary elements to equip teachers to implement data-based instruction. Elementary schools had data teams and access to some disseminated data. However, the effectiveness of data teams in the elementary schools varied, and there was no mechanism for the district to guide and support the teams. And the middle school did not yet have a structure to support all teachers to use assessment data to plan instruction. Finally, the software tracking program had not been established at the high school to disseminate comprehensive data to teachers, and there had been no professional development for high school teachers on the use of data to improve instruction.

The review team recommends that the district use the software tracking program to make available to schools and teachers at all levels a wide range of assessment information. Further, the team recommends that data teams be established in all schools and that the school data teams be supported and monitored by a district data team. Data-based instruction is complex, and teachers need guidance as they undertake it. Some guidance can come from school administrators, some from coaches where they are available, but expectations and support must also come from the district, where these concepts originated. Only when data-based instruction is a reality will instruction across the district be addressing the student needs revealed by assessment results.

The district and teachers' association should commit to establishing a strong working relationship and an effective collective bargaining agreement to stabilize the union-management environment.

The review team found evidence that teachers were feeling powerless, frustrated, and wary about committing their time to professional development in the absence of a recently negotiated teachers' collective bargaining agreement, with three successive extensions by memoranda of the 2004–2007 agreement. Such feelings may become an adverse influence on employees whose ingenuity and enthusiasm are relied upon to provide high levels of service to students and to parents. In addition, there was a strong and expensive professional development effort directed at providing improved teaching in the district schools, requiring strong professional development commitments by teachers.

Through an examination of the collective bargaining agreement and the three memoranda that extended it, as well as interviews with teachers, administrators, and Gloucester Teachers Association leaders, the review team found that the traditional process of “give and take” negotiation followed in the district for a long time may not be a fruitful strategy as currently organized and practiced. Unit A requests money and those proposals are turned down. The school committee then agrees to language to “give back,” for instance by reductions in

professional development days or after school hours. There may be more effective ways of negotiating, ways that serve the interests of both parties, than the method currently used.

This traditional model of “give and take” bargaining is being examined nationally as a method that may be outdated, given today’s economic environment. (See *Education Week*, February 23, 2011, front page story entitled “Districts, Unions Seek to Improve Relations.” This piece cites examples of union-management partnerships around the country that may help provide some ideas to both sides about how to move forward in the Gloucester negotiations. School districts are increasingly finding ways to create balance between the contribution/satisfaction levels of their employees and the resources of their districts, through adopting new models of negotiation and integrating new approaches to organizing the work.

The nature of the working relationship between the teachers’ association and management and the establishment of an effective collective bargaining agreement with teachers are important for overall morale. Employees commit long term to stable organizations that value their contributions. Moving the contract interests of both parties collaboratively will promote such stability in the Gloucester Public Schools.

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

The review team found that neither the administrator evaluation system nor the teacher evaluation system was in compliance with state law in either its content or the frequency of evaluations. Except for one set of forms from one high school department, no evaluation forms had any ratings of teaching or administrative performance. Thus the district had no way of distinguishing levels of teaching skills and was without the tools necessary to support its efforts to improve teaching and learning.

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

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

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

The district should develop a human resources system that connects the various recruiting, screening, interviewing, and hiring functions to district priorities; it should also integrate the district's professional development with the evaluation of teachers and administrators and provide for the involvement of teachers in professional development planning.

At the time of the review the district had a series of relatively independent, disconnected human resource processes. Vacancies were processed independently, with no central coordination. Recruiting was not tied to district needs, for example for personnel with skills in using data or teaching ELLs. Principals used their own standards and beliefs about screening and interviewing candidates, without reference to any district standards for these processes. Personnel files for successful candidates for district positions did not contain ratings or any assessment of the candidate's potential to support district priorities. And mentoring did not always support professional development priorities. For example, the two-year mentoring program, valued by those the review team interviewed, offered no training on the use of data, a priority of the district in its professional development program.

Professional development was also a stand-alone function. No evaluation reviewed by the team contained any recommended professional development. The professional growth documents that substituted for a summative evaluation were stand-alone documents, for the most part aimed at re-licensing the teacher, who selected the professional growth activities. And many teachers expressed the view that they had no voice in centralized professional development planning.

These essential building blocks of human resource management and development must be connected to each other as a deliberate and systematic district human capital plan. Separately, they are isolated functions. Brought together, they are greater than the sum of their parts and can be a powerful self-maintaining system.

The district should provide support for teachers as they implement tiered instruction at all levels.

Principals told the review team in interviews that teachers needed additional support and follow-up in the use of tiered interventions in the classroom. District administrators said that it was the responsibility of the principals to provide appropriate school-based follow-up to district professional development on data-driven instruction, but principals thought that the district should provide structured follow-up. These competing assumptions were contributing to difficulties in instituting tiered instruction districtwide.

The professional development responsibilities of the district administration do not end with the provision of high-quality workshops for principals and teachers. At that point, the work has just begun. Teachers need strong support as they develop and implement tiered intervention strategies to address the gaps in learning identified through data analysis. District follow-up and support for tiered instruction will ensure that it is consistently and effectively put into practice throughout the schools.

The district should develop and execute a plan for serving English language learners (ELLs) more effectively and in accordance with state recommendations and legal requirements.

The review team found the insufficiency of services to ELLs of particular concern. Relying upon a single person to provide support for 72 ELL students in kindergarten through grade 8 was widely acknowledged by interviewees not to meet ELLs' needs.⁹ At the time of the review the certified kindergarten through grade 8 teacher reported directly to a district administrator, and this administrator acknowledged that the ESL teacher was solely responsible for overseeing ESL services.

In addition, very little training had been offered for regular education teachers in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). The district has a responsibility to provide these teachers with SEI training aligned with ESE's RETELL¹⁰ initiative, so that ELLs throughout the district are provided with sheltered English immersion.

The limited services and supports provided for ELLs at the time of the team's visit did not meet their needs or the requirements of law. The district should examine its current ELL program and move to improve it so that it addresses the learning requirements of its ELLs.

In future years the district should use a budget preparation process similar to the one in fiscal year 2012, to foster transparency and understanding as well as improved budget deliberations within the district and between the district and the city.

The budget and planning reports, budget analysis and detailed line item expenditures by function, school, and department provided in the two hundred and sixty-five page fiscal year 2012 budget document brought about a significant change in the budget development process. School principals gained knowledge and insight into their school budgets and the overall district budget. This exercise required significant collaboration between school leaders that may serve as a model for conducting other district collaborations. The additional budget detail provided transparent justification for budget decisions and gave the school system greater credibility with the city.

Using a similar process in the future will mean a continuation of the improved transparency and understanding and the improved basis for budget decisions.

Finally, the development of procedures for the evaluation of programs will also result in better-informed budget decisions.

⁹ The amounts of ESL instruction recommended by the state are:

Levels 1 and 2: daily minimum of 2.5 hours to a full day

Level 3: daily minimum of 1-2 hours

Levels 4 and 5: weekly minimum of 2.5 hours

¹⁰ Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Gloucester Public Schools was conducted from March 14 to March 17, 2011, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. Owen Conway, Leadership and Governance

Dolores Fitzgerald, Curriculum and Instruction

Patricia Williams, Assessment, Review Team Coordinator

Dr. Thomas Johnson, Human Resources and Professional Development

Frank DeVito, Student Support

Dr. Wilfrid Savoie, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Gloucester financial personnel: mayor, chief financial officer, two city council members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Gloucester school committee: chair, assistant chair, four members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Gloucester teachers' association: president, vice-president.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Gloucester Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, assistant superintendent for operations and central services, district literacy specialist, math program leader, human resources officer, director of special education, director of student health services, behavior specialist, and chief financial officer.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Gloucester Public Schools: Beeman Memorial Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), E. Gloucester Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Gloucester High School (grades 9–12), O'Maley Middle School (grades 6–8), Plum Cove Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), Veterans Memorial Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), and W. Parish Elementary (kindergarten through grade 5).

During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with the principal of each school, with the Beeman Memorial Elementary leadership team, and with elementary, middle, and high school teacher focus groups. During school visits, the review team also conducted 41 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects.

- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report
 - Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years

- Teacher's contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Organization chart
 - District Improvement Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the past year
 - Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
 - Literacy Guide
 - Math Guide
 - K-8 science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - A limited number of job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
 - Teacher attendance data
 - All administrator evaluations and certifications
 - Randomly selected teacher personnel files

- Using the Data Process Logic Model
- Paraprofessionals Contract
- Goals and Initiatives for Teaching and Learning
- Child Study Team Forms
- Sample High School Science Units
- Gloucester High School MCAS Preparations
- NEASC Special Progress Report
- Audit of Financial Reporting FY09
- Gloucester Expenditure Budget Report FY11
- Food Service Department Annual Budget
- Budget Plan and Monthly Income and Expense Report
- Memo: Budget Spending Freeze
- Memo: Heat and Utility Budgeting and Spending Freeze
- Letter of Agreement FY06 (Estimate for FY07)
- Letter of Agreement on Transfer of Maintenance and Repair of Buildings and Grounds
- FY2012 School Budget Supporting Documents and special Reports
- FY2011-2012 Budget Reductions
- Provisional School Committee Operating Budget FY2010
- Provisional School Committee Operating Budget FY2011
- FY11 Year End Projection #2
- FY11 Year End Projection #1
- Gloucester Ed Foundation/FY 10 and FY11
- Spreadsheets of Expenditures and Receipts
- Revolving and Special Revenues 2010-2011
- Purchase Order Pay History and Encumbrance – 2
- Beeman Elementary School Mini-Grants
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the Beeman Memorial Elementary visited because it was identified as a “gap-closer” for low-income students:
 - School Improvement Plan
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in the school

- Descriptions of student support programs at the school
- Student and Family Handbooks for the school
- Teacher planning time/meeting schedules at the school
- Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools used at the school
- School Grants List
- Implementation of RTI
- RTI Summer Agenda
- Implementation of RTI
- Professional Development Roster

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Differentiated Needs (Low-Income) Review of the Gloucester Public Schools, conducted from March 14–17, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
March 14 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals, teachers, coaches, school psychologist; review of personnel files; interview with teachers' association.	March 15 Interviews with district staff, principals and assistant principal, coach; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups.	March 16 Interviews with city personnel; school visits (Beeman Memorial, Veterans Memorial, Plum Island, W. Parish); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; interview with teachers' association; school committee interviews; parent focus group.	March 17 Classroom observations at (O'Maley Middle School, Gloucester High School; interview with Beeman Elementary leadership team; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals.

Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008–2010

**Table C1: 2008–2010 Gloucester Public Schools Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
ELA**

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP
Grade 3—District	51	NA*	49	NA*	57	NA*
Grade 3—State	56	NA*	57	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 4—District	38	45	51	43	42	45
Grade 4—State	49	48	53	50	54	50
Grade 5—District	62	52	57	47	62	51
Grade 5—State	61	51	63	50	63	50
Grade 6—District	60	37	61	42	60	47.5
Grade 6—State	67	50	66	50	69	50
Grade 7— District	61	35	63	38	75	49.5
Grade 7— State	69	50	70	50	72	50
Grade 8— District	74	49	69	34	72	46
Grade 8— State	75	49	78	50	78	50
Grade 10— District	71	NA*	81	45	79	47
Grade 10— State	74	NA*	81	50	78	50
All Grades— District	60	44	62	41	63	47
All Grades—State	64	50	67	50	68	50

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

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

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C2: 2008–2010 Gloucester Public Schools Proficiency Rates,
with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
Mathematics**

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>
Grade 3—District	47	NA*	45	NA*	52	NA*
Grade 3—State	61	NA*	60	NA*	65	NA*
Grade 4—District	35	45.5	40	60	34	47.5
Grade 4—State	49	49	48	50	48	49
Grade 5—District	42	40	36	48	48	52.5
Grade 5—State	52	51	54	50	55	50
Grade 6—District	43	44	46	47	40	45
Grade 6—State	56	50	57	50	59	50
Grade 7— District	35	54.5	32	32.5	46	50
Grade 7— State	47	50	49	50	53	50
Grade 8— District	43	68	43	59	37	52
Grade 8— State	49	51	48	50	51	51
Grade 10— District	68	NA*	72	51	73	49
Grade 10— State	72	NA*	75	50	75	50
All Grades— District	45	49	45	49	48	49
All Grades—State	55	50	55	50	59	50

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

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

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in
Beeman Memorial Elementary School, Gloucester Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
ELA**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	Median SGP
State Low-Income Students	41	73.2	45.0	45	75.5	45.0	47	76.5	46.0
State All Students	64	85.2	50.0	67	86.5	50.0	68	86.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	43	75.5	42.0	48	76.9	43.0	48	78.3	47.0
District All Students	60	83.2	44.0	62	84.3	41.0	63	85.4	47.0
Beeman Memorial Low-Income Students	36	70.1	44.5	41	75.4	37.0	45	76.4	46.0
Beeman Memorial All Students	47	76.5	40.0	47	78.3	46.0	54	81.3	46.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C4: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in
Beeman Memorial Elementary School, Gloucester Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
Mathematics**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
State Low-Income Students	33	63.1	45.0	33	64.5	44.0	37	67.1	47.0
State All Students	55	77.7	50.0	55	78.5	50.0	59	79.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	26	60.5	46.0	27	60.8	44.0	32	64.4	44.0
District All Students	45	72.2	49.0	45	72.0	49.0	48	73.6	49.0
Beeman Memorial Low-Income Students	17	56.9	27.0	26	59.4	39.0	34	66.8	43.0
Beeman Memorial All Students	38	68.9	30.0	36	66.9	46.0	44	72.6	46.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C5: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Low-Income Students in Beeman Memorial Elementary School, Gloucester Public
Schools, and State
ELA**

Grade	Beeman Memorial	Gloucester	State
3	44 (29)	42 (120)	43
4	36 (14)	27 (96)	31
5	50 (26)	46 (94)	40
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district.</p> <p>*Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.</p> <p>--- School does not include this grade.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

**Table C6: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Low-Income Students in Beeman Memorial Elementary School, Gloucester Public
Schools, and State
Mathematics**

Grade	Beeman Memorial	Gloucester	State
3	45 (29)	40 (120)	45
4	14 (14)	16 (97)	28
5	33 (27)	32 (94)	33
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district.</p> <p>*Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.</p> <p>--- School does not include this grade.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Key Question 1: To what extent are the conditions for school effectiveness in place at the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. With the direction and support of the principal, Beeman teachers have taken a series of steps leading to a collaborative focus on the needs of individual students.
2. The balanced literacy approach was inadequate to meet the needs of all the students at Beeman. This approach was difficult to implement, since teachers had to develop their own lessons from a variety of resources. Adoption of a core program helped teachers to provide for individual differences.
3. Beeman has instituted both a child-study team and a learning center to systematically address students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

Key Question 2: How do the district's systems for support and intervention affect the school where the performance of low-income students has substantially improved?

1. The absence at the time of the review of a current operative district improvement plan (DIP) or strategic plan led to inconsistencies in the school improvement plans (SIPs).
2. The school district did not have a system for evaluating the effectiveness of personnel and programs.
3. Many curricular elements were established in Gloucester, but at the time of the review there was little overall coordination of the kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum.
4. Classroom observations revealed that the quality of instruction varied widely from classroom to classroom.
5. Teachers and schools were at various stages of using data to plan, differentiate, and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.
6. The district did not have a human resource system that linked recruitment, hiring, professional development, and evaluations to hiring standards in alignment with its instructional and leadership priorities.
7. The district administrator and teacher evaluation processes did not meet the requirements of 603 CMR: 35.00.

8. A robust and deliberate professional development program was jeopardized by teachers' limited role in the planning and wariness about committing their time without a collective bargaining agreement in place.¹¹
9. The district has not fully developed or implemented a plan to systematically support teachers in the development and use of tiered interventions in the classroom.
10. The district did not provide adequate support for English language learners (ELLs).
11. The fiscal year 2012 Gloucester school district budget development was a collaborative and transparent process providing school committee members, central office administrators, and principals with an understanding of the financial conditions of the district. This budget document provided greater detail and clarity than in previous years and was helpful to city and school officials in making the necessary financial decisions by school and program.

¹¹ According to information received from the superintendent in fall 2012, a collective bargaining agreement for the new evaluation system mandated by the revision of 603 CMR 35.00 in June 2011 was tendered at the beginning of the summer of 2012. The teachers' association and the administration agreed to "pilot" ESE's model contract language (with some modifications), rubrics, and forms for the 2012-13 school year.

Recommendation Statements:

1. The district should continue its efforts to develop and implement a districtwide improvement plan that can be used as the basis for aligning and supporting individual school improvement plans. The outcome of this effort has the potential to serve as a unifying element in creating a cohesive kindergarten through grade 12 system.
2. In continuing work toward a complete curriculum, the district should ensure systemic curriculum coordination and provide for horizontal and vertical alignment.
3. To enable teachers to provide students with data-driven instruction, the district should expand its system for collection and dissemination of assessment information to be a complete, districtwide system, and support and monitor the development of data teams in each school by means of a district data team.
4. The district and teachers' association should commit to establishing a strong working relationship and an effective collective bargaining agreement to stabilize the union-management environment.
5. As it aligns its evaluation system with the new ESE educator evaluation model, the district should ensure that all educators have meaningful professional practice and student learning goals and consistent, timely feedback, and that professional development is aligned with the evaluation system.
6. The district should develop a human resources system that connects the various recruiting, screening, interviewing, and hiring functions to district priorities; it should also integrate the district's professional development with the evaluation of teachers and administrators and provide for the involvement of teachers in professional development planning.
7. The district should provide support for teachers as they implement tiered instruction at all levels.
8. The district should develop and execute a plan for serving English language learners (ELLs) more effectively and in accordance with state recommendations and legal requirements.
9. In future years the district should use a budget preparation process similar to the one in fiscal year 2012, to foster transparency and understanding as well as improved budget deliberations within the district and between the district and the city.