



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Gloucester
Public Schools
Technical Report



data driven

standards based

learner centered →



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

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Educational Management Audit Council

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

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

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Gloucester Public Schools in March 2007. With an average proficiency index of 76 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (85 PI points in English language arts and 67 PI points in math), the district is considered a ‘Moderate’ performing school system based on the Department of Education’s rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement below the state average. Half of Gloucester’s students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

The city of Gloucester, located in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts, is the nation’s oldest fishing port. While it’s fishing industry has been stymied by federal fishing regulations, Gloucester provides many employment opportunities for its residents within the city limits. The coastal, picturesque city enjoys a healthy tourism industry and has a strong arts community. The largest sources of employment within the community are educational, health, and social services, and manufacturing. The city is governed by a Mayor-Council form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Gloucester had a median family income of \$58,459 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of \$63,706, ranking it 234 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city had a total population of 30,273 with a population of 5,240 school-age children, or 17 percent of the total. Of the total households in Gloucester, 30 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 27 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Twenty-eight percent of the population age 25 years or older held a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2005-2006 the Gloucester Public Schools had a total enrollment of 3,803. The demographic composition in the district was: 94.4 percent White, 3.0 percent Hispanic, 1.2 percent African-American, 1.0 percent Asian, 0.1 percent Native American, 0.1 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.2 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 1.7 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 24.6 percent low income, and 18.7 percent special education. In 2004-2005, according to the most recent DOE data available for

Gloucester, 93 percent of school-age children in the city attended public schools. The district offers school choice, and 55 students from other school districts attended the Gloucester schools in 2005-2006. A total of 241 Gloucester students attended public schools outside the district, including 56 students who attended the North Shore Technical High School.

The district has eight schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including six elementary schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 5, one middle school serving grades 6 through 8, and one high school serving grades 9 through 12. Gloucester Public Schools' administrative team consists of a superintendent, an assistant superintendent for operations and central services, an assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, a special education director, a human resource officer, and a chief financial officer. Each elementary school has a principal; the middle school has a principal and three assistant principals, one per grade; and the high school has a principal and assistant principal. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2006, Gloucester's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was \$10,351, compared to \$11,196 statewide, ranking it 172 out of 325 of 328 school districts reporting data. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from \$33,711,105 to \$35,905,471; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$5,243,302 to \$5,446,302; the required local contribution increased from \$24,803,276 to \$26,625,347; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 4,152 to 4,060. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 15.6 to 15.2 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending decreased from 62 to 60 percent.

Context

The superintendent and the school committee of the Gloucester Public Schools have a good working relationship, and a collaborative relationship exists between the school system and the city. Although the superintendent, the school committee, and the city worked together and developed and approved sound educational budgets during the period under review, after factoring in increases in health benefits and fuel and structural salary increases, very little of the

increase in the budget of the Gloucester Public Schools remained to fund student programs intended to quickly improve student achievement. The school committee implemented a process that requires principals to present the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) at the same time they make budget presentations. This allowed committee members to understand what the schools need, even though most school improvement programs will not be funded. During the period under review, the district operated with limited budget resources. As a result, some functions and positions, such as a facilities manager, were sacrificed to staff classrooms.

To meet the challenges of annual budget limitations, the Gloucester school district has implemented a strong and organized formative and summative data analysis system that allows the district to make immediate changes to curriculum and instruction. Programmatic changes and the implementation of new programs are data driven and supported with substantial professional development and embedded personnel, such as math and literacy specialists to assist teachers on a day to day basis. In addition, the district has a strong mentoring program. At a time when resources are limited, using student achievement data proactively as an adjunct to the budget process allows the district to allocate or reallocate resources based on school or student need.

The EQA Examination Process

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

From March 26-29, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Gloucester Public Schools for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. This examination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source

documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the onsite visit.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Gloucester to be a ‘Moderate’ performing school district with an average proficiency index of 76 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006, marked by student achievement that was ‘High’ in English language arts (ELA) and ‘Low’ in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance declined by nearly three PI points in ELA and improved by nearly two PI points in math, which widened the district’s average proficiency gap by slightly more than one percent.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, half of all students in Gloucester attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, less than that statewide. Nearly two-thirds of Gloucester students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and roughly one-third of Gloucester students attained proficiency in math and in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-eight percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- Gloucester’s average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 76 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points less than that statewide. Gloucester’s average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 24 PI points.
- In 2006, Gloucester’s proficiency gap in ELA was 15 PI points, one PI point narrower than the state’s average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of roughly two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).

- Gloucester's proficiency gap in math was 33 PI points in 2006, five PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of roughly four PI points per year to achieve AYP. Gloucester's proficiency gap in STE was 31 PI points, two PI points wider than that statewide.

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

Between 2003 and 2006, Gloucester's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall and in math, a slight decline in ELA, and a larger decline in STE. Most of the overall gain occurred between 2003 and 2004, with relatively flat performance since then.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by one percentage point between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by two percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Gloucester narrowed from 27 PI points in 2003 to 25 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of seven percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Gloucester declined slightly, by less than one PI point.
- Math performance in Gloucester showed improvement over this period, at an average of one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Gloucester had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately three PI points over the two-year period.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Gloucester students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Gloucester in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 22 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 24 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Gloucester in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in

the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-third of the students in these subgroups attained proficiency.

- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. More than half the students in these subgroups attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. Roughly half the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

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

In Gloucester, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 21 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 23 to 25 PI points over this period.

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

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

The superintendent, in large measure, provided effective administration for the Gloucester Public Schools during the period under review. However, the district leadership team comprised of

central administrators and principals lacked the resources necessary to provide adequate educational programs due to budgetary restrictions. In FY 2004, the district's Chapter 70 aid was reduced by 20 percent, followed by no increase in FY 2005, and the district's Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of net school spending (NSS) declined from 19.9 percent in FY 2003 to 15.2 percent in FY 2006. The superintendent assigned the director of information technology and the assistant superintendent for operations and central services to serve as interim principals for certain time periods from 2005 through 2007 to alleviate staffing needs and funding shortfalls. These decisions, while fiscally understandable, compromised the district's ability to respond efficiently and effectively in these two critical areas. In addition, the district did not have a facilities director in place two of the last four years.

The district adopted a strategic plan in 2004 that guided the direction of the school system. The plan, yet to take root uniformly across the system, lacked sufficient resources to attain its intended vision for the system. The school committee understood its role as a policymaking body, received training in the requirements of education reform, and worked effectively as a group with school and city officials. The district effectively gathered, analyzed, and utilized data at both the district and school levels in an effort to understand the challenges and barriers students faced in gaining greater academic proficiency. The district did not comply with statutory requirements concerning the frequency of and criteria for teacher and administrator evaluation, and it lacked a uniform and consistently applied instrument for administrator evaluation.

The district leaders created a set of management structures that facilitated district communication and promoted collegial working relationships among staff. The superintendent afforded leadership autonomy to the principals and held them accountable for efficient and effective school operations. The superintendent effectively promoted collegial relations with city officials and school committee members. Annual budget requests supported by data analysis, presented by the superintendent and school staff, articulated district challenges that provided a context for financial resource prioritization and allocation. The district implemented criteria to guide school councils in the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The plans presented during the budget deliberations provided uniformity, consistency, context, and rationale to budget decision makers. The district developed an excellent student/staff safety plan. The plan enabled the system to effectively plan for and respond to potential safety incidents. The district prepared and

disseminated an emergency operations plan and emergency response handbook that guided school staff in the event of situations that threatened school safety.

Curriculum and Instruction

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

The district had curricula at all grade levels in tested core content areas that aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The format and components of the curricula differed in scope and detail. In contrast to the detailed K-5 ELA curriculum, the middle school ELA curriculum guide did not have resources, instructional strategies, timelines, articulation maps, and measurable outcomes. The middle school math curriculum components included pacing charts, math standards mapped to the curriculum, units to cover, math lab requirements, and types of assessments. The high school ELA and math curricula included benchmarks, rubrics, timelines, articulation maps, and assessments.

The district ensured consistent articulation of the curriculum in a variety of ways. It purchased common materials, provided common professional development, and monitored implementation through its principals, program leaders, and coordinators. The district did not have a comprehensive curriculum revision plan. The district did have a draft of a curriculum development grid in place to guide some of its curricular priorities, and it had a district teaching and learning leadership team that met every six weeks. The district also had a leadership team that consisted of principals and district office administrators.

With the support of the district literacy specialist and math program leader, the principals were the curriculum and instructional leaders in the elementary schools. They oversaw the use, alignment, and consistency of the district’s curricula and focused on improvement for all students. At the middle and high schools, the principals, assistant principals, and program leaders provided active leadership and support for the professional development and training in effective instructional strategies. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning met with district leaders and analyzed assessment data, discussed curriculum and instructional practices, and led curriculum revision efforts.

The district had a technology plan, and administrators and teachers used technology to enhance instruction. For example, at the middle school level the district supplied electronic boards and professional development to its math teachers. District leaders indicated that they purchased web-based software to compensate for aged computers.

The EQA examiners conducted observations in 41 randomly selected classrooms during their site visit. Examiners rated the district's teachers high on classroom management skills and the creation of a positive classroom learning environment. High expectations, classroom rigor, and strong instructional practices scored lower. Furthermore, upon inspection of teacher evaluations, the EQA team found that evaluations of teachers were limited and were not performed in compliance with statute. However, principals and other supervisors did utilize active supervision methodologies such as contractually allowed classroom observations to monitor instruction. In addition, the district analyzed student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

For a number of years prior to the period under examination, the Gloucester Public Schools utilized a number of assessments to monitor the progress of its students. In the past three to four years, the district has made a concerted effort to streamline the monitoring process and develop a more unified assessment program. Although the district did not mandate the program or describe it in policy documents, it was well understood by all parties within the district. In the elementary grades, the students were assessed using standardized tests such as the DIBELS, DRA, GRADE, and GMADE. Some, namely the DIBELS and the DRA, were used several times during the year in a formative way, thereby giving the teachers a moving picture of each student's progress in ELA. The district used the GRADE and GMADE tests as summative assessments to document the overall progress of students. At the high school, each department developed common assessments. A review of the district's data showed that they it very high rates of participation on

the various assessments, including the MCAS tests, for which participation rates were consistently at 99 to 100 percent for the aggregate population.

During the period under review, the district focused on improving literacy, resulting in changes to the ELA curriculum and its instructional delivery system. Also, the district had paid close attention to the results of the various assessments (particularly at grades K-8), reviewing these data on a student-by-student, class-by-class, and districtwide basis. District coordinators in math and literacy facilitated the effort using database software to analyze the assessment data the district had collected.

The district did not engage in a formal process of evaluating its programs for effectiveness. It did, however, use assessment data frequently as part of its decision-making process. Administrators, principals, school committee members, and teachers all explained that a great deal of time was spent discussing assessment data and trends. A review of the redesigned 2006-2007 School Improvement Plans showed that the district has moved to more formal data-driven practices. These plans reflected goals and measurement of accomplishment from previous years, particularly in ELA and mathematics, and they also contained measurable goals with timelines and metrics for measuring success.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

The Gloucester Public Schools had hiring procedures in place for the hiring of teachers and administrators and advertised vacancies in Essex county newspapers, *The Boston Globe*, and on the district and Boston Works websites. Central office provided all applications to principals who created school screening committees. Principals made hiring recommendations to the superintendent. The district formed committees when hiring administrators. Interviewees indicated that the district did not have any financial barriers to hiring teachers or administrators. The district provided licensure data to the EQA examiners that showed many administrators and Gloucester Teachers Association (GTA) members did hold the appropriate licensure. Interviewees mentioned that possible factors creating difficulty in attracting licensed personnel

included budget approval timing, geographic location, housing costs, and lack of available teacher specialists. The district posted rental housing opportunities on the district website.

The district had mentoring and professional development programs in place during the period under review and provided appropriate funding. The mentoring program was a two-year program, and the district had trained approximately 62 mentors and provided all new teachers in the district with mentors in compliance with statute. The district had two districtwide and four early release professional development days. In addition, schools conducted professional development sessions at faculty and departmental meetings, and the district had a math and literacy specialist who provided embedded professional development in all schools. The district also provided summer professional development opportunities as well as tuition reimbursement. A review of the professional developed plans and information provided by interviewees showed that analysis of student achievement data, program evaluation and implementation, teacher evaluations, and research-based practices informed professional development. The district trained staff in TestWiz and in the use of data associated with the DIBELS, DRA, GMADE, and GRADE assessments.

District administrators received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation methods and teachers received training in skillful teacher methods. The district did not hold administrators and teachers explicitly accountable for student achievement. While principals and other supervisors conducted formative classroom evaluations, the four-year professional development cycle in place during the period under review did not comply with the MGL 603 CMR 35 evaluation requirements under the Education Reform Act of 1993. The district recognized this and amended the cycle to include a mid-cycle evaluation; however, statute requires an annual evaluation for non-professional status teachers. The superintendent did not conduct annual evaluations for all administrators in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 38; however, administrators indicated they developed annual goals with the superintendent and met regularly with the superintendent to discuss progress. The administrator contract included a performance achievement clause related to additional goals negotiated with the superintendent. Although some administrators took advantage of this opportunity, some did not due to time constraints and the elimination of the bonus received by meeting this goal from base salary calculations.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Most Gloucester schools posted brief expectations for attendance in their respective handbooks. The high school elaborated its policy but still had an attendance rate that was below 90 percent. Four unlicensed personnel, reporting to the assistant principal, handled initial attendance, tardiness, truancy, and the penalties. These personnel referred for further action students with chronic attendance problems. Chronic absenteeism ranged from 29 to 38 percent. The high school assigned no academic penalty for absenteeism, although social and out of school activity sanctions did exist. Interviewees attributed the high retention rate of freshmen to absenteeism and to the students’ belief that there would be no consequences for poor performance.

The middle school responded to absenteeism when it became “excessive,” meaning six or seven absences in one quarter. While overall middle school attendance met state targets, chronic absenteeism was high in the middle school as well. Poor attendance triggered family outreach and intervention, sometimes culminating in the filing of a child in need of services (CHINS) petition.

School handbooks identified unacceptable behavior in general terms and contained mandated language for hazing, harassment, the treatment of special education students, and other such matters. The high school handbook provided some additional language regarding discipline but did not clearly indicate penalties for routine infractions. Only the West Parish Elementary School spelled out a ladder of disciplinary consequences for unacceptable behavior. Four unlicensed staff members who reported to the assistant principal supervised discipline at the high school. The high school did not have an in-school suspension option, but did exercise out-of-school suspensions. In 2006, the high school retained approximately one-fourth of all freshmen and one-tenth of its sophomores. While the high school handbook did have a minimum credit requirement for advancing to the next grade, there were no listed academic penalties for absence and the retention rate was completely based on course failure. Three assistant principals supervised discipline at the middle school.

The high school offered an extensive program of vocational and semi-vocational courses to appeal to students in the community. In addition to a summer school for credit recovery, students had access to the COMPASS program and the North Dakota Independent Study, programs providing alternative settings for completion of diploma requirements.

The district invested in staff and materials to develop a literacy program, which extended into the high school. Over several years, the district purchased phonics texts, Rigby readers, and a leveled library for student use. The district literacy specialist, under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, provided staff with professional development on instruction and assessment. The staff examined and reported assessment results, using formative tests to adjust instruction from kindergarten through middle school. The district also purchased texts and software for the math program. A math program leader provided coaching and supervised curriculum development through grade 8. The high school provided remediation through an MCAS test review for English and a variety of in-school and after-school opportunities to receive teacher help. The district provided opportunities for MCAS test remediation after school, in the evening, and through the summer school.

Special education students were taught in an inclusionary setting to the extent possible. In addition, the district maintained substantially separate resource rooms for special populations at the Fuller Elementary School, the middle school, and the high school. Some of these resource rooms also provided pullout support. Special education caseloads outside of the Fuller Elementary School varied greatly by school. The district had guidance counselors in grades 6-12 who also did individual counseling. Title I students received additional literacy services in one elementary building and both literacy and math support in the other. These students and teachers benefited from the extensive district efforts made on behalf of literacy. A licensed individual offered pullout and some in-class instruction to English language learners (ELLs) through grade 8. At the high school, one foreign language teacher, unlicensed in ELL, provided two periods of English as a second language (ESL).

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Administrators and school committee members described a budget process in which parents, school councils, administrators, school committee members, and the city council actively participated. The district’s strategic plan and SIPs included goals to improve student achievement, especially in literacy. The principals presented budget and SIP proposals to the school committee, a practice school committee members reported made the needs of schools clear. The budget document provided details on changes in the proposed and approved budget as well as historical trends and relevant outside sources of revenue. School committee members and city officials noted that the process and the content of the school budget had become more transparent.

The district sustained a 20 percent reduction in state Chapter 70 aid in FY 2004 followed by no increase in FY 2005, and as a percentage of net school spending Chapter 70 aid declined from 19.9 percent in FY 2003 to 15.2 percent in FY 2006. Approved budgets were not adequate to maintain educational programs, eliminating over 60 staff positions since October 2001 including K-8 librarians, high school physical education staff, middle school foreign languages teachers, the facilities manager, a high school assistant principal, and career and technical education leadership. High school class size increased. The district had to rely on fees and contributions to fund athletic and transportation programs. Needed improvements in some district programs did not receive funding, including elementary reading specialists and adjustment counselors, special education teachers, and compliance with English language learner requirements. The district took steps to improve cost effectiveness by combining certain administrative positions, participating in an energy savings program, transferring some employee benefit charges to the lunch program, improving special education programs to avoid out-of-district costs, cooperative bidding, and other efficiencies.

The district had no written agreement with the city regarding its indirect charges for education until January 2007, and it was vague about the calculation of charges for some items such as snow plowing and grounds maintenance.

The district provided monthly financial reports to a subcommittee of the school committee, with updates to the full committee as needed. The reports included forecasted surpluses and deficits and outside funds. School budgets, including grants and revolving funds, were available to administrators online. Administrators could create purchase orders online using the district's accounting technology, and the accounting system rejected purchase orders unless funds were available. Because the district shared the same accounting system with the city, necessary approvals and oversight were efficient and financial information was immediately available to the district and the city.

Appropriate administrators applied for and managed grants as well as revolving funds, and the assistant superintendent coordinated the grant process. City and district administrators worked together to ensure procurement laws were followed, with certified personnel in both offices. The district had audits of school programs conducted, with the exception of student activity accounts, and administrators took steps to follow their recommendations.

The strategic plan included a goal to prepare a formal preventative maintenance plan, but the district had not yet completed it. Contractors performed major maintenance tasks annually, and in-house maintenance personnel took care of day to day needs. Examiners found the buildings clean, safe, and well lit. The district submitted the capital needs of the schools to the city for inclusion on the city capital projects list. Limited funds, however, precluded the completion of most projects. Examiners found all but two buildings unlocked during the day, but visitors were required to sign in and wear badges. The district had plans to install surveillance cameras when funding was available. Its emergency procedures manual was extensive, updated, and improved annually with the assistance of police and fire officials.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

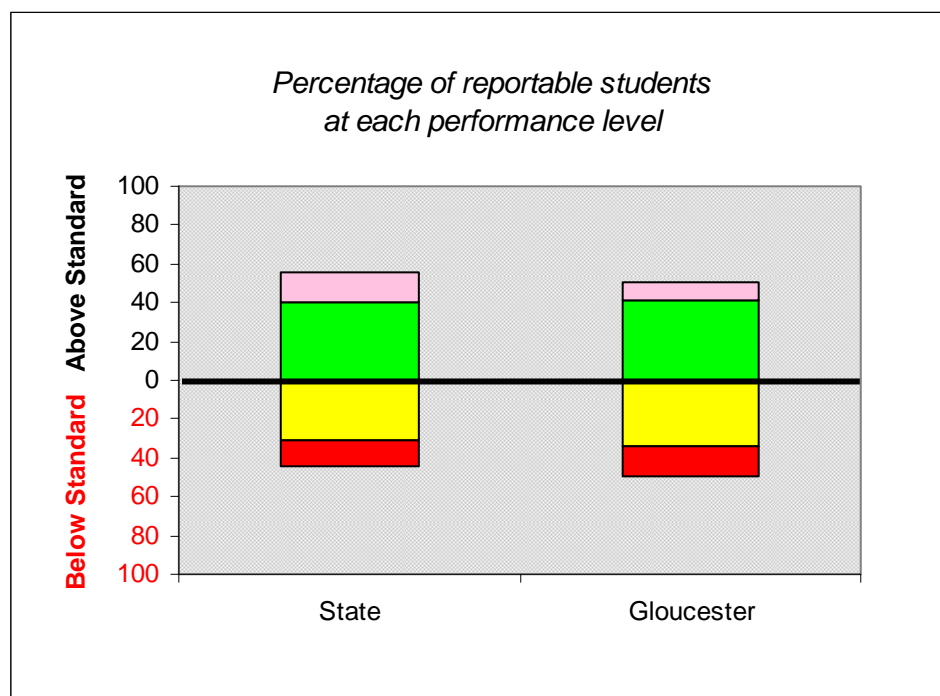
Achievement

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

Findings:

- On average, half of all students in Gloucester attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, less than that statewide. Nearly two-thirds of Gloucester students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and roughly one-third of Gloucester students attained proficiency in math and in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-eight percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.
- Gloucester's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 76 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points less than that statewide. Gloucester's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 24 PI points.
- In 2006, Gloucester's proficiency gap in ELA was 15 PI points, one PI point narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of roughly two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- Gloucester's proficiency gap in math was 33 PI points in 2006, five PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of roughly four PI points per year to achieve AYP. Gloucester's proficiency gap in STE was 31 PI points, two PI points wider than that statewide.

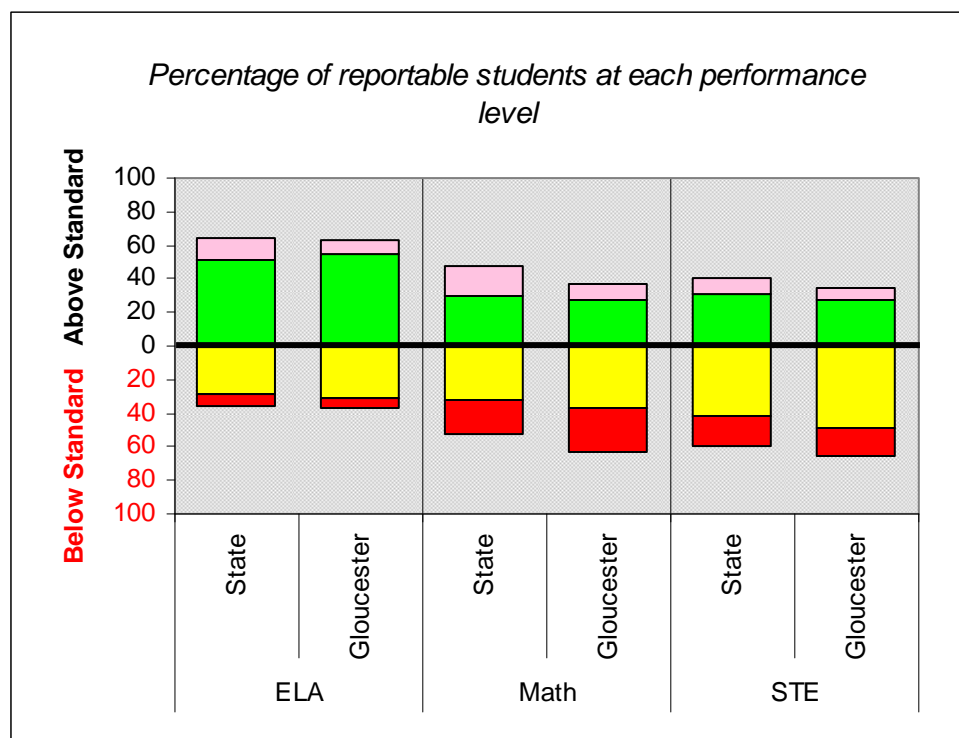
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



		State	Gloucester
	Advanced	15	9
	Proficient	41	41
	Needs Improvement	31	34
	Warning/Failing	14	16
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	50
	Average Proficiency Index (API)	78.3	75.7

In 2006, 50 percent of Gloucester students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, six percentage points less than that statewide. Sixteen percent of Gloucester students scored in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category, two percentage points more than that statewide. Gloucester’s average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 76 proficiency index (PI) points, two PI points less than that statewide. Gloucester’s average proficiency gap in 2006 was 24 PI points.

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



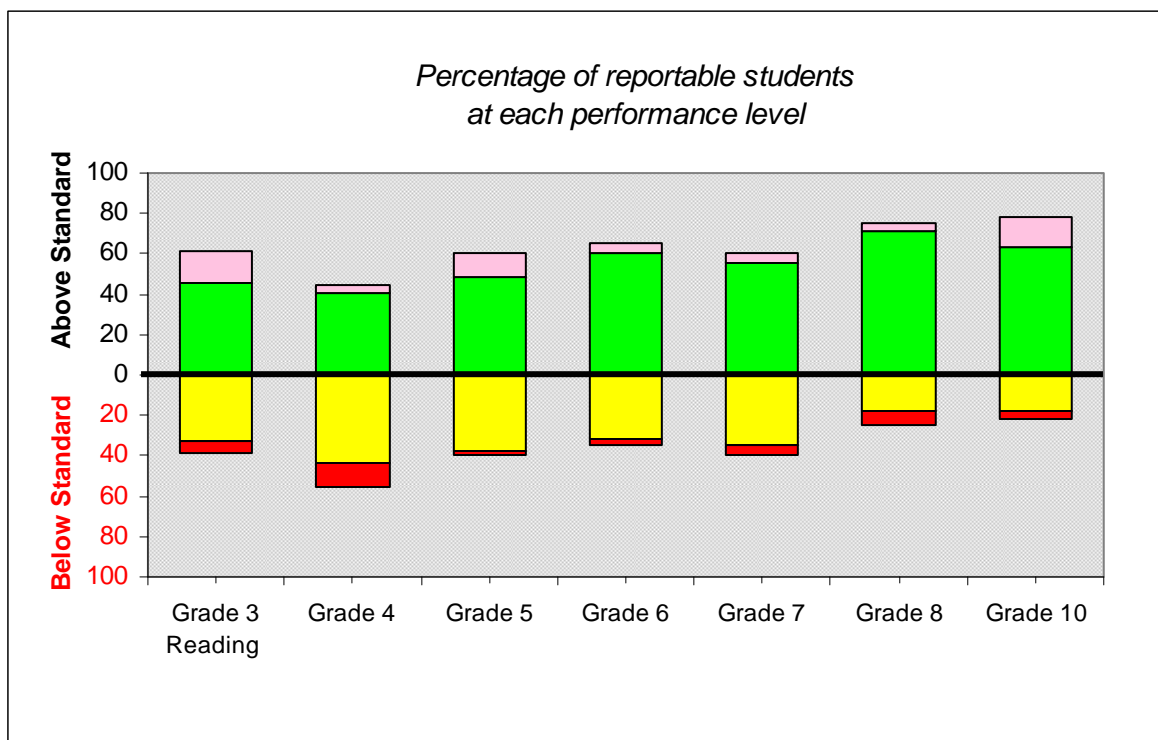
		ELA		Math		STE	
		State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester
	Advanced	13	8	17	10	10	7
	Proficient	51	55	30	27	31	27
	Needs Improvement	29	31	33	37	42	49
	Warning/Failing	7	6	20	25	17	17
Percent Attaining Proficiency		64	63	47	37	41	34
Proficiency Index (PI)		84.3	85.0	72.3	66.5	71.4	69.2

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA) was about the same in Gloucester as statewide, and in math and science and technology/engineering (STE) it was lower in Gloucester than statewide. In Gloucester, 63 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 64 percent statewide; 37 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 47 percent statewide; and 34 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 41 percent statewide.

Gloucester students had considerably stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Gloucester students in ELA was 85 PI points; in math it was 67 PI points; and in STE it was 69 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 84, 72, and 71 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Gloucester students was 15 PI points in ELA, 33 PI points in math, and 31 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 16, 28, and 29 PI points, respectively. Gloucester's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of roughly two PI points in ELA and roughly four PI points in math to meet AYP.

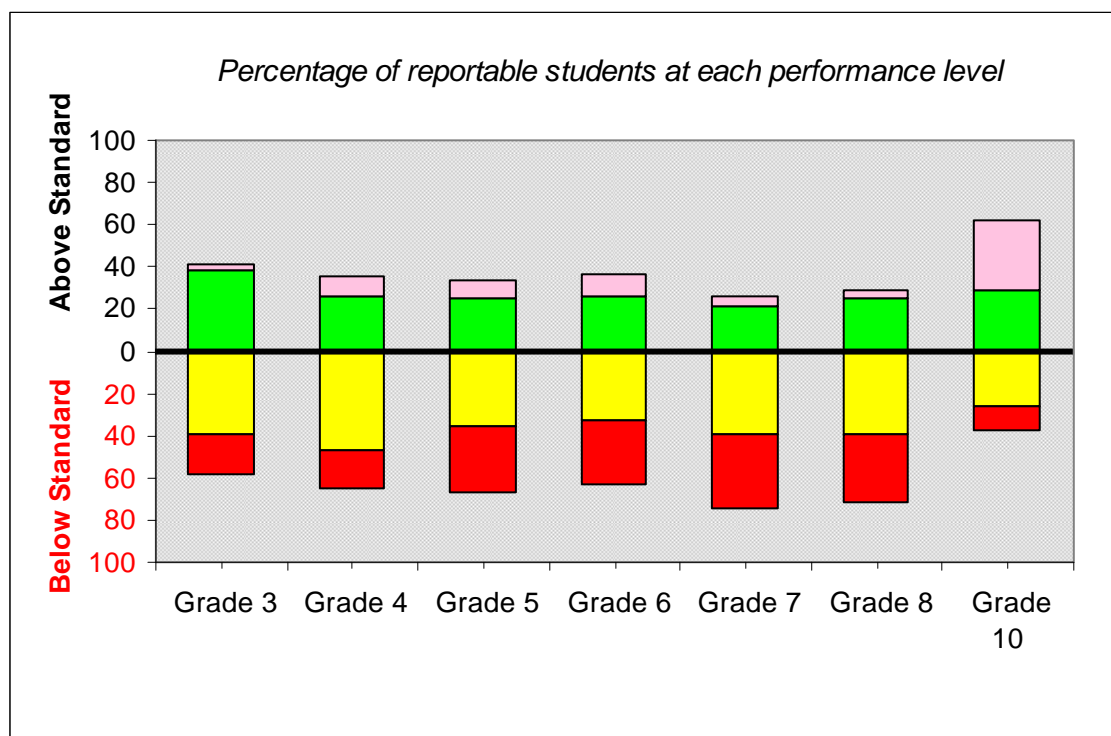
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



		Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
	Advanced	16	4	12	5	5	5	15
	Proficient	45	41	48	60	56	71	63
	Needs Improvement	33	44	37	31	34	18	18
	Warning/Failing	6	12	3	4	5	6	4
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	61	45	60	65	61	76	78

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 45 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 78 percent of grade 10 students.

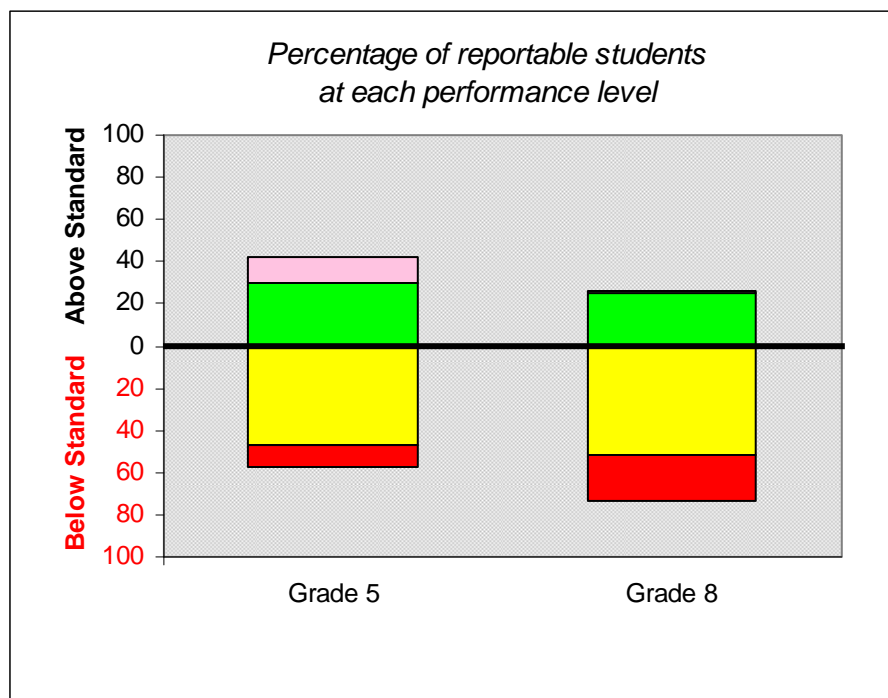
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



		Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
	Advanced	4	9	8	11	4	3	33
	Proficient	38	26	25	26	21	26	29
	Needs Improvement	39	47	35	33	39	40	26
	Warning/Failing	19	18	31	31	35	32	12
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	42	35	33	37	25	29	62

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math also varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 25 percent of grade 7 students to a high of 62 percent of grade 10 students.

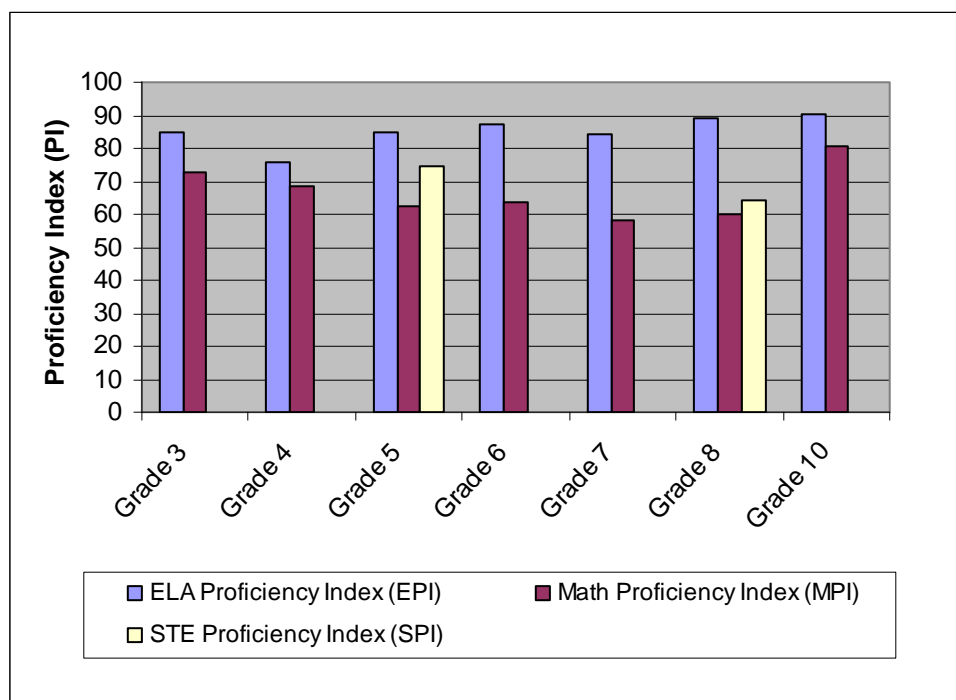
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



		Grade 5	Grade 8
	Advanced	13	1
	Proficient	29	25
	Needs Improvement	47	51
	Warning/Failing	11	22
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	42	26

In Gloucester in 2006, 42 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 26 percent of grade 8 students did so.

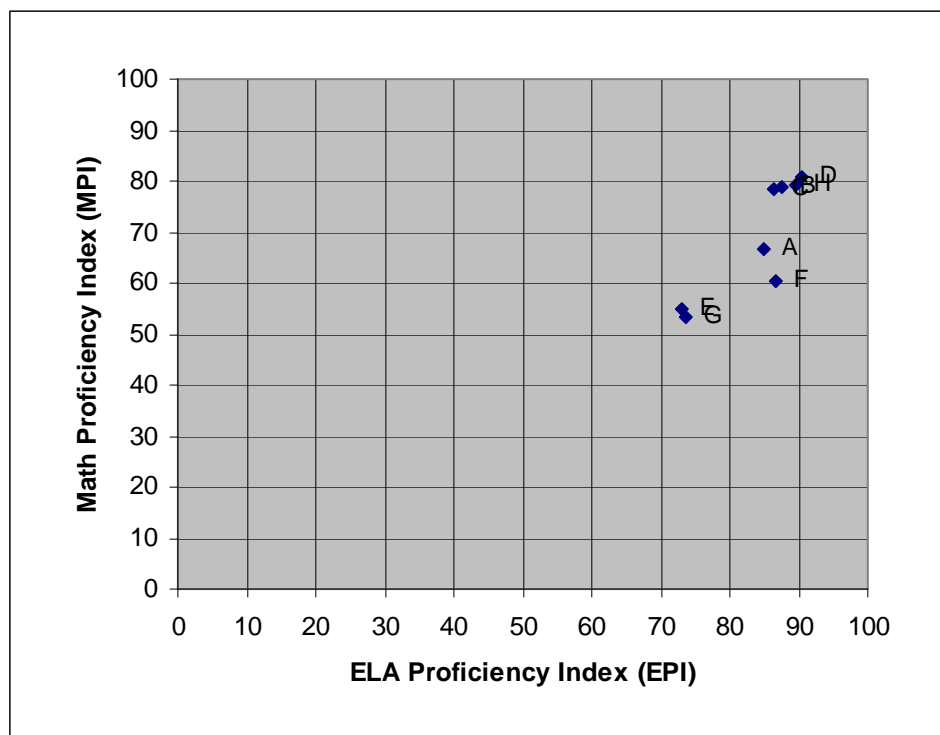
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	84.7	75.6	85.1	87.3	84.1	88.9	90.4
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	73.0	68.7	62.6	63.9	57.9	59.7	80.8
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			74.3			64.3	

By grade, Gloucester's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 10 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 24 PI points at grade 4. Gloucester's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 19 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 42 PI points at grade 7. Gloucester's STE proficiency gap was 26 PI points at grade 5 and 36 PI points at grade 8.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Gloucester	85.0	66.5	3,915
B	Beeman Memorial Elem	87.6	78.7	365
C	East Gloucester Elem	86.3	78.3	210
D	Gloucester High School	90.4	80.8	532
E	Milton L. Fuller Elem	73.0	54.8	519
F	Ralph B. O'Maley Middle	86.7	60.3	1,670
G	Veterans' Memorial Elem	73.7	53.2	232
H	West Parish Elem	89.6	79.3	387

Gloucester's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 10 PI points at Gloucester High School and West Parish Elementary School to a high of 27 PI points at Milton L. Fuller Elementary School. Gloucester's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 19 PI points at Gloucester High School to a high of 47 PI points at Veterans' Memorial Elementary School.

Equity of Achievement

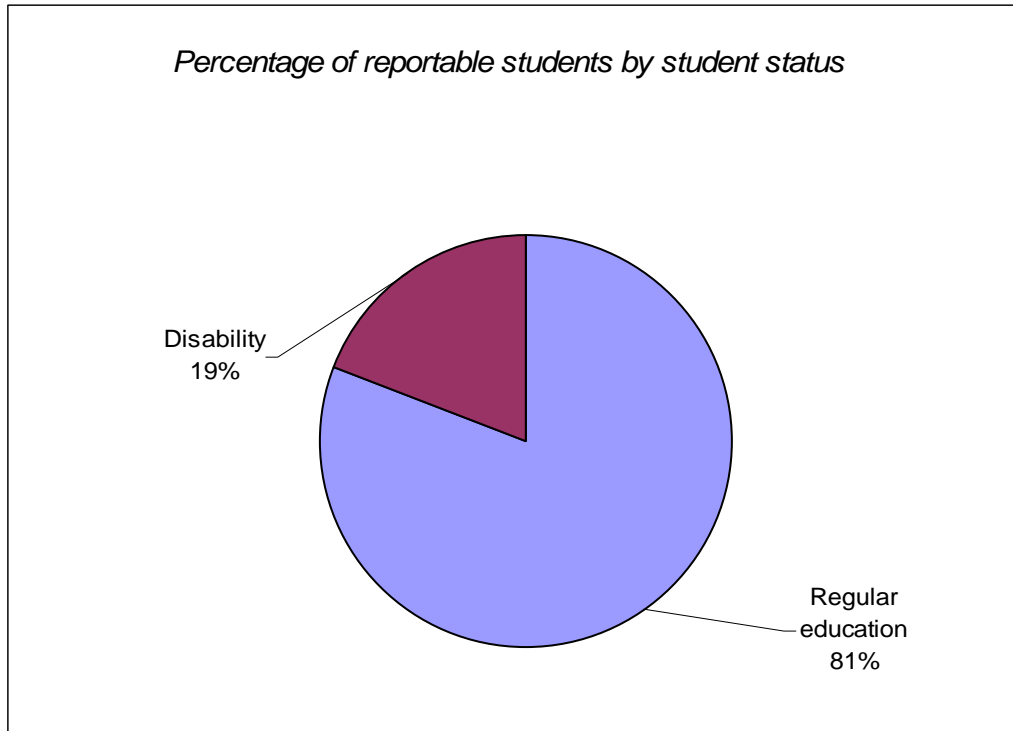
Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

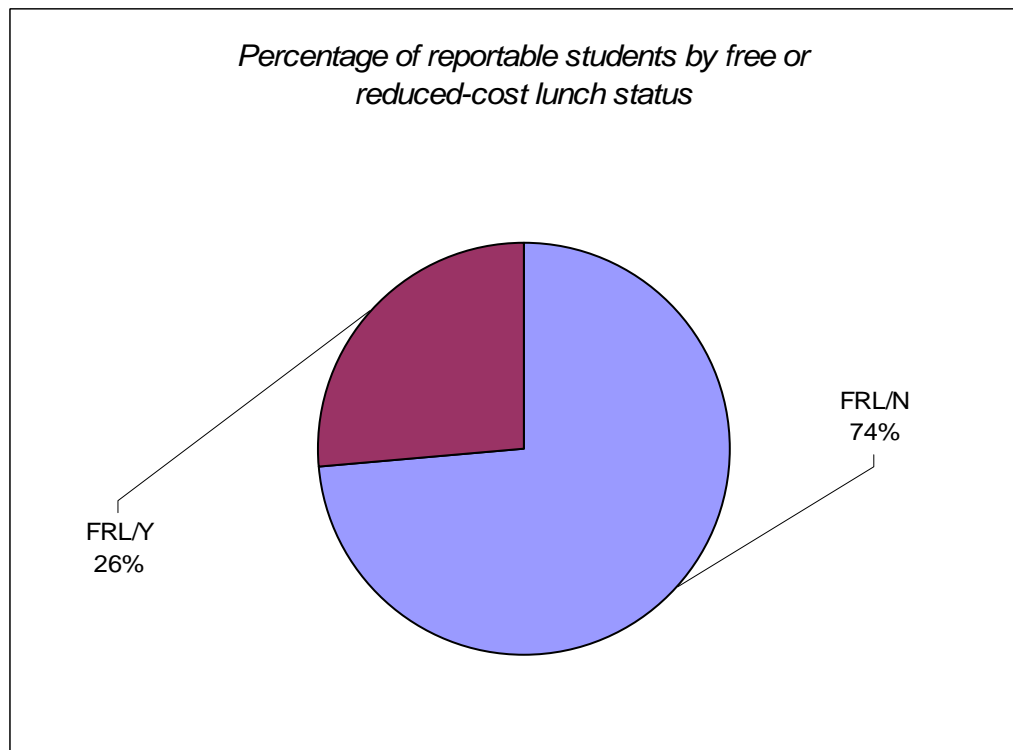
- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Gloucester students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Gloucester in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 22 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 24 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Gloucester in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-third of the students in these subgroups attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. More than half the students in these subgroups attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. Roughly half the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

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

A.



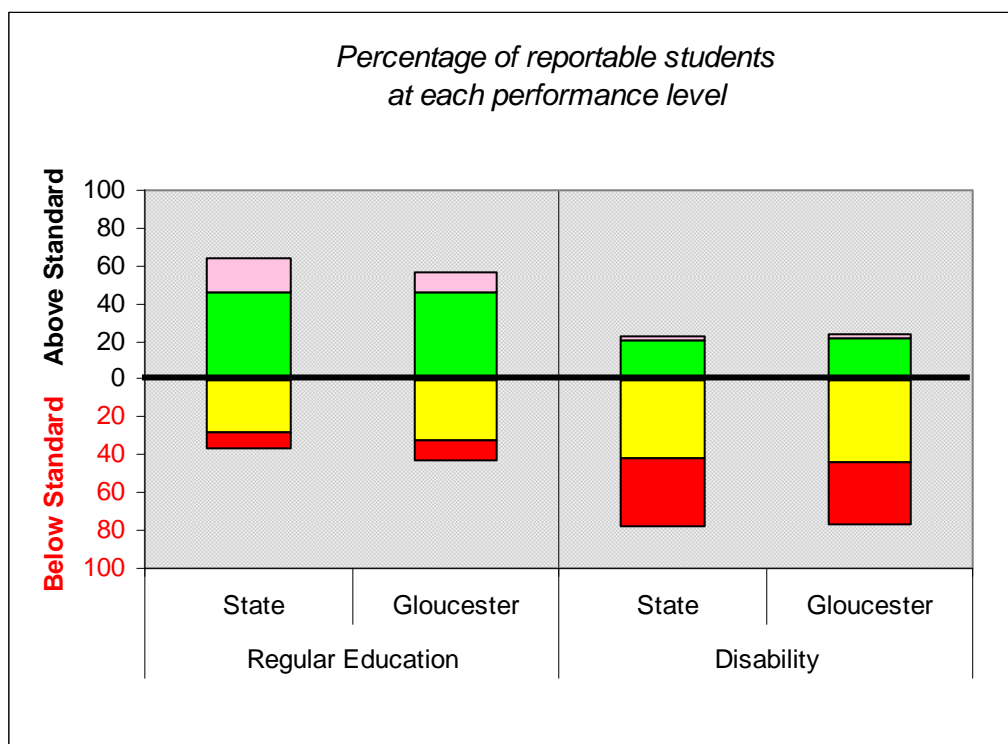
B.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	1,585
	Disability	376
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,461
	FRL/Y	524

In 2006, Gloucester's percentage of students with disabilities was 19 percent and of students participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program was 26 percent.

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

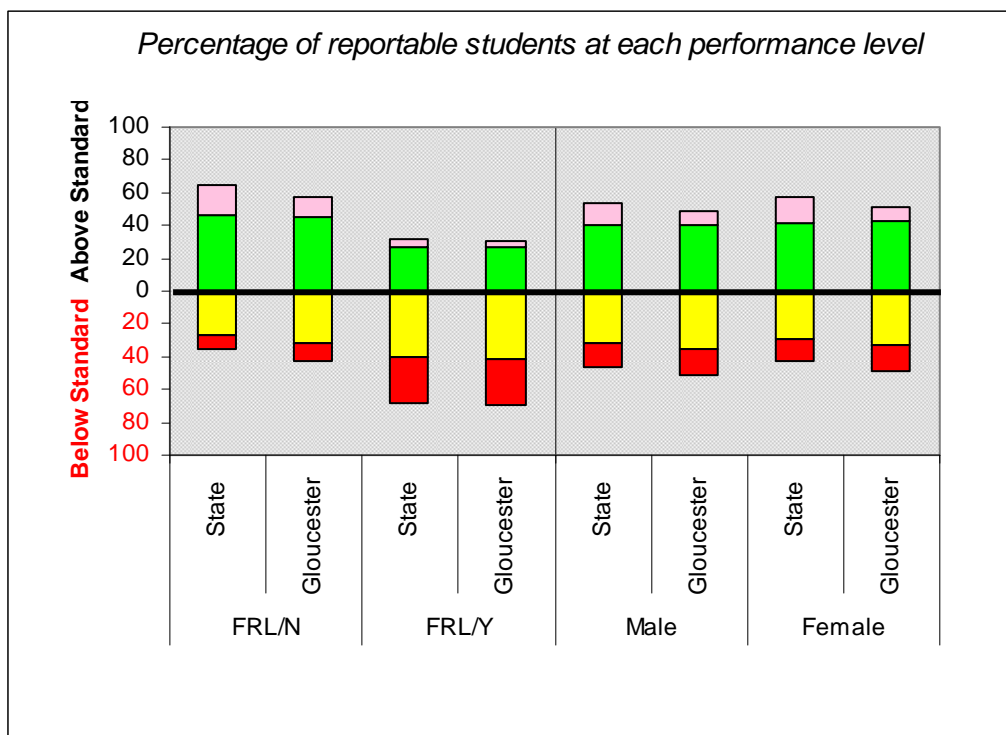


		Regular Education		Disability	
		State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester
	Advanced	18	11	2	1
	Proficient	46	46	20	22
	Needs Improvement	28	32	41	44
	Warning/Failing	8	11	36	33
Percent Attaining Proficiency		64	57	22	23
Average Proficiency Index (API)		84.0	80.3	55.9	57.6

In Gloucester in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than two times greater than that of students with disabilities. Fifty-seven percent of regular education students and 23 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Gloucester's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 20 PI points for regular education students and 42 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 22 PI points.

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

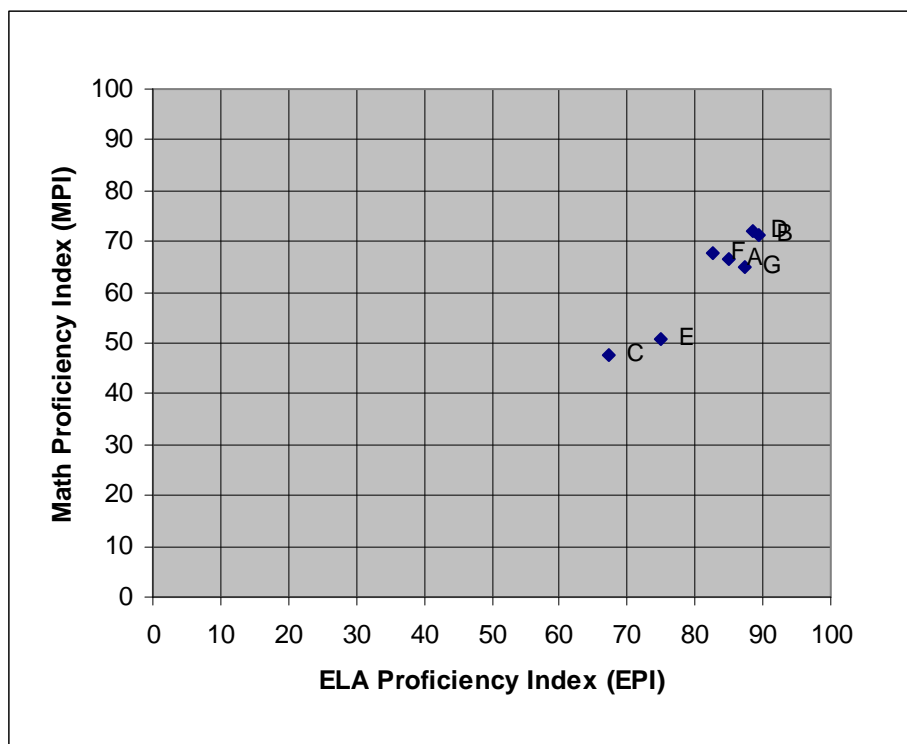


		FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
		State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester	State	Gloucester
	Advanced	19	12	5	3	13	9	17	9
	Proficient	46	46	27	27	40	40	41	42
	Needs Improvement	27	32	40	42	32	35	29	33
	Warning/Failing	8	11	27	28	15	16	13	16
Percent Attaining Proficiency		65	58	32	30	53	49	58	51
Average Proficiency Index (API)		84.5	80.2	63.5	62.8	77.1	75.3	79.6	76.2

In Gloucester in 2006, 30 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 58 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 37 PI points for low-income students and 20 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was 17 PI points.

Performance on the 2006 MCAS tests was comparable for male and female students in Gloucester, with 51 percent of female students and 49 percent of male students attaining overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 25 PI points for male students and 24 PI points for female students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was one PI point.

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

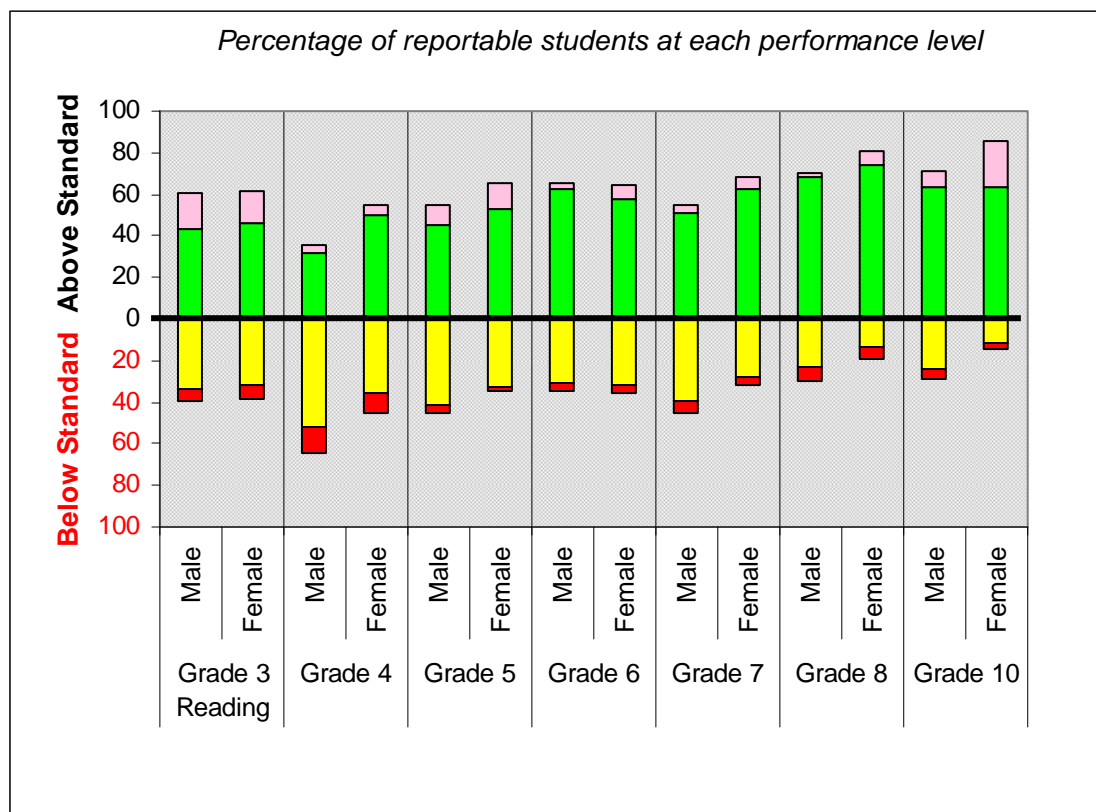


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Gloucester	85.0	66.5	3,915
B	Regular Education	89.3	71.3	3,164
C	Disability	67.4	47.7	704
D	FRL/N	88.5	71.9	2,901
E	FRL/Y	74.9	50.8	1,013
F	Male	82.7	67.8	2,014
G	Female	87.4	65.1	1,900

Of the six measurable subgroups in Gloucester in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 22 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 24 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).

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

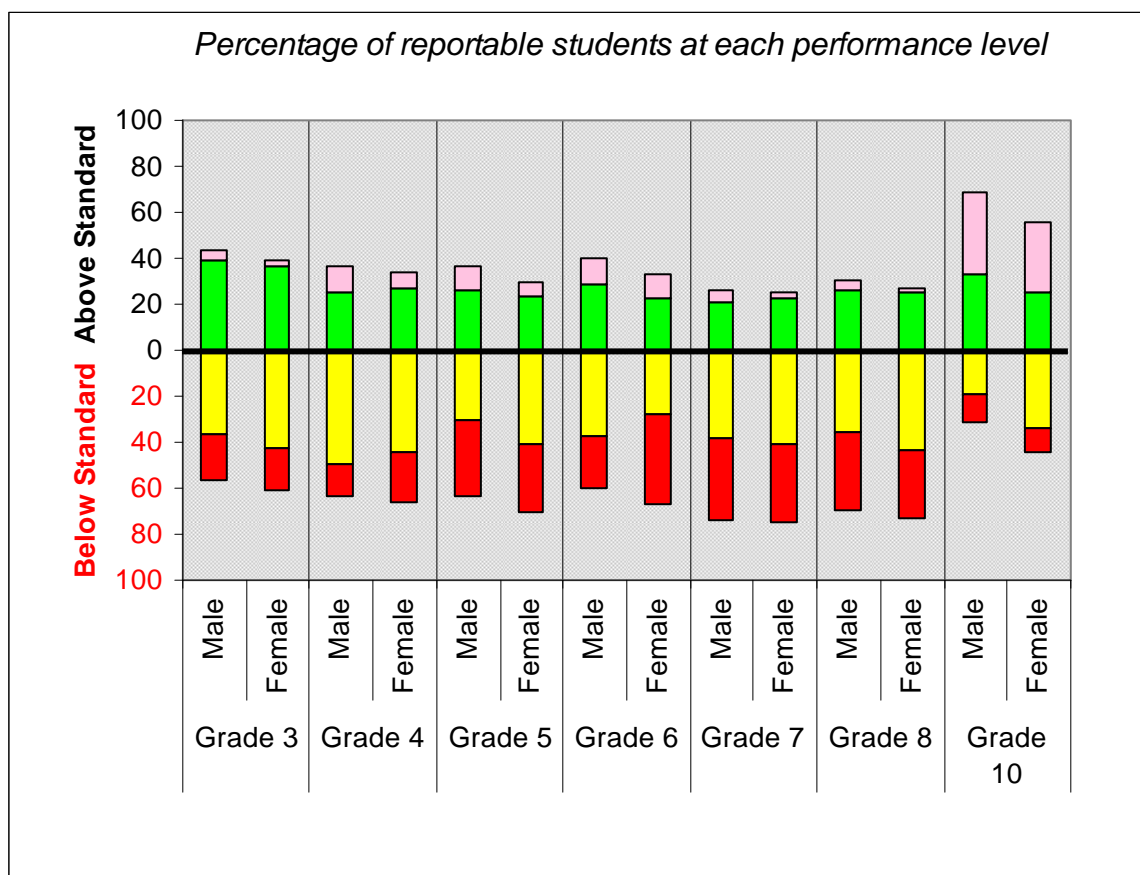
Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



		Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Advanced	17	15	3	5	10	13	3	6	4	6	2	7	7	23
	Proficient	44	47	32	50	45	53	63	58	51	62	68	74	64	63
	Needs Improvement	34	32	52	36	41	33	31	32	40	28	23	14	24	12
	Warning/Failing	6	7	13	9	4	2	3	4	5	4	7	6	6	2
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	61	62	35	55	55	66	66	64	55	68	70	81	71	86

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

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



		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Advanced	4	3	12	7	10	6	11	10	6	3	5	1	36	30
	Proficient	39	37	25	27	26	24	28	23	21	22	26	25	33	25
	Needs Improvement	36	43	50	44	30	41	37	28	38	41	36	43	19	34
	Warning/Failing	20	18	13	22	34	29	23	39	36	34	34	30	12	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency		43	40	37	34	36	30	39	33	27	25	31	26	69	55

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, male students outperformed female students at all grade levels.

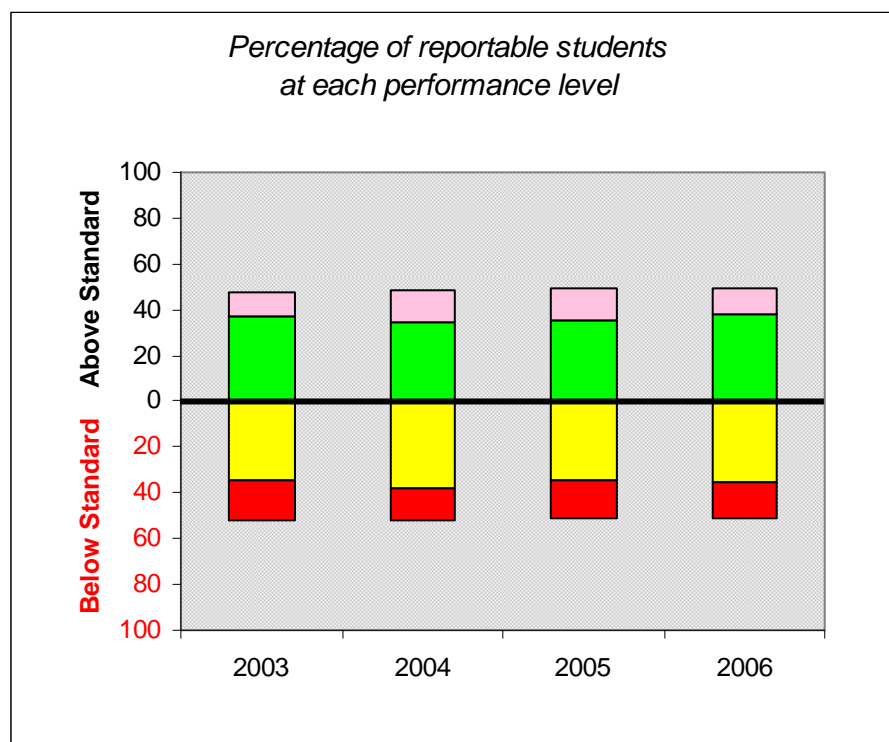
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Gloucester's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall and in math, a slight decline in ELA, and a larger decline in STE. Most of the overall gain occurred between 2003 and 2004, with relatively flat performance since then.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by one percentage point between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by two percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Gloucester narrowed from 27 PI points in 2003 to 25 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of seven percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Gloucester declined slightly, by less than one PI point.
- Math performance in Gloucester showed improvement over this period, at an average of one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Gloucester had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately three PI points over the two-year period.

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



A.

		2003	2004	2005	2006
	Advanced	11	13	14	11
	Proficient	37	35	35	38
	Needs Improvement	34	38	35	35
	Warning/Failing	18	14	16	16
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	48	48	49	49
	Average Proficiency Index (API)	72.9	75.0	74.4	74.7

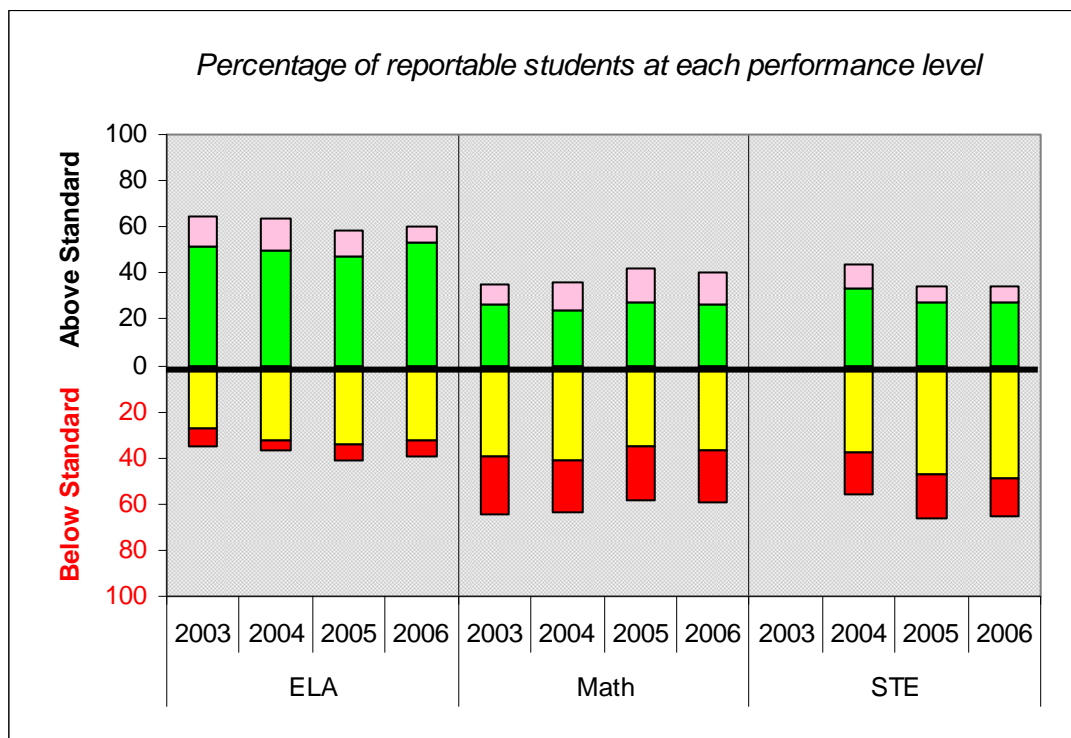
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	238	259	280	219
Proficient	823	678	725	755
Needs Improvement	764	732	711	692
Warning/Failing	402	277	333	314
Total	2,227	1,946	2,049	1,980

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

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests increased from 48 percent in 2003 to 49 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 18 percent in 2003 to 16 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Gloucester narrowed from 27 PI points in 2003 to 25 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of seven percent.

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



		ELA				Math				STE			
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Advanced	13	14	12	8	9	13	15	14		11	6	7
	Proficient	52	49	47	53	26	24	27	27		33	27	27
	Needs Improvement	28	33	34	33	39	41	35	37		38	47	49
	Warning/ Failing	7	4	7	7	26	22	23	23		18	19	17
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	63	59	61	35	37	42	41		44	33	34
	Proficiency Index (PI)	83.8	85.9	82.3	83.1	65.2	66.5	68.6	68.2		72.4	68.1	69.2

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

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 65 percent in 2003 to 61 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 17 PI points in 2006.

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining proficiency in math increased from 35 percent in 2003 to 41 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 35 PI points in 2003 to 32 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Gloucester students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 44 percent in 2004 to 34 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in STE widened from 28 PI points in 2004 to 31 PI points in 2006.

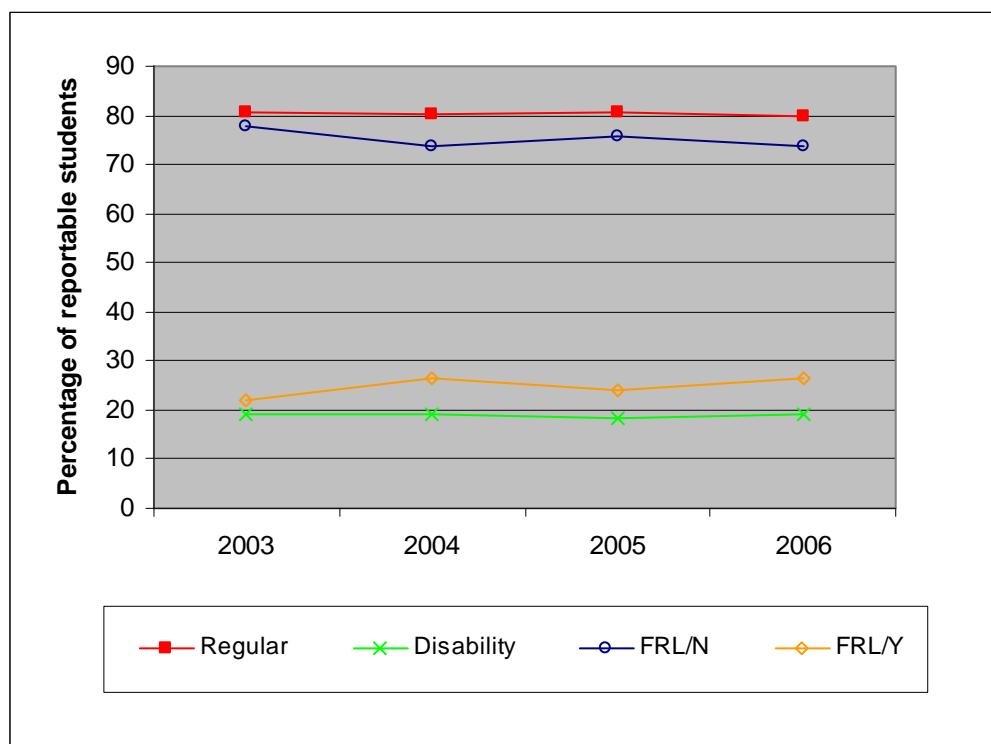
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Gloucester, all student subgroups with the exception of non low-income students had a decline in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA performance was students with disabilities.
- In math, all subgroups in Gloucester showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were non low-income students and regular education students.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 21 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 23 to 25 PI points over this period.

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



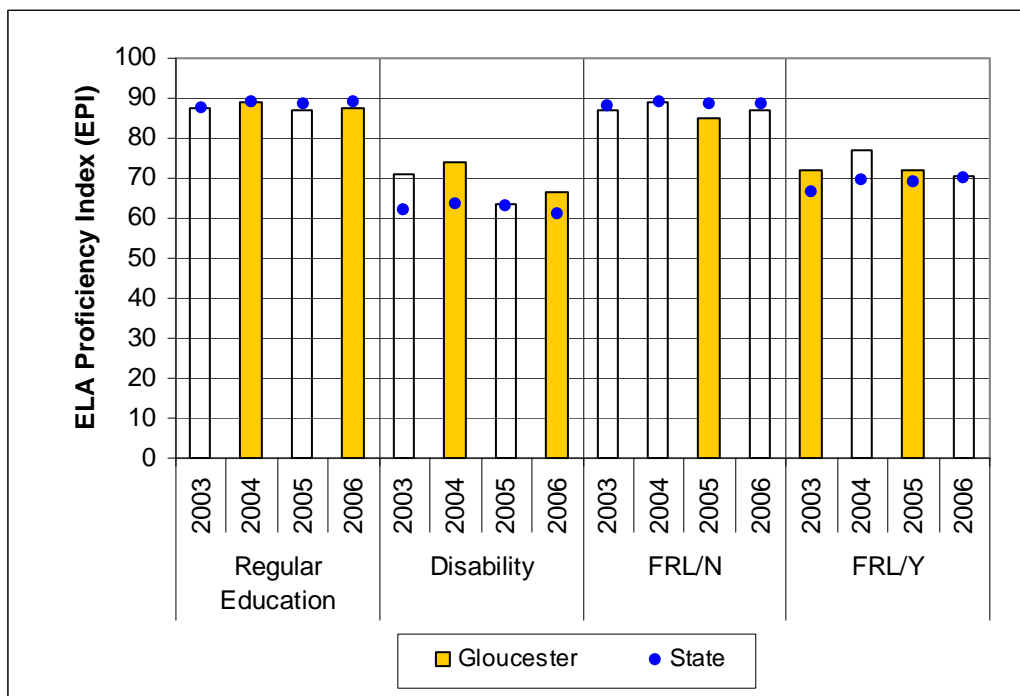
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Gloucester	1,531	1,735	1,749	1,985	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	1,232	1,389	1,410	1,585	80.5	80.1	80.6	79.8
Disability	290	329	323	376	18.9	19.0	18.5	18.9
FRL/N	1,192	1,277	1,326	1,461	77.9	73.6	75.8	73.6
FRL/Y	339	458	423	524	22.1	26.4	24.2	26.4

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

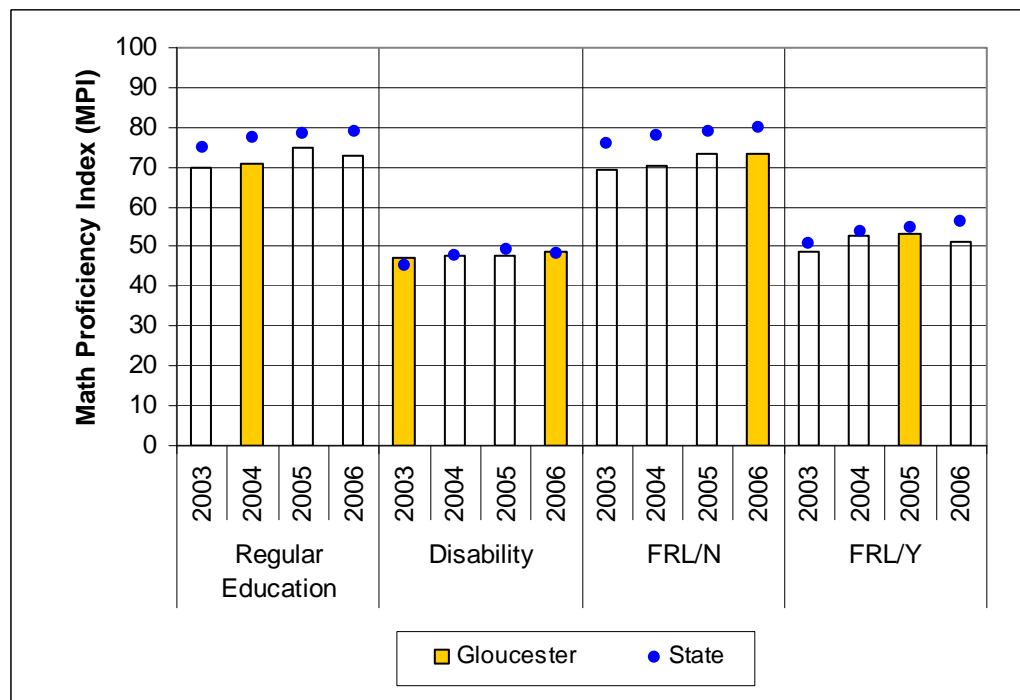
The makeup of the Gloucester student population did not change much between 2003 and 2006. The proportion of students with disabilities was the same and that of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by more than four percentage points during this period.

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

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



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

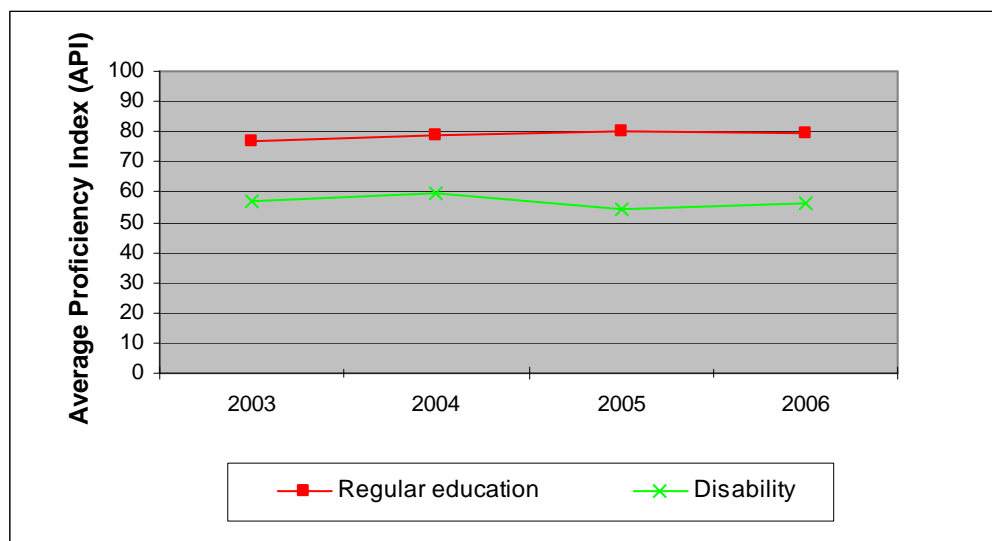


State				Gloucester			
Subgroup	Year	EPI	MPI	Subgroup	Year	EPI	MPI
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	87.4	69.8
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	89.2	70.8
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	87.0	74.7
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	87.4	72.8
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	71.2	47.1
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	74.1	47.8
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	63.6	47.9
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	66.4	48.5
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	86.8	69.3
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	89.1	70.4
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	85.2	73.3
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	87.0	73.5
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	71.9	48.8
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	76.8	52.7
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	71.8	53.4
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	70.4	51.3

In Gloucester, all student subgroups had the same or decreased overall performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroup with the greatest decline in ELA performance was students with disabilities. In math, all subgroups in Gloucester showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were non low-income (FRL/N) students and regular education students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 21 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 23 to 25 PI points over this period.

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

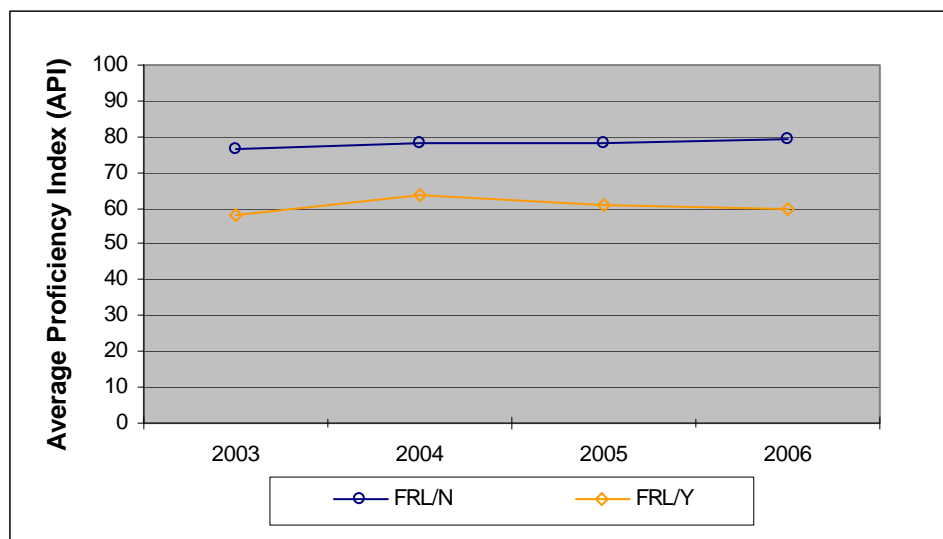


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	77.1	87.4	69.8	72	41
	2004	78.8	89.2	70.8	71	41
	2005	80.0	87.0	74.7	67	49
	2006	79.2	87.4	72.8	69	46
Disability	2003	57.1	71.2	47.1	37	14
	2004	59.5	74.1	47.8	36	16
	2005	54.2	63.6	47.9	26	17
	2006	56.6	66.4	48.5	28	18

Students with disabilities in Gloucester had no improvement in overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006 due to decreased ELA performance, while the performance of regular education students showed overall improvement due to improved math performance. The average proficiency gap for Gloucester's regular education students narrowed from 23 to 21 PI points, resulting in an improvement rate of nine percent. For students with disabilities, the average proficiency gap was 43 PI points in both 2003 and 2006.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by two PI points.

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

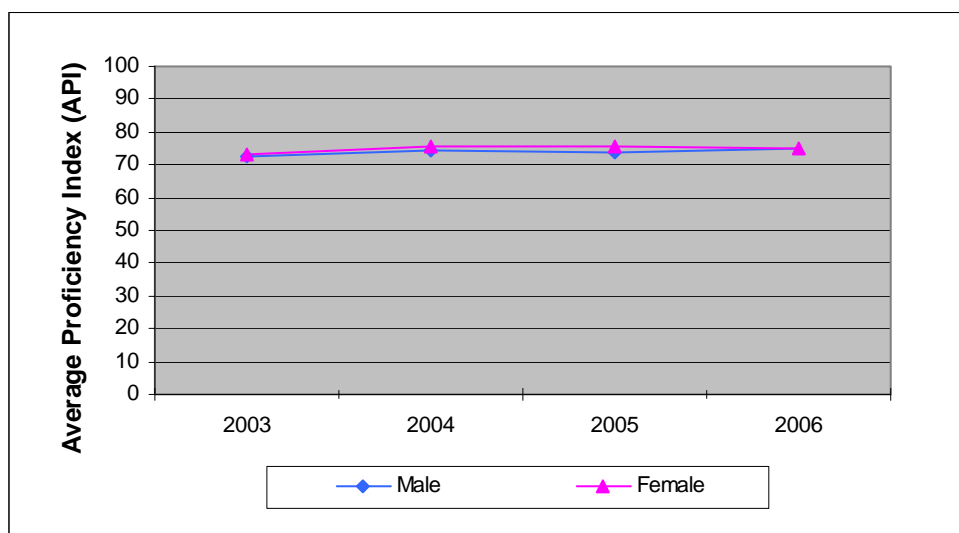


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	76.6	86.8	69.3	70	41
	2004	78.4	89.1	70.4	70	42
	2005	78.4	85.2	73.3	63	48
	2006	79.5	87.0	73.5	67	48
FRL/Y	2003	58.3	71.9	48.8	43	14
	2004	63.9	76.8	52.7	44	18
	2005	60.8	71.8	53.4	43	21
	2006	59.5	70.4	51.3	38	17

Both the low-income (FRL/Y) and non low-income (FRL/N) subgroups in Gloucester had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006 due to improved math performance. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 42 to 40 PI points, and for non low-income students it narrowed from 23 to 20 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of three percent for low-income students and 12 percent for non low-income students.

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

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



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	72.8	82.4	66.0	60	37
	2004	74.4	83.7	67.0	58	38
	2005	73.6	80.1	69.0	53	44
	2006	74.8	80.0	70.5	53	44
Female	2003	73.3	85.7	64.4	71	34
	2004	75.5	88.4	65.9	69	35
	2005	75.6	85.2	68.3	66	40
	2006	74.7	86.7	65.8	69	37

Both male and female students in Gloucester had improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gaps for both male and female students narrowed from approximately 27 to approximately 25 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of seven percent for male students and five percent for female students.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Gloucester	ALL LEVELS	1,954	1,961	576
	Advanced	166	199	40
	Proficient	1,070	532	158
	Needs Improvement	606	732	282
	Warning/Failing	112	498	96
Regular Education	Advanced	164	193	35
	Proficient	967	478	142
	Needs Improvement	398	615	239
	Warning/Failing	51	298	50
Disability	Advanced	2	6	5
	Proficient	102	54	16
	Needs Improvement	194	115	41
	Warning/Failing	54	177	41
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	1	0	0
	Needs Improvement	14	2	2
	Warning/Failing	7	23	5
White	Advanced	161	190	36
	Proficient	1,026	514	155
	Needs Improvement	571	700	275
	Warning/Failing	91	451	88
Hispanic	Advanced	2	2	2
	Proficient	20	7	0
	Needs Improvement	20	19	4
	Warning/Failing	12	28	3
African-American	Advanced	0	0	1
	Proficient	10	4	1
	Needs Improvement	8	6	3
	Warning/Failing	8	16	4
Asian	Advanced	3	7	1
	Proficient	13	6	2
	Needs Improvement	7	7	0
	Warning/Failing	0	3	1
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	148	188	37
	Proficient	871	455	135
	Needs Improvement	374	540	200
	Warning/Failing	54	271	53
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	18	11	3
	Proficient	199	77	23
	Needs Improvement	232	192	82
	Warning/Failing	57	227	43
Male	Advanced	67	119	26
	Proficient	520	282	88
	Needs Improvement	355	357	129
	Warning/Failing	65	249	51
Female	Advanced	99	80	14
	Proficient	550	250	70
	Needs Improvement	251	375	153
	Warning/Failing	46	249	45

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	275	0	0
	2004	285	0	0
	2005	302	0	0
	2006	266	269	0
Grade 4	2003	316	315	0
	2004	281	281	0
	2005	288	287	0
	2006	303	307	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	321
	2005	0	0	286
	2006	285	283	285
Grade 6	2003	0	317	0
	2004	0	284	0
	2005	0	300	0
	2006	249	249	0
Grade 7	2003	281	0	0
	2004	305	0	0
	2005	283	0	0
	2006	299	298	0
Grade 8	2003	0	340	0
	2004	0	275	275
	2005	0	302	300
	2006	285	290	291
Grade 10	2003	327	331	0
	2004	262	258	0
	2005	299	290	0
	2006	267	265	0
All Grades	2003	1,199	1,303	0
	2004	1,133	1,098	596
	2005	1,172	1,179	586
	2006	1,954	1,961	576

Notes

Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years. The following grades are included in the trend data for 2003-2006 reported in Figures/Tables 14-20 and in the table of n-values by grade and year:

English language arts (ELA): 3, 4, 7, 10

Math: 4, 6, 8, 10

Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5, 8

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

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

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

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

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

I Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The Gloucester Public Schools effectively gathered and analyzed student achievement data to understand student strengths and weaknesses, inform instruction, and promote higher levels of achievement.
- The district strategic plan guided the development of School Improvement Plans that were standards based, aligned with district goals, and uniformly presented because of the district's adoption of a comprehensive plan development protocol/checklist.
- The superintendent reported that the school committee understood its responsibilities as a policymaking body and rarely involved itself in day to day operations and governance. The superintendent effectively delegated leadership within the school system
- The district created several organizational structures, such as a district coordinating council, that enabled the school system to monitor the academic progress of its students.

- School and district leaders did not meet statutory requirements for teacher and administrator performance evaluations, although they did actively supervise staff and provide feedback to teachers and administrators.
- The district developed and promulgated a comprehensive emergency operations plan and a school safety handbook.

Summary

The superintendent, in large measure, provided effective administration for the Gloucester Public Schools during the period under review. However, the district leadership team comprised of central administrators and principals lacked the resources necessary to provide adequate educational programs due to budgetary restrictions. In FY 2004, the district's Chapter 70 aid was reduced by 20 percent, followed by no increase in FY 2005, and the district's Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of net school spending (NSS) declined from 19.9 percent in FY 2003 to 15.2 percent in FY 2006. The superintendent assigned the director of information technology and the assistant superintendent for operations and central services to serve as interim principals for certain time periods from 2005 through 2007 to alleviate staffing needs and funding shortfalls. These decisions, while fiscally understandable, compromised the district's ability to respond efficiently and effectively in these two critical areas. In addition, the district did not have a facilities director in place two of the last four years.

The district adopted a strategic plan in 2004 that guided the direction of the school system. The plan, yet to take root uniformly across the system, lacked sufficient resources to attain its intended vision for the system. The school committee understood its role as a policymaking body, received training in the requirements of education reform, and worked effectively as a group with school and city officials. The district effectively gathered, analyzed, and utilized data at both the district and school levels in an effort to understand the challenges and barriers students faced in gaining greater academic proficiency. The district did not comply with statutory requirements concerning the frequency of and criteria for teacher and administrator evaluation, and it lacked a uniform and consistently applied instrument for administrator evaluation.

The district leaders created a set of management structures that facilitated district communication and promoted collegial working relationships among staff. The superintendent afforded

leadership autonomy to the principals and held them accountable for efficient and effective school operations. The superintendent effectively promoted collegial relations with city officials and school committee members. Annual budget requests supported by data analysis, presented by the superintendent and school staff, articulated district challenges that provided a context for financial resource prioritization and allocation. The district implemented criteria to guide school councils in the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The plans presented during the budget deliberations provided uniformity, consistency, context, and rationale to budget decision makers. The district developed an excellent student/staff safety plan. The plan enabled the system to effectively plan for and respond to potential safety incidents. The district prepared and disseminated an emergency operations plan and emergency response handbook that guided school staff in the event of situations that threatened school safety.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district developed a strategic plan in 2004 shortly after the appointment of a new superintendent. Prior to the adoption of this plan, the district had not utilized any formal planning process. The plan, updated in 2005 and 2006, guided the district during the period under review. Revisions to the strategic plan revealed an evolving understanding of a vision and direction for the district. According to the superintendent, the plan had not yet taken root within the individual schools despite the fact that he expected its inclusion in School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

The plan, adopted by the school committee in June 2006, described 13 district principles and values and articulated six goals for the school system. The goals defined a commitment to: 1) meet the academic, physical, social, and emotional development needs of all students in partnership with families and community; 2) raise expectations and levels of achievement and growth to above the state average and meet adequate yearly progress (AYP); 3) recruit, develop,

and retain highly qualified staff and volunteers; 4) provide adequate, safe, clean, and efficient facilities which are fit for their purpose; 5) obtain funding sufficient to support the district's mission and use available resources efficiently and effectively; and 6) develop a coherent preK-12 system that has the confidence of students, employees, and community. The plan also described objectives for each goal, the individual responsible for its implementation, its status, and activities necessary for accomplishment of the goal in the two ensuing fiscal years.

According to the superintendent, he and the school committee required that each SIP identify strategies to raise student achievement in literacy and math and that the attainment of AYP be commensurate, on average, with that of other districts in the state. As a result, each school implemented strategies and programs intended to raise student achievement in these academic areas. The district, due to budget constraints, reached out to community support groups such as the Gloucester Fisherman's Athletic Association and the Gloucester Education Foundation to supplement co-curricular activities.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Newly elected school committee members received training in the requirements of the Education Reform Act. According to the superintendent, and corroborated in meetings with members of the school committee, newly elected members participated in the "On Board" training program provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). Individual members attended the annual conference co-sponsored by the MASC and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and other programs as appropriate. In addition to its regular meetings, the committee organized into three separate subcommittees that focused on building and finance, personnel, and program/student services. The school committee established the program/student services subcommittee during the period under review. This subcommittee focused its work on and provided a forum for the district's efforts to improve curriculum, instruction, and student performance.

The superintendent reported that the school committee understood its responsibilities as a policymaking body and rarely involved itself in day to day operations and governance. Interviews with school committee members indicated that principals prepared SIPs that included budget requests based on student performance data. Previously, principals submitted SIPs to the school committee independently from the budget development process. During the time under review, the process changed and enabled principals to present SIPs to the school committee that included financial resource and staffing requests necessary to accomplish school improvement goals. According to information gleaned in interviews with the school committee members, the new submission process enabled them to understand the challenges faced in each school, and the resources each school requires to overcome those challenges.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district effectively gathered and analyzed student achievement data. Based upon interviews with the superintendent, the district annually presented the MCAS test results of its students to the school committee. Upon receipt of the results, the superintendent and assistant superintendent for teaching and learning analyzed the data and identified district achievement levels, trends, and the extent to which the district attained AYP. The assistant superintendent shared the data with the principals and expected them to conduct item analyses to reveal areas of strength and weakness. According to the superintendent, the director of instructional technology provided technical expertise to the principals to assist them in data analysis. Principals utilized TestWiz to facilitate their analysis. Interviews with the principals corroborated the fact that the district provided support and expertise in this area. Reports submitted to EQA for review also reflected thought provoking suggestions and reminders to the school committee regarding the conditions necessary to achieve organizational change and promote student achievement.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, principals presented SIPs that reflected the strategic plan of the school system. According to the superintendent, and corroborated by a review of each plan, the principals, in concert with their school councils, designed and implemented strategies intended to meet several system-wide goals. Each plan defined initiatives and resources necessary to ensure that 90 percent of the district's students will read with comprehension at grade level or above by 2010 and meet AYP progress targets in the interim. The plans also included goals to raise mathematics achievement within the district. The superintendent and school committee required that each plan identify strategies to meet the goals. In several instances, the school committee returned plans for revision with an expectation that they include the omitted student achievement goals.

In 2005, to clarify understanding and facilitate consistency, the program/student services subcommittee adopted a SIP checklist. The checklist provided a template for the development and implementation of SIPs. The checklist guided the principals and school councils in six essential areas: 1) plan development; 2) focus and data; 3) goals; 4) culture, conditions, and resources; 5) responsibilities; and 6) presentation. The adoption of this checklist/template enabled the school councils to present comprehensive, coherent, and consistent SIPs to the school committee. The plans cited the analysis of data, the challenges faced, and the resources needed to respond to those challenges.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district promoted equity within its schools through the allocation of Title I funds. Both the Veterans' and Fuller elementary schools received targeted assistance. Based upon data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), during school year 2004-2005 more than 40 percent of the student population in each of those schools came from low-income families. According to the superintendent, additional resources from the general fund enabled the Fuller Elementary School to maintain lower class sizes and employ two assistant principals. Caseloads

for special education staffs tended to be inequitable across the district but were at a reasonable level at the Fuller Elementary School. Based upon interviews with the principals, the schools purchased additional literacy materials in an effort to enhance student learning. During the period under review, budgetary limitations precluded the district from providing caseloads that were more equitable for its special educators. Limited English proficient (LEP) students represented less than two percent of the district's students. Based upon an interview with the superintendent, the district did not provide a quality English language learner (ELL) program for its students due to inadequate resources.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the superintendent presented an educationally sound budget to the school committee for consideration. It has been the practice of the school committee to take the lead in advocating for the budget it approved, according to the superintendent. The district amended the budget process to permit consideration of SIP priorities during its budget deliberations. Principals identified program challenges/priorities and improvement needs as well as resource requirements. The superintendent forwarded those requests to a joint meeting of the program/student services subcommittee and the finance subcommittee for consideration. The subcommittees considered the merits of and costs associated with each proposal. The entire school committee endorsed those proposals for which it anticipated funding and submitted them in April of each year as part of its budget request to the mayor of Gloucester. The mayor submitted both the school and city budget requests to the city council for consideration. By city charter, the city council adopted the ensuing fiscal year budget by the end of June.

The superintendent characterized the educationally sound budget as the "adequate budget." This budget represented what the superintendent needed to provide a quality program for the students of the district. The superintendent indicated that the district required an additional \$3 million to fund an adequate budget. During the period under review, the district lacked the resources

necessary to attain the vision set forth in its strategic plan. According to interviews with school committee members, the inability of the city to meet the funding needs implicit in the strategic plan created a perception that the plan was a “wish list” rather than an action document. Budget requests from the school staff provided considerable achievement data and based program requests on student performance needs. The superintendent stated that advocacy on behalf of the students for school funding rested with the school committee members. The superintendent viewed his role as providing expertise and background information to them in support of their role as advocates for the district.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district merged the annual update of progress toward the achievement of the strategic plan goals and the SIPs into the budget development process. According to the superintendent and school committee members, the revised process afforded the school committee a more realistic context in which to evaluate the district’s progress. The plans included student performance data, program revisions, and instructional strategies needed to promote higher levels of student performance.

During the period under review, the district adopted a protocol/checklist for SIP development that guided the process for each school. The protocol enabled each school council to present a plan that uniformly reported its status, supported by data, acknowledged its challenges, and identified the resources required for improvement. Due to budgetary limitations, many of the initiatives proposed and resources required remained unfunded.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district relied on the analysis of data to improve its instructional programs and to identify strategies to raise student achievement. According to the superintendent, the district expected school staffs to develop item analyses of student performance on all summative assessments. Such analyses focused the review of curriculum and instruction at the individual schools and grade levels. According to principals, the district provided technical expertise to assist these analyses. The director of instructional technology provided training in TestWiz and other software programs that facilitated data management and interpretation. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning provided leadership and expertise as well. Regular meetings of the leadership team and the elementary school principals chaired by the assistant superintendent included agenda items that focused on student performance data. According to teachers interviewed, grade-level groups discussed student achievement data and used them to plan strategies for improved instructional performance.

The annual District Improvement Plan for Literacy (DIPL) set forth a method to meet the district's literacy goal to have 90 percent of students read with comprehension at or above grade level by 2010. The plan described the current level of student performance through the usage of a variety of assessment instruments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), the MCAS tests, special education assessments, and data gathered during learning walks. The plan also articulated the means of evaluating progress and targeted expected performance gains.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district created several organizational structures that enabled the school system to monitor the academic progress of its students. Annual presentations to the school committee on MCAS results each fall and the presentation of student achievement progress as part of the SIP

development afforded opportunities for public dialogue and scrutiny of student achievement results. A district coordinating council, composed of parent co-chairs of school councils and parent teacher organizations and school committee members, held meetings several times per year at which discussion and monitoring of student achievement results occurred. Internally, district leadership team meetings conducted by the superintendent and assistant superintendent provided opportunities to monitor progress in raising student achievement. SIP development enabled school leaders, staffs, and site councils the opportunity to understand student academic deficiencies, identify program design flaws, and develop improvement strategies. Such discussions enabled the district to adopt the Foundations program to enhance elementary literacy instruction and the Investigations program to support elementary mathematics instruction.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The superintendent did not include the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership as criteria in his evaluation of central administrators and principals. Based upon interviews with the superintendent and building principals, a common evaluation instrument did not exist. The superintendent set mutual goals with each administrator and prepared a narrative document that articulated his assessment of the administrator's performance. The evaluation did not explicitly connect student achievement data with his assessment. Implicitly, progress made on goals set in the SIP factored into his overall assessment. Some administrators received additional compensation if they met goals agreed to by the superintendent. The voluntary procedure, termed the Gloucester professional achievement incentive, enabled administrators to gain up to an additional three percent of their base salary. According to the superintendent, participation in the process has diminished due to the demands currently placed on members of the leadership team and the fact that such compensation did not remain as part of the administrator's base salary.

During the time under review, the school committee annually evaluated the superintendent of schools. The evaluation process included goals set mutually by the superintendent and the

committee. To provide a context for the committee, the superintendent provided each member with a document prepared by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) that described the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent of schools. At the end of each evaluation period, each committee member prepared a narrative document that described the superintendent's performance. The committee also prepared a summary document that encapsulated the more significant commentary from each member's evaluation narrative. The committee, in public session, shared the summary document as well as the individual narratives with the superintendent. The committee made copies of the evaluation documents available to the press who reported the outcome of the superintendent's evaluation. The evaluation did not explicitly connect student achievement data to compensation and/or contract renewal decisions. According to school committee members and corroborated by the superintendent, the committee, in its goal setting with the superintendent and by virtue of its adoption of the strategic plan, expected the district and its leadership to commit to raising student achievement.

During the time under review, the district did not comply with staff evaluation regulations as promulgated by the DOE. The superintendent acknowledged this non-compliance and took steps to bring the district into compliance. The district entered into an agreement with the Gloucester Teachers Association (GTA) to ensure compliance. Beginning in the spring of 2006, the district placed all staff members on a revised evaluation schedule. The district scheduled teacher and administrator evaluations in compliance with the state regulations, beginning with the 2006-2007 school year.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the time under review, the superintendent actively and purposefully delegated leadership within the school system. The district used management and meeting structures that enhanced communication. The superintendent and assistant superintendent for teaching and learning met regularly with building principals and other administrators. According to the superintendent, he

held the principals responsible for the operation of their schools and recognized the importance of site-based autonomy. He also expected that the principals appreciated the importance of consistency across and within the district. According to principals interviewed, district leaders valued the opinions and insights that they offered. While site-based management remained “a work in progress,” principals cited an increasing interest in receiving greater autonomy, particularly in the area of professional development.

Based upon interviews with school committee members, the district possessed the strongest group of principals in recent years. Committee members recognized the efforts of the leadership team and appreciated the challenges and barriers that limited resources placed on them. Most of the principals interviewed described themselves as educational and instructional leaders. They understood their role and stated that the district expected such leadership from them. They perceived district leaders as supportive of that role and remained confident that they enjoyed the support of the superintendent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district encouraged collaboration and developed an organizational culture marked by collegial and respectful relationships. Based upon interviews with Gloucester Teachers Association representatives, union leaders met regularly with the superintendent and other district leaders. The meetings provided opportunities to share issues of mutual concern and anticipate the resolution of potential issues without initiating formal grievance procedures. The superintendent characterized these meetings as “case studies” in which he and the association solved problems.

The school committee organizational structure provided for a personnel subcommittee. This subcommittee, without benefit of labor counsel, negotiated contractual agreements with nine different bargaining units. According to both school committee members and teachers

association representatives, the district enjoyed respectful relationships despite very limited resources.

Recent efforts to reinstitute the curriculum coordinating council provided an opportunity for district teachers to voice their opinions concerning curricular issues and professional development opportunities. Similar to the principals, district teachers voiced an interest in gaining more influence in the design and implementation of professional development offerings available to teachers, particularly at the building level.

The GTA resisted recent efforts to permit “learning walks” within the schools except on a voluntary basis. The district-designed learning walks gave selected administrators the opportunity to observe and gather data related to the quality of instruction within the classrooms. The association viewed such efforts as evaluative and in conflict with the negotiated evaluation procedures.

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

Rating: Excellent

Evidence

The district, during the time under review, had and distributed a comprehensive safety plan. Based upon interviews with the assistant superintendent for operations and central services and a review of both the Gloucester public school emergency operations plan and the emergency response handbook, the district addressed safety planning comprehensively. The emergency operations plan, developed in concert with police, fire, and other appropriate officials, guided the district in its efforts to ensure student and staff safety. Planning/preparation initiatives included an evaluation of each school building with respect to safety and security, virtual tours of the inside of each building to provide information for local safety officials, the development of evacuation procedures, the identification of off-site emergency evacuation shelters, and the institution of tabletop incident emergency training exercises followed by debriefing evaluative sessions.

According to the assistant superintendent and corroborated in school visits, each classroom teacher received a copy of the emergency response handbook that described the utilization of procedures appropriate to the occurrence of a wide range of potential school safety incidents.

The district recently expended \$51,000 to replace doors at Gloucester High School. The district intends, as resources become available, to equip all of the district's buildings with a buzzer/camera entrance system. The district crisis team met three times a year and aligned its work with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

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

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The Gloucester Public Schools implemented curricula at all grade levels in tested core content areas that addressed the components of the state curriculum frameworks.
- As a foundation for future curriculum efforts, on June 15, 2006 the school committee adopted a district curriculum policy titled “Entitlement and Achievement.”
- The district’s curricula varied in format and organization. Not all curricula contained the minimum components of objectives, resources, strategies, timelines, articulation maps, and assessments. For example, the middle school ELA curriculum documents lacked detail and did not contain timelines, benchmarks, and assessment practices.
- The district ensured consistent articulation of curriculum through the purchase of common materials, professional development, and implementation monitoring.
- The district did not have a comprehensive plan to review and revise its curricula. It did have a curriculum grid that outlined its priorities.
- Each school had principals and curriculum leaders who actively monitored what occurred in classrooms by meeting regularly with teachers at grade-level and departmental meetings and by visiting classrooms.

- The district's schools used a variety of formative and summative assessments to guide instruction, and used assessments such as the DRA, the DIBELS, the GRADE, and the GMADE to provide the necessary information to identify and make appropriate interventions for at-risk students.
- Random classroom observations revealed that not all classroom instruction was rigorous. Teachers had very good classroom management skills, and the classroom climates were conducive to learning.

Summary

The district had curricula at all grade levels in tested core content areas that aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The format and components of the curricula differed in scope and detail. In contrast to the detailed K-5 ELA curriculum, the middle school ELA curriculum guide did not have resources, instructional strategies, timelines, articulation maps, and measurable outcomes. The middle school math curriculum components included pacing charts, math standards mapped to the curriculum, units to cover, math lab requirements, and types of assessments. The high school ELA and math curricula included benchmarks, rubrics, timelines, articulation maps, and assessments.

The district ensured consistent articulation of the curriculum in a variety of ways. It purchased common materials, provided common professional development, and monitored implementation through its principals, program leaders, and coordinators. The district did not have a comprehensive curriculum revision plan. The district did have a draft of a curriculum development grid in place to guide some of its curricular priorities, and it had a district teaching and learning leadership team that met every six weeks. The district also had a leadership team that consisted of principals and district office administrators.

With the support of the district literacy specialist and math program leader, the principals were the curriculum and instructional leaders in the elementary schools. They oversaw the use, alignment, and consistency of the district's curricula and focused on improvement for all students. At the middle and high schools, the principals, assistant principals, and program leaders provided active leadership and support for the professional development and training in effective instructional strategies. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning met with district

leaders and analyzed assessment data, discussed curriculum and instructional practices, and led curriculum revision efforts.

The district had a technology plan, and administrators and teachers used technology to enhance instruction. For example, at the middle school level the district supplied electronic boards and professional development to its math teachers. District leaders indicated that they purchased web-based software to compensate for aged computers.

The EQA examiners conducted observations in 41 randomly selected classrooms during their site visit. Examiners rated the district's teachers high on classroom management skills and the creation of a positive classroom learning environment. High expectations, classroom rigor, and strong instructional practices scored lower. Furthermore, upon inspection of teacher evaluations, the EQA team found that evaluations of teachers were limited and were not performed in compliance with statute. However, principals and other supervisors did utilize active supervision methodologies such as contractually allowed classroom observations to monitor instruction. In addition, the district analyzed student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the district had curriculum guides at grades K-12 in various stages of revision and update. Interviewees stated that the district engaged in ongoing curriculum development and revision. The curricula submitted to the EQA team included guides developed between 1997 and 2001 and updated revised curriculum drafts. The guides for the elementary, middle, and high schools had varying formats that differed in organization and scope. Furthermore, not all guides contained the minimum components required by education reform. In

each of its revisions, the K-12 curricula for ELA, mathematics, and science addressed the components of the state curriculum frameworks.

The district focused on improving literacy. A major revision of the K-5 ELA guide occurred in 2005-2006, and these detailed revisions included framework alignment. The ELA guide included a balanced literacy framework, writing handbooks for each grade level, literature units, literary assessments, and common novels for grades 3-5. It did not include pacing charts. According to interviewees, staff used the embedded scope and sequences from such programs as Rigby, Foundations, and First Steps.

In contrast to the K-5 ELA curriculum, the middle school ELA curriculum lacked detail. The K-8 guide contained the frameworks, learning standards, and lists of suggested activities. There were no pacing charts or assessments in the guide. Included in the curriculum binder were grade 6, 7, and 8 two-page brochures that explained the ELA focus for each of those grades. Brochures included the focus of the program, the text used, the use of a writing portfolio, and learning standards.

The high school ELA curriculum developed concept-based units of study aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Concept-based units of study contained the unit theme, standards, essential understandings, essential questions, critical content, skills, key activities, performance tasks or assessments of student knowledge, and a rubric for the performance tasks. The units did not contain timelines or pacing charts.

In school year 2005-2006, the district revised and updated the K-8 math curriculum guide. According to interviewees, the district used Investigations in grades K-5. In grades 6-8, the district used Mathscapes and other supplementary material. The district's K-5 mathematics curriculum contained drafts of a standards-based math report card, pacing charts, math standards mapped to the curriculum, and rubrics for Performance Tasks in Investigations. Grade 6-8 guides had math standards mapped to the math curriculum, pacing charts, and math brochures for parents. The high school offered a range of courses from Algebra to AP Calculus. Benchmarks, pacing, and assessments were part of the course guidelines. Teachers used Tech Paths, a curriculum mapping system, to map out the essential questions, content, skills, essential understandings, and Massachusetts curriculum framework standards. According to

administrators, teachers had finished three-fourths of the curriculum mapping in the tested content areas. Teacher focus groups told the EQA that the system had some drawbacks relative to detail and ease of use.

The district's curriculum development grid listed areas of focus. The district completed the revision of K-5 ELA standards and assessments and three-fourths of the grades 9-12 ELA concept-based units. In math, the district revised the K-8 standards, assessments, and pacing charts. In science, the district completed revision of its K-8 standards.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of the curriculum documents submitted to the EQA examiners and interviews with school personnel indicated the district worked toward horizontal and vertical alignment of its ELA, mathematics, and science curricula. Interviewees stated that the horizontal alignment improved with the implementation of district programs, the purchase of additional resources, and professional development. Vertical alignment continued to be an area where the district needed to have more time for teachers to meet across the district.

The district ensured curriculum alignment in several ways. It expected principals to appreciate and work toward consistency both across the district and within their schools. There was regular communication with the leadership team. Building principals, program leaders, or other coordinators met with teaching staff by grade level and/or department, after school or during release time, to discuss curriculum gaps and redundancies, analyze assessment data, identify trends, and make modifications in curriculum and instruction.

Interviewees stated that the district had a commitment to improve literacy from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The district began revising its ELA curriculum in 2005 and made modifications to put into place a more coherent curriculum. According to administrators, the horizontal and vertical alignment across the elementary schools was consistent. Teachers in each of the six elementary schools had the same K-5 ELA curriculum documents and the same balanced reading programs and materials. Due to budgetary limitations, the district's program

and resource purchases took successive school years for implementation. For example, Foundations for phonics and phonemic awareness began in kindergarten in 2002, grade 1 in 2003, grade 2 in 2004, and grade 3 in 2006. The Rigby leveled book program began in 2004 for grades K-2 and in 2005 for grades 3-5.

The elementary schools used the same texts and materials in mathematics and science. The district phased in the implementation of the Investigations math program developed by TERC and published by Scott Foresman. Elementary school classrooms each had the same Scott Foresman science series that included pacing charts and assessments, and teachers used science kits.

The middle school's grades 6-8 ELA program included reading selections from Prentice Hall, novels, and a writing portfolio. The grades 6-8 math program used Mathscapes, interactive electronic boards, and other math resource materials. The teachers used pacing charts for units and established common assessments at each grade. The high school used various texts to accompany its math and science course offerings.

According to high school administrators, teachers used the same novels with some choice for differentiation. Honor classes did more independent reading, while lower level classes had more hands on, small group instruction, and the pacing varied.

Interviewees indicated that high school and middle school teachers met to focus on what students should be able to do at the end of grades 6, 7, and 8. For example, they met and adjusted the writing rubric, and teachers worked on developing and implementing a common lab report rubric for science for middle and high school students.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district had a network of leaders with responsibilities for curriculum alignment, consistency, and effectiveness. The overall responsibility for the

development of curriculum and instruction fell to the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. The assistant superintendent supervised the districtwide curriculum writing process with the support of the district's teaching and learning leadership team. Through a collaborative process, the district's leaders met to improve curriculum and instructional practice. Furthermore, interviewees stated that school leaders used weekly after-school meetings, grade-level meetings, departmental meetings, professional development days, and early release days to discuss test data, curriculum modifications, assessment results, program changes, and other topics pertinent to the operation of the schools.

At the elementary level, the building principal led curriculum efforts with the support of the K-8 math program leader and the district literacy specialist. At the middle school level, three assistant principals and the K-8 math program leader supported the principal in overseeing curriculum development. At the high school level, the dean of academic affairs and the program leaders in each department oversaw the development of the curricula in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages.

The technology director provided the MCAS test data analysis to the principals of all schools. Principals knew how to obtain data from TestWiz, and the technology director provided technical expertise to assist them in data analysis. Furthermore, K-12 administrators and teachers used test data from the DIBELS, the DRA, the GRADE, and GMADE, common exams, and other assessments to inform their decision-making in modifying the curriculum.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The principals provided active leadership and support for instructional changes, and the district provided them with additional support through a network of curricular leaders, such as program leaders and content specialists. In addition, administrators had professional development on what constitutes good teaching. The district presented a series of good teaching videos so

administrators would know what to look for when they made informal observations in classrooms.

District and building leaders continuously monitored implementation of new initiatives as well as ongoing programs. Administrators stated that they and other supervisory personnel attended grade-level and departmental meetings, visited classrooms, conducted walk-throughs, and did teacher evaluations. Furthermore, principals received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) methods to learn how to support teachers in the classroom. Supervisory personnel such as the K-8 math program leader provided professional development for staff that included coaching and modeling of lessons.

At the high school level, the principal, academic dean, and program leaders all had curriculum and instruction responsibilities. According to interviewees, the program leaders assured the appropriateness of instruction. Teachers by department discussed the results of classroom and other assessments and used the results to improve instruction.

At the elementary and middle school levels, the principals, the district literacy specialist, and the math program leader assisted staff in various ways. The math program leader provided coaching and modeling of instructional strategies. At the middle school level, math teachers received training and used electronic interactive whiteboards in their classroom units. At the elementary level, K-5 teachers received training in implementing a balanced reading program; a district literacy specialist supported staff in the implementation of the program. The specialist supported a literacy block at the middle school by providing professional development in reading strategies and assisting teachers in the implementation of the block.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to administrators and focus group interviewees and a review of the curriculum documents, the district had no overarching plan or set calendar for the development and review

of curriculum. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that they had not completed all the work for a comprehensive K-12 curriculum. The district had a draft of a curriculum development grid in place to guide some of its curricular priorities. The areas listed on the grid included ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, health, and world languages. According to administrators, the district completed the revision of the K-5 ELA standards and assessments. At grades 9-12, development of concept-based units was ongoing with approximately three-fourths of the work completed. In mathematics, the district completed the K-8 standards, assessments, and pacing charts and started the K-3 pilot of a standards-based report card. In science, the district completed revising its K-8 standards.

The district analyzed MCAS test results and used a variety of assessments to revise its curriculum documents and determine curricular priorities. The district's teaching and learning leadership team, comprised of central office and building administrators, met every six weeks for three or more hours. The team focused on a literacy goal of having 90 percent of the students reading at grade level by 2010. SIPs identified strategies to raise student achievement in literacy and mathematics. Furthermore, the district used MCAS test data and other formative and summative assessments to implement early intervention programs, purchase literacy materials for the district, and provide professional development for staff. Examples of purchases included Foundations for grades K-3, Investigations for grades K-5, Comprehension Tool Kit for grades 4-5, and Strategies that Work for grades 3-12. The district purchased Math on Call, Math at Hand, Algebra to Go, interactive electronic whiteboards, and math software for middle school mathematics.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees stated that they made few instructional time changes. However, according to interviewees and documents provided, the district analyzed the results of the MCAS tests, the DRA, the DIBELS, the GRADE, and the GMADE and other student achievement data, and allocated instructional time in the elementary and middle school to improve student achievement.

At the elementary level, the district allocated ample instructional classroom time for instruction in ELA and mathematics. According to interviewees, elementary periods for math added up to approximately one hour daily. In ELA, administrators and staff stated that the schools allotted a minimum of 90 minutes to teach the balanced literacy block and an additional 30 minutes two times per week in kindergarten for Early Reading Intervention (ERI).

At the middle school level, grade 6-8 students took the GRADE in the fall and the spring. The students had 17 percent growth in grade 6, eight percent growth in grade 7, and five percent growth in grade 8. The students took the GRADE in the fall of 2006, and the district had expectations for greater gains due to the implementation of a daily 40-minute reading block for all students that was in addition to the ELA block. The 40-minute reading block modeled the three-tiered approach to literacy. Teachers received professional development and a resource book entitled *Strategies that Work*. Students needing the most support received instruction in one of four areas for 10 to 12 weeks by six special education teachers. These teachers provided targeted instruction to intensive intervention students each day.

The high school provided after-school help and a summer school program. Administrators indicated that they did not have double blocks in ELA or math. Courses offered in ELA and mathematics included Advanced Placement (AP), honors, college preparatory 1, and college preparatory 2. According to interviewees, most high school students had a full schedule. Approximately 45 to 60 students had study periods in their schedule that compromised their time on learning requirements.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district had a K-12 technology plan in place. Components of the plan included a vision, benchmark objectives, status, strategic actions, timeline, person(s) responsible, and needed resources. The district had a comprehensive inventory of its equipment that allowed it to keep track of its investment in hardware and software. According to interviewees, budget restrictions hindered the hiring of technical personnel and purchase of

newer equipment. Interviewees stated that even though the computer equipment had aged, it still supported the district's programs.

According to interviewees, each elementary school had a computer lab. The middle and high schools had multiple computer labs for instruction. At the elementary level through Project STEAM (Skillful Teachers Excited About Math), two cohorts of K-5 teachers received training in the use of the district's mathematics curriculum software, Investigations. Approximately 50 teachers participated in the training offered from 2004 to 2006. The professional development helped teachers deepen their math content knowledge and technology skills. Teachers learned to use in-focus projectors in classroom instruction. Interviewees told the EQA that there were no computer aides at the elementary level. Teachers brought students once a week into the lab for instructional purposes. According to interviewees, the lack of a tech person and varying skill sets of the staff created inconsistencies in the quality of integration.

In the spring of 2006, the district purchased research machines software and one electronic interactive whiteboard for each math classroom at the middle school. According to interviewees, the middle school math teachers received training and professional development time to build their skills in the integration of this technology into classroom instruction. The mathematics program leader provided ongoing support for the math teachers. The use of the interactive whiteboards supported remediation efforts as well as enrichment opportunities to challenge students. The EQA examiners observed the use of the electronic whiteboards in classroom lessons. The middle school had one lab on each grade level floor, additional labs, and computers on carts. Each lab had an in-focus projector, and teachers had access to in-focus projectors on carts that they used for classroom instruction.

The high school had a variety of labs that supported business education, mathematics, English language arts, science, library, and teacher/student use. According to interviewees, the district purchased web-based software because of its aging equipment. A curriculum integration specialist assisted in the selection of the software and helped teachers develop technological skills. The high school offered to students courses in technology such as Real World Applications in grade 9.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district expected school leaders to monitor instruction, according to interviewees and a review of documents. In a review of randomly selected personnel folders, the EQA team found that teacher evaluations did not address the expectation that instructional practices reflect high expectations for students' work and mastery. A review of the evaluations of a random sample of 38 professional and non-professional status staff showed limited alignment with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38, in that a summative evaluation was not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status or every year for a teacher with non-professional status. Many files included no summative evaluations, and most evaluations observed in files did not follow the Principles of Effective Teaching. Principals indicated that they did informal walk-throughs. They held formal and/or informal meetings with staff members to discuss student progress and provided interventions when necessary.

Administrators stated that they had some teachers on improvement plans. Interviews with administrators and teachers indicated a variety of practices in place that administrators and other supervisory personnel used as methods of monitoring teachers' instruction for high expectations and student mastery. These included, but were not limited to, Looking at Student Work, assessments such as running records, the DRA, the DIBELS, and the GRADE, Investigations unit tests, Mathscapes unit tests, results of common midterm and finals, the use of rubrics, and coaching and modeling from the district literacy specialist and K-8 mathematics program leader. Administrators stated that they had professional development to help them improve instruction. The district provided this development to administrators to ensure that they would be informed observers of the delivery of instruction in their schools. Administrators had professional development on what constitutes good teaching. The district presented a series of good teaching videos so administrators would know what to look for when they made formal or informal observations in classrooms.

The Gloucester Teachers Association (GTA) resisted efforts to permit learning walks within schools except on a voluntary basis and with limitations on feedback to staff. The district-designed learning walks gave selected administrators the opportunity to observe and gather data related to the quality of instruction within the classrooms. Observers focused on purpose, engagement, rigor, and results (PERR). The GTA viewed such efforts as evaluative and in conflict with the negotiated evaluation procedures.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district used formative and summative student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of its curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, the district provided administrators and staff with professional development in formative and summative assessment and purchased support materials to help teachers improve student achievement.

According to administrators and teacher focus groups, components of the district's K-8 literacy program and mathematics program included regular formative assessment practices such as running records, the Developmental Reading Assessment DRA, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, and the Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation that assessed student progress. The district also used assessments from Investigations in grades K-5, Mathscapes in grades 6-8, and an algebra placement exam. Furthermore, the teachers routinely tested at-risk students in literacy to monitor their progress and for placement in flexible skill groupings. The high school administered common midterms and final exams, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the PSAT, and the SAT. The program leaders and teachers reviewed results from these exams to assess student progress and monitor the consistency of instruction and fidelity to the curriculum.

Interviewees stated that the ongoing assessments led to the purchase of various resources to support the curriculum and teacher instruction. For example, the district purchased teacher and

student resources such as Rigby K-5, Foundations K-3, novels, leveled texts, Guiding Readers and Writers 3-6, and Strategies That Work 3-12 to support its literacy initiatives. The middle school purchased electronic interactive writing boards for its math teachers and provided professional development in their use in classroom instruction. The high school purchased graphing calculators and social studies texts with a digitized component.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed 41 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes reflected in five categories of the Principles of Effective Teaching: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA conducted observations at district schools as follows: 22 at the elementary schools, 12 at the middle school, and seven at the high school. In total, the EQA examiners observed 22 ELA classrooms, 12 math classrooms, five science classrooms, one social studies classroom, and one occupational therapy classroom.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 91 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 100 percent at the elementary level, 77 percent at the middle school level, and 89 percent at the high school level.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that require the use of higher order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off-task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it

should be age-appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged. The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 75 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 84 percent at the elementary level, 59 percent at the middle school level, and 75 percent at the high school level.

Expectations refer to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 63 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 74 percent at the elementary level, 50 percent at the middle school level, and 54 percent at the high school level.

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 63 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 71 percent at the elementary level, 50 percent at the middle school level, and 62 percent at the high school level.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 85 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 95 percent at the elementary school level, 75 percent at the middle school level, and 71 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	15	4	3	22	16.6	0.5	59	56	6.5
Middle	5	4	3	12	20.6	0.3	14	7	35.3
High	2	4	1	7	18.1	0.0	4	1	127.0
Total	22	12	7	41	18.0	0.3	77	64	11.6

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Elementary					
Total observations	88	166	65	94	63
Maximum possible	88	198	88	132	66
Avg. percent of observations	100%	84%	74%	71%	95%
Middle					
Total observations	37	64	24	36	27
Maximum possible	48	108	48	72	36
Avg. percent of observations	77%	59%	50%	50%	75%
High					
Total observations	25	47	15	26	15
Maximum possible	28	63	28	42	21
Avg. percent of observations	89%	75%	54%	62%	71%
Total					
Total observations	150	277	104	156	105
Maximum possible	164	369	164	246	123
Avg. percent of observations	91%	75%	63%	63%	85%

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

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district had a coordinated assessment program for grades K-12 that all parties understood well.
- During the period under review, Gloucester students participated in assessments at very high rates. In 2006, the participation rates on the MCAS tests in ELA and math were 99 and 100 percent, respectively.
- The district efficiently gathered assessment data at grades K-8 and analyzed them using various software and database systems, permitting a broad perspective of how the students were doing individually, by class, by school, or in the district as a whole.
- The district did not formally evaluate its programs on a regular basis during the period under review. It did use assessment data on an ongoing basis to examine the effectiveness of its math and ELA curricula and instruction in general terms.

Summary

For a number of years prior to the period under examination, the Gloucester Public Schools utilized a number of assessments to monitor the progress of its students. In the past three to four years, the district has made a concerted effort to streamline the monitoring process and develop a more unified assessment program. Although the district did not mandate the program or describe

it in policy documents, it was well understood by all parties within the district. In the elementary grades, the students were assessed using standardized tests such as the DIBELS, DRA, GRADE, and GMADE. Some, namely the DIBELS and the DRA, were used several times during the year in a formative way, thereby giving the teachers a moving picture of each student's progress in ELA. The district used the GRADE and GMADE tests as summative assessments to document the overall progress of students. At the high school, each department developed common assessments. A review of the district's data showed that they it very high rates of participation on the various assessments, including the MCAS tests, for which participation rates were consistently at 99 to 100 percent for the aggregate population.

During the period under review, the district focused on improving literacy, resulting in changes to the ELA curriculum and its instructional delivery system. Also, the district had paid close attention to the results of the various assessments (particularly at grades K-8), reviewing these data on a student-by-student, class-by-class, and districtwide basis. District coordinators in math and literacy facilitated the effort using database software to analyze the assessment data the district had collected.

The district did not engage in a formal process of evaluating its programs for effectiveness. It did, however, use assessment data frequently as part of its decision-making process. Administrators, principals, school committee members, and teachers all explained that a great deal of time was spent discussing assessment data and trends. A review of the redesigned 2006-2007 School Improvement Plans showed that the district has moved to more formal data-driven practices. These plans reflected goals and measurement of accomplishment from previous years, particularly in ELA and mathematics, and they also contained measurable goals with timelines and metrics for measuring success.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district administered a battery of assessments across grades K-12. Even though the district did not have a formal policy calling for assessments to take place, it had implemented an assessment practice prior to the period under examination. A review of the district vision statement (in draft form, dated 10/03, revised 3/04) revealed a goal that stated that assessments should have defined criteria and should align with units of study across grades and courses; formative and summative assessments would become an integral part of learning, and the district would describe performance criteria through rubrics/scoring guides, etc.

Administrators and principals explained that at the elementary and middle grades (K-8) the district specified a series of assessments, including the DRA, DIBELS, and GRADE in ELA, and the GMADE in math, to be administered to all students. At the high school, students took common midterm and final exams in each of the major subject areas, and the school just introduced the GRADE for grade 9 students.

Administrators gathered the data from the DRA, DIBELS, GRADE, and GMADE and entered them into databases (either commercially obtained or locally developed). Administrators explained that these data were then available for analysis by principals and teachers. They cited numerous instances of leadership meetings, principal meetings, teacher meetings, and professional development sessions at which they examined and discussed data from these databases.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) revealed that the district students participated in the MCAS tests at a rate that exceeded the state minimum requirement of 95 percent. Additionally, according to principals, almost 100 percent of students completed the district-mandated standardized tests.

Principals explained that they placed a great emphasis on student participation in the required assessments (such as the DRA, DIBELS, GRADE, MCAS, etc.). They stated that teachers frequently reminded students of key testing dates, either in person or in written communications to the parents. A review of student handbooks provided by the district showed that in one case, the West Parish Elementary School student handbook, it explicitly stated this high expectation, “All students are required to participate in the state testing program.” The high school planner, dated 2006-2007, provided a list of the MCAS testing dates.

The 2006 adequate yearly progress (AYP) data showed that the district met or exceeded the participation target for all subgroups and for all grades. In fact, the participation rate for the aggregate student population in the MCAS testing in 2006 was 99 percent in ELA and 100 percent in math. The grades 9-12 special education student subgroup had the lowest participation rate, at 95 percent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The primary area in which the district was found to use assessment systems to measure the attainment of goals, progress, and effectiveness was in the revised format School Improvement Plan (SIP) implemented in 2006. The SIPs dated 2006-2007 contained a narrative section at the beginning, which included 2005-2006 accomplishments as they related to the previous year’s goals. For example, the O’Maley Middle School’s SIP stated “...began the 2005-2006 school year by pre-testing the students using the GRADE reading assessment.” It continued by stating that the school collected data again in the spring and used them to see whether the professional development and the Strategies That Work approach had been successful. The data showed improvement had occurred.

Principals and parent members of the school improvement councils explained that they typically revisited their respective School Improvement Plans at the end of the school year. The purpose of

this was to determine the progress that had been made toward accomplishing the goals. Once again, interviewees cited student achievement measured using assessments as one factor used in determining the degree to which the schools had met their goals.

When asked about informing parents of progress made, principals explained that they did not specifically communicate the student assessment data to all parents; however, parents had opportunities to come to the school to meet with teachers and discuss items such as this. Additionally, examiners found very few instances in which district staff had produced a specific progress report or summary of a program or goal achievement. As principals, parents, and administrators described their activities around items of this nature, they explained that they typically shared these findings within a discussion. They would then make decisions based upon the data, but it was not typical.

Principals and administrators explained that they were required to present summary information to the school committee on an annual basis. They stated that the members of the school committee were quite comfortable discussing data, so principals and administrators were expected to present relevant data during their presentations. These meetings were open to the public and viewable on the local access cable television station (however, it was not broadcast live).

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators and principals revealed in interviews that the district used a series of assessments to measure student progress, which was reflected in district documentation. Additionally, they analyzed the data from these assessments and disseminated reports to the appropriate staff in a timely manner.

The assessment protocol was well established in the schools, according to interviewees, especially at the elementary level. At grades K-3, all students were tested with the DIBELS and

the DRA. The DIBELS assessment tested each student's phonemic awareness, and the DRA was used to measure a student's comprehension and fluency. These assessments were also used at grades 4-5; however, they were reserved for students found to be struggling. The GRADE was administered to all students in grades 3-9. This assessment measured comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. The GRADE had been phased into the district, starting with the lower grades, over the past three to four years. All of these assessments were part of the districtwide focus on literacy. To monitor the progress of students in math, the district administered the GMADE to all students in grades 3-8. Teachers used other assessments, such as running records, as well.

At the high school level, the district did not typically use standardized tests; however, students were required to take common midterm and final exams in each of their subject areas, according to the principal and administrators. Classroom teachers collected and analyzed the results from these assessments.

Interviews with teachers confirmed that the assessment results were made available to them with a rapid turnaround time. The district had an electronic test-scoring scanner that facilitated the scoring of the GRADE and GMADE assessments.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district administration paid particularly close attention to the results of the assessments administered at grades K-8. At the high school level, the departments generally monitored and reviewed assessment results.

Interviews with administrators and principals revealed that the district allocated large amounts of professional development time to review the data and analyze them to identify areas of strength and weakness. Teachers then used the analyses to assess the effectiveness of their instruction in their classrooms. Elementary and middle school teachers and principals explained that the data, especially from the literacy tests, gave them a very accurate picture of how their students were

performing. The data also allowed them to better understand whether teaching strategies were effective.

For example, the district discovered that in the early grades, using the Foundations program, students were becoming very good at decoding. However, it also discovered that students were doing poorly in terms of fluency and comprehension. As a result, the elementary school teachers had to alter their strategies to better address this area of weakness.

At the high school level, more attention was paid to the results of the MCAS tests, as well as to the results of the SAT and AP exams. However, with the exception of the MCAS tests, these assessments were not mandatory and many students did not elect to take them. Administrators deferred to department heads regarding the results of these assessments.

For the new School Improvement Plans (2006-2007), the updated format called for schools to identify areas of strength and weakness as revealed in the assessment data. Schools were also to report on modifications they would be making to the overall instructional program in light of their findings.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district had not regularly engaged in either internal or external audits to inform the effectiveness of the implementation of programs, as revealed through a review of district documentation and interviews with district administrators. Information provided by the district indicated that commissioning external audits was not a priority when it was cutting staffing levels year after year. It did use data regularly as part of an ongoing process to assess the progress made by students. However, the district was able to provide very few examples of audits or studies that the district had conducted. One notable exception was an extensive audit completed in April 2005 of many different program areas including governance, educational service delivery, and resources (revenue, grants, personnel, and property).

A review of this audit revealed that its primary emphasis was on cost effectiveness. In interviews, district administrators and principals pointed out that the city initiated the audit. They explained that the city believed that the schools were not using their resources efficiently and that there was “a lot of fat that could be trimmed.” Factually, the audit did not support this belief. Most of the interviewees felt that the audit process was problematic and that the findings were not especially relevant or useful to them. The superintendent did summarize the findings of the audit and prepare timelines and plans to address areas of weakness. The school committee considered and approved an action plan related to the school management audit, and subsequently considered progress reports, which were presented to a joint meeting of the school committee and the city council.

This audit was not typical of the practice of the district. In most cases administrators, principals, and teachers explained that the district had not formally evaluated or audited most of the district’s programs. The high school was currently in the initial stages of preparing for its reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The early childhood program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Administrators pointed out that any reporting required as part of a grant had been completed. They stated that the district gathered and reported these data for this purpose alone, and did not generally share or report the findings to the staff as a whole.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The Gloucester Public Schools have undergone a period of years during which finances have been extremely tight. As a result, the district had to make a number of cuts in almost every area. These included librarians, support staff, classroom teachers, directors, program coordinators, supplies, custodial services, and building maintenance. Interviews with administrators and principals revealed that in the past they had made staffing decisions using data concerning class

size, need, and availability of quality personnel. They stated that for the past couple of years the district had made cuts in all areas, and data played a lesser part in these decisions as the majority of programs had been cut back to minimum levels.

Principals expressed frustration about the goal setting and school improvement planning process. They explained that in the majority of cases they could not afford, in terms of resources, to follow through with the action steps that accompanied the goals. A notable exception to this was in the area of literacy, for which the district maintained its support for its districtwide initiative. This included program materials for Foundations and leveled reading materials, as well as the testing costs associated with Early Reading Intervention (ERI), GRADE, DRA, and DIBELS, and the commercially produced database software to allow better analysis of the data.

Administrators explained that the district had reallocated time to better serve the needs of the students. For example, paraprofessionals were provided for 40 minutes per day to cover teachers' duty periods. This allowed the teachers to work in groups on the curriculum. Also, at the middle school level, time was built into the school day to allow students to use the Successmaker software.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the district did not formally evaluate the majority of its programs. District personnel were able to cite examples of program changes based on trends or patterns revealed in their data. However, given the financial climate in the district, it was difficult to tell whether programmatic changes were typically made in this way during the period under review. Once again, the notable exception was in the area of literacy. During the period under examination, the district had placed a priority on literacy to help improve the district's overall MCAS performance. Principals and administrators explained that the district had initiated the Foundations program, unified the overall literacy approach (previously, "each school was doing

its own thing”), and significantly increased the amount of professional development time devoted to literacy and its assessment.

In 2007, the district has considered closing one of its schools in a decision driven primarily by the need to cut costs. However, district leaders considered many different data while choosing a school to close. Administrators described many different scenarios that involved different facilities. Each scenario considered class size, teaching staff, quality of the facility, and suitability of a facility to meet the educational needs of the students.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

- The Gloucester Public Schools provided and funded substantial professional development programs for staff and a two-year mentoring program for new teachers. The district had trained 62 mentors.
- The district determined professional development needs based on the analysis of assessment data, teacher and program implementation and evaluation, and research-based practices. The district provided multiple professional development sessions in data analysis skills.
- The district had hiring practices and procedures in place for teachers and administrators but did not apply for waivers to the Department of Education for uncertified staff. At the time of the review, four percent of the Gloucester Teachers Association members and 20 percent of the administrators did not hold the appropriate license, but had applied for licensure or enrolled in a licensure program.
- Administrators performed active supervision in the form of contractually allowed classroom observations. The district implemented learning walks conducted by non-supervisory administrators based on class purpose, student engagement, rigor, and results, but because they were voluntary the district only conducted a limited number.
- The district had district and school crisis and emergency plans, provided crisis and emergency training, and held periodic emergency drills.

- The professional growth cycle in place during the period under review did not comply with the requirements of education reform. Although the statute requires annual summative evaluations for non-professional status teachers, the district amended the cycle to include a summative evaluation every two years.

Summary

The Gloucester Public Schools had hiring procedures in place for the hiring of teachers and administrators and advertised vacancies in Essex county newspapers, *The Boston Globe*, and on the district and Boston Works websites. Central office provided all applications to principals who created school screening committees. Principals made hiring recommendations to the superintendent. The district formed committees when hiring administrators. Interviewees indicated that the district did not have any financial barriers to hiring teachers or administrators. The district provided licensure data to the EQA examiners that showed many administrators and Gloucester Teachers Association (GTA) members did hold the appropriate licensure. Interviewees mentioned that possible factors creating difficulty in attracting licensed personnel included budget approval timing, geographic location, housing costs, and lack of available teacher specialists. The district posted rental housing opportunities on the district website.

The district had mentoring and professional development programs in place during the period under review and provided appropriate funding. The mentoring program was a two-year program, and the district had trained approximately 62 mentors and provided all new teachers in the district with mentors in compliance with statute. The district had two districtwide and four early release professional development days. In addition, schools conducted professional development sessions at faculty and departmental meetings, and the district had a math and literacy specialist who provided embedded professional development in all schools. The district also provided summer professional development opportunities as well as tuition reimbursement. A review of the professional developed plans and information provided by interviewees showed that analysis of student achievement data, program evaluation and implementation, teacher evaluations, and research-based practices informed professional development. The district trained staff in TestWiz and in the use of data associated with the DIBELS, DRA, GMADE, and GRADE assessments.

District administrators received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation methods and teachers received training in skillful teacher methods. The district did not hold administrators and teachers explicitly accountable for student achievement. While principals and other supervisors conducted formative classroom evaluations, the four-year professional development cycle in place during the period under review did not comply with the MGL 603 CMR 35 evaluation requirements under the Education Reform Act of 1993. The district recognized this and amended the cycle to include a mid-cycle evaluation; however, statute requires an annual evaluation for non-professional status teachers. The superintendent did not conduct annual evaluations for all administrators in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 38; however, administrators indicated they developed annual goals with the superintendent and met regularly with the superintendent to discuss progress. The administrator contract included a performance achievement clause related to additional goals negotiated with the superintendent. Although some administrators took advantage of this opportunity, some did not due to time constraints and the elimination of the bonus received by meeting this goal from base salary calculations.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of staff. The district policy manual included a number of personnel policies. Examples included policies on the posting of professional staff vacancies, professional and support staff hiring, part-time and substitute staff employment, employee health and fringe benefits, a philosophy of staff development, staff time schedules, support staff assignments and transfers, and the creation of professional staff positions. The school committee had a personnel subcommittee that reviewed arrangements for the recruitment and retention of staff. In addition, goal five of the strategic plan (2006-2008) was to recruit, develop, and retain highly qualified and effective staff and volunteers. In addition, according to policy the district followed the contractual rights

requirements included in the contract between the district and the Gloucester Teachers Association (GTA).

A review of hiring procedures included in the district policy manual showed an eight-step process was in place to hire professional or certified teaching staff. The process included the posting and advertising of vacancies after administrators determined staffing needs. The district advertised positions in *The Boston Globe*, the Boston Works website, the district website, Essex county newspapers, and posted open positions in the schools. Central office administrators provided all applications to principals. Principals created screening teams, which could include parents, teachers, school council, and other community members. The teams determined the characteristics and qualities candidates should have and developed questions for interviewees. Principals screened applications and provided the applications of candidates who met the criteria for the job to members of the screening committee for review. Interviewees indicated that teachers requesting transfers received interviews. The screening committee recommended candidates to the principals. The principals made recommendations to the superintendent who, for the most part, supported their recommendations.

Interviewees indicated a similar process was in place for the hiring of administrators. Interviewees stated that the district convened panels of stakeholders, including school and central office staff, parents, and school council members, who interviewed administrator applicants and made recommendations to the superintendent.

All staff hired had a criminal offender record information (CORI) check conducted. Interviewees indicated that the superintendent had not placed financial restrictions on hiring, but that grant funding sometimes limited the amount of compensation personnel received.

2. All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Staff licensure information provided by the district on EQA Attachment D for school year 2006-2007 showed that 16 of the 20 administrators employed in the district held the appropriate license, and 279 of 301 professional staff in the GTA held the appropriate license. The district

reported 13 teachers were teaching out of field for one or more period a day. The district reported that 32 of 141 paraprofessionals met the ‘highly qualified’ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standard. Staffing data reported by the district included guidance counselors and therapists, but not staff on leave of absence. Unlicensed personnel had applied to DOE for licensure or reinstatement and were waiting for DOE action, according to interviewees.

The district had notified unlicensed personnel of the need to obtain the appropriate certification to continue employment. Two unlicensed administrators had applied for certification over three years ago, and the applications were in the DOE pending or ready for review categories. The fourth unlicensed administrator was completing the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA) program for administrative licensure.

Interviewees cited a number of reasons for having to hire unlicensed teaching personnel, including difficulty in finding licensed math, science, and special education teachers. Interviewees indicated that having financial instability, not having the budget resolved until the summer, geographic location, and high housing costs led to the district losing qualified licensed personnel. The district posted housing rentals for staff on the district website.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to information provided to the EQA, the district did not apply for waivers for any unlicensed teachers or administrators for school year 2006-2007. According to interviewees, personnel office staff reviewed licensure status of personnel and checked the DOE licensure database for licensure information and status. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that checking on licensure status was a collaborative effort and was included as part of the hiring and interviewing process. Presently, the district used a manual system for reviewing licensure information, but was in the process of creating a database of licensure information to monitor progress toward licensure or the need to reapply, according to interviewees. The district also

used the DOE hotline to check on licensure information. Interviewees indicated the district provided mentoring and professional development to unlicensed staff.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Massachusetts law requires districts to provide an orientation program for new teachers, assign a trained mentor to a new teacher within a certain time, assign a support team of an administrator and a mentor, and provide release time for the mentor and beginning teacher to observe classrooms and conduct other mentoring activities. According to interviewees and a review of documents provided by the district, the district had a two-year mentoring program for new teachers, and principals determined mentor/mentee pairings. The district's professional growth plan for teachers suggested mentoring as a professional growth activity. The district provided to the EQA a document entitled *Meaningful Mentoring Guidebook for Mentors and Administrators*. The guidebook included a description on how to apply to be a mentor, mentor responsibilities, and the role of mentees. Also included were mentoring logs, professional development request forms, a monthly mentoring checklist, classroom observation forms, and descriptions of the differences between mentoring and supervising and the phases of peer coaching.

According to interviewees and information provided by the district, the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning managed the mentoring program. In a memo to mentors and mentees, the assistant superintendent detailed mentor responsibilities including the 45 hours per year required to mentor a new teacher. The program required that mentees spend 50 hours annually in the program, 45 hours with a mentor and five hours in district meetings. The district required submission of mentor/mentee meeting logs and mentors received compensation of \$750 or up to three in-service credits. Only mentors who participated in the district mentor training received compensation, and mentees could apply for three in-service credits for participating in the program. The district scheduled five district mentor meetings, including a meeting to evaluate the program.

The district developed five mentor trainers through graduate work and used a consultant to develop a training program for mentors. The district trained 62 mentors, 22 at the high school, nine at the middle school, and 31 at the elementary schools. Eighteen teachers applied to mentor in 2006-2007. Because over the last two years the district lost to resignation or retirement an average of approximately 26 teachers, having 62 mentors allowed the district to meet the need for mentoring new teachers.

The district had an orientation program for new teachers each year before school started. Interviewees indicated the first half of the agenda included an overview of the district, a description of district goals and assessment programs, and staff introductions. Teacher association representatives spoke with the teachers, and district staff discussed the professional growth cycle and professional development opportunities. During the second half of the orientation, new teachers had a tour of their new school and had discussions on school philosophy.

No formal mentoring program was in place for administrators, but interviewees indicated that administrators met regularly to discuss issues and problems. Interviewees indicated that an atmosphere of collaboration existed among administrators and they readily helped each other with problems.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Professional development programs in place during the period under review provided workshops on learning or improving data analysis skills to address student achievement. The district implemented and/or administered a number of formative assessments including the DRA, the DIBELS, the GMADE, and the GRADE, analyzed the data regularly, and used them to measure student progress and make modifications to instructional practices. The district used the MCAS tests as the principal summative assessment. Interviewees indicated that the district provided principals and other administrators with academic responsibilities with TestWiz training, and

central office administrators reviewed, analyzed, and disaggregated MCAS test data and provided analyses to principals, who reviewed them with teachers and program leaders. The District Improvement Plan for Literacy (DIPL) had formative assessment data displayed by stanine, grade, and risk category.

Interviewees indicated that the district provided data analysis training for teachers in the district. Districtwide professional development included a number of training programs related to data analysis skills. For example, during the October 2004 and 2005 professional development days, K-2 teachers received training on analyzing DIBELS data, which included reviewing the data, determining strengths and weaknesses, and developing approaches and strategies to modify instruction. In January 2006, teachers in grades 4 and 5, special education teachers, and Title I teachers received training in administering the DRA and reviewing DRA results. Part of this training included how to take running records. In January 2007, an outside consultant provided a workshop for K-3 and special education and Title I teachers in collecting, interpreting, and utilizing DIBELS data. The same consultant provided DIBELS training for teachers during several other professional development days. During an early release professional development day in October 2006, the district provided GMADE training for K-3 teachers. Interviewees indicated that the director of technology and the math and literacy coordinator provided embedded professional development in data analysis.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district policy manual contained a policy on staff development, which encouraged employees take advantage of opportunities for staff development and professional growth. The policy outlined five specific opportunities for professional growth including professional development, membership on curriculum development committees, release time to visit other classrooms and schools or to attend workshops and conferences, leaves of absence for graduate study, and tuition reimbursement for graduate courses. A review of documents and information

provided by interviewees showed that the district had policies and procedures in place to hire effective personnel; in addition, the 2006-2008 strategic plan included a goal to recruit, develop, and retain high qualified and effective staff and volunteers. To accomplish this goal, the district created objectives relative to advertising and the interview process, contract negotiations, the development of a districtwide learning community, the development of a comprehensive professional development plan, and a review of the employee evaluation process.

The district established and funded significant mentoring and professional development programs for teachers. Administrators had access to professional development activities and administrative contracts included professional development reimbursement. Teachers received in-service credit for summer professional development. The teacher evaluation process in place during the period under review included a four-year professional growth cycle, which included goal setting in year one, implementation of growth activities in year two, continued growth activities and classroom observations in year three, and a summative teacher assessment in year four. The district, after negotiations with the Gloucester Teachers Association, added a mid-cycle summative assessment after it realized it was not compliant with statutory evaluation requirements.

Examples of suggested growth activities in the professional growth plan included peer observation, mentoring, curriculum development, study groups, and teaching a workshop. A sample faculty guidebook from an elementary school included detailed information regarding the professional growth cycle as well as the importance of professional development in improving staff performance. The district provided graduate course reimbursement and multiple stipended positions, such as mentors and extra curricular advisor positions. Interviewees stated that the district provided \$35,000 contractually for graduate course reimbursement. Interviewees indicated that the district had limited promotional opportunities for teachers, although the district had program leader positions at the middle and high schools.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had professional development plans in place each year during the period under review as required by statute. According to statute, a district must adopt a professional development plan for all principals, teachers, and other professional staff, paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, and members of school councils. The district institutionalized professional development and supported it with substantial funding. The district budgeted \$516,246 and \$499,670 for professional development in school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, respectively. In both years, over \$100,000 of the budgeted amount was for professional development increment payments. The district also included the salaries or part of the salaries of staff supporting professional development in these amounts. In addition, interviewees stated that the district provided \$35,000 for graduate courses for teachers. Professional development also took place in faculty and grade-level meetings in an informal way. The district had math and literacy coordinators who supported teachers on a daily basis and served as embedded professional development resources. The district provided summer professional development sessions, but due to budget restrictions teachers received in-service credit rather than reimbursement.

The structure of professional development in the district included two districtwide days and four early release days. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning administered the professional development program with collaborative input from other administrators and from teacher surveys that reported the needs and wants of staff. Interviewees indicated that the district planned and implemented professional development programs based on evaluations of teachers and educational programs, student achievement data, and research-based practices.

The district had an overarching goal included in the strategic plan, the DIPL, and the SIPs that 90 percent of students will read with comprehension at or above grade level by 2010. To support this goal the district provided multiple ongoing professional development sessions in Foundations

and Rigby. One interviewee stated that district goals drove professional development. During the period under review, the district implemented multiple assessment programs including the DIBELS, the DRA, the GMADE, and the GRADE and provided professional development in using the assessment tools and interpreting the student achievement data gleaned from the assessments. The district provided RBT training for administrators and teachers, and most administrators had TestWiz training.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district supported changes in its programs by offering professional development that provided teachers with the skills needed to effectively deliver programmatic offerings and improve classroom instruction and student achievement. Principals, assistant principals, mentors, program leaders, and other central office administrators supervised the implementation of professional development and classroom instructional practices by teachers, according to interviewees.

Principals used formal and informal classroom walk-throughs and the formative and summative evaluation processes and attended teacher meetings to monitor implementation of professional development, content programs, and instructional changes. Principals received RBT training to learn how to support teachers in the classroom. The contract with the GTA allowed supervisory personnel to conduct one formative evaluation of a non-professional status teacher each year and one formative evaluation of a teacher with professional status every four years with pre- and post-conferences. During the period under review, the district conducted summative evaluations once every four years, but the district and the GTA amended the contract in 2006 to allow a mid-cycle summative evaluation every two years.

The district developed a non-evaluative, voluntary learning walk process during the period under review that allowed administrators, other than direct supervisors, to provide feedback to teachers after observing instruction. The observers focused on purpose, engagement, rigor, and results.

The district established teacher and student indicators and guiding questions for the observer to use in the classroom. For example, when observing for the purpose of the class the observer would look to see if the teacher communicated a clear plan to the students for assessing student work, determine whether the students understood the assessment plan, and ask how the assessment framed student learning. Information provided by the district indicated that by using this process the district was trying to “establish a widening conversation and consensus about those characteristics of teaching and learning which seem to be essential ingredients for success and engagement....” Interviewees indicated that the purpose of the learning walks was to develop discussions about positive teaching methods.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Evaluation procedures were in place in administrator contracts, but an examination of administrator personnel files did not produce evidence of written evaluations, although the superintendent stated that all administrators he supervised were evaluated each year. A sample of administrator contracts revealed the existence of specific evaluation criteria. For example, the contract stated the superintendent shall evaluate the performance of the administrator in writing by May 1 based on the job description, goals in the SIP, policy manual guidelines, progress on incentive goals (if applicable), policies and directives of the superintendent, and in accordance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38.

Interviewees indicated that administrators met with the superintendent and set goals, but that a formal review process was not in place. Administrators had a core contract and negotiated with the superintendent for extra contract items. They stated that, in general, the superintendent met with administrators two to three times per year to discuss progress and then wrote a report and discussed suggested goals for the next year. Further, they revealed that the district did not hold

administrators explicitly accountable for improving test scores. The superintendent based continued employment on overall performance and interviewees indicated some former administrators did not have a contract renewed. The financial condition of the district affected administrator compensation, but interviewees stated the superintendent tried to be fair.

The administrator contract included a professional achievement incentive plan. This plan allowed administrators to develop additional goals with the superintendent. If the administrator achieved the goals, the superintendent could award the administrator a bonus of up to three percent of his/her salary. Interviewees indicated that in 2005-2006, the district stopped adding the amount of the bonus to the salary base. Since that time, some administrators stopped participating in the program.

The EQA team reviewed evaluations included in the personnel files of 18 administrators employed in the district during the period under review, including the superintendent. Three administrators were new to the position and no evaluation was required at that time. During the period under review, not all administrators received annual evaluations in compliance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38, in that eight of the administrators did not receive annual evaluations. The evaluations performed were informative, but most did not follow the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and, for the most part, did not include recommendations for improvement. The administrators did not sign about one-third of the evaluations. The school committee evaluated the superintendent annually, but the superintendent had not signed the evaluation.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district had a four-year professional growth cycle document dated April 2003 in place during the period under review; however, the cycle adopted by the district did not comply with statute,

according to interviewees. They indicated that program leaders at the secondary level, who were members of the GTA bargaining unit, performed teacher evaluations. Interviewees were unsure whether principals reviewed and signed these evaluations. According to the professional growth cycle document, the purpose of the growth cycle was to support and promote improvement in teachers' skills to improve student achievement, incorporate professional development, and provide a fair and professional means to assess teacher effectiveness.

In year one of the cycle, teachers reflected and set goals. In year two, teachers implemented growth activities. In year three, growth activities continued, and in year four, the teachers submitted documents regarding progress on goal attainment and attendance at professional development offerings. The supervisor conducted formative and summative assessments in year four. According to interviewees, new teachers received one formative observation in year one and teachers with professional status received a formative observation in year four.

The growth cycle included an improvement plan for struggling teachers, an appeal process, and included the Principles of Effective Teaching in Appendix B-Professional Standards for Teachers. According to interviewees, the district realized the professional growth cycle was out of compliance with statute and amended the cycle in 2006 to include a summative assessment in year two; however, the amended cycle continued to be out of compliance because statute requires non-professional status teachers to have a summative evaluation in each of the first three years of employment. Some interviewees indicated that evaluations were sporadic depending on who was the supervisor.

The superintendent indicated that the personnel files included a form that indicated the year of the professional growth cycle teachers were in at the time of the amended cycle. EQA examiners observed this form. The superintendent indicated the personnel files included a dearth of evaluations because of the non-compliance to statutory requirements. A review of the evaluations of a random sample of 38 professional and non-professional status staff showed limited alignment with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38, in that a summative evaluation was not performed every two years for a teacher with professional status or every year for a teacher with non-professional status. Many files included no summative evaluations, and most evaluations observed in files did not follow the Principles of Effective Teaching; however, although staff

signed evaluations and summative evaluations were informative, they were not instructive in that they did not include recommendations for improvement. Interviewees indicated that the district did not hold teachers explicitly accountable for student achievement results, and that consequences were in place for ineffective teaching or behavior. They added that the district had terminated non-professional status teachers; however, interviewees could not recall the district terminating a professional status teacher, although some had resigned.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of teacher and administrator evaluations from the period under review and information from interviewees indicated that administrators did not have effective systems of summative evaluation to implement district and school programs. However, the district in the latter part of the period under review implemented a method of active formative supervision to implement district and school programs and goals. A review of teacher and administrator summative evaluations showed that principals and the superintendent did not perform summative evaluations in a timely way and wrote informative but not prescriptive evaluations. Evaluations for the most part did not follow the Principles of Effective Teaching or the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership. However, interviewees stated principals and other supervisory personnel conducted informal walk-throughs of classrooms as well as formal classroom observations allowed by contract and provided feedback to teachers. Principals and other administrators stated that the superintendent met with them regularly to discuss performance and principals made presentations to the school committee on SIP progress and SIP goals for the next year.

In the last year of the period under review, the district implemented a major active supervision program referred to as learning walks. Similar to the contractually allowed formative observations, administrators used learning walks to determine the fidelity of program implementation and to provide positive feedback to teachers. Administrators based the walks on

purpose, engagement, rigor, and results (PERR). Interviewees indicated the walks were non-evaluative. Interviewees indicated that, unlike the classroom observations allowed by contract, learning walks were voluntary and conducted sometimes by administrators who did not directly supervise the teachers.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district linked employment, supervision, and the professional development process and supported them with appropriate levels of funding, despite financial restrictions that led to little budget growth during the period under review. The district had practices, policies, and procedures in place relative to staff employment and hiring procedures. For example, the district had policies on the posting of professional staff vacancies, professional and support staff hiring, part time and substitute staff employment, and a philosophy of staff development. The district had changed the timing of the development of SIPs so it aligned with the budget development process. The district appropriately funded professional development and a two-year mentoring plan during the period under review. The administrative/supervisory staff included a superintendent, two assistant superintendents, a human resource officer, a chief financial officer, principals, assistant principals, and program leaders to manage programs, people, and assets. The strategic plan included a goal “to recruit, develop, hire, and retain highly qualified and effective staff and volunteers.”

Information provided to the EQA showed that in March 2007 the district had approximately 596 full-time equivalents (FTEs). This was a reduction of approximately 60 FTEs since 2001, including a reduction of approximately four administrators and 57 teacher association members. The district added 22 special education aides during that period. During this time, a review of DOE enrollment data showed enrollment decreased from approximately 4,200 to approximately 3,800.

During the period under review, a review of district End of Year Pupil and Financial Reports showed spending on administration was approximately \$827,000 in FY 2004, \$802,000 in FY

2005, and \$857,000 in FY 2006. Spending on instructional services was approximately \$21 million over all three fiscal years of the review period. This spending did not include spending from grants. The district met net school spending requirements during the period under review, and budgeted \$516,246 in 2005-2006 and \$499,670 in 2006-2007 for professional development. In both years, over \$100,000 of the budgeted amount was for longevity payments for long-time staff who obtained a certain number of professional development points (PDPs) as well as portions of the salaries of staff members who supported professional development. Additionally, interviewees stated that the district provided \$35,000 for graduate courses for teachers.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had school crisis and safety policies, procedures, and practices in place during the period under review. Interviewees indicated that schools had crisis teams and safety plans developed by the assistant superintendent with help from local safety officials. Teachers knew who was on crisis teams, whose membership included personnel such as the school psychologist, school nurse, principals, assistant principals, paraprofessionals, and secretaries. According to interviewees, in the latter part of the 1990s the district leaders met with police and fire officials and developed a safety committee, which met monthly. Interviewees stated that the district worked with the Massachusetts Police Association to evaluate the safety status of all schools.

Virtual tours of school were available to police, fire, and other safety officials so they could become familiar with the layout of the schools. The district developed offsite evacuation locations and procedures for evacuations, as well as a transportation recall list so the district could contact bus drivers quickly to evacuate students. Safety officials had desktop training sessions with administrators and queried them as to how they would handle certain crisis scenarios. The district held emergency simulations, including a simulated pneumonia leak at the high school, and all schools had periodic fire drills. The district had real bomb scares, which tested the emergency response system.

According to interviewees, some members of crisis teams received National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. A review of the professional development offerings during the period under review indicated that nurses and nurses aides received training in the Homeland Security Incident Command System and avian flu pandemic issues, and maintenance personnel received training in handling hazardous materials and acts of terrorism. New teachers received safety and crisis training, mostly through the mentoring program and from colleagues. Interviewees stated that the district did not have a formal training program for substitute teachers in safety and emergency procedures. Interviewees indicated that because some of the schools are aging, creating a totally secure environment was a challenge. In response to the challenge, the district recently completed a \$51,000 upgrade of doors at the high school.

The district developed two detailed safety and emergency documents for staff and schools. The district provided one document entitled the *Gloucester Public School System Emergency Response Handbook* to all classroom staff. It consisted of a flipchart with 27 sections that included procedures for emergencies such as missing children, kidnappings, bomb threats, and gang/group violence. The district also developed a 23-page emergency response protocol document that had important telephone numbers and detailed procedures for various emergencies.

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

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Average attendance at Gloucester High School was below 90 percent. Chronic absenteeism was high in grades 6-12. The high school did not penalize students with loss of credit for excessive absenteeism.
- The middle school did not retain students as a matter of policy. In 2006, 26 percent of high school freshmen were unable to attain sophomore status because they did not pass enough of their high school coursework.
- School handbooks contained mandated language such as that addressing harassment, hazing, and the treatment of special education students. They contained few or no consequences for routine disciplinary infractions with the exception of the West Parish Elementary School, which listed a hierarchy of consequences.
- The district provided professional development and leadership in literacy to identify and service students at risk through assessments such as the DIBELS, DRA, and GRADE. To improve reading skills, the district purchased reading materials and implemented a literacy block in all classes through grade 8.
- The middle and high schools had transition protocols for moving students into grades 6 and 9. They introduced children to the new building and faculty, oriented parents, and created

opportunities for staff to learn about the academic, social, and emotional needs of incoming students.

- Students who enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses were required to take the AP exams and earned creditable scores in sizeable numbers.
- The district mainstreamed special education students with some essentially separate services provided at each level for developmentally delayed, behaviorally challenged, or autistic students.
- Special education teachers who serviced elementary students outside the Fuller Elementary School had variable caseloads.
- The district provided minimal services to English language learners. One of the two ELL staff was unlicensed.

Summary

Most Gloucester schools posted brief expectations for attendance in their respective handbooks. The high school elaborated its policy but still had an attendance rate that was below 90 percent. Four unlicensed personnel, reporting to the assistant principal, handled initial attendance, tardiness, truancy, and the penalties. These personnel referred for further action students with chronic attendance problems. Chronic absenteeism ranged from 29 to 38 percent. The high school assigned no academic penalty for absenteeism, although social and out of school activity sanctions did exist. Interviewees attributed the high retention rate of freshmen to absenteeism and to the students' belief that there would be no consequences for poor performance.

The middle school responded to absenteeism when it became "excessive," meaning six or seven absences in one quarter. While overall middle school attendance met state targets, chronic absenteeism was high in the middle school as well. Poor attendance triggered family outreach and intervention, sometimes culminating in the filing of a child in need of services (CHINS) petition.

School handbooks identified unacceptable behavior in general terms and contained mandated language for hazing, harassment, the treatment of special education students, and other such matters. The high school handbook provided some additional language regarding discipline but

did not clearly indicate penalties for routine infractions. Only the West Parish Elementary School spelled out a ladder of disciplinary consequences for unacceptable behavior. Four unlicensed staff members who reported to the assistant principal supervised discipline at the high school. The high school did not have an in-school suspension option, but did exercise out-of-school suspensions. In 2006, the high school retained approximately one-fourth of all freshmen and one-tenth of its sophomores. While the high school handbook did have a minimum credit requirement for advancing to the next grade, there were no listed academic penalties for absence and the retention rate was completely based on course failure. Three assistant principals supervised discipline at the middle school.

The high school offered an extensive program of vocational and semi-vocational courses to appeal to students in the community. In addition to a summer school for credit recovery, students had access to the COMPASS program and the North Dakota Independent Study, programs providing alternative settings for completion of diploma requirements.

The district invested in staff and materials to develop a literacy program, which extended into the high school. Over several years, the district purchased phonics texts, Rigby readers, and a leveled library for student use. The district literacy specialist, under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, provided staff with professional development on instruction and assessment. The staff examined and reported assessment results, using formative tests to adjust instruction from kindergarten through middle school. The district also purchased texts and software for the math program. A math program leader provided coaching and supervised curriculum development through grade 8. The high school provided remediation through an MCAS test review for English and a variety of in-school and after-school opportunities to receive teacher help. The district provided opportunities for MCAS test remediation after school, in the evening, and through the summer school.

Special education students were taught in an inclusionary setting to the extent possible. In addition, the district maintained substantially separate resource rooms for special populations at the Fuller Elementary School, the middle school, and the high school. Some of these resource rooms also provided pullout support. Special education caseloads outside of the Fuller Elementary School varied greatly by school. The district had guidance counselors in grades 6-12

who also did individual counseling. Title I students received additional literacy services in one elementary building and both literacy and math support in the other. These students and teachers benefited from the extensive district efforts made on behalf of literacy. A licensed individual offered pullout and some in-class instruction to English language learners (ELLs) through grade 8. At the high school, one foreign language teacher, unlicensed in ELL, provided two periods of English as a second language (ESL).

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district examined student achievement data, especially from kindergarten through grade 8, in order to provide supports for all lower-achieving students. According to interviewees, most students in these lower-achieving groups were members of at-risk populations. The district focused special effort on assessing and providing literacy support for students identified as Tier 3 at-risk students. An examination of MCAS scores revealed that both special education and low-income students performed better in ELA than their respective counterparts did across the state at almost every grade level. Although these same populations performed below state averages in math, district students in general performed below the state average in math at most grade levels.

In order to take advantage of limited resources, the district placed the students with developmental, behavioral, and autism needs at the Fuller Elementary School where special education resources were concentrated. These students received instruction in substantially separate classrooms. Students with less severe disabilities attended their local school. According to interviews, the district mainstreamed all special education students to the extent possible with support in resource rooms.

At the Fuller Elementary School, Title I and special education staff worked with two classes at each grade level. Title I staff worked with kindergarten students using the Early Reading

Intervention (ERI). Two Reading Recovery teachers assisted grade 1 students. In the year subsequent to the period under review (2006-2007), the Fuller school received grant money to run an outreach program to parents.

Interviewees reported that the second Title I school in the district, Veterans' Memorial Elementary School, had the services of one Title I teacher who supported grades 3-5 in both ELA and math. The school also provided the services of a part-time literacy specialist for the early grades and maintained one resource room. Support staff pulled students out of class to "double dose" the students in need of services who ranked in Tier 2, "at some risk." The special education staff at Veterans' Memorial and the four remaining elementary schools served a population that varied greatly in size. The district cited special education caseloads of between 12 and 40 at the various elementary schools. Special education teachers had the assistance of paraprofessionals and aides.

The middle school mainstreamed special education students and maintained two resource rooms where the school provided students additional support. A small group of autistic children were taught separately. The middle school also ran a program called Home Base for children with emotional needs. About 10 students per grade checked in daily with paraprofessionals to organize homework and have a place for "time out" when angry. The child study team served as a pre-referral resource through grade 8.

According to interviewees, the high school taught special education students in both mainstream and separate settings. Some students took their required courses in multi-level classes geared for students with learning disabilities. The Gloucester Alternative Program (GAP) was a special program for students with behavioral issues. Staff members said that students who had been in the middle school behavior program often continued to need a similar setting at the high school. The intervention program at the high school did not include pre-referral screenings.

Interviewees revealed that a licensed ELL teacher tested and served English language learners in kindergarten through grade 8. Although a large number of the ELL students were located at the Fuller Elementary School, ELL students were enrolled in several schools where they received pullout instruction. The ELL teacher occasionally went into the regular classroom to offer support. The same individual received training by the DOE to deliver professional development

in the district in sheltered English immersion (SEI). At the high school, a foreign language teacher taught two periods of ESL. This individual did not hold ELL licensure.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Despite the effort to identify students who did not meet expectations and provide supports for them, student proficiency did not show significant and sustained gains during the period under review. The 2005 mid-cycle AYP report did not show acceptable performance or improvement in math for students in the aggregate or for subgroups. The 2006 AYP report showed a decline in ELA scores and a very small gain in math districtwide.

Interviewees reported that the district had engaged in a large-scale effort during the period under review to train teachers to use new assessments including the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), running records, Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE). Teachers of grade K-2 students had received the most training in the use of these assessments. Many grade 3 teachers had received instruction, but fewer teachers in grades 4-8 had received the full range of training. The district literacy specialist assisted staff to understand how to use the assessments, identify students at-risk, and provide instruction for those identified in most need. Only the Fuller and Veterans' Memorial schools had reading or Title I teachers. The Fuller Elementary School had also received a John Silber Reading First grant. This grant funded the position of the reading coordinator who oversaw the Reading Recovery program in the school. Staff members and district reports reiterated the need for additional literacy staff at other elementary schools to serve students at some risk of failure.

At the middle school, all students received reading instruction in the content area during a 40-minute block. All students with reading difficulties, whether they qualified for special education

services or not, received specialized reading instruction from a special education teacher, rotated or repeated at the end of a 10 to 12 week block, depending on an assessment of the student's progress during that period. All middle school students also spent one day out of six during math class in the Successmaker lab, which kept a running record of basic math skills. Students worked individually on math problems, supervised by their teacher. A math program leader assisted teachers of kindergarten through middle school with curriculum, articulation, and instruction.

The high school offered a course for MCAS English review as well as afternoon, evening, and summer classes to provide additional remedial instruction. The after-school program was run in both the fall and late winter for 10 to 12 weeks, twice weekly from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. The school also ran extra help sessions during school time in the STAR program. The principal assigned one or two teachers to the media center during one of their unassigned periods. Students who had a study or who could leave a class could go to the media center for individual tutoring. According to interviews, this program did not work well because it was difficult for students to receive permission to miss a class, student and teacher schedules did not always match, and some assigned teachers were not able to help students with math. In addition to these remedial opportunities, students were able to take advantage of regular teacher help sessions after school and tutoring by National Honor Society members.

Interviewees revealed that child study teams (CSTs) in the elementary and middle schools met regularly with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and the school psychologist to follow children in difficulty. The protocol offered a checklist to pinpoint problem areas. The CST suggested appropriate interventions such as counseling, extra help, and homework assistance as well as modifications such as breaking down assignments and using graphic organizers. The West Parish Elementary School had a clear "pyramid of intervention" to be followed. Interviews revealed that at other schools staff followed some variation of the process, although none mapped the process as clearly.

According to interviews, the high school intervention team did not operate as a pre-referral group. At the high school, each guidance counselor served a segment of the student body, assigned by alphabet. The counselor met with the nurse and school psychologist to discuss that counselor's students at risk. The team met with parents and coordinated with the courts if

necessary. Interviewees indicated that these teams provided support for social, behavioral, and family issues rather than addressing academic needs.

Each school had a document entitled the district curriculum accommodation plan (DCAP), which differed from building to building. The DCAPs listed the services available at each school. They also mentioned the staff training provided by the district, which would ensure that teachers were prepared to identify and support students who were not succeeding in their academic classes. The DCAPs appeared to be prepared to inform parents about available services but suggested few accommodations for the classroom that would be useful to teachers.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In 2006, 59 percent of all grade 3 students in the district tested at the 'Proficient' level in reading on the grade 3 MCAS test, one point above the state average. This represented a decrease from 68 percent proficient in 2004, when the district scored five percentage points higher than the state average. In 2006, 45 percent of grade 4 students attained proficiency on the MCAS ELA test, five points below the state average. In 2004, 60 percent had attained proficiency, four points above the state average. The percentage of students at the 'Warning/Failing' level also increased during this period.

According to document review and interviews, the district engaged in a significant amount of professional development to train teachers, especially teachers of young children, to assess and advance reading skills. During the period under review, the district phased in literacy materials and a phonics text. The district began to assemble leveled libraries of trade books at each school, and it employed a district literacy specialist who oversaw the testing and worked with regular staff members at every level to develop their ability to implement good reading strategies and remedial instruction. The district collected and analyzed a large volume of assessment information on the reading abilities of its elementary and middle school students.

Staff interviews identified several possible reasons that student proficiency had not improved during the period under review. As the district attempted to implement a comprehensive literacy program, it had not yet fully trained the teachers of tested grades. Kindergarten through grade 2 teachers had received training from the literacy specialist. Teachers of grade 3 had received most, but not all, of the needed training; teachers of grades 4 and 5 needed significantly more instruction. Assessments had shown that while the district had some success in raising children from the Tier 3, “greatest risk,” category, students in the middle and upper categories did not show commensurate gains. Staff concluded that they needed to have higher expectations for students who did not fall into the high-risk category because skills and strategies taught had not kept up with the difficulty level of the texts. The limited financial resources of the district did not permit the hiring of reading specialists/coaches recommended in the District Improvement Plan for Literacy (DIPL) and requested by two schools.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Principals and other staff members described an extensive process to transition students from elementary to middle and then to high school. Every year in the spring, the middle school hosted a special performance of the school play for all grade 5 students. The principal took this opportunity to introduce some of the staff to the children. In May, the district brought groups of 25 grade 5 students to the middle school for a visit and paired them with a grade 8 student who had attended the same elementary school. During the visit, the elementary school children followed a typical schedule and received a tour of the building. The middle school held an evening event to orient parents to building staff and expectations.

The middle school staff received a great deal of information about incoming students. Grade 5 teachers provided an information card on each student. The elementary school also sent the students’ portfolios, which included writing samples and a variety of assessment results. The elementary schools provided a plethora of assessment data to assist the middle school in forming

heterogeneous teams. Counselors and specialists from elementary schools and the middle school met to discuss students with special issues. In the last year of the period under review, teachers of grades 5 and 6 had time to meet to review vertical alignment issues in order to provide a better academic transition for students.

According to interviews, the high school assistant principal and guidance staff visited each of the grade 8 homerooms at the middle school in March in order to introduce themselves and tell the children what they could expect at the high school. The district routinely assigned the guidance staff a caseload of students by section of the alphabet. As the year advanced, representatives of high school extracurricular activities were invited to set up a table in the middle school cafeteria to enroll students. Representatives of elective subjects were invited to do the same on another occasion. High school administration invited parents of grade 8 students to an evening meeting in March in order to discuss the high school program and introduce the parents to the criteria for honors courses. A peer mentor, usually a junior student, provided tours of the high school for small groups of students in the early spring. Finally, grade 9 students were able to follow their schedules for the morning of the first day of school before the rest of the school started later in the morning. The district discontinued this final step late in the period under review due to time on learning regulations.

In the spring, middle and high school counselors met to discuss students at risk. The middle school forwarded writing portfolios and assessment results for placement purposes. High school program leaders met with middle school staff to ensure that course recommendations would be appropriate. In the year subsequent to the period under review, the middle school and high school teachers had an opportunity in the fall and spring to meet to look at writing portfolios and other assessment information to ensure a smooth transition. This meeting offered an opportunity to understand department standards across levels and allow middle school teachers to place students in the appropriate level of high school courses, particularly in math. High school math teachers visited the middle school to model a lesson for interactive math to assist students with their math choices.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the district employed staff to oversee discipline referrals, document review revealed that the district had not clearly delineated the consequences of poor behavior. School handbooks included the mandated language regarding hazing, harassment, and treatment of special education students. The high school handbook included regulatory language regarding the prohibition of smoking and alcohol on the premises and other offenses, which could result in suspension. The West Parish Elementary School handbook was most specific in spelling out the levels and types of disciplinary consequences for various infractions. The other school handbooks did not reference specific disciplinary consequences for routine offenses. The district did not apply discipline uniformly, according to documents and interviewees.

At the middle school, three assistant principals handled discipline referrals. Staff members described a system of teacher detention and calls home supplemented by the loss of privileges, community service, and school detention. The middle school did not have an in-school suspension option and did not have personnel to staff such a room.

According to interviews, the high school did not have an in-school suspension option for financial and philosophical reasons. The out-of-school suspension rate was 11.2 percent for 2004, 11.1 percent for 2005, and 12.9 percent for 2006. At the high school, four individuals titled student supervisor monitored discipline. These non-licensed staff members reported to the assistant principal.

According to the high school SIP, the high school retained 26 percent of all freshmen in 2006. DOE data showed that the high school retained approximately 10 percent of all sophomores yearly. The school committee policy regarding retention was general: students will normally progress annually from grade to grade, although there may be exceptions. The high school handbooks required freshmen to earn at least 26 credits for promotion as part of the graduation requirement. The district did not have academic penalties for absence, which might have resulted in retention, although the district had attendance penalties related to social and out of school

activity. Interviewees attributed the high retention rate to excessive student absenteeism at the high school, the lack of a middle school retention policy, and home issues. Staff members revealed that many of these students failed again the next year due to absence. Retained students were placed in a freshman homeroom but were allowed to move on with their studies in courses that they had not failed. The middle school did not retain students because it had no educational options to offer retained students other than what those students had already received.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district graduation rate of 79.4 percent in 2006 was slightly below the state average, according to DOE graduation data. The data show that eight percent of the general high school population dropped out. According to document review and interviews, the high school maintained a number of programs to keep young people in school. To keep students interested in school and to provide a curriculum related to the needs and interest of certain students, the district offered a number of vocational courses that were of interest to that population, including automotive, carpentry, machine, and electrical shops as well as semi-vocational programs in culinary arts, industrial arts, and child study. In addition to remedial courses and tutoring, the district offered a summer school program for credit recovery. Students who passed the MCAS tests but were at risk of dropping out could attend the community, opportunity, motivation, principles, authenticity, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency (COMPASS) youth program. Action, Inc. ran this community program off-site in conjunction with the courts and the district. It served approximately 15 students yearly. At this facility, a special education teacher taught the GED program in the evening. Guidance counselors had begun to arrange a meeting between the potential student and the teacher in their high school office to improve the likelihood that the student would enroll in the program. The North Dakota Independent Study program was among the school offerings. This was an online course for children whose emotional problems prevented them from attending school.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district charged the professional assistant of student health and emergency services with providing access and services to homeless students. The district had one homeless shelter and a residential drug treatment home. In Gloucester, students enrolled directly at the neighborhood school. Intake forms allowed staff to identify homeless students. The liaison regularly contacted the schools to remind them of their obligation with regard to homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act. In frequent contact with community service agencies, the liaison received reports about homeless students and foster placements from principals and the agencies. The liaison provided transportation, free/reduced-cost lunch, and other needed services to 25 students yearly.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although each school published an attendance policy in its school handbook encouraging good attendance, asking parents to call the school in case of student absence, and requiring a note, the school committee manual did not contain an attendance policy. Students in the district registered an average of 12.2 days absent in 2006 compared to the state average of 9.4 days.

The district used IPass software to collect and manage attendance and disciplinary data. The city did not provide a resource officer or truant officer to work with the schools on attendance or discipline. Although average daily attendance through grade 8 ranged between 93 and 95 percent, there were pockets of chronic absenteeism. The number of chronically absent students in grades 1 and 2 ranged between 10 and 12 percent. Chronic absenteeism at the middle school ranged between 15 and 19 percent. The DOE defined chronic absenteeism as missing at least 18 days of school.

The middle school handbook indicated that the school would call home when student absences were “excessive.” According to interviews, when a child had missed six or seven days in one quarter, middle school administrative staff would send a letter home to encourage better attendance. If attendance did not improve, a second, sterner letter would be sent. In some cases, the middle school filed a child in need of services (CHINS) petition with the court. During interviews, staff attributed chronic absence to family social and emotional issues. Overall middle school attendance met state targets.

Attendance at the high school averaged 89 percent. The percentage of chronic absentees ranged from 28.6 to 37.7 percent in 2006. An automated system called the home at the beginning of the day when teachers reported students absent. Four paraprofessionals, known as Maria 4, supervised attendance. They reported to the assistant principal. The high school handbook listed types of acceptable absences from class such as family emergencies, legal appearances, college visits, verified illness, etc. and required that the student bring a note to the assistant principal. Family vacation during school time was acceptable absence if the school was given 60 days notice. The child was required to hand in missed assignments. According to the student handbook, excessive absences did not trigger an academic penalty for high school students. Three unexcused absences in a quarter would prevent a student from attending extracurricular events. The same penalty applied to unexcused tardiness, truancy from class, and failure to attend a detention session. Staff members said that absence was a serious problem at the high school because there were few penalties, and they attributed the high freshman retention rate in part to frequent student absence.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Staff interviews revealed that the superintendent encouraged good staff attendance in September when he sent his yearly letter to staff. The assistant superintendent for operations and central services tracked teacher attendance at district professional development days and around

vacation periods. Teacher attendance at the elementary schools was good. Teacher absence ranged from a low of 4.8 days per year at the Plum Clove Elementary School to 11.6 days at the high school and 11.8 days at the middle school. When professional development days were excluded the number of absences ranged from 3.4 to 10.7 days. Teachers in the district averaged 8.7 days absent, excluding professional development time. In the elementary schools, teachers called the principal to report their absence. The principal then called the clerk who found appropriate substitutes. The middle and high school staff called the clerk directly.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district informed students of the path to Advanced Placement (AP) programs, but did not maintain special programs to encourage and mentor subgroup populations. According to interviews, the guidance counselors informed parents of grade 8 students of the path that their child needed to take for admittance to one of the 10 AP courses offered. Teachers reaffirmed the necessary requirements to students during their high school career. Students were required to take honors level courses and do well, receiving a teacher recommendation in order to enroll in an AP course. The district expected students in AP courses to take the AP exam and paid the fee so that each child could do so. This policy may have increased subgroup participation. Approximately 120 students took the AP exams yearly in 2005 and 2006, with an average success rate of between 60 and 67 percent. Most of the grades below creditable level occurred in three of the 10 AP courses. The district reported AP results to the school committee.

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

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- While the city and the state provided revenue in accordance with their legal obligation, interviewees indicated that the Gloucester Public Schools budget was not adequate to maintain or improve school programs and facilities, and the district lost 60 positions since FY 2002.
- The district consulted parents, staff, and administrators in the development of its budget, and held an open hearing and meetings with the city council to discuss it; school committee members and city officials stated that the process and the budget had become much more transparent.
- The district's SIPs included goals based on student assessment data, and principals presented their SIPs to the school committee along with school budget proposals.
- The city exercised substantial control over district purchases and payroll, ensuring appropriate documentation and compliance with state regulations.
- The district and the city had no written agreement describing the manner for calculating indirect charges by the city until January 2007.

- The assistant superintendent oversaw the application for and management of grants along with grant administrators. The district had many revolving funds and funded many programs through outside contracts, fees, and fundraising by community groups.
- The city had a five-year capital plan that included school projects, but limited funding precluded the completion of most projects.
- Although the district strategic plan called for a preventative maintenance schedule, the district had not completed this task. Administrators described a number of facility maintenance problems, but EQA examiners found the buildings to be clean, safe, and well lit.
- Visitors had to identify themselves at schools, but only one school had a surveillance camera and other schools did not lock doors during the school day, and some fire alarms needed repair. The district had an emergency procedure manual with detailed procedures for crises.

Summary

Administrators and school committee members described a budget process in which parents, school councils, administrators, school committee members, and the city council actively participated. The district's strategic plan and SIPs included goals to improve student achievement, especially in literacy. The principals presented budget and SIP proposals to the school committee, a practice school committee members reported made the needs of schools clear. The budget document provided details on changes in the proposed and approved budget as well as historical trends and relevant outside sources of revenue. School committee members and city officials noted that the process and the content of the school budget had become more transparent.

The district sustained a 20 percent reduction in state Chapter 70 aid in FY 2004 followed by no increase in FY 2005, and as a percentage of net school spending Chapter 70 aid declined from 19.9 percent in FY 2003 to 15.2 percent in FY 2006. Approved budgets were not adequate to maintain educational programs, eliminating over 60 staff positions since October 2001 including K-8 librarians, high school physical education staff, middle school foreign languages teachers, the facilities manager, a high school assistant principal, and career and technical education leadership. High school class size increased. The district had to rely on fees and contributions to fund athletic and transportation programs. Needed improvements in some district programs did

not receive funding, including elementary reading specialists and adjustment counselors, special education teachers, and compliance with English language learner requirements. The district took steps to improve cost effectiveness by combining certain administrative positions, participating in an energy savings program, transferring some employee benefit charges to the lunch program, improving special education programs to avoid out-of-district costs, cooperative bidding, and other efficiencies.

The district had no written agreement with the city regarding its indirect charges for education until January 2007, and it was vague about the calculation of charges for some items such as snow plowing and grounds maintenance.

The district provided monthly financial reports to a subcommittee of the school committee, with updates to the full committee as needed. The reports included forecasted surpluses and deficits and outside funds. School budgets, including grants and revolving funds, were available to administrators online. Administrators could create purchase orders online using the district's accounting technology, and the accounting system rejected purchase orders unless funds were available. Because the district shared the same accounting system with the city, necessary approvals and oversight were efficient and financial information was immediately available to the district and the city.

Appropriate administrators applied for and managed grants as well as revolving funds, and the assistant superintendent coordinated the grant process. City and district administrators worked together to ensure procurement laws were followed, with certified personnel in both offices. The district had audits of school programs conducted, with the exception of student activity accounts, and administrators took steps to follow their recommendations.

The strategic plan included a goal to prepare a formal preventative maintenance plan, but the district had not yet completed it. Contractors performed major maintenance tasks annually, and in-house maintenance personnel took care of day to day needs. Examiners found the buildings clean, safe, and well lit. The district submitted the capital needs of the schools to the city for inclusion on the city capital projects list. Limited funds, however, precluded the completion of most projects. Examiners found all but two buildings unlocked during the day, but visitors were required to sign in and wear badges. The district had plans to install surveillance cameras when

funding was available. Its emergency procedures manual was extensive, updated, and improved annually with the assistance of police and fire officials.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Printed materials from the district outlined the procedures for establishing the budget development schedule, identifying dates and budget actions from December through June, when the town approved the final budget. Principals requested budget input and proposals from their staffs and school councils in the fall. According to administrators, the superintendent sometimes asked them to prepare three budgets: adequate, level services, and three percent below current levels. The superintendent and chief financial officer compiled their requests for submission to the school committee in January. The school committee building and finance subcommittee met frequently to discuss the budget and consider reductions, and the full committee discussed the budget at its public meetings. The school committee held a hearing in March and voted in April.

The mayor of Gloucester sat on the school committee and kept the city informed throughout the budget process. The mayor recommended the city budget, held joint public meetings with the school committee and city council, and the city council and school committee voted on the budget in June. School committee members, administrators, and city officials reported that the school committee had met several times with the city council in the past few years and had made special efforts to make their budget more transparent. According to interviewees, they had succeeded.

The budget document listed revenue sources, including state aid, revolving funds, and grants, as well as anticipated operating expenses. The superintendent focused on changes in the budget and his recommendations for possible reductions. The budget listed a program budget for salaries and operations for each school, as well as previous budgets and expenditures. Each school identified its staffing requirements; for instance, the annexes to the budget included provisions for staffing

changes in the event the budget stayed at the current level, and in the event there was either a funding increase or a decrease of three percent. Other than changes, the budget did not include line item details. Administrators reported they provided this information to the school committee in other reports.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees reported that principals presented their proposed budgets to the school committee together with the SIPs, and because SIP development in part included the use of student assessment data, the relationship between improving student achievement and budget needs was clear. School committee members praised this process. An analysis of assessment data led to SIP and budget proposals, including the Investigations math program, the Foundations reading program, and technological aids. Also proposed based on an analysis of student achievement data, but ultimately not funded, were additional reading specialists.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district budget was inadequate to improve or maintain school programs. According to budget documents and interviews with administrators, cuts made during the period under review included K-8 library staff, high school physical education staff, middle school foreign language staff, a high school assistant principal, and a career and technical education leadership position. The district combined the duties of the facilities manager and the technology director with those of an elementary principal. A chart of staffing changes from FY 2002 to FY 2007 showed a

reduction of 60.6 positions, including 56.9 teachers. Other unmet needs were adjustment counselors, reading specialists, after-school and tutoring programs, reduced caseloads for special education teachers, compliance with English language learner requirements, and building repairs.

The district implemented athletic and transportation fees during the period under review. Administrators reported that fees and fundraising by the Gloucester Fisherman's Athletic Association (GFAA) almost fully funded the athletics program in 2007. Evaluations by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and a private management company retained by the district cited the district for inadequate funding for library materials, building maintenance and repairs, and support for professional development. In the budget document for FY 2008, the estimate for an adequate budget, meeting student needs and providing funding to maintain current programs, was approximately \$39,763,883, an increase of \$6,498,984 or 19.5 percent, of which \$3,660,945 was necessary to maintain current services, compared to the estimated \$900,000 available.

The city increased its expenditures for schools from \$31,623,788 in FY 2003 to \$32,362,006 for FY 2006, an average of 0.8 percent per year. This increase was not enough to cover increases in collective bargaining agreements, heat and utilities (3.7 percent average increase), special education tuition (18.5 percent average increase), and health insurance (13.0 percent average increase). As a result, funds available for instruction decreased by \$699,725 and maintenance budgets for buildings declined.

According to DOE financial information, the city was able to increase its contribution to schools annually, in spite of a decrease of \$1,320,825 (20 percent) in state aid in FY 2004. Although below the state average, Gloucester's per pupil expenditures have shown a modest increase.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Examiners found no evidence that the district, as part of the budget process, implemented an evaluation-based review process to determine the cost effectiveness of programs, although the district took several steps to improve cost effectiveness of its programs. The city engaged a management consulting firm to perform a review of district practices and programs. Examples of recommendations made in this audit included closing a school, sharing certain operations with the city, combining the preschool and Head Start programs, shifting an assistant principal to the high school, eliminating supervisory positions in special education and health, and transferring the revenue from a contract to transport Manchester and Essex students to the school budget. School committee members and administrators reported that they took the audit seriously and, where practicable, followed recommendations. The district also contracted with a consultant for an energy study. Recommendations included lowering thermostats, turning off lights, reducing run times for equipment, and monitoring energy use. The firm's September 2006 report cited potential savings of \$378,786, or 24 percent.

Administrators reported several other steps taken to improve cost effectiveness. The district revised transportation contracts and schedules to improve efficiency and save on mechanical repairs. It combined the positions of technology director and the East Gloucester Elementary School principal. The district offset the cost of transporting special education students by contracting to pick up students in neighboring districts. It reduced athletic busing costs by sharing buses among teams. The district revised snow removal procedures to reduce overtime costs. It hired special education aides to retain special education students in the district and avoid out-of-district tuition costs. The lunch program picked up a share of its employees' benefit costs. The district used to do building renovations during vacation periods at no cost to the district. In 2003, the district contracted with a cleaning service for some of its custodial needs, saving the expense of three custodians. The district collaborated with the city and a consortium of districts to bid for supplies and materials resulting in lower prices.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the district and the city had no written agreement detailing the manner for calculating charges levied on the school district budgets by the community, and the FY 2005 audit of the district's End of Year Financial Report included this omission among its findings.

The district executed a written agreement with the city detailing most indirect charges levied on the school district budget in 2007. The agreement specified the manner for calculating city administrative and benefit charges, but was vague in the methodology for calculating other costs absorbed by the city, including snow plowing, grounds maintenance, etc. Both city and school administrators agreed the charges were fair.

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

Rating: Satisfactory**Evidence**

According to DOE data, the city exceeded NSS requirements throughout the period under review by 6.7 to 12.2 percent. However, the percentage over the NSS requirement has decreased over the last three years from 12.2 percent in FY 2004 to 8.3 percent in FY 2006. End of Year Reports to the DOE showed that city expenses for schools increased by an average of 11.7 percent per year from FY 2003 to FY 2006, leaving an average 0.8 percent increase for education expenditures by the school committee during the same period.

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

Rating: Satisfactory**Evidence**

The district hired new a chief financial officer (CFO) in early 2006, and administrators and school committee members reported that new monthly financial reports were timely, accurate,

and transparent. These reports went to the school committee building and finance subcommittee for review and the school committee discussed and reviewed them when necessary. They included monthly projections for major school budget items such as tuition, new staffing and position/vacancy changes, utilities, benefits, “holdback” from frozen accounts, along with offsets from revolving accounts, circuit breaker and foundation (“pothole”) aid, and transportation contracts. Administrators had immediate access to current balances in their accounts through the district online accounting system. Administrators reported that financial reports to the state were not accurate under the previous CFO, and FY 2004 audits confirmed that they were not accurate and that two grant reports were not timely.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used the Unifund accounting package to post and print purchase orders, encumber purchases and payroll, and prepare financial reports. Administrators had immediate online access to account balances and to the preparation and approval of purchase orders. The city implemented the same accounting package in 2005, simplifying and improving accuracy in tracking financial transactions and records between school and city offices. City officials and administrators reported a few problems, especially with respect to revenues, due to the recent implementation of the package by the city. Where possible, the business office encumbered funds for salaries, utilities, and other predictable purchases, and the CFO monitored changes that influenced projected balances such as personnel vacancies and new positions, utility prices and costs, and anticipated receipts. These adjustments appeared on monthly financial reports for school committee members.

In addition to interviews with school and city administrators, examiners reviewed purchasing, invoice, warrant, and payroll records of the school district. Control systems on purchases were

extensive. The city auditor required a purchase order and prior approval for any purchase greater than \$1,000, and refused to approve invoices not meeting these requirements until reviewed by the city council. The appropriate administrator and the CFO also approved purchases, and the city purchasing agent reviewed purchases and prepared bids when required. If an account was insufficient to cover a purchase order, the accounting system rejected the purchase order, and the CFO and city auditor both checked account balances before approving the purchase orders. The district permitted administrators to make transfers among their own operations accounts, and school committee approval was required for transfers between major accounts. A review of payroll records revealed that the district created paychecks based on the conditions included in appointment letters and personnel contracts, overtime approvals, and, for substitute teachers, administrator approval. The CFO, the chair of the school committee, the city auditor, and the mayor all approved warrants for purchases, and the CFO, auditor, and mayor approved payroll warrants.

The school committee had a policy for student activity accounts based on MGL Chapter 66. It required receipts for student activities be deposited with the city treasurer, and for principals to have the authority to write checks on a checking account with appropriate maximum balances of \$8,000 to \$20,000.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to DOE data, the district received \$2,490,717 in state and federal grants, and district reports included an additional grant from the state Department of Public Health (DPH). Administrators reported that the appropriate administrator prepared the grant application, oversaw expenditures, and ensured the district expended the grant for the intended purpose. The assistant superintendent oversaw the grant application and management process. Administrators

reported that the district spent most grant money, with the exception of carryovers in Title I. Audits did not report any inappropriate expenditure in the district's federal grant programs.

The district strategic plan included a goal to work with voluntary organizations to provide additional funding for school programs, and administrators reported that they obtained donations from the Perfect Storm fund, the Gloucester Fishermen's Athletic Association, and the Gloucester Education Foundation. Administrators and budget documents noted other revolving funds for the schools such as revenue from school choice, ROTC, high school student parking fees, student activity fees, state circuit breaker and foundation ("pothole") aid, preschool tuition, ice rink and building rental fees, and transportation contracts and fees.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Giusti, Hingston and Company of Georgetown performed audits of city finances and of the district's End of Year Reports. The audits cited issues with reconciliations of receivables and debt in city accounts, noncompliance with federal guidelines for school lunch eligibility in FY 2004, and late final reports for two federal grants for FY 2005. The audit of the district's FY 2005 End of Year Report noted a lack of agreement between figures on the report and the district's general ledger. City officials reported they worked to improve reconciliations with the new Unifund accounting software, and they expected to resolve this problem after full implementation of and training on the new accounting software.

The FY 2005 audit noted that noncompliance in eligibility requirements for school lunch appeared to be rectified. The district hired a new chief financial officer in early 2006 who worked to resolve problems with late final grant reports and reconciliations in the district's End

of Year Report. An audit of student activity accounts in the schools was not available and administrators reported the district had not had one performed in recent years. School and city administrators reported that the city purchasing agent ensured that the district followed procurement and bid laws. The district principal accounts clerk had MCPPO certification, and city officials reported that business office personnel held the certification as well.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The management audit and the district strategic plan emphasized the need for a preventative maintenance plan for the district, and administrators reported that such a plan and associated contracts continued under development. The NEASC evaluation of the high school and progress reports emphasized the importance of building maintenance, including roof repairs, air quality and mold, and field house floor replacement, and SIPs of other schools cited similar maintenance needs. Administrators reported that an electrician, a plumber, a roofer, and an energy coordinator/HVAC technician were on staff, and the district used contractors to annually maintain fire alarms, boilers, and other major equipment. The district took steps to improve high school air quality including the replacement of exterior doors, dehumidifiers for affected employees, roof repairs, and rooftop HVAC unit repairs. A \$1 million repair of the high school roof was completed in 2006. The district did not have a facilities manager during two of the years under review due to financial constraints.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

City and school administrators reported that the city Capital Plan Improvements Board (CPIB) reviewed and scheduled capital needs for all city departments. In 2002, the city contracted with an architect who recommended \$55 million in needed capital projects, and the management audit cited \$54,846,080 in capital needs of which only \$8,539,000 appeared in the CPIB five-year plan. The city funded projects identified by the CPIB and approved by the city council through borrowing on an annual basis without the need for a debt exclusion override, but funding for school repairs was limited. City administrators reported that almost no funding was available last year for FY 2007 projects, and the district postponed many capital projects. School projects funded during the period under review included high school roof repairs, fire and exterior doors, fire alarm repairs, and elevator repairs. Addressing other needs noted in SIPs have not been completed, including rooftop unit replacements, certain fire alarms, paving, and flooring.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement**Evidence**

Examiners visited all seven schools in the district and interviewed principals and other administrators regarding safety. Examiners found only two schools were locked during school hours, and one had a surveillance camera. Administrators stated that a goal of the district was to install buzzers and cameras in all schools when funding was available. They stated that some school fire alarms needed repair. High school teachers reported problems with door locks, and administrators reported that the district recently completed replacement of locks and keys at the high school to improve security. ID badges were required for visitors at all schools.

The district had an emergency procedure manual with detailed procedures for crises such as shooters, hijackers, gas leaks, pandemic flu, unauthorized entry into the building, etc. Administrators stated that every school had a crisis team, and they described extensive review, drill, and simulation efforts together with local police and fire officials to annually update and improve the manual and procedures.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

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

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY 1997 – FY2006

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/Under
FY97	3,933	2.7	22,344,957	5.2	18,273,794	3,401,432	17.2	21,675,226	3.8	23,055,924	10.4	1,380,698	6.4
FY98	3,926	-0.2	23,040,504	3.1	19,480,748	3,465,642	1.9	22,946,390	5.9	25,310,408	9.8	2,364,018	10.3
FY99	3,981	1.4	25,193,284	9.3	20,236,814	4,728,100	36.4	24,964,914	8.8	25,435,653	0.5	470,739	1.9
FY00	4,057	1.9	25,679,560	1.9	20,555,568	5,473,005	15.8	26,028,573	4.3	27,513,873	8.2	1,485,300	5.7
FY01	4,148	2.2	27,280,926	6.2	21,551,036	6,198,905	13.3	27,749,941	6.6	30,122,841	9.5	2,372,900	8.6
FY02	4,241	2.2	28,967,824	6.2	22,784,001	6,554,127	5.7	29,338,128	5.7	33,095,111	9.9	3,756,983	12.8
FY03	4,225	-0.4	29,681,706	2.5	24,354,505	6,554,127	0.0	30,908,632	5.4	32,986,900	-0.3	2,078,268	6.7
FY04	4,152	-1.7	29,236,275	-1.5	24,803,276	5,243,302	-20.0	30,046,578	-2.8	33,711,105	2.2	3,664,527	12.2
FY05	4,102	-1.2	30,429,017	4.1	25,747,957	5,243,302	0.0	30,991,259	3.1	33,944,980	0.7	2,953,722	9.5
FY06	4,060	-1.0	31,232,007	2.6	26,625,347	5,446,302	3.9	32,071,649	3.5	35,905,471	5.8	3,833,822	12.0

	<u>Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment</u>			<u>Percentage of Foundation</u>			<u>Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS</u>
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY97	5,681	865	5,862	15.2	97.0	103.2	14.8
FY98	5,869	883	6,447	15.0	99.6	109.9	13.7
FY99	6,328	1,188	6,389	18.8	99.1	101.0	18.6
FY00	6,330	1,349	6,782	21.3	101.4	107.1	19.9
FY01	6,577	1,494	7,262	22.7	101.7	110.4	20.6
FY02	6,830	1,545	7,804	22.6	101.3	114.2	19.8
FY03	7,025	1,551	7,808	22.1	104.1	111.1	19.9
FY04	7,041	1,263	8,119	17.9	102.8	115.3	15.6
FY05	7,418	1,278	8,275	17.2	101.8	111.6	15.4
FY06	7,693	1,341	8,844	17.4	102.7	115.0	15.2

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g. FY06 enrollment = Oct 1, 2004 headcount).

Foundation budget is the state's estimate of the minimum amount needed in each district to provide an adequate educational program.

Required Net School Spending is the annual minimum that must be spent on schools, including carryovers from prior years.

Net School Spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures and transportation.