



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District Technical Report



data driven

standards based

learner centered →



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

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Educational Management Audit Council

Maryellen Donahue, Chairwoman
Irwin Blumer
Ethan d'Ablemont Burnes
Joseph Esposito
Alison Fraser

Joseph B. Rappa, Executive Director, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Visiting Examination Team

Paula Hutton, Coordinating Examiner
Lincoln DeMoura, Senior Examiner
Marion Bank, Examiner
Rose DiOrio, Examiner
Joanne Grenier, Examiner
Frank Sambuceti, Examiner

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings at its meeting on March 7, 2008.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District in December 2007. With an English language arts (ELA) proficiency index of 95 proficiency index (PI) points and a math proficiency index of 90 PI points based on the 2007 MCAS test results, the district is considered a ‘Very High’ performing school system based on the Department of Education’s rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement well above the state average. On the 2007 MCAS tests, 86 percent of Groton-Dunstable’s students scored at or above the proficiency standard in ELA and 77 percent did so in math.

District Overview

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, located in Middlesex County in northern Massachusetts, is comprised of two member towns, Groton and Dunstable. The town of Groton has a New England village charm with plenty of open space. Dunstable is a rural community. The largest source of employment within both communities is educational, health, and social services. Manufacturing and professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services are the second largest sources, with roughly equal proportions in Groton and a stronger proportion for manufacturing in Dunstable. Groton is governed by a Board of Selectmen/Administrative Assistant/Open Town Meeting and Dunstable by a Board of Selectmen/Open Town Meeting.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Groton had a median family income of \$92,014 in 1999 and Dunstable had a median family income of \$92,270 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of \$63,706, ranking them 41 and 40, respectively, out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the member towns had a total population of 12,376, with a population of 3,044 school-age children, or 25 percent of the total. Groton had a total population of 9,547, with a population of 2,372 school-age children, or 25 percent of the total. Dunstable had a total population of 2,829, with a population of 672 school-age children, or 24 percent of the total. Of the total households in Groton, 48 percent were households with children under 18 years of age; while in Dunstable 50 percent were households with children under 18 years of age. In Groton, 54 percent

of the population age 25 years or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, and 44 percent in Dunstable did so; these figures compare to 33 percent statewide.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2006-2007 the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District had a total enrollment of 2,937. The demographic composition in the district was: 96.1 percent White, 2.7 percent Asian, 0.6 percent Hispanic, 0.2 percent African-American, 0.1 percent Native American, and 0.2 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.2 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 3.0 percent low income, and 11.0 percent special education. Eighty-nine percent of school-age children in Groton and Dunstable attended public schools. The district participates in school choice, and 45 students from other school districts attended the Groton-Dunstable schools in 2006-2007. A total of 88 Groton students attended public schools outside the district, including 35 students who attended Nashoba Valley Technical High School and 35 students who attended charter schools. A total of 21 Dunstable students attended public schools outside the district, including 16 students who attended Greater Lowell and Nashoba Valley technical high schools and two students who attended charter schools.

The district has six schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including one early childhood center serving pre-kindergarten, three elementary schools serving kindergarten through grade 4, one middle school serving grades 5 through 8, and one high school serving grades 9 through 12. The administrative team consists of a superintendent, a director of business and finance, a director of curriculum and staff development, and a director of pupil personnel services. Each elementary school has a principal, except the preschool which is led by a director; the Florence Roche Elementary School also has a 0.5 assistant principal who serves the other half of her time as the special education liaison. The middle school has a principal, two assistant principals, and a full-time special education chairperson. The high school has a principal, a 0.5 assistant principal who serves the other half of her time as the special education chairperson, and a full-time dean. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2007, Groton-Dunstable's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was \$10,284, compared to \$11,789 statewide, ranking it 200 out of the 302 of 328 school districts reporting data. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in

each year of the review period. From FY 2005 to FY 2007, net school spending increased from \$23,387,749 to \$26,126,887; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$9,547,245 to \$10,590,960; the required local contribution increased from \$9,817,152 to \$11,478,206; and the foundation enrollment increased from 2,858 to 2,909. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained at 41 percent. From FY 2005 to FY 2006, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending decreased from 61 to 60 percent.

Context

Both family income and parental expectations for teaching and learning were high in Groton-Dunstable. The EQA review period included one year under the former and two years under the current superintendent. In fulfillment of a longstanding goal of the school committee, the new superintendent worked to increase communication and accessibility in order to improve trust and communication in the district. The superintendent's entry plan goals included improving the performance of the administrative team, mentoring an interim business manager, promoting the use of technology, and increasing safety.

The school committee set a goal to strengthen "relationships with constituencies by clearly defining roles and, relationships, and expectations for community, municipal officials, administrative council members, staff, school councils, and each another." Accomplishment of this goal required some changes in assumptions and past practices that caused dissonance and dissention. Four long-term administrators left the district, raising concerns in the community about communication and trust.

The superintendent took steps intended to make the budget development process more transparent, increasing public trust and confidence in district financial operations. In accordance with a school committee goal to build a new system of leadership and governance, the superintendent clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of district administrators, and engaged a facilitator with expertise in teambuilding to improve the collaboration of the administrative team.

The district curriculum was aligned with the state frameworks in core subjects and included most essential components such as benchmarks, pacing guides, resources, and assessments. Some domains were better developed than others. The director of curriculum and staff development

and the curriculum coaches provided professional development for teachers on the use of formative and summative assessments and other sources of data to inform instruction. The district determined the root causes of the poor performance of middle school special education students in mathematics. When analysis of disaggregated student achievement data showed that special education students enrolled in regular education mathematics classes performed better than special education students enrolled in resource room mathematics classes, the district changed the service delivery model, increasing mainstreaming with support.

The district adopted a new mathematics program at the middle level ,better aligned with the state framework, to increase student achievement, yet enrollment in grade 8 Algebra I declined. The same Algebra I course at the middle and the high school levels differed in learning outcomes and outcome measures. The district was developing common benchmark and course assessments. Data management and collection were not yet consistent across the district.

The establishment of a cohesive administrative team with clear roles and responsibilities and a focus on goals improved district programs, services, curriculum, and instruction. The quality of instruction was high in the district, consistent with the perceptions of principals and other administrators. The district made evident progress on the accomplishment of its goals, except for increased and embedded use of updated technology in core subject areas. Budget reductions in technology reduced district capacity. Most classrooms had at least one updated computer connected to the Internet, but computers were rarely used to enhance instruction. Except at the high school, the availability and use of other forms of technology such as calculators and probes were limited.

Recommendations

As a result of its examination, the EQA arrived at recommendations for the district, which were presented to the superintendent subsequent to the examination. They are as follows.

- Although the district has met its net school spending requirements, its per pupil expenditure during the period under review was below the state average. Reconsider budgetary decisions that might further reduce net school spending.

- Provide a viable plan and the necessary resources to facilitate integration of technology into instruction. The loss of key personnel in the area of technology due to budget reductions has made this nearly impossible to accomplish.
- Develop and implement an effective system of professional staff supervision, and support staff improvement with well designed professional development. Little evidence existed that the district had used effective systems of supervision across the district, and this must become a top priority.

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 December 3-6, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District for the period 2005-2007, with a primary focus on 2007. 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 on-site visit.

For the period under examination, 2005-2007, Groton-Dunstable Regional School District is considered to be a 'Very High' performing school district, marked by student achievement that was 'Very High' both in English language arts (ELA) and in math on the 2007 MCAS tests. Over the examination period, student performance improved by two and one-half PI points in

ELA and four PI points in math, which narrowed the district's proficiency gaps by 35 percent in ELA and 33 percent in math.

The following provides a summary of the district's performance on the 2007 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 2007 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Groton-Dunstable participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

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

On average, more than four-fifths of the students in Groton-Dunstable Public Schools attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) on the 2007 MCAS tests, more than three-fourths of Groton-Dunstable students attained proficiency in math, and slightly more than two-thirds attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-nine percent of the Class of 2007 attained a Competency Determination.

- Groton-Dunstable's ELA proficiency index on the 2007 MCAS tests was 95 proficiency index (PI) points. This resulted in a proficiency gap, the difference between its proficiency index and the target of 100, of five PI points, nine points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of less than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- In 2007, Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency index on the MCAS tests was 90 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 10 PI points, 14 points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than one PI point per year to achieve AYP.
- Groton-Dunstable's STE proficiency index in 2007 was 87 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 13 PI points, 15 points narrower than that statewide.

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

Between 2004 and 2007, Groton-Dunstable's MCAS performance showed slight improvement in English language arts, more improvement in math, and little change in science and technology/engineering.

- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, ELA performance in Groton-Dunstable improved slightly, by one PI point over the three-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 84 percent in 2004 to 86 percent in 2007.
- Math performance in Groton-Dunstable showed more improvement over this period, at an average of close to two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 38 percent, a rate higher than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in math rose from 69 percent in 2004 to 80 percent in 2007.
- Between 2004 and 2007, Groton-Dunstable had little change in STE performance, declining by one-tenth PI point, which widened the proficiency gap by one percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 71 percent in 2004 to 68 percent in 2007.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2007 varied considerably among subgroups of Groton-Dunstable students. Of the four measurable subgroups in Groton-Dunstable, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 30 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Groton-Dunstable in 2007 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).
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students.

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

In Groton-Dunstable, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 19 PI points in 2004 to 23 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 32 to 29 PI points over this period.

- The regular education and non low-income student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The more improved subgroup in ELA was non low-income students.
- In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable improved between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroups in math were low-income students and students with disabilities.

Fidelity of Implementation

A characteristic of effective educational organizations (schools and districts) is the strong alignment of goals, plans, processes, and actions—from the policymakers to the classroom. Therefore, the EQA has developed a protocol for assessing the alignment of these elements. The *fidelity of implementation* is an indicator of the consistency of execution of a district's expectations: its stated goals, plans, curricula, and various processes, down to the level of instruction. When these various components are consistent and highly aligned, a high level of fidelity of implementation exists. When these are inconsistent and poorly aligned, a low or poor level of fidelity of implementation exists. The classroom observation protocol is designed to collect evidence of district and school goals, plans, and expectations in the instructional setting.

The goals of the superintendent, the school committee, and those published in the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) all focused on communication and collaboration, increasing student achievement, especially in mathematics, retaining quality staff members, and increasing the use of updated and embedded technology to improve student achievement. These key goals were articulated at each level of the school district and were clear to all stakeholders, including parents and community members who were interviewed. The district's priority of retaining quality staff members was evident in interviews throughout the

district. For example, although one's place of residence might change, interviewees stated that they would commute long distances rather than seek employment in other school districts. Teachers who were interviewed made positive comments about school changes under new principal leadership and could clearly articulate their own role in their respective school's SIP and their school's role in the DIP.

Principals and school councils developed their respective school's SIP, and the schools' academic goals were aligned with district priorities. Most SIPs focused on improvement of math achievement as well as the improvement of technology and embedded technology skills. The schools' goal of improving math achievement was articulated by teachers in interviews, and EQA examiners saw evidence of the implementation of this goal in the classrooms they observed. Teachers were receptive to the goals of the new principals and stated that they appreciated the fact that the new principals were frequently in classrooms and actively engaged in the schools. Most teachers were open to the idea of the principal using some kind of a walk-through protocol as a benchmark for useful feedback on instruction.

Generally the fidelity of implementation of the district's goals gave the district potential for improvement because it harnessed the district's leadership on improving math achievement in a systemic way. Furthermore, the administrators and teachers who were interviewed understood that improving math achievement and closing the achievement gap between student subgroups were the greatest areas of need in the district, and they knew what steps they had taken in central office and in each school to address the issues.

Based on classroom observations at the middle school, it was evident that making progress in math was a priority. In addition, this priority was evident in the focus of professional development, changing the focus of Title I services to math, the additional implementation of a co-teaching model as a means to mainstream in special education, and concern about the access to the same curriculum and resources in all math programs.

One of expectations stated by interviewees at all levels of the school district was the use of student achievement and other forms of data, such as survey and statistical data, to help the administrative team make data-driven decisions. This was evidenced in the increased use of formative assessment such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the development

of common benchmarks and exams at the middle and secondary levels, and the customary use of the Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol at the high school to gather student achievement data. On the other hand, examiners saw little evidence in their classroom visits that improvement of technology was being supported in the budget, given the reduction in technology personnel, or that teachers and students used technology effectively in the classroom to improve teaching and learning. The barrier of examining MCAS data with a Mac platform was not supported by the implementation of and training in the use of the web-based version of TestWiz.

The expectation that principals and schools work on communication with parents was evident in improved communication through the Connect-ED system, the district's website, school surveys, and personal communication with parents through open houses, various school venues, and coffee hours. It was also clear from interviewing principals that the superintendent expected increased collaboration between all schools but especially between the three elementary schools and between the middle and high schools. As a result, transitions and the horizontal alignment of curriculum and instruction at the elementary level were improving. Vertical alignment of policy and procedures was also increasing. The stated expectation was that principals would keep the superintendent informed of what is happening at their respective school sites, and that they would keep one another updated at administrative council meetings. As a result of the expectation that administrators work together in a focused effort, Groton-Dunstable is developing a number of efficient districtwide systems rather than supporting a collection of schools in the communities.

Collaboration among principals on the administrative team was evident by their participation in common training and by raising the expectation that principals become the instructional leaders of their respective schools. This may continue to have ramifications for changes in personnel and the way accountability for instruction is monitored in classrooms. Due to a focus on data collection and analysis, the school district is moving toward developing a system in which analyzing student achievement data, providing feedback to teachers based on data, and making data-informed school-based and districtwide decisions to improve student achievement are the expectation as well as the norm.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on 12 and ‘Needs Improvement’ on two of the 14 performance indicators in this standard.

The Groton-Dunstable district mission statement was clear, commonly understood, and used to guide decision-making. The goals in individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP) goals and consistent with the mission statement. Each school presented its SIP for the next school year to the school committee and reported on progress toward the accomplishment of current SIP goals. During the period under review, the district established priorities to improve student achievement and increase communication with stakeholders.

The school committee used student performance data and other documentation to develop the budget, form policy and make decisions. During the period under review, the budgets recommended by the school committee were reduced by the towns. As a result, the district was unable to maintain technology both for data analysis and student learning and to furnish classrooms with multiple learning resources. Groton-Dunstable provided good educational facilities and a positive learning environment for students.

Groton-Dunstable made a conscious effort to increase stakeholder’s understanding of its priorities and accomplishments. The superintendent and school committee met regularly with town officials and other interested parties. In addition, the school committee conducted surveys to improve communication and identify needs. School committee meetings were broadcast on the local cable channel and reported in the press. The district maintained a website with current and useful information, and issued regular newsletters and special reports to parents and the community addressing timely issues and concerns.

The school committee collaborated with town officials, parents, and school and community organizations to determine and realize the mission of the schools. The committee also helped to set long- and short-term goals and evaluate district progress toward their accomplishment.

School committee members understood their roles and attended workshops sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to keep current. The superintendent provided orientation and training sessions for new members. The school committee participated in budget development sessions with town officials and joint workshops with the administrative council.

The district formed partnerships with community organizations and benefactors to augment educational and other services for students. District policy encouraged businesses and organizations to sponsor and support school programs.

The district had an approved school safety policy prior to the period under review, and developed a safety plan with uniform procedures and codes in cooperation with local public safety officials. The plan was reviewed annually.

Curriculum and Instruction

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on eight and ‘Needs Improvement’ on three of the 11 performance indicators in this standard.

Groton-Dunstable curriculum documents were aligned with the state frameworks. Standards were posted in the classrooms and used as a reference during instruction to promote student learning. The district’s focus on standards-based instruction was supported by the adoption of programs aligned with the state frameworks and the content area standards developed by professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

A curriculum council, headed by the district’s director of curriculum and staff development, provided curriculum leadership in the district. At the high school, department leaders in ELA, math, science, and social studies who had part-time teaching responsibilities provided curriculum leadership in a part-time capacity. At the K-8 levels, two full-time curriculum coordinators provided curriculum leadership in ELA and math, while science and social studies teachers who taught full time provided curriculum leadership as time allowed. The district eliminated the curriculum leaders for fine arts, health, and foreign languages in 2007-2008 because of budget

limitations, and the principals of the elementary and middle schools had to assume curriculum leadership in these areas.

Teachers developed an action plan for each curriculum area in grade-level and departmental teams. The district reviewed the action plans for completion annually. Curriculum issues were addressed during the development of the action plans and at other times as needs warranted it. The mathematics curriculum was aligned horizontally and vertically except in grades 3 and 4, which were just beginning implementation of the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program. The district projected complete implementation by 2008-2009.

The district's instructional practice was characterized by cooperative and flexible grouping, inclusion with co-teaching or paraprofessional support, and use of data to inform planning. Displayed student work showed evidence of high expectations, care, complexity, and challenge.

The district used a top-down process for analysis and distribution of assessment data such as the MCAS data, since only curriculum coordinators and a few administrators were trained in data analysis. The district's Macintosh platform supported the web-based, but not the software version, of TestWiz. Lack of funds prevented district use of the web-based version. Administrators, the curriculum coordinator, and curriculum leaders prepared and furnished data to teachers. Teachers analyzed the data to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses and made revisions and modifications, such as adjusting the pacing guides for subjects and courses.

At the elementary level, teachers used formative data, such as those from the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and district benchmarks and assessments built into the Investigations program and the Connected Mathematics Program (CMP) in grades K-8 to monitor student progress and inform instruction. Teachers also had an established protocol at the middle and high schools for Looking at Student Work (LASW). Teachers reviewed student work routinely at various team, grade-level, and department meetings throughout the year.

In most classes observed by the EQA examiners, students were active participants, answering questions that evoked broad involvement, and asking their own questions to increase their understanding. Teachers asked students to explain their thinking, and employed a variety of

instructional strategies within a class. Students transitioned from one activity to another smoothly and with little teacher cueing, and routines for learning were automatic. Although the quality of instruction observed by examiners was high, this was more reflective of the district having hired effective teachers and providing them with ongoing high quality professional development, rather than providing an effective system of supervision.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on all eight performance indicators in this standard.

Groton Dunstable was a data-driven district. The district modified programs and services based on outcome measures. For each of the years under review, the leadership and staff of the district evaluated student MCAS test data in order to ensure alignment of the curriculum with state standards. The EQA team found that School Improvement Plans were aligned with the District Improvement Plan. District MCAS test scores were well above state averages, but an achievement gap existed in the district between the performance of regular and special education students.

The district hired qualified and experienced teachers and provided continuous professional development to assist them in delivering the curriculum. The curriculum was well aligned horizontally, and the district was working to improve vertical alignment, especially in mathematics. Toward this end, the elementary and middle schools recently adopted the Investigations in Number, Data and Space program for grades K-5 and the Connected Mathematics Program for grades 6-8.

Administrators analyzed MCAS test data when they became available from the central office, and brought the data to teacher action teams, curriculum coordinators, and other curriculum leaders. Teachers discussed the aggregated and disaggregated results and an item analysis after school and during district in-service days.

The district effectively reported MCAS test data as well as other standardized assessment scores to parents and the community through a continuously updated website, televised school

committee meetings, community newspapers, and e-mail. Report cards and progress reports were issued to parents regularly.

The guidance department and content area specialists analyzed SAT and Advanced Placement examination results. Groton-Dunstable consistently scored above state averages on both of these measures. The district used the Looking at Student Work (LASW) action plan to evaluate programs. At the high school, this process was used to assess knowledge across the curriculum in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Teachers in each subject area developed common core assessments and rubrics. They administered these assessments twice in each course and used the results to compare the achievement of students at the same grade level and at different grades within each school. The results were also used to compare the achievement of students in the three elementary schools.

Middle school teachers administered mini-benchmark tests in the four content areas six to eight times during the year to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. At the high school, the EQA team found little consistency in the administration of common midterm and final examinations. Most quizzes, tests, and final examinations were designed and administered by individual teachers, although some departments had begun to develop standardized final examinations.

During the period under review, the district participated in several internal and external audits, reviewed the findings and recommendations, and made changes in programs and services to improve teaching and learning.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on nine and ‘Needs Improvement’ on four of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

Groton-Dunstable had consistent procedures for hiring personnel, checking references, requesting Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background checks, and monitoring certification renewal. Responsibilities were clear and understood. The district widely advertised vacancies with an intent to engage the most qualified teachers and administrators. The superintendent interviewed each candidate recommended by the principals following school-

based team interviews. The superintendent required and reviewed notes from the interview process and reference checks. The human resource director made the CORI background requests and verified years of experience. The superintendent interviewed the recommended candidates, and made the final decision on employment and placement on the salary scale.

Groton-Dunstable offered professional development before and after school, on weekends, in the evenings, and during the summer. In-service sessions were both districtwide and school-specific. Programs were offered within the district by district staff members or consultants and offsite under district sponsorship. The joint administrative and curriculum leadership teams created the professional development plan and ensured that it was consistent with the district's strategic plan, the District Improvement Plan, and the School Improvement Plans. The director of curriculum and staff development scheduled all of the activities. The school committee reimbursed teachers for courses approved in advance by the superintendent.

The district had a well developed, documented, and well supervised mentor program. Teacher leaders directed the program under the supervision of the director of curriculum and instruction.

The Groton-Dunstable teacher evaluation procedure was negotiated in 1997-1998, following passage of the Education Reform Act, but the process did not comply with statute. The evaluation of professional status teachers was not timely, since summative evaluations based on classroom observations did not occur in alternating years. Additionally, the format did not include all of the categories in the Principles of Effective Teaching.

Principals observed non-professional status teachers two times a year for the first three years, and completed a narrative summative evaluation at the end of the year. Summative evaluations were brief and informative but not instructive or growth oriented. Many were missing, and there was no indication when the district granted professional status to one teacher whose file was reviewed.

Although administrators were supposed to be evaluated annually according to the procedure, the former superintendent completed very few evaluations. The evaluation criteria included some but not all of the categories in the Principles of Effective Leadership. The current superintendent

completed evaluations of principals and other administrators. These evaluations were thorough and made reference to student achievement data.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of ‘Satisfactory’ on this standard. They rated the district as ‘Excellent’ on two, ‘Satisfactory’ on 10, and ‘Needs Improvement’ on one of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

Groton Dunstable’s schools provided a range of educational services and supplemental programs designed to meet diverse student learning needs and improve academic achievement. A variety of early intervention services and remedial and support programs in regular and special education had been implemented or expanded during the period under review. The increased use of formative assessments and summative data helped identify students performing below grade-level expectations, and contributed to an overall improvement in student achievement.

Although the district’s English language learner (ELL), transient, and homeless populations were small, appropriate written policies and formal procedures were in place to ensure that these student populations were eligible for and received a full range of timely services and targeted assistance. In 2007-2008, the district provided faculty members with sheltered English immersion (SEI) training through the Merrimack Education Center (MEC).

With the exception of students in the special education subgroup, the district conducted very little regular or systematic analysis of disaggregated performance data. As a result, administrators and staff members could not accurately describe whether subgroup enrollment and achievement rates in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) programs were proportionate to overall student population rates. Although students who did not meet qualifying criteria and academic prerequisites could petition for admission through a waiver process, a review of the data revealed that relatively few of them did. The number of grade 7 and 8 students allowed to enroll in the middle school pre-algebra/algebra program declined substantially in 2007, as a result of the implementation of more stringent prerequisites. Enrollments in high school AP courses remained relatively low and flat throughout the review period as well.

Through the implementation of a more inclusionary, co-taught instructional model, increasing numbers of special education students had more direct access to the full academic curriculum in the regular education classroom.

Clear and detailed student attendance policies were developed and published in all of Groton-Dunstable's schools. These policies included specific notification and enforcement practices and consequences when students exceeded attendance limits. Administrators and staff members described an extensive set of proactive procedures employed by the schools to support and consistently enforce their student attendance and punctuality policies and expectations, including frequent letters, phone calls, and parent conferences. In 2007, the district's daily student attendance rate was 96.1 percent, compared to the state rate of 94.5 percent. Analysis of data revealed uniformly positive attendance rates and patterns in each of the district's schools, including the high school.

The number of disciplinary infractions, suspensions, and dropouts remained well below state averages throughout the review period. Between 2004 and 2007, rates for both in- and out-of-school suspensions in all the district's schools averaged less than half those for the state. In addition, during this same time period, student retention rates at all grade levels also remained significantly below state averages. Groton Dunstable's dropout rate averaged 1.4 percent, compared with the state rate of 3.5 percent during this same three-year period. Administrators and staff members attributed these positive indicators to fair and consistent enforcement of the district's disciplinary and attendance policies, and continuing and constructive communication between school and home.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on 11, 'Needs Improvement' on one, and not applicable on one of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

During the period under review, the district appointed a new superintendent who developed the 2006-2007 budget. The budget development process under the new superintendent was open and participatory. The district allocated its resources based primarily on reviews of MCAS test

results. During budget development, district administrators and directors reviewed student achievement data and allocated resources based on the needs of students. Principals and program directors submitted staffing requests, generated in part by input from teachers and school councils. Principals and administrators identified levels of staffing and support necessary to maintain the current level of service in the subsequent fiscal year. They also identified known costs as well as expenses based on compliance with mandates and regulations and student enrollments. The district allocated funds to each school on a per pupil basis to be used at the principal's discretion for expenses related to professional development, supplies, computers, and the library.

The period under review included a time of budget restrictions on local, state, and federal levels. The superintendent and the administrative council, school committee, and town officials held continuous budget sessions. The superintendent provided detailed budget documents to the school committee. The superintendent disseminated information throughout the budget development process prior to the budget being presented at the annual town meeting for voter approval.

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District exceeded its net school spending (NSS) requirement for each of the years in the period under review, but the per pupil expenditure fell below the state average. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained at 41 percent over this period.

The culture of the towns valued education, and voters historically had supported the district's operational budget and capital improvement projects. Although the district had provided adequate resources based on net school spending during the period under review, declining operating funds resulted in a lack of adequate technology, reduced staffing, and increased class sizes in 2007-2008.

The district requested an override for the 2007-2008 budget because of insufficient Chapter 70 aid from the state. The operational override failed in May 2007 when voters in both Groton and Dunstable voted by a 2-to-1 margin against it. Among the reasons cited for the failure of the override were numerous changes in the amount requested, lack of clarity about whether reductions in staff meant personnel cuts or reduction/reassignment of responsibilities, the

perception of community members that district salaries were too high, and concern about the departure of several veteran administrators. In addition, prior to the vote the school committee approved an early extension of the superintendent's contract with a 14-percent salary increase to take effect July 2009, which added to the opposition to the override request, although the superintendent would not have had a salary increase from July 2005 to July 2009.

The district's facilities were clean, well lit, and well maintained by custodians and maintenance workers supervised by a director of buildings and grounds. The district had a written school preventative maintenance schedule and contracted outside vendors each year for preventive maintenance. During the period under review, the district undertook extensive maintenance and renovation projects to address the air quality issue at the Prescott Elementary School.

The schools in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District were not secure. The district security protocol for its schools included the locking of all doors except front doors. All schools had signs on the front doors instructing visitors to log in with the main office and identify the reason for their visits. Visitors were expected to wear identification badges, but with the exception of one school, staff members were not required to wear badges.

The district funded a pilot project to install a security system at the Boutwell Early Childhood Center, where all doors were locked and a security system was in place. At the Florence Roche Elementary School, the principal implemented increased safety measures, including locking all doors except the front door, and implemented a new parent pick up sign out procedure. At the two middle schools, students traveled between buildings daily, and according to school personnel the front doors needed to remain unlocked. During the period under review, the district installed security cameras both inside and outside the high school.

The director of buildings and grounds developed a long-term capital plan yearly for each building in the district. A facilities task force, acting in an advisory capacity, reviewed enrollment projections, determined facility capacity, and identified available space.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

The EQA's analysis of student achievement data focuses on the MCAS test results for 2004-2007, with primary attention paid to the 2007 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 2007 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Groton-Dunstable 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 Groton-Dunstable; and comparative analyses of district wide, 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 subgroups.

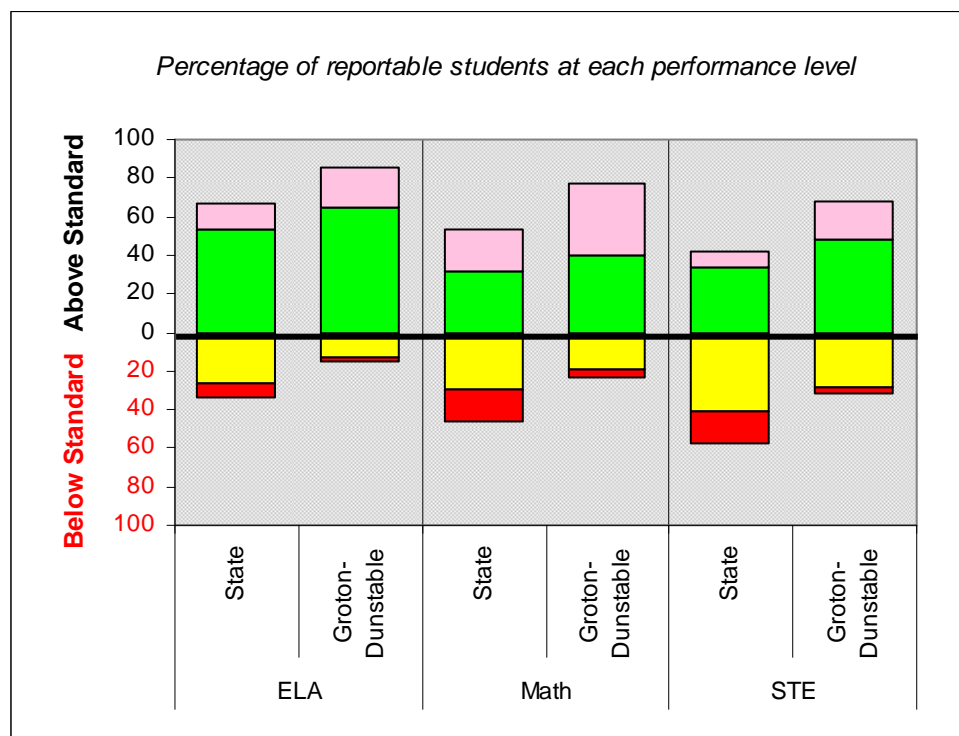
Achievement





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

Findings:

- On average, more than four-fifths of the students in Groton-Dunstable Public Schools attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) on the 2007 MCAS tests, more than three-fourths of Groton-Dunstable students attained proficiency in math, and slightly more than two-thirds attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-nine percent of the Class of 2007 attained a Competency Determination.
- Groton-Dunstable's ELA proficiency index on the 2007 MCAS tests was 95 proficiency index (PI) points. This resulted in a proficiency gap, the difference between its proficiency index and the target of 100, of five PI points, nine points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of less than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- In 2007, Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency index on the MCAS tests was 90 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 10 PI points, 14 points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than one PI point per year to achieve AYP.
- Groton-Dunstable's STE proficiency index in 2007 was 87 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 13 PI points, 15 points narrower than that statewide.

Figure/Table 1: MCAS Test Performance by Subject, 2007



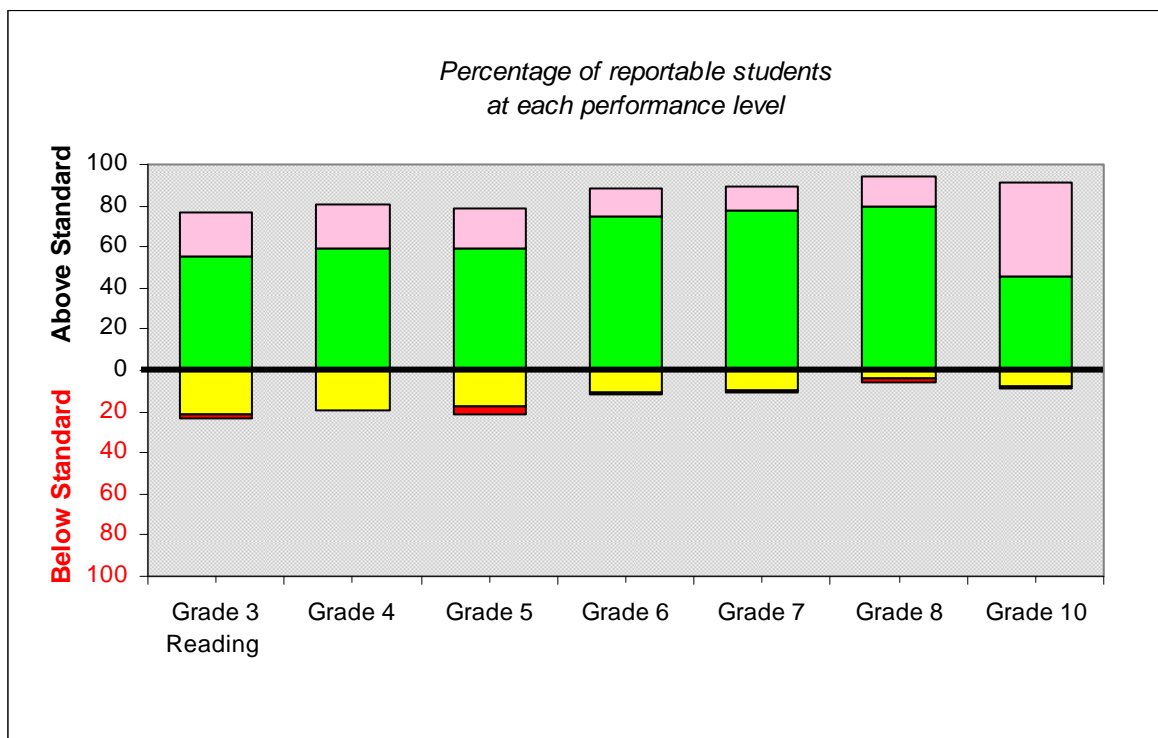
		ELA		Math		STE	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	13	21	22	37	9	20
	Proficient	53	65	32	40	34	48
	Needs Improvement	27	13	30	19	41	28
	Warning/Failing	7	2	17	4	17	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency		66	86	54	77	43	68
Proficiency Index (PI)		85.7	94.7	76.1	90.4	72.1	87.3

In 2007, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was higher in Groton-Dunstable than statewide. In Groton-Dunstable, 86 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 66 percent statewide; 77 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 54 percent statewide; and 68 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 43 percent statewide.

The 2007 proficiency index for Groton-Dunstable students in ELA was 95 PI points, compared to 86 PI points statewide; in math, it was 90 PI points, compared to 76 points statewide; and in STE, it was 87 PI points, compared to 72 points statewide.

The ELA proficiency gap for Groton-Dunstable students in 2007 was five PI points, compared to 14 PI points statewide, and would require an average improvement of less than one PI point annually to make AYP. Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency gap in 2007 was 10 PI points, compared to 24 PI points statewide, and would require an average improvement of more than one PI point per year to make AYP. Groton-Dunstable's STE proficiency gap was 13 PI points, compared to 28 PI points statewide.

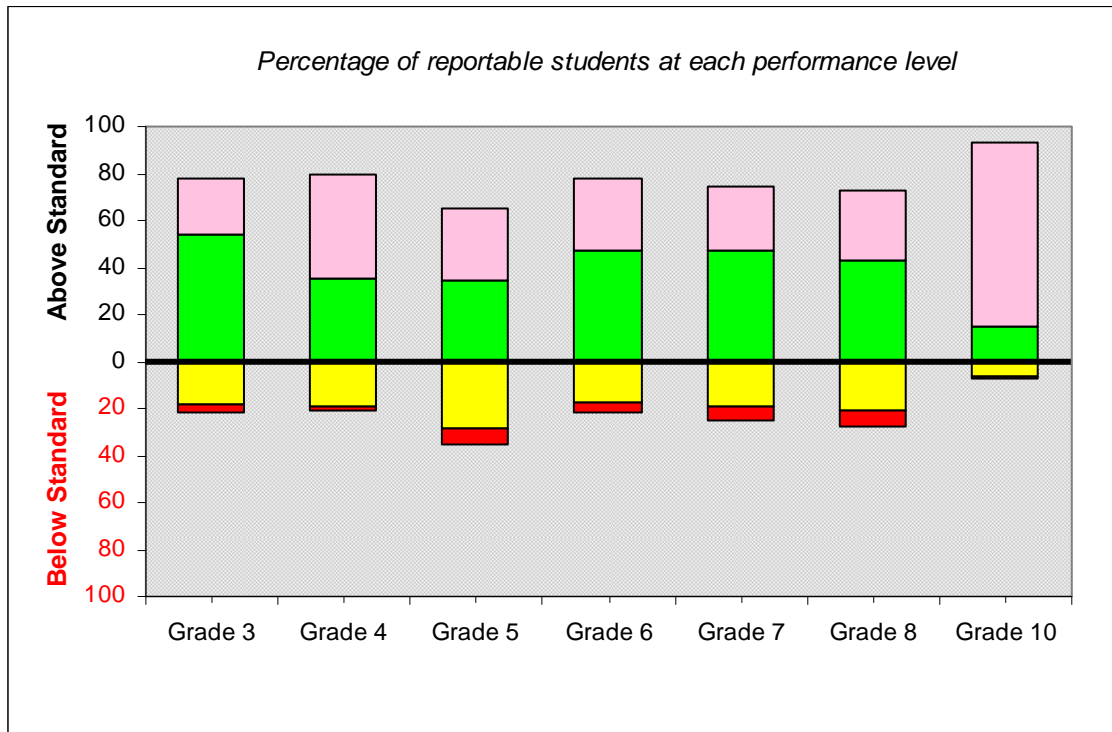
Figure/Table 2: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Grade, 2007



		Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
	Advanced	21	21	20	13	12	14	45
	Proficient	55	59	59	75	77	80	46
	Needs Improvement	21	19	18	11	9	4	8
	Warning/Failing	2	0	4	1	1	2	0
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	76	80	79	88	89	94	91

The percentage of Groton-Dunstable students attaining proficiency in ELA in 2007 varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 76 percent at grade 3 to a high of 94 percent at grade 8.

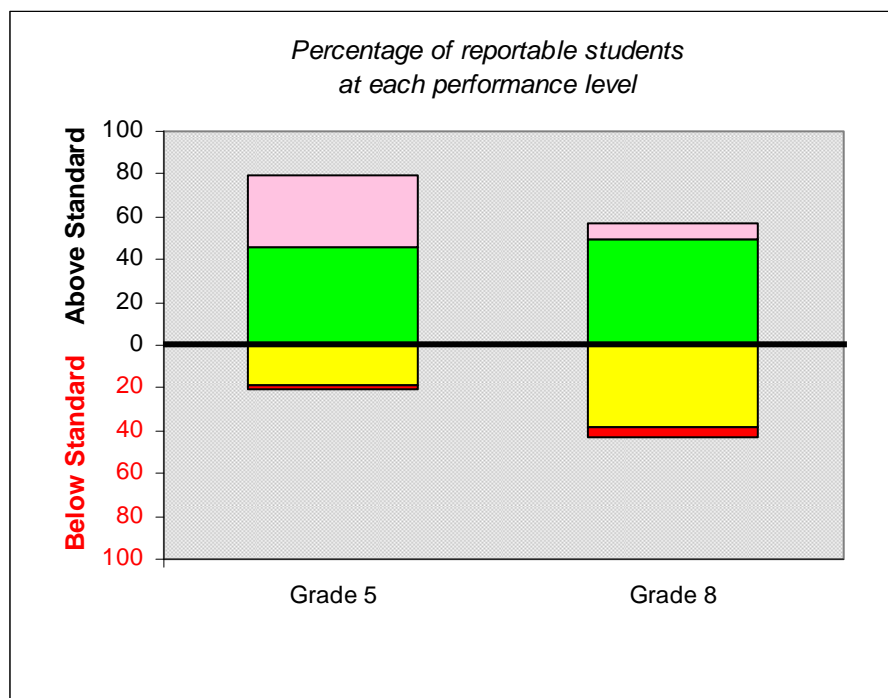
Figure/Table 3: MCAS Math Test Performance by Grade, 2007



		Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
	Advanced	25	44	31	31	28	30	78
	Proficient	54	36	34	47	47	43	15
	Needs Improvement	19	19	28	17	19	20	6
	Warning/Failing	3	1	7	5	6	7	0
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	79	80	65	78	75	73	93

The percentage of Groton-Dunstable students attaining proficiency in math in 2007 also varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 65 percent at grade 5 to a high of 93 percent at grade 10.

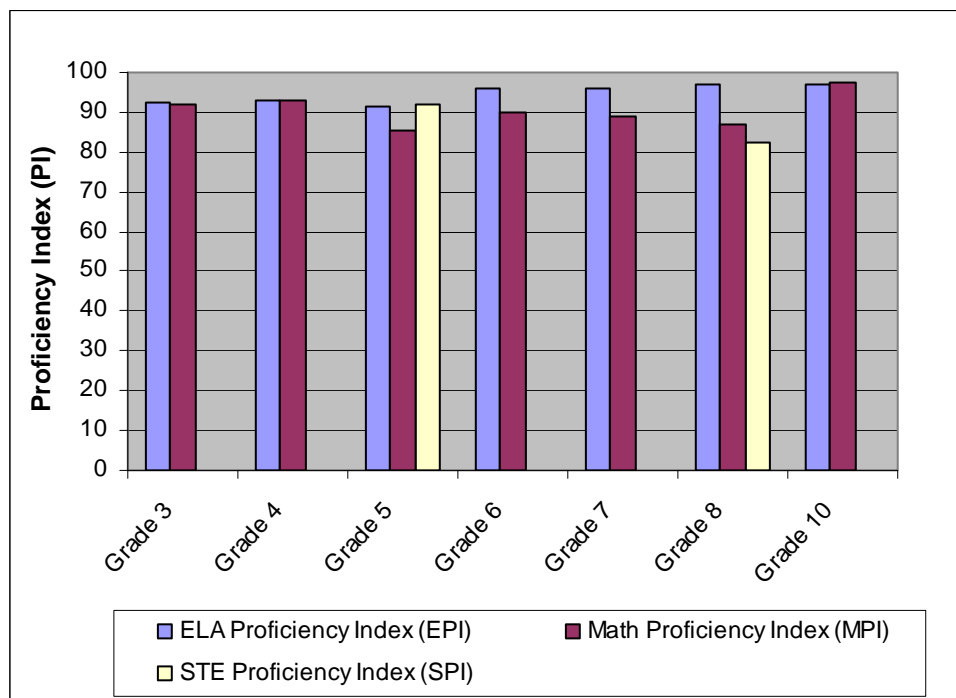
Figure/Table 4: MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance by Grade, 2007



		Grade 5	Grade 8
	Advanced	33	7
	Proficient	46	50
	Needs Improvement	18	38
	Warning/Failing	3	5
	Percent Attaining Proficiency	79	57

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, 79 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 57 percent of grade 8 students did so.

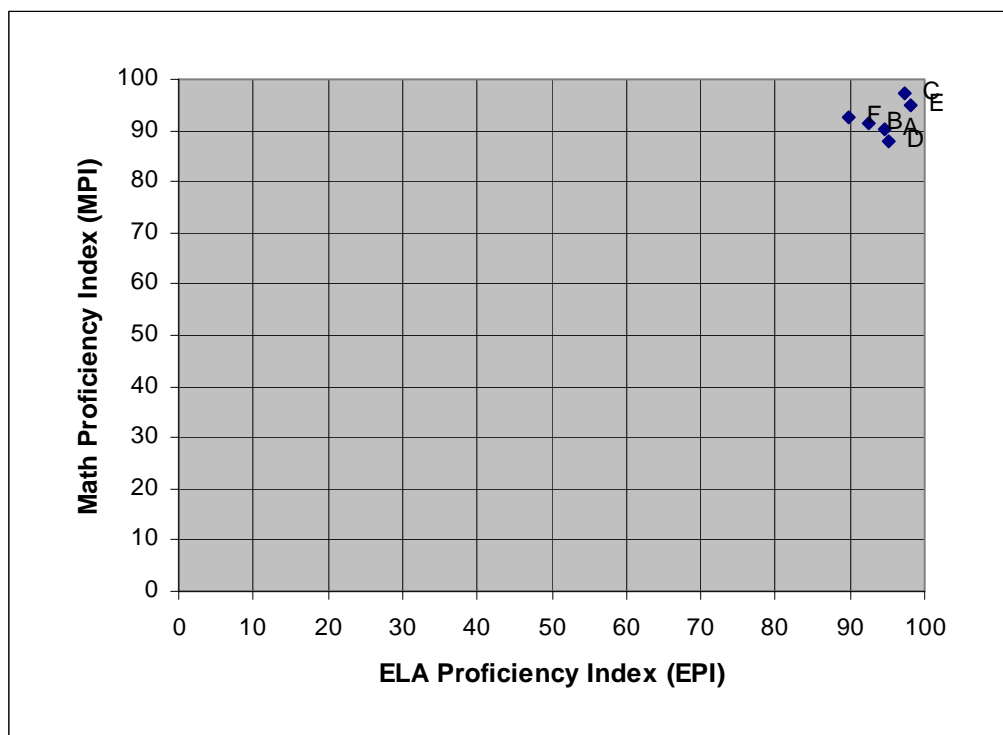
Figure/Table 5: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Grade and Subject, 2007



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	92.5	93.1	91.6	95.8	95.9	97.2	97.2
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	91.8	93.0	85.6	90.0	89.0	86.8	97.3
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			92.1			82.6	

At every grade level except grades 5 and 10, the performance of Groton-Dunstable students on the 2007 MCAS tests was strongest in ELA. Groton-Dunstable's ELA proficiency gap in 2007 ranged from a low of three PI points at grades 8 and 10 to a high of eight PI points at grade 5. Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of three PI points at grade 10 to a high of 14 PI points at grade 5. Groton-Dunstable's STE proficiency gap was eight PI points at grade 5 and 17 PI points at grade 8.

Figure/Table 6: MCAS ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) vs. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by School, 2007



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Groton-Dunstable district average	94.7	90.4	3,191
B	Florence Roche Elementary	92.4	91.3	472
C	Groton-Dunstable Regional High	97.2	97.3	411
D	Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle	95.1	87.8	1,868
E	Prescott Elementary	98.1	95.1	184
F	Swallow Union Elementary	89.8	92.6	256

Among Groton-Dunstable's schools, the ELA proficiency gap in 2007 ranged from a low of two PI points at Prescott Elementary School to a high of 10 PI points at Swallow Union Elementary School. Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of three PI points at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School to a high of 12 PI points at Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle School.

Equity of Achievement

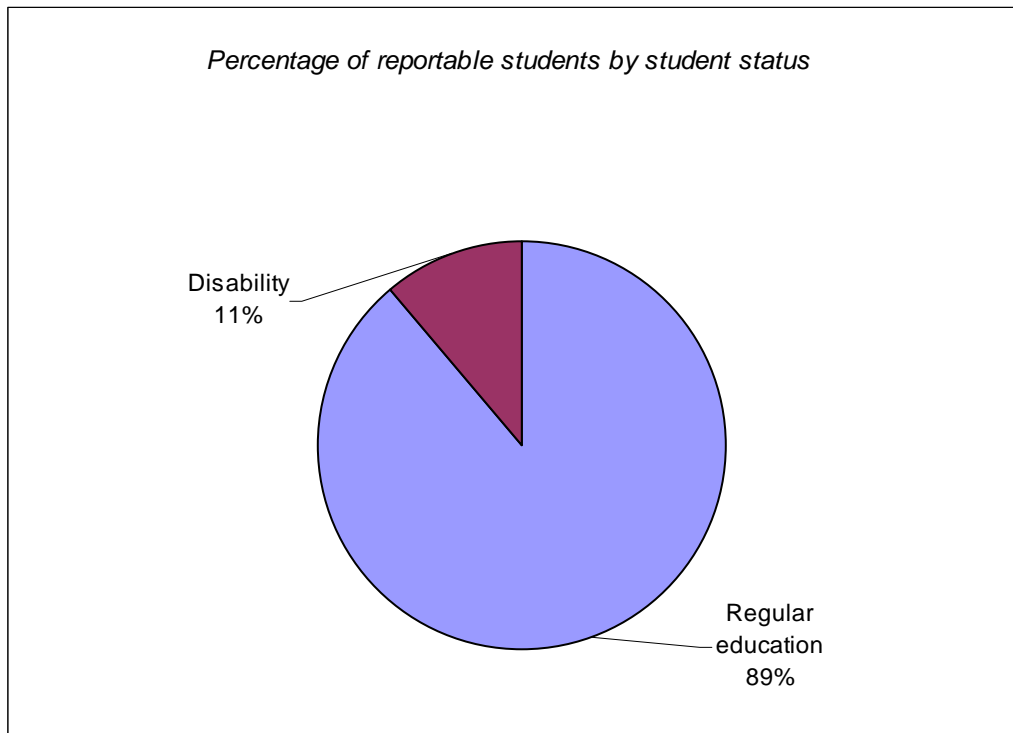
Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

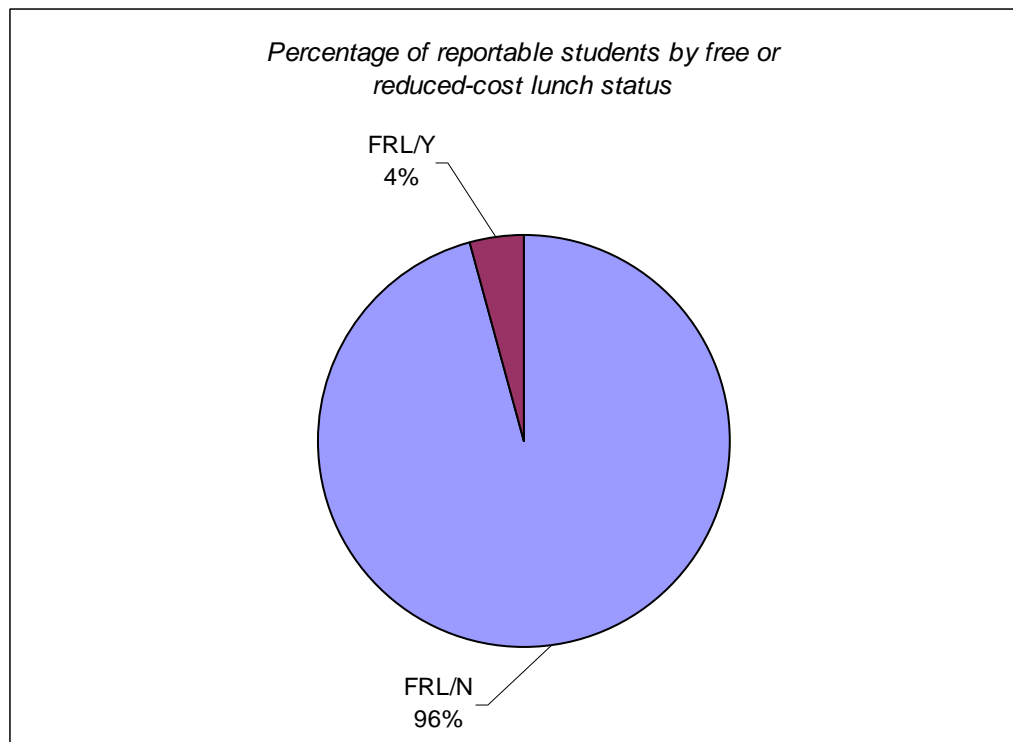
- MCAS performance in 2007 varied considerably among subgroups of Groton-Dunstable students. Of the four measurable subgroups in Groton-Dunstable, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 30 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Groton-Dunstable in 2007 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).
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students.

Figures 7 A-B/Table 7: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2007

A.



B.

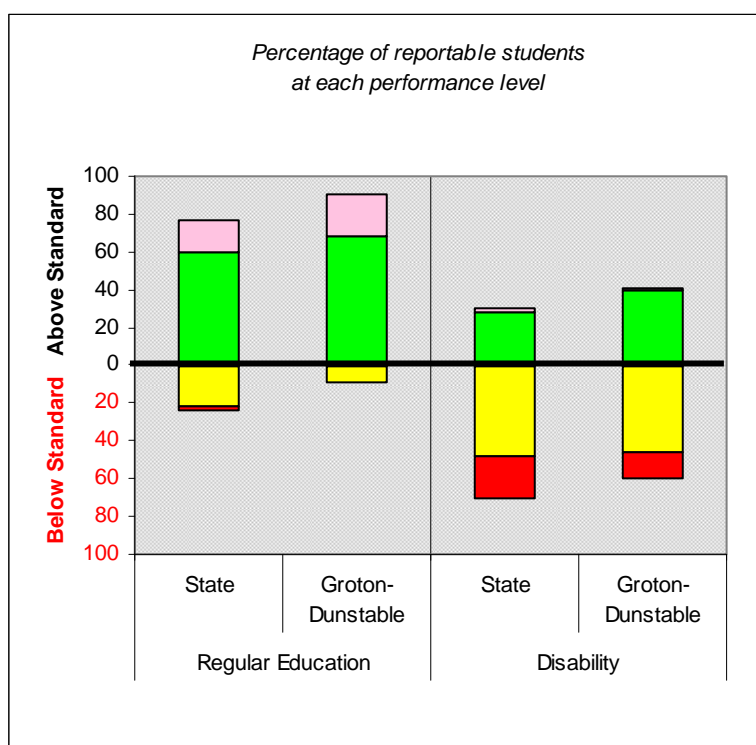


	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	1,424
	Disability	177
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,541
	FRL/Y	65

Note: Data include students in tested grades levels only.

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, 11 percent of the students tested were students with disabilities. Four percent of the tested students participated in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

Figure/Table 8: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Student Status Subgroup, 2007

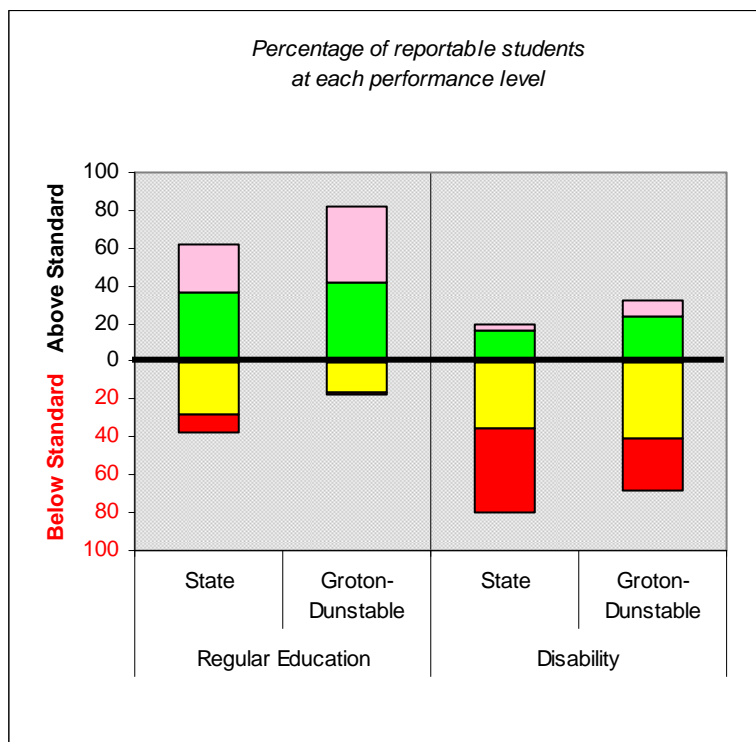


		Regular Education		Disability	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	16	23	2	1
	Proficient	60	68	28	39
	Needs Improvement	21	9	48	46
	Warning/Failing	2	0	22	14
Percent Attaining Proficiency		76	91	30	40
Proficiency Index (EPI)		91.3	97.2	64.8	73.3

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, the proficiency rate in ELA of regular education students was more than two times greater than that of students with disabilities. Ninety-one percent of regular education students and 40 percent of students with disabilities attained proficiency in ELA on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Groton-Dunstable's ELA proficiency gap in 2007 was three PI points for regular education students, compared to nine PI points statewide; and 27 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 35 PI points statewide. The performance gap in ELA between Groton-Dunstable's regular education students and students with disabilities was 24 PI points.

Figure/Table 9: MCAS Math Test Performance by Student Status Subgroup, 2007

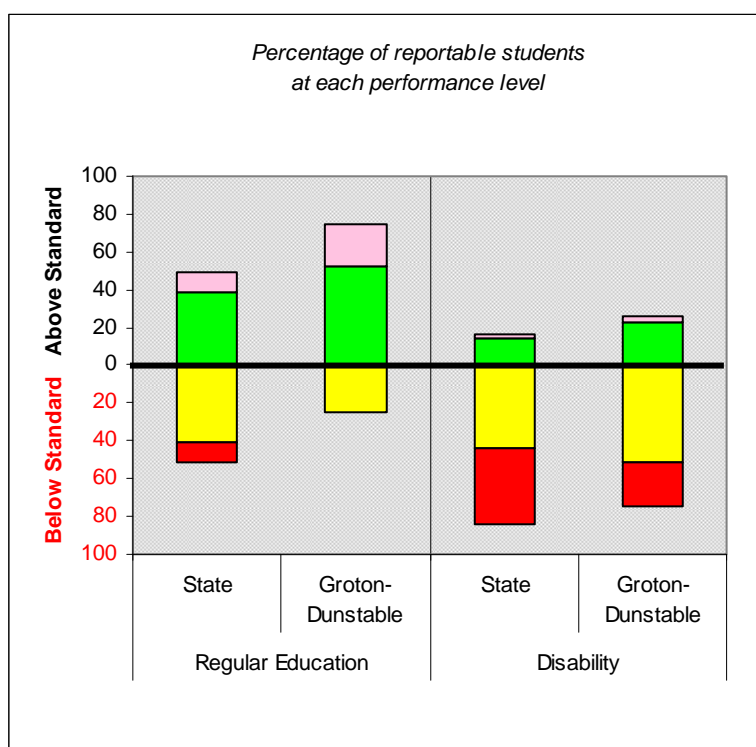


		Regular Education		Disability	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	26	41	4	8
	Proficient	36	41	16	23
	Needs Improvement	28	16	36	40
	Warning/Failing	10	2	44	28
Percent Attaining Proficiency		62	82	20	31
Proficiency Index (MPI)		82.2	93.5	51.0	63.7

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, the proficiency rate in math of regular education students was more than two and one-half times greater than that of students with disabilities. Eighty-two percent of regular education students and 31 percent of students with disabilities attained proficiency in math on the MCAS tests in 2007.

Groton-Dunstable's math proficiency gap in 2007 was seven PI points for regular education students, compared to 18 PI points statewide; and 36 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 49 PI points statewide. The performance gap in math between Groton-Dunstable's regular education students and students with disabilities was 30 PI points.

Figure/Table 10: MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance by Student Status Subgroup, 2007

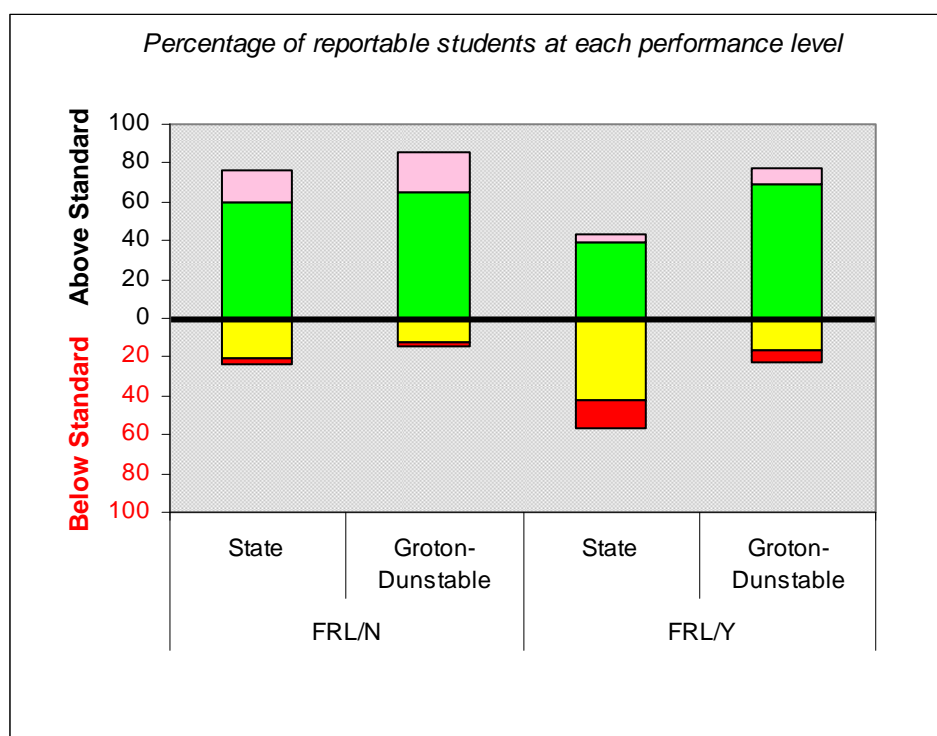


		Regular Education		Disability	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	10	23	2	3
	Proficient	39	52	14	23
	Needs Improvement	41	24	44	52
	Warning/Failing	10	0	40	23
Percent Attaining Proficiency		49	75	16	26
Proficiency Index (SPI)		77.5	91.3	51.8	63.3

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, the proficiency rate in science and technology/engineering of regular education students was nearly three times greater than that of students with disabilities. Seventy-five percent of regular education students and 26 percent of students with disabilities attained proficiency in STE on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Groton-Dunstable's STE proficiency gap in 2007 was nine PI points for regular education students, compared to 23 PI points statewide; and 37 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 48 PI points statewide. The performance gap in STE between Groton-Dunstable's regular education students and students with disabilities was 28 PI points.

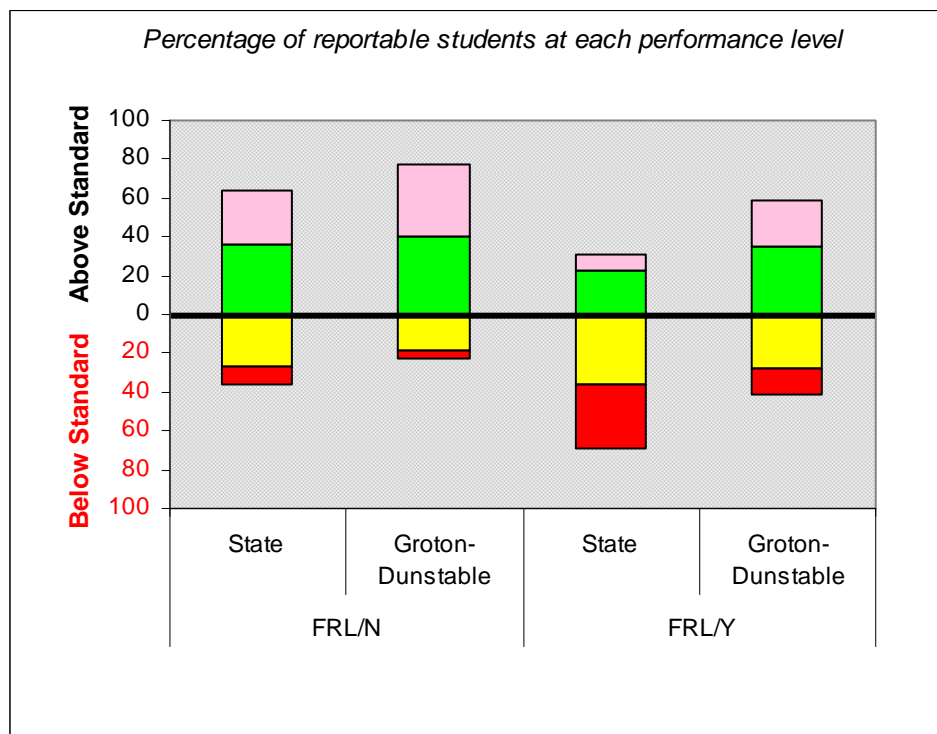
Figure/Table 11: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	17	21	4	8
	Proficient	59	65	39	69
	Needs Improvement	20	13	42	17
	Warning/Failing	3	1	15	6
Percent Attaining Proficiency		76	86	43	77
Proficiency Index (EPI)		91.0	95.0	73.4	89.2

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, 77 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in ELA on the MCAS tests, compared to 86 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The ELA proficiency gap was 11 PI points for low-income students, compared to 27 PI points statewide; and five PI points for non low-income students, compared to nine PI points statewide. Groton-Dunstable's performance gap in ELA between the two subgroups was six PI points.

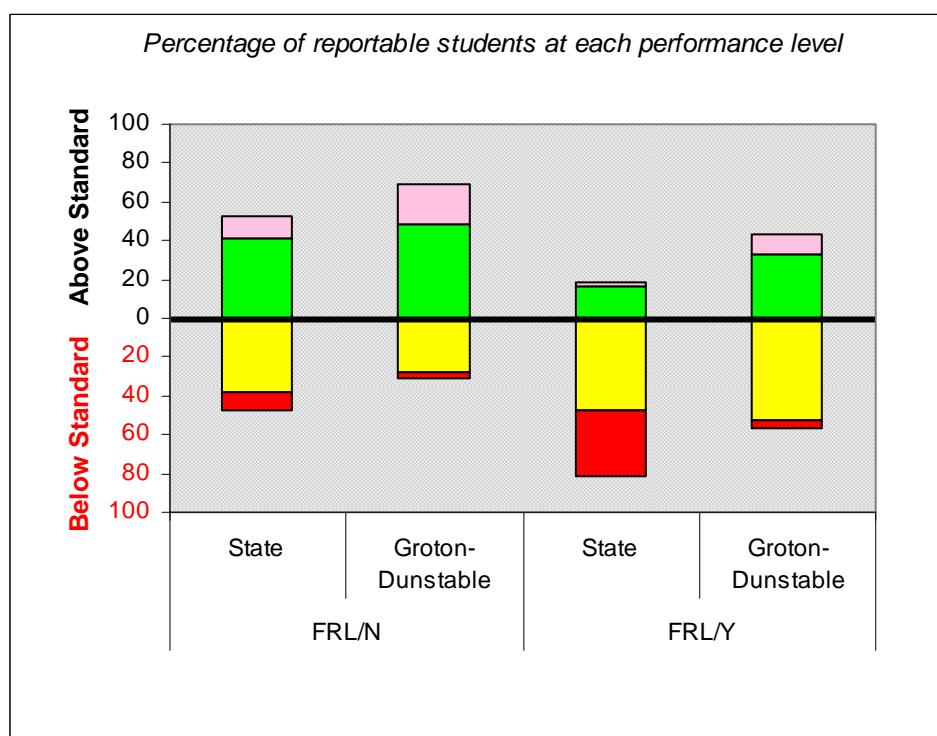
Figure/Table 12: MCAS Math Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	27	38	8	23
	Proficient	36	40	23	35
	Needs Improvement	27	18	37	28
	Warning/Failing	10	4	33	14
Percent Attaining Proficiency		63	78	31	58
Proficiency Index (MPI)		82.7	90.8	60.3	79.6

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, 58 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in math on the MCAS tests, compared to 78 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap in math was 20 PI points for low-income students, compared to 40 PI points statewide; and nine PI points for non low-income students, compared to 17 PI points statewide. The performance gap in math between the two subgroups in Groton-Dunstable was 11 PI points.

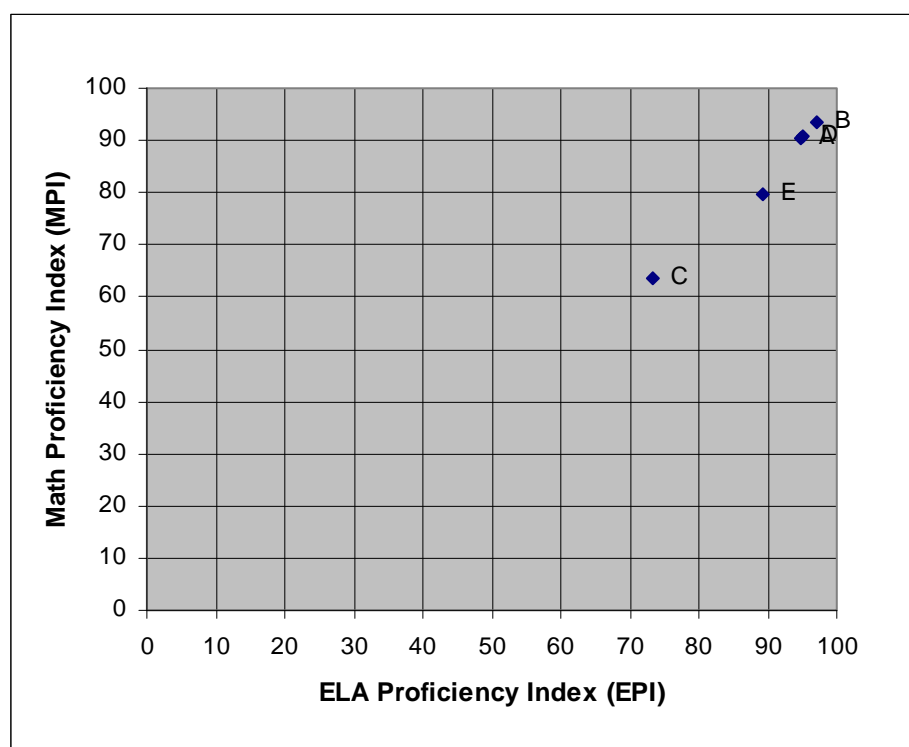
Figure/Table 13: MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
		State	Groton-Dunstable	State	Groton-Dunstable
	Advanced	11	21	2	10
	Proficient	41	49	17	33
	Needs Improvement	39	27	47	52
	Warning/Failing	9	3	34	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency		52	70	19	43
Proficiency Index (SPI)		79.4	87.7	55.2	79.8

In Groton-Dunstable in 2007, 43 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in STE on the MCAS tests, compared to 70 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap in STE was 20 PI points for low-income students, compared to 45 PI points statewide; and 12 PI points for non low-income students, compared to 21 PI points statewide. Groton-Dunstable's performance gap in STE between the two subgroups was eight PI points.

Figure/Table 14: MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index by Subgroup, 2007



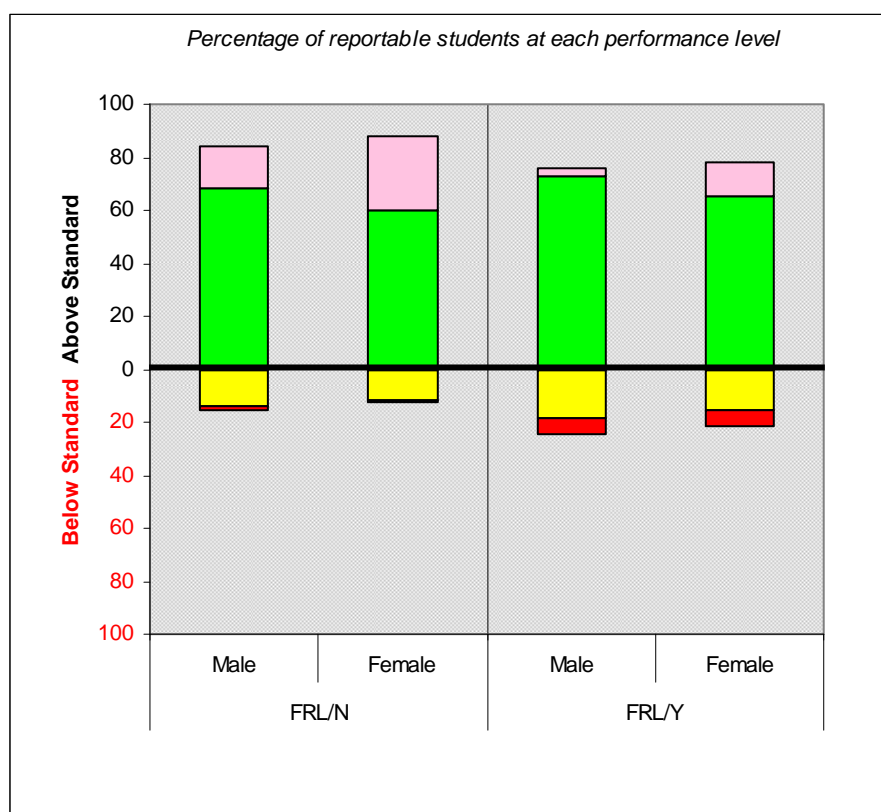
		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Groton-Dunstable	94.7	90.4	3,191
B	Regular Education	97.2	93.5	2,849
C	Disability	73.3	63.7	332
D	FRL/N	95.0	90.8	3,061
E	FRL/Y	89.2	79.6	130

The gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in Groton-Dunstable in 2007 was 24 PI points in ELA (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 30 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

Regular education students and non low-income students in Groton-Dunstable performed above the district average in both ELA and math in 2007, while students with disabilities and low-income students performed below the district average in both subjects.

Each subgroup in Groton-Dunstable had stronger performance in ELA than in math on the 2007 MCAS tests. While the gap between performance in ELA and math for regular education and non low-income students in Groton-Dunstable was four PI points, this gap was 10 PI points for students with disabilities and low-income students.

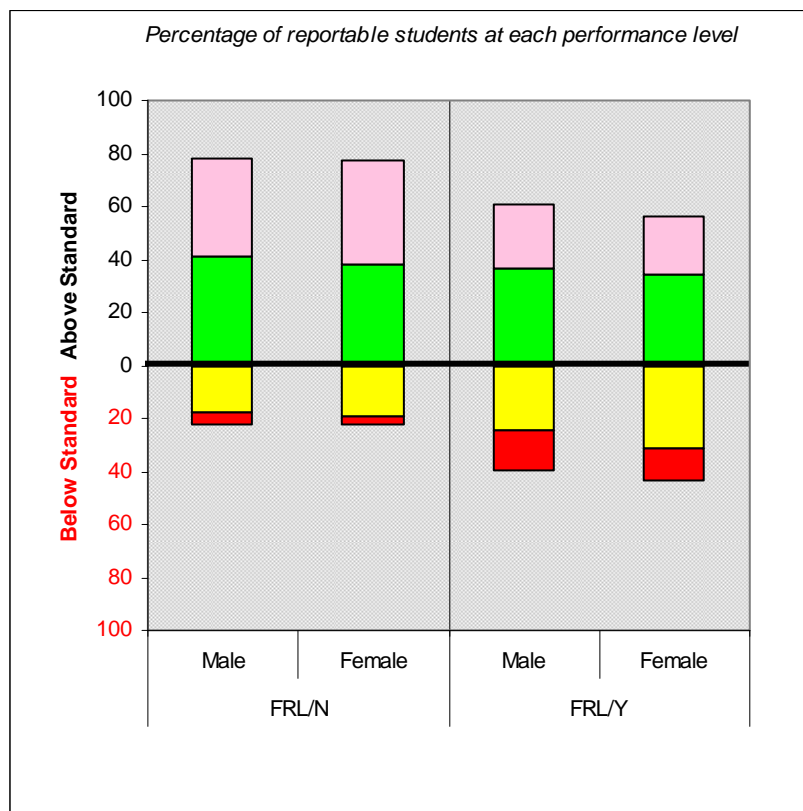
Figure/Table 15: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status by Gender, 2007



		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
	Advanced	16	28	3	13
	Proficient	68	60	73	66
	Needs Improvement	14	11	18	16
	Warning/ Failing	2	1	6	6
Percent Attaining Proficiency		84	88	76	79
Proficiency Index (EPI)		94.2	95.9	88.6	89.8
Number of Tests		822	708	33	32

On the 2007 MCAS tests in ELA, Groton-Dunstable's female students outperformed male students in both the low-income and non low-income subgroups. The performance gap in ELA between female and male students was one PI point for low-income students and two PI points for non low-income students.

Figure/Table 16: MCAS Math Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status by Gender, 2007



		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
	Advanced	37	39	24	22
	Proficient	41	38	36	34
	Needs Improvement	18	19	24	31
	Warning/ Failing	4	3	15	13
Percent Attaining Proficiency		78	77	60	56
Proficiency Index (MPI)		90.8	90.8	80.3	78.9
Number of Tests		822	709	33	32

On the 2007 MCAS tests in math, Groton-Dunstable's female and male students in both the low-income and non low-income subgroups performed at approximately the same level.

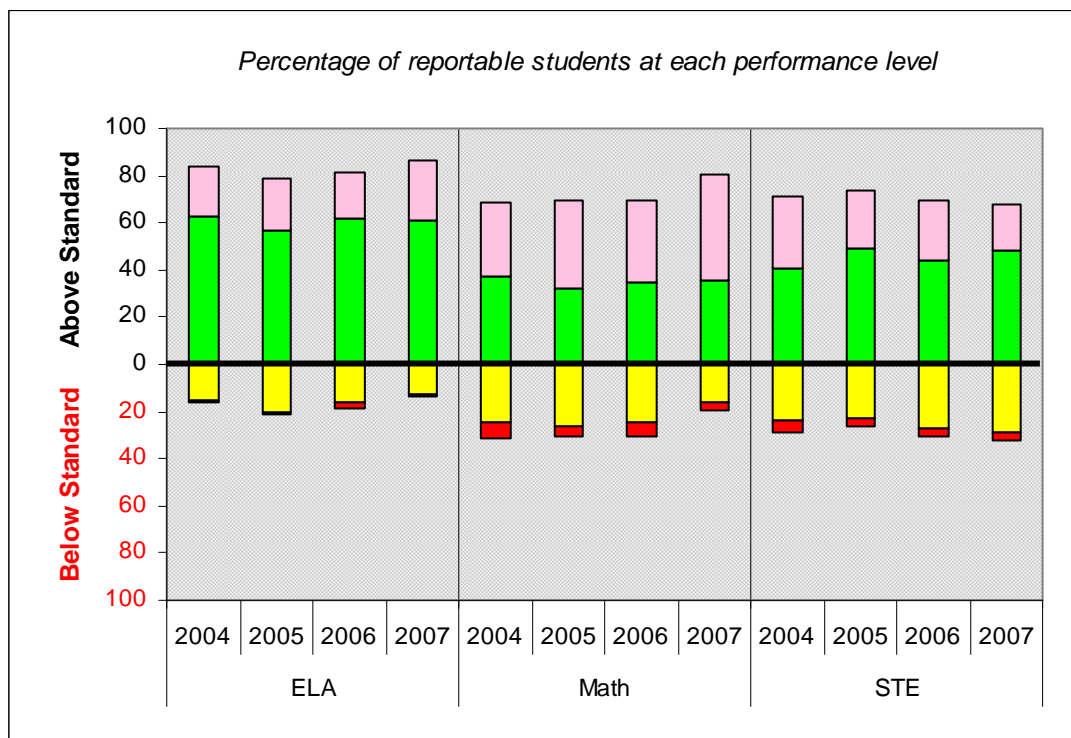
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2004 and 2007, Groton-Dunstable's MCAS performance showed slight improvement in English language arts, more improvement in math, and little change in science and technology/engineering.
- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, ELA performance in Groton-Dunstable improved slightly, by one PI point over the three-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 84 percent in 2004 to 86 percent in 2007.
- Math performance in Groton-Dunstable showed more improvement over this period, at an average of close to two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 38 percent, a rate higher than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in math rose from 69 percent in 2004 to 80 percent in 2007.
- Between 2004 and 2007, Groton-Dunstable had little change in STE performance, declining by one-tenth PI point, which widened the proficiency gap by one percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 71 percent in 2004 to 68 percent in 2007.

Figure/Table 17: MCAS Test Performance by Subject, 2004-2007



		ELA				Math				STE			
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
	Advanced	21	22	20	25	32	38	34	44	30	25	25	20
	Proficient	63	57	62	61	37	32	35	36	41	49	44	48
	Needs Improvement	15	20	16	12	25	26	24	16	24	23	28	28
	Warning/ Failing	1	1	2	1	6	5	7	4	5	3	3	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency		84	79	82	86	69	70	69	80	71	74	69	68
Proficiency Index (PI)		94.3	92.8	93.1	95.3	86.5	87.4	86.4	91.6	87.4	89.7	88.5	87.3

Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, the 2007 ELA and math data may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 1.

The percentage of Groton-Dunstable students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 84 percent in 2004 to 86 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from six to five PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to make AYP.

The percentage of Groton-Dunstable students attaining proficiency in math increased from 69 percent in 2004 to 80 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 14 to eight PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 38 percent, a rate higher than that required to make AYP.

The percentage of Groton-Dunstable students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 71 percent in 2004 to 68 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in STE declined by one-tenth PI point, which widened the proficiency gap by one percent.

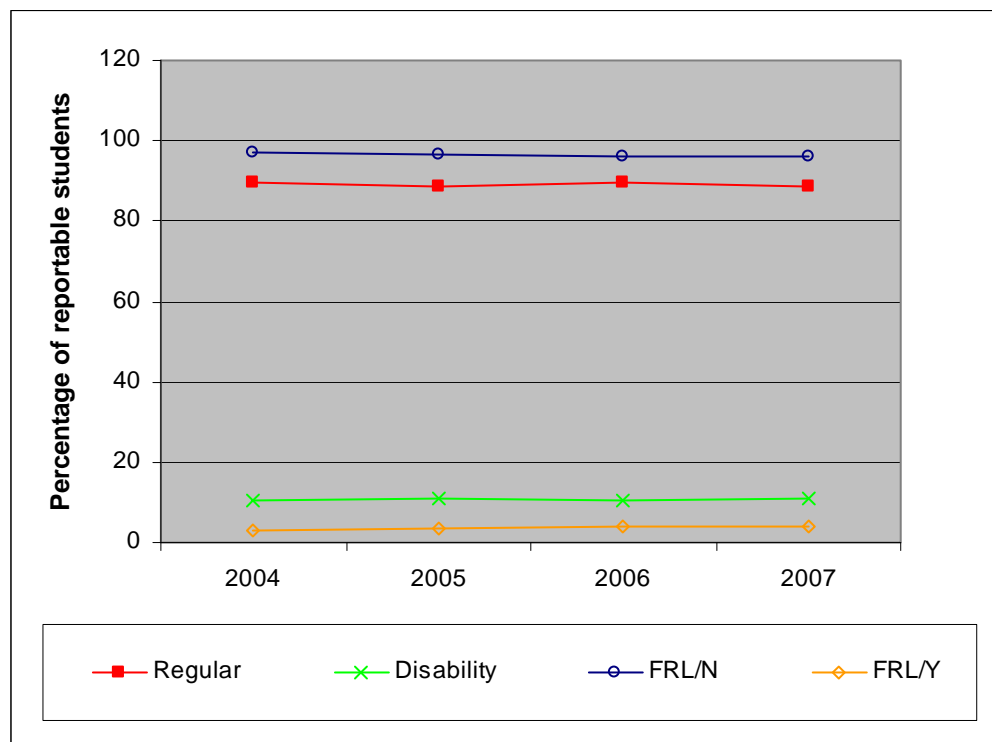
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Groton-Dunstable, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 19 PI points in 2004 to 23 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 32 to 29 PI points over this period.
- The regular education and non low-income student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The more improved subgroup in ELA was non low-income students.
- In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable improved between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroups in math were low-income students and students with disabilities.

Figure/Table 18: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2004-2007



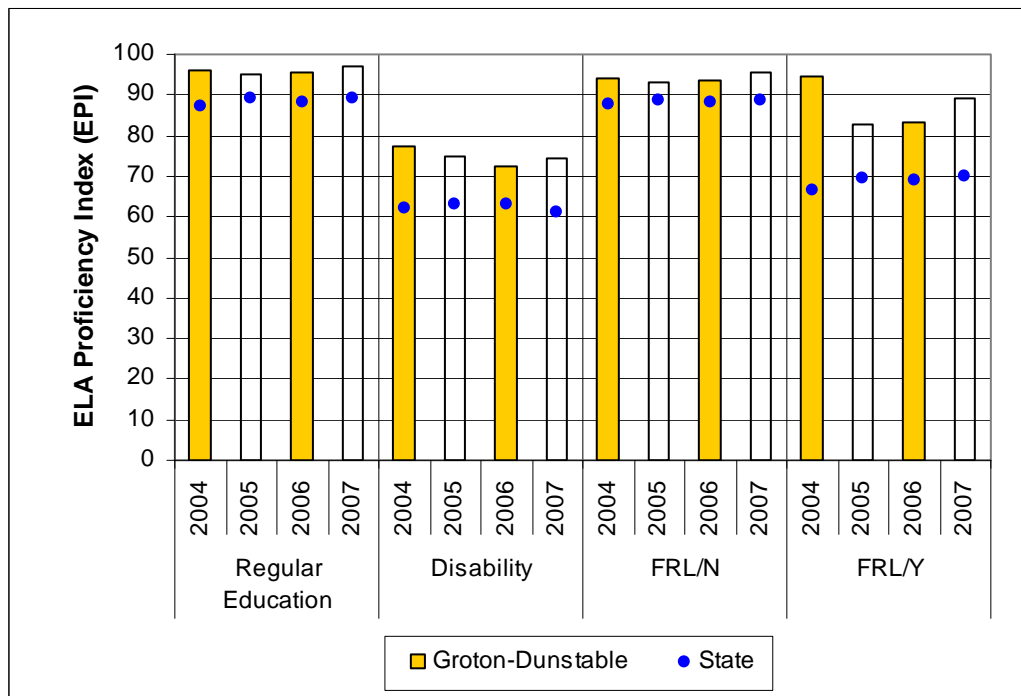
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Groton-Dunstable	1,353	1,406	1,651	1,606	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	1,210	1,246	1,478	1,424	89.4	88.6	89.5	88.7
Disability	140	157	169	177	10.3	11.2	10.2	11.0
FRL/N	1,313	1,356	1,586	1,541	97.0	96.4	96.1	96.0
FRL/Y	40	50	65	65	3.0	3.6	3.9	4.0

Note: The 2007 percentages of students reported here may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 7; the percentages shown here are based on the total number of students in the district, whereas the percentages shown in Figure 7 are based on the number of students in reportable subgroups. Data include students in tested grades only.

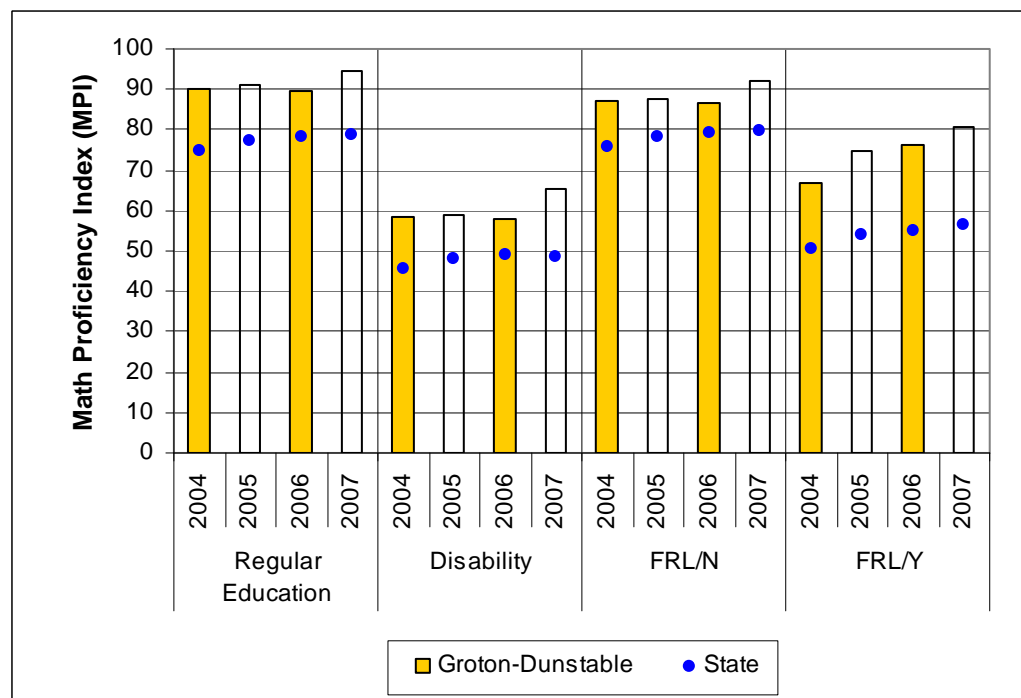
Between 2004 and 2007 in Groton-Dunstable, the proportion of regular education students and of students with disabilities remained approximately the same. The proportion of low-income students increased by one percentage point.

Figures 19 A-B/Table 19: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Subgroup, 2004-2007

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

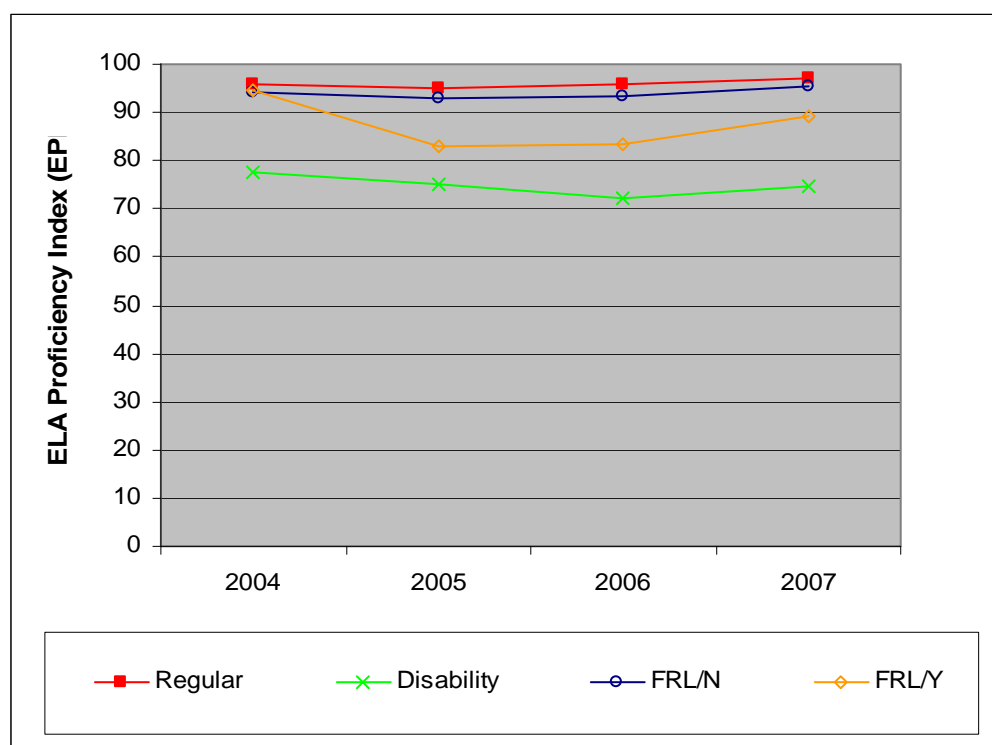


State				Groton-Dunstable			
Subgroup	Year	EPI	MPI	Subgroup	Year	EPI	MPI
Regular Education	2004	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2004	96.0	89.9
	2005	89.2	77.4		2005	95.0	90.9
	2006	88.3	78.2		2006	95.8	89.6
	2007	89.0	78.9		2007	97.2	94.5
Disability	2004	62.1	45.3	Disability	2004	77.4	58.2
	2005	63.3	47.9		2005	75.0	58.7
	2006	62.9	49.0		2006	72.2	58.0
	2007	61.2	48.4		2007	74.5	65.1
FRL/N	2004	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2004	94.3	87.2
	2005	88.9	78.1		2005	93.1	87.7
	2006	88.3	79.0		2006	93.5	86.8
	2007	88.6	79.7		2007	95.6	92.0
FRL/Y	2004	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2004	94.4	67.0
	2005	69.7	53.9		2005	82.8	75.0
	2006	68.8	55.0		2006	83.3	76.4
	2007	70.0	56.3		2007	89.4	80.6

Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 8, 9, 11, and 12.

In Groton-Dunstable, all student subgroups had greater improvement in math than in ELA between 2004 and 2007. Over this period, the performance of regular education students improved by one PI point in ELA and by five PI points in math. The performance of students with disabilities declined by three PI points in ELA and improved by seven points in math. The performance of non low-income students improved by one PI point in ELA and by five PI points in math, and the performance of low-income students declined by five PI points in ELA and improved by 14 points in math.

Figure/Table 20: MCAS English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



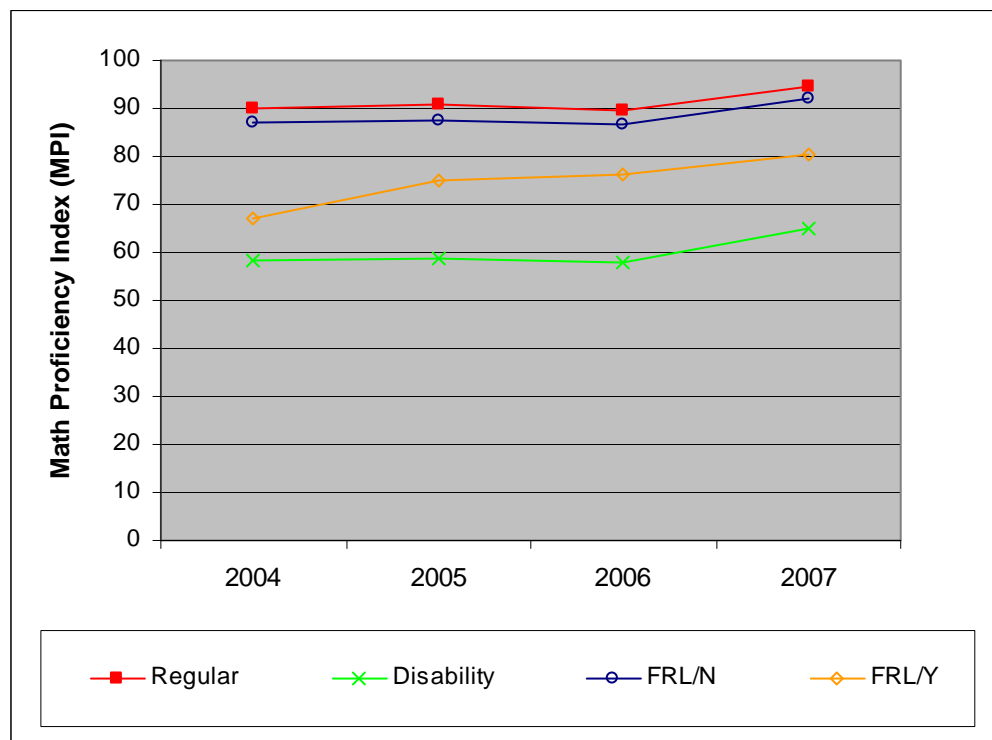
	ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Groton-Dunstable	94.3	92.8	93.1	95.3	84	79	82	87
Regular	96.0	95.0	95.8	97.2	88	84	88	91
Disability	77.4	75.0	72.2	74.5	40	38	35	37
FRL/N	94.3	93.1	93.5	95.6	84	80	83	87
FRL/Y	94.4	82.8	83.3	89.4	83	56	58	77

Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 8 and 11.

The regular education and non low-income student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The ELA proficiency gap for Groton-Dunstable's regular education students narrowed from four to three PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 30 percent, and for students with disabilities it widened by 13 percent from 23 to 26 PI points. The ELA proficiency gap for non low-income students narrowed from six to four PI points for an improvement rate of 23 percent, and for low-income students it widened by 89 percent from six to 11 PI points.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in ELA between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by four PI points. The performance gap in ELA between non low-income and low-income students widened by six PI points over this period.

Figure/Table 21: MCAS Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



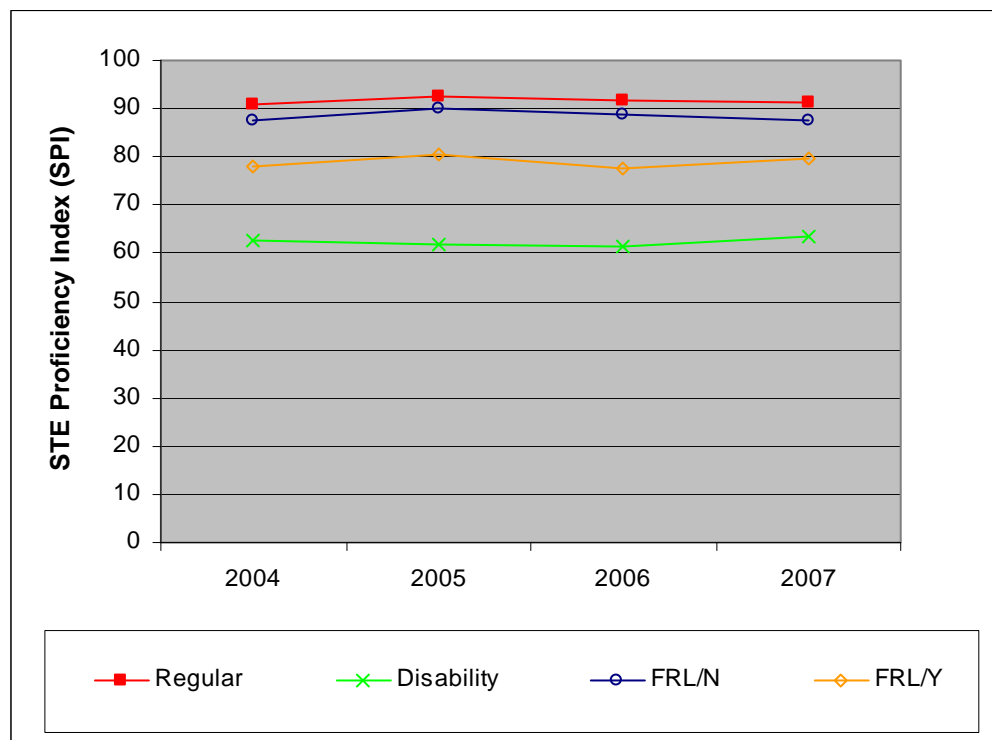
	Math Proficiency Index (MPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Groton-Dunstable	86.5	87.4	86.4	91.6	69	69	69	80
Regular	89.9	90.9	89.6	94.5	75	75	74	85
Disability	58.2	58.7	58.0	65.1	23	27	25	36
FRL/N	87.2	87.7	86.8	92.0	70	70	70	81
FRL/Y	67.0	75.0	76.4	80.6	46	45	49	61

Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 9 and 12.

In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable improved between 2004 and 2007. The math proficiency gap for Groton-Dunstable's regular education students narrowed from 10 to six PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 46 percent, and for students with disabilities it narrowed from 42 to 35 PI points, an improvement rate of 17 percent. The math proficiency gap for non low-income students narrowed from 13 to eight PI points, an improvement rate of 38 percent, and for low-income students it narrowed from 33 to 19 PI points, an improvement rate of 41 percent.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in math between regular education students and students with disabilities narrowed by two PI points. The performance gap in math between non low-income and low-income students narrowed by nine PI points over the same over this period.

Figure/Table 22: MCAS STE Proficiency Index (SPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



	STE Proficiency Index (SPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Groton-Dunstable	87.4	89.7	88.5	87.3	71	74	69	68
Regular	90.8	92.7	91.8	91.3	76	79	75	75
Disability	62.5	61.9	61.3	63.3	34	25	24	26
FRL/N	87.7	90.2	88.9	87.7	72	75	70	69
FRL/Y	78.1	80.4	77.8	79.8	50	57	44	43

In science and technology/engineering, all student subgroups in Groton-Dunstable with the exception of non low-income students had improved performance between 2004 and 2007. The STE proficiency gap for Groton-Dunstable's regular education students narrowed by one-half PI point over this period for an improvement rate of five percent, and for students with disabilities it narrowed from 38 to 37 PI points, an improvement rate of two percent. The STE proficiency gap for non low-income students remained at 12 PI points, and for low-income students it narrowed from 22 to 20 PI points, an improvement rate of eight percent.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in STE between regular education students and students with disabilities narrowed by less than one-half PI point. The performance gap in STE between non low-income and low-income students narrowed by two PI points over this period.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

- On the 2007 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Groton-Dunstable participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2007

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Groton-Dunstable	ALL LEVELS	1,595	1,596	482
	Advanced	330	595	97
	Proficient	1,033	632	231
	Needs Improvement	206	300	137
	Warning/Failing	26	69	17
Regular Education	Advanced	328	580	95
	Proficient	965	591	215
	Needs Improvement	128	231	101
	Warning/Failing	3	23	2
Disability	Advanced	2	14	2
	Proficient	65	39	15
	Needs Improvement	76	67	34
	Warning/Failing	23	46	15
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	1	0
	Proficient	3	2	1
	Needs Improvement	2	2	2
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
White	Advanced	311	567	94
	Proficient	998	609	226
	Needs Improvement	201	292	132
	Warning/Failing	26	68	17
Hispanic	Advanced	3	5	1
	Proficient	6	3	0
	Needs Improvement	1	2	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
African-American	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	2	3	0
	Needs Improvement	2	1	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
Asian	Advanced	13	19	2
	Proficient	23	14	5
	Needs Improvement	2	5	3
	Warning/Failing	0	1	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	325	580	95
	Proficient	988	609	224
	Needs Improvement	195	282	126
	Warning/Failing	22	60	16
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	5	15	2
	Proficient	45	23	7
	Needs Improvement	11	18	11
	Warning/Failing	4	9	1
Male	Advanced	130	310	47
	Proficient	587	350	142
	Needs Improvement	120	154	61
	Warning/Failing	18	41	11
Female	Advanced	200	285	50
	Proficient	446	282	89
	Needs Improvement	86	146	76
	Warning/Failing	8	28	6

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2004-2007

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2004	233	0	0
	2005	245	0	0
	2006	239	239	0
	2007	220	220	0
Grade 4	2004	237	237	0
	2005	244	244	0
	2006	243	243	0
	2007	236	236	0
Grade 5	2004	0	0	249
	2005	0	0	237
	2006	238	238	238
	2007	240	240	240
Grade 6	2004	0	227	0
	2005	0	254	0
	2006	234	233	0
	2007	226	226	0
Grade 7	2004	214	0	0
	2005	228	0	0
	2006	251	251	0
	2007	225	225	0
Grade 8	2004	0	226	226
	2005	0	219	219
	2006	228	227	227
	2007	242	244	242
Grade 10	2004	192	192	0
	2005	194	194	0
	2006	208	209	0
	2007	206	205	0
All Grades	2004	876	882	475
	2005	911	911	456
	2006	1,641	1,640	465
	2007	1,595	1,596	482

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 2004-2007 reported in Figure/Tables 17-22 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

The highest performance level for grade 3 reading in 2006 and 2007 was 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 2007 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	14	Total
Excellent															
Satisfactory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Needs Improvement								✓		✓					2
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:

- Student performance and needs drove budget and program development in Groton-Dunstable.
- School Improvement Plans (SIPs) had a common format and SIP goals were explicitly aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP).
- During the period under review, the DIP focused on improving student achievement in English language arts and mathematics, and the district shifted resources to schools and students with greater needs.
- Student achievement was a component of administrative evaluations.
- The district made a deliberate effort to improve communication with stakeholders during the period under review.

- Teachers were expected to use aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data to improve instruction and monitor student progress.
- Teachers lacked training and tools for independent data analysis.
- During the period under review, the budgets recommended by the school committee were reduced by the towns, diminishing district programs and services and limiting instructional materials.

Summary

The Groton-Dunstable district mission statement was clear, commonly understood, and used to guide decision-making. The goals in individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP) goals and consistent with the mission statement. Each school presented its SIP for the next school year to the school committee and reported on progress toward the accomplishment of current SIP goals. During the period under review, the district established priorities to improve student achievement and increase communication with stakeholders.

The school committee used student performance data and other documentation to develop the budget, form policy and make decisions. During the period under review, the budgets recommended by the school committee were reduced by the towns. As a result, the district was unable to maintain technology both for data analysis and student learning and to furnish classrooms with multiple learning resources. Groton-Dunstable provided good educational facilities and a positive learning environment for students.

Groton-Dunstable made a conscious effort to increase stakeholder's understanding of its priorities and accomplishments. The superintendent and school committee met regularly with town officials and other interested parties. In addition, the school committee conducted surveys to improve communication and identify needs. School committee meetings were broadcast on the local cable channel and reported in the press. The district maintained a website with current and useful information, and issued regular newsletters and special reports to parents and the community addressing timely issues and concerns.

The school committee collaborated with town officials, parents, and school and community organizations to determine and realize the mission of the schools. The committee also helped to set long- and short-term goals and evaluate district progress toward their accomplishment. School committee members understood their roles and attended workshops sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to keep current. The superintendent provided orientation and training sessions for new members. The school committee participated in budget development sessions with town officials and joint workshops with the administrative council.

The district formed partnerships with community organizations and benefactors to augment educational and other services for students. District policy encouraged businesses and organizations to sponsor and support school programs.

The district had an approved school safety policy prior to the period under review, and developed a safety plan with uniform procedures and codes in cooperation with local public safety officials. The plan was reviewed annually.

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

Groton-Dunstable district and school leaders developed a commonly understood vision and mission statement. The goals in the district and school improvement plans were student-centered, aligned, and focused on improving student achievement. The district's 2002-2007 Strategic Plan served as its District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP goals were based on student achievement data, including those from the MCAS tests, Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, the SAT, district common examinations, and the postsecondary plans of graduating seniors.

The district used its DIP and an analysis of students' strengths and needs to develop, implement, and modify programs. For example, Groton-Dunstable implemented a co-teaching model at the secondary level to improve the performance of special education students by providing them access to the curriculum through inclusion in regular education classrooms. The district focused on improving student performance in mathematics by increasing funding for mathematics instruction in its Title I grant, and introducing the Connected Mathematics Program 2 (CMP 2) at the middle school. Groton-Dunstable also added special education staff members, and transferred a reading teacher to the Swallow Union Elementary School in order to improve student achievement

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

Members of the Groton-Dunstable School Committee understood their responsibilities under the Education Reform Act, and used student achievement data for policy and decision-making. In interviews with the EQA examiners, school committee members stated that they were well informed. Committee members were aware of their responsibilities for policymaking, budget preparation, and hiring and evaluating the superintendent. They told the EQA team that the superintendent was responsible for the daily management of the district.

The superintendent conducted an eight-hour training program for new members. In addition, school committee members attended workshops provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). One member served on the MASC legislative committee.

School committee members told the EQA team that they used student achievement data for decision-making and goal-setting. They went on to say that they expected staff members to provide them with documentation for proposals and recommendations. Administrators and teachers furnished the EQA team with examples of data used to justify budget requests.

By arrangement with the local electric company, the school committee included a community survey in the mailing envelope with a billing. To address concerns about communication raised in the community survey, the school committee posted agendas, minutes, and documentation on the school district website, and took other actions to make information more timely and accessible. For example, the three subcommittees of the school committee posted their meeting dates for the year in advance.

The school committee participated annually in the development of goals for the district and completed a self-assessment of progress at the end of the school year. The results were used to set goals for the next year. For example, one goal for the 2006-2007 school year was to improve student achievement by reducing class size.

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 used data for decision-making, but teachers had little training in data analysis and limited access to data analysis tools. According to interviewees, central office administrators and principals met frequently with staff members to discuss the implications of student achievement data, and assessment teams in each school used disaggregated data to develop strategies for improving student achievement.

Administrators told the EQA team that the district administered standardized achievement tests and other assessments including running records to measure the acquisition of beginning reading skills and preschool and kindergarten screening instruments. Additional district assessments included chapter tests, examinations with common components, common midterms, a fall math assessment in grades 1, 2, and 3, MCAS practice tests, weekly vocabulary and spelling tests, teacher assessment portfolios, and alternative assessments.

Teachers reviewed MCAS test results and developed action plans for students scoring below expectation at full-day professional development workshops held in 2004 and 2005. Central office administrators and curriculum coordinators disaggregated MCAS test data for the district

by school, grade, classroom, and the special education subgroup. In interviews with the EQA examiners, administrators and teachers stated that teachers did not have data analysis training and tools because the district lacked the software program needed for MCAS test data analysis on the Mac platform and funding to access the web-based program.

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

For each year of the period under review, every school had an approved School Improvement Plan (SIP). School Improvement Plan goals were aligned with the district goals established by the superintendent and the school committee. In the spring, each school presented its plan to the school committee for approval, and the principal and school council members reported on the progress toward accomplishment of the SIP goals for the current year.

The EQA team reviewed all school committee and school council meeting notes and found that most plans focused on improvement of student learning in reading and mathematics, technology, open-response questions, writing, and analyzing and interpreting literature. All schools utilized a similar format for documenting SIP goals and objectives. In addition to goals and objectives, the plans contained strategies, resources, indicators of success, and timelines.

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

Groton-Dunstable leaders promoted equity by allocating resources to students and schools with greater needs. For example, the district assigned a reading teacher to the Swallow Union School to improve reading achievement. Support programs funded under Title I were broadened to include mathematics as well as reading instruction at the middle school. The high school added Advanced Placement offerings in history and science and increased staff to provide greater

opportunities for students. Groton-Dunstable added a school psychologist to counsel special education students. The district instituted MCAS remediation classes at all levels, and the middle school implemented after-school tutoring programs.

Groton-Dunstable offered some co-taught classes at the middle school to increase mainstreaming and provide special education students access to the regular education curriculum. The district allocated computers to schools depending on needs and the availability of programs. The superintendent stated that teachers and principals needed to demonstrate how technology would be integrated into instruction in order to justify requests.

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

The superintendent recommended and the school committee annually approved educationally sound budgets, but the recommended and approved budgets were not supported by the towns of Groton and Dunstable during the period under review. Administrators told the EQA examiners that all stakeholders were involved in budget preparation. Budget requests were broadly based, including recommendations from school staff members and the school councils. For example, the EQA examiners found that school budgets contained requests for additional staff members to reduce class size in order to improve student achievement. Principals submitted prioritized school budget requests to central office administrators. The superintendent initially reviewed the school and program budget requests for compliance with state and federal mandates.

The superintendent categorized budget requests as mandated, needed, or desirable using a Have to, Ought to, Want to (HOW) prioritizing scheme, and documented line items with data on student performance, class size ratios, and national standards. The budget document contained a detailed rationale for new staff positions and an analysis of utility costs, including fuel degree days, kilowatt usage, and potential energy conservation savings.

The budget subcommittee of the school committee worked closely with district administrators to ensure that the proposed budget reflected district needs and priorities. The school committee reviewed the proposed budget throughout the winter and discussed it with town officials. The superintendent and school committee members told the EQA examiners that there were two budget review phases. In the first phase, the budget preparers established what was needed to improve student achievement. In the second phase, the preparers reviewed the needs in light of what the towns could afford and made necessary reductions. The superintendent and school committee members stated that there was considerable debate during this phase.

Beginning in October and continuing throughout the fall, central office administrators met informally with the school committee budget subcommittee. Administrators made a formal presentation of the proposed district budget to the full school committee in January. The Groton-Dunstable School Committee approved the budget in March, and the towns of Groton and Dunstable voted on the budget in April and May.

For the period under review, the towns of Groton and Dunstable did not approve the school committee recommended budgets, and per pupil expenditures for Groton-Dunstable were below the state average.

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

School committee members stated that the superintendent and staff reported semi-annually on progress toward attainment of the goals in the District Improvement Plan. They went on to say that the committee solicited questions from the community to stimulate discussion. All school committee meetings were televised and relevant documents were posted the next day on the district website. The press attended and reported on the meetings. The public library archived school committee policies and meeting minutes. School committee members told the EQA examiners that they received reports and heard presentations on student performance, including the results of the MCAS tests and district assessments.

Administrators stated that each school presented a SIP for the next year to the school committee at one of its regularly scheduled meetings in the spring, and reported on the accomplishment of the SIP goals for the current year.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators told the EQA team that Groton-Dunstable administered assessments to monitor student progress and improve instruction. When interviewed, however, some principals and most teachers stated that they lacked data analysis training and tools. District administrators stated that lack of funding prevented the district from installing web-based software compatible with the Mac platform to support data analysis.

Central office administrators provided principals and teachers aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data. District administrators stated that staff members could interpret and use the aggregated and disaggregated data. They went on to say that decisions were data-driven. Some examples included a co-teaching model at the middle school to improve the achievement of special education students and flexible grouping at the elementary level in English language arts (ELA).

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

District administrators stated that they monitored student achievement by analyzing the results of the MCAS tests, SATs, Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, and district common assessments. The superintendent cited, and administrators confirmed, a number of program changes resulting from analysis of student achievement data during the period under review.

Examples of new and modified programs included development of the co-teaching model at the middle school; reallocation of Title I funds to include mathematics instruction; redefinition of the middle school grade span from 6-8 to 5-8; adoption of the CMP at the middle school; creation of end of unit assessments; and provision of coaching for teachers by curriculum experts. The district also added a math teacher at the middle school and increased the number of Advanced Placement courses at the high school based on student needs.

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

School committee members and the superintendent told the EQA team that the school committee evaluated the superintendent and the superintendent evaluated other central office administrators and principals. These evaluations were conducted annually. They went on to say that administrative evaluations included student performance data and addressed some of the Principles of Effective Leadership in the state guideline. In a review of administrative evaluations, the EQA team found that assistant principals were not evaluated during the period under review.

Evaluations of principals and district administrators were completed by the current superintendent in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. These evaluations were timely, based in part on the Principles of Effective Leadership, and contained informative and instructive comments promoting growth and overall effectiveness. Administrators maintained an artifact folder or portfolio providing evidence of performance. Many evaluations made reference to artifacts in the folders. The superintendent completed administrators' evaluations in the fall, following receipt of the school and district MCAS test results.

The superintendent was evaluated in a 360 format. This encompassing mode of evaluation included data from the superintendent, staff, parents, and the community. The evaluation instrument contained a rubric and a narrative explanation of high and low ratings.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The superintendent delegated educational and operational leadership to principals and directors and used student achievement data to assess their performance of certain responsibilities. These included development and control of the school budget; development and reporting of the SIPs; participation in curriculum development and instructional design; planning professional development; ordering supplies; implementation of the DIP; communication with parents; managing student behavior; use of staff; supervision of volunteers; and collaboration with the school council.

The superintendent and principals told the EQA team that that the superintendent delegated screening and hiring of school staff members to the principals. Principals reviewed applications for vacant positions and screened and interviewed candidates, usually with the assistance of a screening committee. Principals stated that they forwarded the credentials of the recommended candidate to the superintendent. The superintendent subsequently interviewed the candidate and offered the position, provided that the candidate was highly qualified. Only the superintendent had the authority to determine placement on the salary schedule.

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

Interviewees stated that the school committee and the superintendent had begun a number of initiatives to bring all stakeholders together to support and improve student achievement. The school committee participated in joint budget workshops with town officials. School committee members helped align goals and participated in evaluating goal outcomes. The school committee attended some joint workshops with the administrative council during the school year.

The committee supported and conducted community surveys. For example, the committee endorsed a survey conducted by the district special education parent advisory council (PAC) intended to improve district special education services. The PAC analyzed the data from over 300 responses and made findings and recommendations to the superintendent and school committee. The school committee conducted a community survey to determine how residents received and preferred to receive information about the schools. This survey was intended to facilitate delivery and receipt of accurate information and to improve communication in a cost effective manner.

According to the superintendent, the district developed its current five-year strategic plan with comments and opinions from parents, staff members, and community members from both Groton and Dunstable. Administrators went on to say that the district collaborated with the police and fire departments in the development, review, and revision of district safety plans and protocols.

Administrators provided the school committee quarterly reports on the budget, and periodic reports on student performance and needs at school committee meetings. All school committee meetings were covered by the local press and cable channel. In an effort to improve communication with the community, the district issued press releases, distributed newsletters, answered questions, and addressed concerns. Taking turns, individual members of the school committee wrote informational articles and commentaries on important issues and concerns such as the air quality at the Prescott Elementary School, the math curriculum, block scheduling at the high school, the fifth grade transition to the middle school, and the amount of time devoted to physical education in the elementary schools.

13. The district formed partnerships with community human service agencies and benefactors, such as corporate and civic sponsors, to provide at-risk students and families access to health, social, recreational, and supplemental educational services.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district collaborated with many community agencies and benefactors to provide at-risk students access to social, recreational, and supplemental educational services. District policies encouraged partnerships and sponsorships aligned with school goals, and specified that donations

were to be used to enhance student achievement. School committee policy encouraged businesses and community organizations to sponsor and support school programs and activities.

Through a review of documents, the EQA team found that there were 21 trust funds to assist residents of Groton. From 2005 to 2007, Groton's Educational Foundation distributed \$133,706 to the schools through 81 mini-grants. Other community partnerships supported recreational and supplemental educational services. The Deluxe Corporation provided the "Time is Money" program, and the Groton School provided students access to its pool and art gallery. Dunkin' Donuts donated funds, the Groton Cultural Council supported school activities, and the Community Health Link provided a variety of clinical services.

14. 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: Satisfactory

Evidence

Groton-Dunstable created a comprehensive safety plan in collaboration with community public safety agencies. The superintendent stated, and the EQA examiners confirmed, that a district policy on safety entitled Safe Schools Policy (ADD-1998) was developed and approved prior to the period under review.

The district implemented standard procedures for school and bus evacuations, and crisis codes were uniform. Until 2007-2008, the district employed a full-time school resource officer to coordinate the development and revision of school safety protocols with the police and fire departments. Interviewees told the EQA team that the school resource officer had a positive presence, but this position was eliminated in 2007-2008 because of budget reductions.

Consistent with state regulations, the district annually reviewed all crisis plans with town safety officials, the district's insurance carrier, and the school councils. School and safety officials annually attended the STAR conference sponsored by the office of the district attorney to coordinate the staging of emergency teams. The district purchased hand radios to expedite

emergency notification. In addition, district policy encouraged administrators to the notify students, parents, staff members, and the community of safety concerns.

Standard II: Curriculum and Instruction												
Ratings ▼ Indicators ►	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
Excellent												
Satisfactory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	8
Needs Improvement							✓	✓	✓			3
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 district process of aligning, reviewing, revising, and modifying the curriculum, supported by various curriculum leaders, resulted in a living document to guide instruction.
- Administrators and coordinators analyzed the results of summative and formative assessments, and teachers used the interpreted data to plan instruction.
- The district began to move from a pull-out model for special education students to an integrated model supported by learning centers in order to give special education students greater access to the regular education curriculum based on the state frameworks.
- Through meetings with teachers, both by and across grade levels and within departments, and mandated professional development sessions, administrators and coordinators designed, implemented, and reviewed the effectiveness of instructional practices and strategies.
- Technology was most readily available at the high school, and least available at the elementary schools. The loss of the technology director and two technology integration specialists due to budget constraints impeded the integration of technology.
- The district had high expectations for effective instruction and provided teachers with high quality professional development, but school principals did not monitor teachers' instruction to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Summary

Groton-Dunstable curriculum documents were aligned with the state frameworks. Standards were posted in the classrooms and used as a reference during instruction to promote student learning. The district's focus on standards-based instruction was supported by the adoption of programs aligned with the state frameworks and the content area standards developed by professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

A curriculum council, headed by the district's director of curriculum and staff development, provided curriculum leadership in the district. At the high school, department leaders in ELA, math, science, and social studies who had part-time teaching responsibilities provided curriculum leadership in a part-time capacity. At the K-8 levels, two full-time curriculum coordinators provided curriculum leadership in ELA and math, while science and social studies teachers who taught full time provided curriculum leadership as time allowed. The district eliminated the curriculum leaders for fine arts, health, and foreign languages in 2007-2008 because of budget limitations, and the principals of the elementary and middle schools had to assume curriculum leadership in these areas.

Teachers developed an action plan for each curriculum area in grade-level and departmental teams. The district reviewed the action plans for completion annually. Curriculum issues were addressed during the development of the action plans and at other times as needs warranted it. The mathematics curriculum was aligned horizontally and vertically except in grades 3 and 4, which were just beginning implementation of the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program. The district projected complete implementation by 2008-2009.

The district's instructional practice was characterized by cooperative and flexible grouping, inclusion with co-teaching or paraprofessional support, and use of data to inform planning. Displayed student work showed evidence of high expectations, care, complexity, and challenge.

The district used a top-down process for analysis and distribution of assessment data such as the MCAS data, since only curriculum coordinators and a few administrators were trained in data analysis. The district's Macintosh platform supported the web-based, but not the software version, of TestWiz. Lack of funds prevented district use of the web-based version.

Administrators, the curriculum coordinator, and curriculum leaders prepared and furnished data to teachers. Teachers analyzed the data to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses and made revisions and modifications, such as adjusting the pacing guides for subjects and courses.

At the elementary level, teachers used formative data, such as those from the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and district benchmarks and assessments built into the Investigations program and the Connected Mathematics Program (CMP) in grades K-8 to monitor student progress and inform instruction. Teachers also had an established protocol at the middle and high schools for Looking at Student Work (LASW). Teachers reviewed student work routinely at various team, grade-level, and department meetings throughout the year.

In most classes observed by the EQA examiners, students were active participants, answering questions that evoked broad involvement, and asking their own questions to increase their understanding. Teachers asked students to explain their thinking, and employed a variety of instructional strategies within a class. Students transitioned from one activity to another smoothly and with little teacher cueing, and routines for learning were automatic. Although the quality of instruction observed by examiners was high, this was more reflective of the district having hired effective teachers and providing them with ongoing high quality professional development, rather than providing an effective system of supervision.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

Groton-Dunstable implemented curricula for all grade levels in tested core content areas that clearly addressed the components of the state curriculum frameworks. The components included the topic or unit and Massachusetts framework standards addressed, objectives and concepts, key terms, activities, available resources, and assessments. In addition, the district developed and

implemented pacing guides. Math and English language arts specialists created an action plan for 2006-2007, and reviewed it for evidence of completion and revised it in 2007-2008.

Interviewees stated that a committee began researching various mathematics programs in 2002-2003 to move the district toward a more constructivist program and philosophy. The district mathematics program had not been horizontally aligned; for example, teachers used a variety of texts at the elementary level. In order to improve horizontal alignment, Groton-Dunstable began implementation of the Investigations in Number, Data, and Space program (Investigations) in grades K- 5 and the Connected Mathematics Program (CMP) in grades 6-8, and trained teachers prior to the implementation of each new unit.

The district had fully implemented Investigations in grades K-2 for the entire review period and purchased the second edition of Investigations in the 2007-2008 school year. In grades 3 and 4, the district has been using two mathematics programs, the Addison-Wesley program and Investigations, in a combined instructional approach. Grade 5, located at the middle school, used Investigations only. The district planned full implementation of Investigations in grades K-5 by 2008-2009. Groton-Dunstable phased in the implementation of CMP in grades 6-8 at the rate of two to three units each year. For the 2007-2008 school year, the district reached full implementation of eight units with pacing guides. The district used the CMP for Pre-algebra, but continued with a traditional text in Algebra I. While the high school had core assessments for courses and examinations with common elements, the Algebra I final examination at the high school was not the same as the grade 8 final examination.

In interviews with the EQA team, high school staff members stated that the district's standards-based mathematics program was based on the Massachusetts mathematics framework and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. During the period under review, Groton-Dunstable introduced an Algebra IA/IB sequence for students requiring a slower-paced two-year coverage of Algebra I. The course addressed the algebra and geometry standards assessed by the grade 10 MCAS mathematics test.

The district elementary ELA curriculum was aligned with the state framework. Interviewees stated that the English language arts program at the elementary level was a balanced literacy model with reader's and writer's workshops and guided reading. The district had ELA

benchmarks and benchmark assessments, including the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and writing assessments.

According to the program of studies, the high school ELA curriculum was an integrated language arts program focusing on literature, media, writing, vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking. All syllabi were aligned to the Massachusetts framework, and examinations were based on common-themed elements.

Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that the district reviewed and aligned the science curriculum with the most recent state framework during the period under review. High school staff members stated that the science department focused curriculum review and alignment on the content areas assessed by the MCAS science tests. Students enrolled in Integrated Science, Principles of Technology, or Engineering Design and Construction in grade 9 and Biology or Chemistry in grade 10. Curriculum council members told the EQA examiners that the district curriculum was a working document. Staff reviewed curricula regularly, using data to make decisions.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that by the end of the period under review, the district's written curricula in most tested areas were aligned horizontally and vertically. During the period under review, the curriculum director and coordinators met with staff members by and across grade levels and within departments to work on vertical and horizontal alignment. Administrators and teachers in interviews stated that these sessions and the development of pacing guides for core tested areas had strengthened horizontal and vertical alignment.

Prior to full implementation of Investigations, elementary teachers used a variety of texts and the elementary mathematics program was not horizontally aligned. Beginning in 2004-2005, the district implemented two or three units of Investigations each year at the elementary level, and used the Addison-Wesley traditional mathematics program as a supplement. Teachers were expected to teach the fractions units using Investigations that year, and they were given training

in two to three additional units and were encouraged to teach using those units. In 2006-2007, Investigations was fully implemented with pacing guides in grades K-2. The district was preparing for full implementation of Investigations in grades 3 and 4 in 2008-2009.

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

Through a review of documents and interviews with administrators and staff members, the EQA examiners found that each school in the district had curriculum leadership. Curriculum coordinators and leaders and the principal oversaw the use, alignment, and consistency of the curricula, focusing on improvement for all students. A review of 38 randomly selected personnel files did not show timely supervision and evaluation of all staff members for effectiveness of delivery of the curriculum.

During the period under review, the district had a curriculum director, four content area curriculum leaders (.33 FTE each), 2.0 FTE K-8 teachers on assignment (TOA) or curriculum leaders (1.0 FTE each for ELA and math), and two full-time classroom teachers with limited TOA responsibilities in K-8 science and social studies. Most curriculum leaders were part time with teaching responsibilities. The district eliminated the curriculum council leaders for fine arts, health, and foreign languages in 2007-2008 because of budget limitations.

According to interviewees, the principals and assistants completed teachers' evaluations without consulting the curriculum leaders. The curriculum leaders, TOAs, and coordinators monitored implementation of curricular revisions and modifications through grade-level and department meetings and meetings held on professional development days. While middle school ELA and mathematics TOAs were given time in their schedules for curriculum leadership, science and social studies TOAs taught full time. These TOAs had limited time for data analysis to improve instruction and achievement in accordance with the goals of the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs.)

Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that principals began doing walk-throughs in 2007-2008. In the review of personnel files, the EQA examiners found that many teachers had not been evaluated in a timely fashion. In addition, summative evaluations occurred only once every four years for professional status teachers, and there were few comments on the effectiveness of their implementation of the curriculum. In 2007-2008, new principals were in place at the high school, middle school, and one elementary school. These principals stated that they were beginning to use a walk-through checklist based on a model provided by the Department of Education. Groton-Dunstable lacked a standard protocol for conducting walk-throughs and providing teachers with comments.

Groton-Dunstable analyzed student performance data to determine needs and developed plans to address them. The district focused on mathematics achievement during the period under review. From 2004 through 2007, all district subgroups improved in mathematics, as measured by the Math Proficiency Index (MPI) on the MCAS tests.

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

Through interviews, the EQA examiners learned that 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.

During the period under review, school curriculum leaders supported the implementation of new programs such as Investigations and CMP through coaching, modeling, and observations. Curriculum coordinators modeled lessons, co-taught, and offered professional development at faculty, grade-level, and department meetings. This established a system to improve student achievement. According to interviewees, both principals and coordinators gathered data for curriculum review, modification, and revision, and helped develop strategies to address needs.

Interviewees stated that the district provided professional development and support for best practices in instructional strategies. For example, the district engaged a consultant to provide training in varied instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. As teachers implemented these instructional strategies in their classrooms, colleagues supported them by sharing successful practices and providing recommendations at grade-level, department, and faculty meetings. Teachers planned lessons using backwards design and implemented strategies under the supervision of coordinators and principals who monitored classroom implementation.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

Through interviews and a review of documents, the EQA examiners found that the district had a documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of curricula; however, it was not fully implemented as written due to budget constraints. For example, Groton-Dunstable deviated from the established cycle prior to the period under review to address identified needs in ELA. The district formed an ELA curriculum team with a coordinator to analyze student achievement data and modify the program. When the standing committees of the curriculum council ended in 2006-2007, the district moved from a curriculum council format involving a few teachers to professional learning communities involving many more.

The ELA review was followed by a review of the mathematics curriculum, leading to adoption and implementation of new programs. Groton-Dunstable revised its K-8 mathematics program by piloting selected programs from 2002-2005, before adopting Investigations and CMP. The district began to align its science curriculum with the state framework during the period under review, and planned to review its social studies curriculum in 2007-2008.

According to interviewees, while the district curriculum review cycle was out of phase, curricula were reviewed and revised regularly at school and grade levels to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment. Administrators and coordinators provided teachers MCAS test data and district benchmark data. Teachers used summative and formative assessment data to identify strengths

and weaknesses in the curriculum, adjust topics and sequences, and make other revisions. This process led to modifications of curriculum and instruction and revision of the pacing charts.

Interviewees told the EQA team that while the district lacked funds for standing committees, teachers worked in grade-level and departmental teams and on ad hoc committees led by curriculum leaders and TOAs. This structure created broad involvement. The district also funded summer curriculum work for teachers and curriculum leaders. According to interviewees, the district planned to adopt a grade 4 social studies text in 2007-2008, and it intended to plan for and modify its social studies pathways for 2008-2009.

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

During the period under review, administrators and staff members reported that the district analyzed student achievement data and allocated instructional time in the tested core content areas that focused on improved rates of proficiency. The district exceeded state time and learning minimal requirements at all levels with 1148.4 hours at the high school, 1130.4 hours at the middle school, and 1098.0 hours at the elementary schools.

Interviewees stated and a review of class schedules showed that the district increased mathematics instruction at the elementary level during the period under review to 70 minutes. The class period included 60 minutes of instruction based on the pacing guide and 10 minutes of review or skills practice.

After analyzing data on student achievement in mathematics, the district modified the high school block schedule for struggling students by changing the apportionment rather than the amount of instructional time. Under this modification, mathematics and biology were scheduled in one block as full-year, 43-minute classes rather than semester, 86-minute classes.

The high school created the Algebra 1A and 1B sequence to support students needing additional time for mastery of algebra concepts. The sequenced courses encompassed the geometry standards assessed on the grade 10 MCAS mathematics test. The high school also added MCAS

prep classes in English and mathematics. Priority for enrollment was based on grades 7 and 8 ELA and mathematics MCAS test scores and teacher recommendation. At the middle school, students in grades 5 and 6 scoring in the ‘Warning/Failing’ and low ‘Needs Improvement’ categories on the MCAS tests were recommended for Title I reading instead of Spanish or music, and students in grades 5-8 scoring in the ‘Warning/Failing’ and low ‘Needs Improvement’ categories received Title I math support using an inclusion model.

Interviewees told the EQA team that the middle school was moving toward greater inclusion of special education students. Under the new model, special education students were enrolled in regular education academic classrooms and attended the learning center for supportive instruction during some integrated arts time. The special educators in the learning center worked with regular education teachers in regular classrooms, and had direct knowledge of the curriculum and the learning expectations.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, administrators and staff members stated that appropriate educational technology was available in the district, but not widely used as an integral part of the instructional process. In random classroom observations conducted by the EQA examiners, teachers used technology appropriately to deliver instruction in 30 percent of the 46 classrooms observed, and students used available technology appropriately in 23 percent. The fourth goal of superintendent’s entry plan was to promote the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, but loss of the technology director and two technology integration staff members resulting from budget cuts left one staff member to service and maintain the network.

The EQA team found evidence of student use of technology in report preparation, and the production, layout, and photography of student-developed magazines. Interviewees stated that the district had capacity to help teachers integrate technology when there were two technology specialists, but those positions and the technology director were lost in budget reductions.

Administrators and teachers stated that the high school had a mobile laptop lab, two computer classrooms, 11 computers in the library for research, mounted projection systems in classrooms to project from a computer, graphing calculators, closed circuit and regular TV broadcasts, and science probes. The district increased technology at the high school as part of the building project completed in 2002, although some of the funds originally allocated for technology were reduced or transferred to meet other needs. The middle school complex had two SmartBoards, computer labs, science probes, and several computer software projection systems. Comparatively little technology was available at the elementary schools.

In 2007-2008, each school had a technology committee that met to implement the district technology plan.

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

Through interviews with administrators and staff members, examiners learned that during the period under review district and school principals did not consistently monitor teacher's instruction for evidence of practices that reflected high expectations for students' work and mastery.

Interviewees at the high school level stated that the previous principal did not visit classrooms or monitor instruction and the district lacked a walk-through protocol. The current superintendent told the EQA examiners that instructional leadership was a critical role for principals and an important attribute in the consideration of applicants for the principalship. The three principals recently hired by the superintendent had begun walk-throughs in their buildings as part of active supervision.

Administrators and coordinators stated that the Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol at the high school expanded to the middle and elementary schools during the period under review. According to interviewees, LASW helped raise expectations for student work and strengthened student writing. Coordinators led grade-level and department meetings where strategies and

expectations were reviewed, modified, and revised, based on data from an analysis of student work.

Administrators and coordinators worked with staff members to analyze the MCAS test data and target student support services. They identified both curricular weaknesses and individual students who were not meeting expectations. These students were recommended for Title I or other support services. Staff members wrote Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) for all students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category on the MCAS tests at the middle and high school levels, and in the 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs Improvement' categories at the elementary level.

9. The district created inclusive classrooms or programs for student populations, through an integrated services model, minimizing separation from the mainstream.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In interviews, administrators and staff members stated that toward the end of the period under review the district began to develop an integrated services model, minimizing separation from the mainstream. According to interviewees, the district moved toward more inclusion when data showed that the pull-out model was ineffective when students did not have access to the regular education curriculum. The special education administrator and staff tracked the degree of withdrawal of special education students from regular education classes, and set a goal to increase inclusion.

In 2007-2008, the district began implementation of a co-teaching model. Each school had some co-teaching in math and ELA classes. At the middle school, classes with special needs students were co-taught or had a paraprofessional assigned. The special needs teachers and paraprofessionals returned to the learning center to reinforce lesson content and skills with targeted students. In addition, all therapists were expected to render services in the regular education setting.

The district included special education teachers in trainings on assessments such as the DRA and DIBELS. Special needs teachers and paraprofessionals also attended professional development

with regular education teachers on implementation of Investigations and CMP. The district planned professional development on the co-teaching model for 2007-2008.

Administrators stated that the district intended to evaluate the results of the inclusion model and make modifications to improve it.

10. 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

Interviews with administrators and teachers and a review of documents substantiated that through the ongoing use of formative and summative student assessment data, Groton-Dunstable monitored the effectiveness of teacher's instruction and provided resources, professional development, and support to improve and maintain high levels of instructional quality and delivery.

The district began development of benchmark assessments during the period under review, and fully implemented them in 2006-2007. The high school administered core assessments in each content area, and was moving toward final examinations with common components. Teachers told the EQA team that they analyzed formative and summative data to inform instruction and plan lessons and mini-lessons.

Administrators and teachers stated that mandated professional development supported implementation of district initiatives and programs including differentiated instruction, the Investigations and CMP mathematics programs, and the Sitton Spelling program. Ongoing professional development also supported implementation of the balanced literacy model, and reader's and writer's workshops in grades K-8.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 46 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 33 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted at the district's schools as follows: 16 at the elementary schools, 21 at the middle school, and nine at the high school. In total, the EQA examiners observed 17 ELA classrooms, 22 math classrooms, five science classrooms, and two classrooms of other subjects. In calculating the presence of observed practices, where appropriate, the practices that would not be applicable were noted and were removed from the total to obtain a proper basis for determining the percentage.

Based on 46 classroom observations, the quality of instruction was high in Groton-Dunstable. The schools have established classroom rules that were automatic and internalized by most students. Transitions maximized instructional time and teachers promoted respectful behavior. Although students took responsibility for their work, paraprofessionals, assistants, or additional teachers were not consistently involved in the learning process, especially at the secondary level.

Instructional practice was also very good. Teachers provided clear expectations, frequently checked for understanding, and made goals clear to students. Teachers used a variety of instructional techniques in addition to whole class instruction, and elicited and valued student responses. Instructional strategies were aligned with district and school priorities, with the exception of using technology to deliver subject area instruction. Use of technology was rated low across all levels, even at the middle and high school levels where there was more available hardware.

Teachers communicated high expectations for student work and instructional time was spent on producing high quality work. Although the teachers have used the Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol for a number of years, rubrics indicating how to increase the quality of student work were not posted and little student work was on display. Overall, students showed an understanding of learning goals at all levels. Middle school students were actively engaged in class, but less often demonstrated their engagement by asking questions than did students at the elementary and high school levels. Student work reflected quality, care, and complexity, and interaction between students was respectful. Although it was one of the district's professional development and instructional goals, student use of and the embedded use of technology in content learning was rated markedly low across the district.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 89 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 94 percent at the elementary level, 88 percent at the middle school level, and 84 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 85 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 90

percent at the elementary level, 82 percent at the middle school level, and 83 percent at the high school level.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 83 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 91 percent at the elementary level, 76 percent at the middle school level, and 82 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 84 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 89 percent at the elementary level, 80 percent at the middle school level, and 83 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 89 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 96 percent at the elementary school level, 87 percent at the middle school level, and 82 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Science/ Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	8	7	1	16	21.6	0.6	79	73	4.7
Middle	7	9	5	21	19.7	0.7	68	55	7.5
High	2	6	1	9	21.3	0.0	28	21	9.1
Total	17	22	7	46	20.7	0.5	175	149	6.4

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Classroom Climate
Elementary					
Total checks	73	151	73	93	76
Maximum possible	78	168	80	104	79
Avg. percent of checks	94%	90%	91%	89%	96%
Middle					
Total checks	86	184	80	114	91
Maximum possible	98	224	105	142	105
Avg. percent of checks	88%	82%	76%	80%	87%
High					
Total checks	36	82	37	52	37
Maximum possible	43	99	45	63	45
Avg. percent of checks	84%	83%	82%	83%	82%
Total					
Total checks	195	417	190	259	204
Maximum possible	219	491	230	309	229
Avg. percent of checks	89%	85%	83%	84%	89%

Standard III: Assessment and Program Evaluation									
Ratings ▼ Indicators ►	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Excellent									
Satisfactory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Needs Improvement									
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 administration and staff consistently collected and analyzed student data in order to improve the curriculum. The district modified some programs as a result of the analysis of student achievement data.
- The curriculum director and curriculum coordinators were trained in the use of TestWiz. Each year, principals and teachers received an analysis of MCAS scores and worked at grade levels and in department content areas to make appropriate changes in curriculum and instruction.
- The district effectively communicated and reported student achievement through e-mail, parent-teacher conferences, progress reports, and report cards. All schools used a software program to communicate with parents.
- The district used a number of assessment tools in addition to the MCAS tests, and developed local benchmarks, core assignments, schoolwide rubrics, and teacher-developed tests and quizzes.
- The district instituted learning centers and co-taught classes at the middle school and high school to replace a separate resource room model. These changes addressed learning style differences and provided support for students under special educational management.

- The district used internal and external audits to assess the effectiveness of its programs and services and acted upon the findings and recommendations

Summary

Groton Dunstable was a data-driven district. The district modified programs and services based on outcome measures. For each of the years under review, the leadership and staff of the district evaluated student MCAS test data in order to ensure alignment of the curriculum with state standards. The EQA team found that School Improvement Plans were aligned with the District Improvement Plan. District MCAS test scores were well above state averages, but an achievement gap existed in the district between the performance of regular and special education students.

The district hired qualified and experienced teachers and provided continuous professional development to assist them in delivering the curriculum. The curriculum was well aligned horizontally, and the district was working to improve vertical alignment, especially in mathematics. Toward this end, the elementary and middle schools recently adopted the Investigations in Number, Data and Space program for grades K-5 and the Connected Mathematics Program for grades 6-8.

Administrators analyzed MCAS test data when they became available from the central office, and brought the data to teacher action teams, curriculum coordinators, and other curriculum leaders. Teachers discussed the aggregated and disaggregated results and an item analysis after school and during district in-service days.

The district effectively reported MCAS test data as well as other standardized assessment scores to parents and the community through a continuously updated website, televised school committee meetings, community newspapers, and e-mail. Report cards and progress reports were issued to parents regularly.

The guidance department and content area specialists analyzed SAT and Advanced Placement examination results. Groton-Dunstable consistently scored above state averages on both of these measures. The district used the Looking at Student Work (LASW) action plan to evaluate programs. At the high school, this process was used to assess knowledge across the curriculum in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Teachers in each subject area developed

common core assessments and rubrics. They administered these assessments twice in each course and used the results to compare the achievement of students at the same grade level and at different grades within each school. The results were also used to compare the achievement of students in the three elementary schools.

Middle school teachers administered mini-benchmark tests in the four content areas six to eight times during the year to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum. At the high school, the EQA team found little consistency in the administration of common midterm and final examinations. Most quizzes, tests, and final examinations were designed and administered by individual teachers, although some departments had begun to develop standardized final examinations.

During the period under review, the district participated in several internal and external audits, reviewed the findings and recommendations, and made changes in programs and services to improve teaching and learning.

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

The Groton-Dunstable school district consistently analyzed and used student assessment results. In November 2006, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) commended the district for ongoing use of schoolwide rubrics for each learning expectation and the development of core assignments. The review and revision of these core assignments was the focus of many in-service professional development days during the period under review.

The early childhood curriculum used developmental summaries as assessments. Teachers also assessed speech, language, motor, and literary skills with the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL). At the end of kindergarten, teachers ranked students, and administered the Observation Survey for Reading Recovery to their lowest performing students. Reading specialists monitored Reading Recovery students in grade 1.

The district used the Looking at Student Work protocol to assess students' accomplishment of learning outcomes. This process focused on critical thinking, problem solving, and application of knowledge in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. The district administered core assessments at least twice in each course. These assessments were scored with rubrics. Teachers were involved in the development of assessment grids for ELA. The district was developing a second generation of these assessments for mathematics at both the elementary and middle school levels.

In grades K-8, teachers monitored students' progress at each grade level in ELA both in the aggregate and individually. Teachers collected data from two writing assessments focusing on topic development and mechanics in the spring and fall of each year. Each teacher scored the writing samples from another teacher's class during professional development days. The district developed a chart showing the percentage of students attaining grade-level benchmarks in each of the three elementary schools and the comparative percentages. In 2007, the students in the Florence Roche school scored higher than the students in the Prescott and the Swallow Union schools in both topic development and conventions. Across the district, 83 percent of students reached or exceeded district benchmarks.

Grades K-5 implemented Investigations in Number, Data, and Space as the base mathematics program, including the program's assessments. Teachers in grades 3 and 4 also used parts of the Addison-Wesley mathematics program as the district phases in full implementation of Investigations. Additional assessments included common rubrics, mini-benchmarks, and open-response questions. During the period under review, curriculum leaders at the high school worked with those at the elementary and middle schools to align the curriculum horizontally and vertically. The district curriculum director oversaw this process. At all schools, action teams analyzed MCAS test results and shared their findings with teachers at faculty meetings.

The district was implementing the Connected Mathematics Program in grades 6-8 during the years under review. Middle school mathematics teachers were creating common end-of-unit assessments and benchmarks in fulfillment of a goal in the 2006-2007 School Improvement Plan. Common math midterm and final exams were administered at each grade level. Title I students in grades 5-8 were also assessed with the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Pre- and post-

assessments were administered at the beginning and end of each school year in order to monitor students' progress.

Teachers at all grade levels used core assignments as common assessment; however, the EQA team found that final examinations at the high school lacked consistency. According to interviewees, while all high school teachers gave final examinations, these examinations were not necessarily common. In 2005, the mathematics department began to develop common geometry assessments to for specific instructional units.

The high school guidance department and content area specialists analyzed SAT and Advanced Placement (AP) examination results annually. In 2005, 87 percent of the 46 district students taking AP examinations earned a qualifying score of '3' or better. The number of students taking AP exams increased to 86 in 2006 and to 129 in 2007. In 2007, 89 percent of the 129 students taking the AP exams earned a qualifying score of '3' or better. District SAT scores were well above national averages during the period under review. Verbal scores were within the 523-542 range and mathematics scores were within the 556-568 range.

All students in grades K-4 were assessed with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in the fall and spring of each school year to determine whether they had met benchmark standards. During the last three years, curriculum coordinators generated an item analysis of the MCAS test results for special education students. Students working with reading specialists or special education teachers were sometimes assessed with other instruments, including the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Ekwall Shanker Reading Inventory, the Gray Oral Reading Test, the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT-R) and the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP).

The district developed Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) for students performing below expectation, and adjusted the curriculum to meet their individual needs. According to the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP), each school had its own student success plan. This plan described services for students who scored at the 'Warning/Failing' level (200-219) on the MCAS tests. In 2007-2008, the elementary schools were also implementing ISSPs for students scoring in the 'Needs Improvement' category.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, district MCAS test participation was 100 percent for regular education students and 96 to 100 percent for students with disabilities. The district communicated the importance of participating in the assessments to parents at the appropriate times through the newsletters and televised school committee meetings. The district provided students with breakfast and extended breaks on the days that teachers administered the MCAS tests.

All elementary schools and the middle school administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in the fall and spring, and more frequently to struggling students. Teachers administered mathematics assessments annually in October and January. School psychologists, special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists assessed special education students as required by law.

One hundred percent of the district's high school students took the SAT and approximately 90 percent took the PSAT. Eleven percent of high school students took AP courses. Although taking the AP exam at the completion of a course was voluntary, interviewees reported that the majority of students chose to take them. In 2007, 46 students took AP examinations in biology, physics chemistry, psychology, French, statistics, English literature, calculus, European history, world history, and/or U.S. history.

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

Through the use of district-generated reporting instruments, district and school leaders communicated student achievement results to all appropriate staff and community members. All schools in the district used a web-based software program to facilitate communication among school, teachers, parents, and students. Interviewees stated that the district posted memos, assignments, and scheduling updates continuously. According to teachers, most parents used e-mail to communicate with school personnel. This was effective since most teachers had their own computers. In addition, some teachers developed their own websites and posted class expectations and assignments. In grades K-2, the district used descriptive progress reports to communicate student achievement to parents. In grades 3-4, the district issued report cards with letter grades for students to take home.

The middle school mailed progress reports and report cards four times annually. Students received a letter grade in each course, unless the child study team (CST) had arranged a pass/fail alternative grading system with parent approval. Students conducted student-led conferences during which they explained their own progress with reference to a portfolio of their work. Students set achievement goals for the remainder of the year at these conferences in consultation with their parents and teachers. The high school mailed student progress reports to all parents at the end of the fourth week of each marking term. Teachers could issue individual warning reports to the parents of students making unsatisfactory progress at any time. Report cards were mailed four times each year. Teachers gave students a letter grade and made two to three comments. Teachers at the middle and high schools used software to enter grades and attendance. Parents could not access these data on-line. During the period under review, an information management specialist trained teachers to enter data on-line; however, this position was currently unfilled at the time of the EQA visit.

In addition to progress reports and report cards, parent-teacher conferences were scheduled at all schools. Three days were set aside for individual conferences at the elementary schools. Parent conferences were scheduled twice each year at the middle and high schools.

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

According to administrators, data drove instruction in the district; however, teachers lacked data analysis training and tools. In addition to the MCAS tests, the district used a variety of other assessment instruments. The K-8 English language arts curriculum contained multiple assessments for all students including the DRA, running records, and writing samples. K-8 teachers were trained to administer the DRA and to interpret the results. In addition, elementary school teachers used assessment rubrics from reader's and writer's workshops to assess students' progress and needs. Teachers participated in parallel scoring sessions using writing rubrics. The Investigations program included standardized assessments at the end of each unit. According to interviewees, individual teachers also developed their own checklists and rubrics.

According to the DCAP, each elementary school had a Reading Recovery program to serve grade 1 students performing in the lowest third of their class in reading. Kindergarten teachers ranked students on overall strength in reading and writing. Reading Recovery teachers administered the Marie Clay Observation Summary to those students scoring in the lower 25 to 40 percent of the grade level. They matched the number of potential candidates to the available slots, giving priority to students with the greatest needs. Twelve weeks into the program, rapidly accelerating students could be discontinued from the program. At 20 weeks, all children were tested, and struggling students not enrolled in Reading Recovery were reconsidered for the program. Teachers filed a child study team request when a child did not discontinue successfully from Reading Recovery. The CST provided support for students with learning, behavioral, and other difficulties. When a child did not make expected progress, even with support, the CST made a referral for a special education evaluation.

Middle school teachers used mini-benchmark tests in all four content areas to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum. Teachers administered these tests six to eight times during the year. Each test consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions. Teachers analyzed the results during

common planning time, and made instructional modifications as needed. These tests were similar to the MCAS tests in format and provided students with test practice. Teachers reported students with scores below 70 percent correct to the principal. The principal identified at-risk students in each content area.

In the spring, the middle school guidance counselors provided high school guidance counselors with student placement recommendations based on the results of grade 8 assessments. The most at-risk students in grades 5 and 6 were enrolled in Title I reading and mathematics programs. Eligibility was determined by the results of the MCAS tests and local assessments. Reading teachers helped with the administration of diagnostic assessments. Based on the recommendations, grade 8 teachers and guidance counselors placed students in the standard, advanced, or honors level in each subject.

During the period under review, most teachers did not give midterm examinations at the high school. According to interviewees, although the learning outcomes and standards were common for a course, there was no consistency in the final examinations administered by teachers of the same course. They went on to say that teachers were developing common finals in some courses, such as Biology.

The mathematics department administered many student assessments. Mathematics teachers developed their own quizzes, chapter assessments, unit tests, open-ended writing questions, and portfolio assignments. In addition, high school students took a standardized examination in Algebra I, and most AP students took the AP exam. Some students also took the calculus league and the New England mathematics league examinations.

When the district received MCAS test results, administrators reviewed the aggregated and disaggregated data and shared them with department heads. Teachers reviewed the data at faculty meetings. Administrators and grade-level and departmental teachers reviewed an item analysis in each domain. Teachers analyzed the results of common assessments collaboratively, modified instruction to increase learning, and adjusted the curriculum to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment with the standards.

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 used assessment results to measure the effectiveness of its programs. All three elementary schools stated in their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) that one of their major goals was to improve student writing as measured by the district writing rubrics.

Teachers administered mathematics assessments in October and January, and met within two weeks of receiving the results to monitor student progress and assess the effectiveness of instruction. District schools set goals for student performance based on assessment results. For example, in its SIP for 2007-2010, the Florence Roche Elementary School set goals for student achievement in mathematics. One goal was for 90 to 100 percent of kindergarten students to perform at benchmark levels as measured by Assessing Mathematical Concepts. Another goal was for grade 1-4 students to score 80 percent or higher on midyear assessments.

Students needing additional support in reading in grades K-8 had access to a certified reading specialist. Each elementary school had a Reading Recovery program to serve grade 1 students who performed in the lowest third of their class. The students enrolled were tutored individually by a trained Reading Recovery teacher. At-risk students in grades 5 and 6 had access to the Title I reading program. Students were withdrawn from part of an integrated arts block for instruction. The Title I math program served students in grades 5-8. Instruction for these students was rendered by a Title I math specialist within the students' regular math class. In addition, the district employed an individual who taught Title I math for half her time, and for the other half served as a math coach who met with all math teachers to coordinate curriculum and modeled teaching strategies in classrooms, and also assisted teachers when needed.

The district provided MCAS support for students who failed or were at risk of failing the MCAS tests. The middle school provided before- and after-school tutorials. The high school provided semester MCAS English and mathematics preparation courses. Teachers developed these courses for grade 9 students scoring in the 'Needs Improvement' or 'Warning/Failing' categories on previous MCAS testing. In grade 10, students needing extra help attended an after-school

program funded by an academic support grant. At the high school, special education students attended learning centers where teachers developed and conducted remedial lessons based on a student's individual weaknesses.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used several external audits to improve its educational programs. According to a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted in 2005, the district did not consistently document the basis for the determination of a specific learning disability, and those “conducting assessments did not consistently summarize in writing the student’s needs and methods to meet them.” In addition, the CPR stated that the district process for developing an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) was not always completed within the regulatory time. District administrators shared the report with the faculty and made changes in the child study team process. Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that the district learning center and co-teaching models resulted from the findings and recommendations of the CPR.

The district underwrote an audit of all school libraries in April 2005. The findings included commendations and recommendations. For example, the district was commended for automating library resources, administrative support of library facilities and resources, and supplementation of elementary libraries with extensive classroom book collections. On the other hand, the report cited district administrators for providing too little support for library personnel. The auditors recommended that the district develop a strategic plan for the growth and restructuring of libraries at each school building.

An evaluation performed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in 2006 commended the high school for the faculty’s ongoing use of schoolwide rubrics to assess student achievement. The report also stated that the Looking at Student Work initiative had enhanced teachers’ assessment of individual student knowledge of each course.

The Walker Partnerships performed an external audit of district special education services in the spring of 2007. The report commended the middle school for increasing the special education staff by one position in 2007-2008, maintaining a technology specialist devoted to special education, and closely collaborating with the local mental health center providing services to students under special educational management. The Walker report also found that the purpose for the district child study team was not well understood by staff members, the district lacked a policy for grading students with special needs, and it failed to share data on the performance of special education student with appropriate staff members. The report recommended the establishment of performance standards and benchmarks for students under special educational management. According to interviewees, the district had worked to develop and implement benchmarks.

The district conducted internal and informal audits during the period under review such as parent and student surveys. The areas addressed by the surveys included school climate, discipline, and curriculum and instruction. At the middle school, more than 80 percent of the parents surveyed returned responses. As a result of the parent survey, the middle school created a parent shadow day. The district also surveyed teachers to help determine the topics for professional programs and release day activities.

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

During the period under review, the district and school leadership considered student assessment results in order to allocate time and resources. Interviewees reported that in 2005-2006 curriculum development focused on improving student writing in grades K-5. In the fall administrators analyzed MCAS test results using TestWiz, and discussed student performance in topic development and conventions with teachers. Teachers used aggregated and disaggregated data to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the written language curriculum, and to develop writing rubrics and prompts to measure and monitor student progress.

Two of the goals in the 2005-2008 District Improvement Plan were to use student performance data to assess student progress, and to offer professional development opportunities to help staff members improve the assessment of student learning. In order to meet these goals, several courses were offered to teachers, including Collaborative Lesson Planning and Assessment and Developmental Reading Assessment Training. The district also provided in-service training in September 2006 to help K-5 teachers identify both at-risk and gifted students.

In the summer of 2007, the district formed teacher study groups to review data and add enrichment and re-teaching materials to unit teaching guides. As a result, the district allocated more time for mathematics and science instruction at the elementary level in 2007-2008. In the service of this initiative, kindergarten and grade 1 teachers attended a workshop on assessing and providing appropriate instruction for students with severe difficulties in mathematics.

In the area of ELA, documentation provided to the EQA team showed that during the period under review teachers monitored the progress of scores in grades K-8 yearly, both individually and in aggregate. Teachers collected data in the spring and fall of each year, and administered assessments on topic development and mechanics. The percentage of students achieving benchmark standards in ELA and mathematics was consistently higher at the Florence Roche school than at the Prescott and Swallow Union schools. In order to try to address this disparity, the district transferred a reading teacher from Florence Roche to Swallow Union.

The high school instituted a four-by-four block schedule prior to the period under review. The schedule benefited students who had failed a course during the first semester since the failed course could be repeated during the second semester of the year. This had the potential to prevent credit deficiency and maintained students in their graduating classes.

The district used data to maximize the effectiveness of its staff. For example, funds were allocated for the training of an AP English teacher in 2005 and an AP English literature teacher in 2006. According to interviewees, curriculum specialists assigned teachers to AP classes based on their proven strengths and knowledge of the curriculum.

During the years under review, the district reallocated computers to schools based on needs and the availability of programs. According to the superintendent, a school received computers when

the principal justified their use for instruction. Many teachers stated that the computers in their schools needed to be updated, and that not enough were available. Teachers stated that mobile computer labs on carts were not a substitute for classroom-based computers.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

District and school leaders typically used program evaluations to improve the delivery of instruction and student achievement. For example, at the elementary level, mathematics teachers identified and prioritized instructional focus areas based on the district fall and midyear mathematics assessments. The district administered the Assessing Mathematical Concepts tests in October and January in grades K-3. Within two weeks of receiving the results, teachers analyzed the data and determined instructional strategies at faculty meetings. The district hired a math consultant to provide training for grade 4 math teachers in 2005. The curriculum office followed up with in-service sessions on instructional strategies.

The middle school revised the procedure for determining appropriate placement in grades 7 and 8 mathematics through use of standardized pre-algebra and algebra readiness tests. The district introduced on-line tutorials to support struggling students in Title I mathematics, established special education support classes, and after-school MCAS workshops.

The district designed and implemented learning center and co-teaching models to address the proficiency gap between regular and special education students in mathematics. Mathematics and special education teachers worked together in the co-taught classrooms. Special education students received individualized support and instruction based on the curriculum with a certified mathematics teacher. In addition, the district redesigned the Title I program at the middle school to include ELA (grades 5 and 6) and mathematics (grades 5-8).

The high school implemented several changes in curriculum as a result of concerns expressed by teachers about the two-semester block schedule. Teachers stated that there was lack of continuity

in the four core subjects assessed by the MCAS tests. The spring MCAS tests might assess students' knowledge of standards addressed by courses they took during the fall semester and not reviewed since. They went on to say that students in the district were at a disadvantage compared to other students across the state. To address this concern, the high school instituted a number of changes. For example, Algebra I and Algebra II courses were scheduled in consecutive semesters to provide students a mathematics sequence without a gap prior to the administration of the MCAS tests. Also, a number of AP seminars were instituted as second semester classes to provide continuity of learning and review prior to the administration of the AP examinations.

On the other hand, the district eliminated the foreign languages program in grades 1 and 2 and the foreign languages curriculum leader in the 2007-2008 budget without an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. The district did not present evidence that it investigated why no district students had taken the AP examinations in foreign languages after 12 years of foreign language study beginning in grade 1.

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	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	9
Needs Improvement					✓				✓	✓	✓			4
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

Findings:

- The district teacher evaluation procedure did not meet the requirements of the Education Reform Act. The procedure was last negotiated in 1997-1998 and consisted of a four-year cycle, with classroom observations every three years.
- There was little evidence that the district was using effective strategies for active supervision and effective evaluation of staff members, and the new superintendent cited revision of the system of evaluation and increasing accountability as district priorities.
- The district hired and retained effective teachers, and provided them opportunities for leadership and recognition.
- In 2006-2007, the district began implementing CMP with a new series of professional development to support all teachers of math, including special education and Title I teachers for the first time.
- In 2007-2008, the district had no teachers on waivers. The district frequently hired experienced teachers and administrators who were already certified.
- The district had a longstanding well developed mentor program, directed by a mentor teacher at each level and supervised by the director of curriculum and instruction. The program was consistent across the district.

- Groton-Dunstable funded professional development adequately and used data to determine professional development needs and priorities.
- The district attempted to close the achievement gap between regular and special education students, especially in mathematics, through teacher coaching and professional development, among other actions.
- The district provided training on its emergency and crisis protocols for teachers, substitutes, and volunteers.

Summary

Groton-Dunstable had consistent procedures for hiring personnel, checking references, requesting Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background checks, and monitoring certification renewal. Responsibilities were clear and understood. The district widely advertised vacancies with an intent to engage the most qualified teachers and administrators. The superintendent interviewed each candidate recommended by the principals following school-based team interviews. The superintendent required and reviewed notes from the interview process and reference checks. The human resource director made the CORI background requests and verified years of experience. The superintendent interviewed the recommended candidates, and made the final decision on employment and placement on the salary scale.

Groton-Dunstable offered professional development before and after school, on weekends, in the evenings, and during the summer. In-service sessions were both districtwide and school-specific. Programs were offered within the district by district staff members or consultants and offsite under district sponsorship. The joint administrative and curriculum leadership teams created the professional development plan and ensured that it was consistent with the district's strategic plan, the District Improvement Plan, and the School Improvement Plans. The director of curriculum and staff development scheduled all of the activities. The school committee reimbursed teachers for courses approved in advance by the superintendent.

The district had a well developed, documented, and well supervised mentor program. Teacher leaders directed the program under the supervision of the director of curriculum and instruction.

The Groton-Dunstable teacher evaluation procedure was negotiated in 1997-1998, following passage of the Education Reform Act, but the process did not comply with statute. The evaluation of professional status teachers was not timely, since summative evaluations based on classroom observations did not occur in alternating years. Additionally, the format did not include all of the categories in the Principles of Effective Teaching.

Principals observed non-professional status teachers two times a year for the first three years, and completed a narrative summative evaluation at the end of the year. Summative evaluations were brief and informative but not instructive or growth oriented. Many were missing, and there was no indication when the district granted professional status to one teacher whose file was reviewed.

Although administrators were supposed to be evaluated annually according to the procedure, the former superintendent completed very few evaluations. The evaluation criteria included some but not all of the categories in the Principles of Effective Leadership. The current superintendent completed evaluations of principals and other administrators. These evaluations were thorough and made reference to student achievement data.

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 human resources manager monitored the district's policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of professional staff members. Under the former superintendent, the manager reported to the director of curriculum and staff development. Under the current superintendent, the manager reported directly to the superintendent. According to the current job description, the human resources manager was an administrative member of the central office staff with responsibility for directing a human resources program, including recruitment, salary and classification studies, records management, benefits, department-level planning, and day to day operations. The role also encompassed management of all personnel

operations, monitoring files and records, and monitoring compliance with state and federal regulations, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The manager coordinated the database, completed all personnel reports, provided training for secretaries and paraprofessionals, participated in contract negotiations, tracked the evaluation of staff members for principals, and produced staff directories and employee and substitute teacher handbooks. The manager also coordinated the annual staff recognition event.

Groton-Dunstable advertised vacancies in area newspapers and participated in a regional teacher recruiting fair in Lowell. Principals generally interviewed applicants with a committee comprised of three others, including a parent and a community member. According to interviewees, Groton-Dunstable engaged the best applicant for a position. The district used Master's-step 4 on the salary scale as a reference point rather than a limit. In effect, there was no limit. For example, at the high school candidates were recruited to teach a variety of science or mathematics courses and required multiple DOE certifications to meet 'highly qualified' teacher requirements. The best candidates for these positions were also highly educated and experienced.

Principals interviewed applicants, checked their references, and recommended the best candidates to the superintendent. The superintendent required principals to submit their interview and reference check notes. The superintendent interviewed the recommended candidates, and offered the position.

When teachers were hired, the human resources manager verified years of employment for placement on the salary scale. The superintendent made the placement decision. According to interviewees, the district frequently offered the Skillful Teacher course through Teachers 21, and administrators stated that new teachers were encouraged to enroll.

2. All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

All professional staff members had appropriate Massachusetts licensure. The human resources director was responsible for ensuring that that district administrators and teachers maintained a current and valid license on file. The EQA team randomly selected 38 teacher and 24

administrative personnel files for review and questioned the currency of 12 certificates. The district subsequently provided evidence of current certification through the DOE security portal. The EQA examiners found that all professional staff members held current and appropriate Massachusetts licensure through at least 2007-2008.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

Groton-Dunstable currently employed no teachers or administrators on waivers. Interviewees stated the human resources director and the director of curriculum and staff development shared responsibility for providing monitoring and support for staff members hired on waivers, according to the district procedure.

Administrators told the EQA team that the human resources director ensured that the district was compliant with DOE regulations on waivers. The superintendent determined whether staff members hired on waivers were making effective progress toward licensure, and when to request a waiver for a second year.

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 that addressed the importance of the assessment and use of student data.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The director of curriculum and staff development supervised the district mentor program with the assistance of three experienced mentor teachers. These teachers were responsible for management of the program at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Mentees attended an induction program, including an introduction to the mentoring program, and met at least monthly with their mentors. Most mentees and mentors met more frequently throughout the year. Mentors and mentees were required to keep a journal of their meetings. The mentor program

managers at each level reviewed the journals and submitted them to the director of curriculum and staff development. The director reviewed the journals and verified the hours recorded by mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees observed one another two times each year. Principals told the EQA team that they were responsible for matching mentors with mentees in their schools.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district's professional development program did not include data analysis training for all teachers and professional staff members. The director of curriculum and staff development and curriculum coaches conducted an initial analysis of district MCAS test results, but teachers did not have access to data analysis tools because district had not yet purchased the web-based version of TestWiz, compatible with its Mac platform. Almost all classrooms had at least one Mac computer with Internet access.

The director of curriculum and staff development and the curriculum coordinators analyzed student achievement data. They discussed the data with principals at meetings of the administrative council. Principals disseminated the data and discussed the implications with teachers at grade-level and department meetings. Teachers also reviewed and discussed student achievement data at professional development sessions and at meetings on early release days.

Groton-Dunstable engaged personnel to support the use of technology, and to manage the school database. The new superintendent provided direction for data collection and analysis and expected to involve administrators, principals, and teachers in the process.

The current special education director was new to the district in 2007-2008. In interviews with the EQA examiners, special education teachers stated that they had reviewed individual student results on the MCAS tests and analyzed trends and patterns two years ago. The district instituted the learning center and co-teaching models and other changes based on the findings and

recommendations from this review, and included special educators in all regular education professional development training sessions.

The EQA coordinator contacted the former special education director for further elaboration. The former director stated that the district had focused on closing the achievement gap between regular and special education students. The former director went on to say, and special education teachers confirmed, that a comparative analysis of MCAS test data, report card grades, and other assessment data showed that special education students enrolled in regular education program classes achieved at a higher level than special education students enrolled in separate resource room classes.

Special education teachers told the EQA team that this was because special education students had access to the regular education curriculum in regular education classes. The district attempted to close the achievement gap by including special education students in regular education classes and providing appropriate support; making in-service education trainings common for regular and special education teachers; basing the achievement goals in IEPs on the district curriculum; and correlating report card grades with grade-level standards. Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that preliminary results indicated that these initiatives and changes had improved the achievement of special education students

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

According to interviewees, the district encouraged and placed high priority on professional growth. Interviewees cited programs such as Teachers as Scholars and Looking at Student Work (LASW) as evidence. The director of curriculum and staff development documented the role of teacher leaders, coaches, and consultants engaged by the district in promoting professional growth and development, and listed a number of activities and initiatives. Groton-Dunstable offered many courses for credit on-site, facilitating access for teachers. According to the human

resources director, the district made an effort to start teachers at a step where their experience was recognized and valued.

The district made an effort to retain teachers and turnover was minimal. One teacher told the EQA team that she commuted from a distant town each day because she loved her job in Groton-Dunstable. The mentor program was well developed and managed by teacher leaders with the stated goal of retaining good teachers.

According to interviewees, under the former superintendent the human resources director and superintendent sponsored an annual cookout held on the last day of school. At this event, the district recognized staff members with 20, 25, and 30 years of service, and teachers who attained professional status that year. The district also offered teachers stipends for a large number of leadership roles in instruction, extracurricular activities, study groups, and curriculum development.

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 professional development program was the primary responsibility of the director of curriculum and staff development, assisted by the curriculum coordinators. Each coordinator was required to write a strategic plan for professional development aligned with the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) addressing needs determined by data analysis. The coordinator wrote annual plans for professional development underwritten by a combination of district and school funds.

The strategic plans for professional development were based in part on SIP goals and informed by program assessments; research-based practices, and student achievement data. Professional development was informed to a lesser degree by staff evaluations. The director of curriculum and staff development surveyed staff members annually to determine their professional development

needs and preferences. The topics were not based on needs determined by administrators through classroom observations. Based on a review of selected personnel files, the EQA team found that classroom visits by administrators were infrequent.

At the preschool level social competency was the focus of professional development in 2007-2008, and at the elementary level reading and writing workshops were the focus of professional development in 2007-2008. Teachers at the secondary level required content-specific professional development to maintain certification, including highly specialized training for teachers of upper level courses in science and mathematics. Interviewees stated that the Teachers as Scholars Program met their needs, but each year the number of teachers requesting to subscribe courses exceeded the district quota, and the district had to select teachers via a lottery. Interviewees stated that some of the advanced courses for high school teachers were offered during the school day rather than after school. This in effect denied access and was an impediment to advancing their content knowledge.

According to interviewees, Groton-Dunstable provided Advanced Placement (AP) training for teachers each summer, increasing the number of teachers prepared to teach AP course in the district. District curriculum leaders told the EQA team that they analyzed the AP scores each year. They rotated the assignment of teachers to AP courses, and requested the teachers with the best results to teach more frequently. Interviewees stated that summer curriculum development and professional development were based on needs determined by an analysis of MCAS test results from the previous fall.

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

According to interviewees, the employment of three new principals and a new special education director accelerated expectations for change in programs and practice in 2007-2008. All administrators were expected to take a district-sponsored course on observing and analyzing teaching. Interviewees stated that the administrative council worked as a team to address issues

and concerns. New administrators brought ideas and a broad range of successful practices from other districts. For example, the middle school principal introduced a walk-through protocol for collecting relevant data and providing useful feedback.

According to the former special education director, professional development in English language arts and mathematics at all levels had recently focused on how to deliver the same curriculum to all students, with accommodations and modifications for special education students. This approach required that all teachers, including special education and Title I teachers, attend the same trainings. The district was moving toward a co-teaching model at all levels. This required specialized training. Middle school teachers began the training in January 2008, although the co-teaching model was instituted at the middle school in September 2007.

The district expected all teachers to complete an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). This plan was endorsed by the principal, and reviewed in alternating years. The district developed an IPDP template. The template was customized at each level. Some principals maintained copies of the IPDPs while others sent them to the human services director to file in teachers' personnel records. The pupil personnel services director worked with the nursing supervisor to plan in-service for the district nurses.

According to interviewees, all teachers were highly qualified, and paraprofessionals did not yet need to demonstrate highly qualified status since their positions were funded by the district rather than under federally funded programs, such as Title I. Paraprofessionals were able to attend some workshops not fully subscribed by teachers.

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

The district's evaluation procedure for administrators was partially aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act, and did not include all of the categories of the Principles of Effective Leadership. According to interviewees, the former superintendent did not evaluate administrators annually. This was confirmed in a review of administrators' personnel files conducted by the EQA examiners. The district lacked an accountability system for evaluations. The EQA examiners found that none of the assistant principals had received written evaluations from their principal as required by contract.

Change began with the arrival of the current superintendent. The superintendent wrote evaluations of principals and other administrators that were informative, instructive, growth oriented, and could be used as a model for principals to use in their schools. The superintendent's evaluations of principals also connected student performance and other relevant school data with effectiveness and continued employment.

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's evaluation procedure for teachers was not fully aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act. The evaluation protocol included a pre-observation goal-setting conference and a post-conference following the classroom observation. Out of a random sample of 38 evaluations reviewed, all but eight were informative. Out of the same sample, five were considered instructive, including directives, recommendations, and suggestions for improving instruction.

Compared to the narrative in classroom observations, the summative evaluations were short and lacked specific feedback to improve classroom practice. These evaluations did not promote individual growth and overall effectiveness.

Principals and assistant principals were the primary evaluators of teachers according to contract. Administrators told the EQA examiners that the district provided opportunities for additional professional development and support for struggling teachers through the use of coaches from the office of curriculum and staff development. Coaches discussed and modeled promising and effective strategies and increased teacher understanding of concepts taught in the curriculum. Principals requested coaching services for a teacher through the director of curriculum and staff development. The district provided little evidence, however, that coaching improved teachers' classroom performance.

According to the district procedure, teachers with professional status were observed in the first and third years of a four-year cycle. Teachers set professional goals in the second and fourth years, but were not observed. With permission of the principal, a teacher with experience in the district could bypass the third-year classroom observation phase and instead set goals.

The EQA examiners reviewed the file of one teacher who was evaluated for the first two years, based on two classroom observations annually. In the third year, when the teacher was eligible for consideration for professional status, the principal failed to complete classroom observations and the summative evaluation. The teacher attained professional status without a recommendation by the primary evaluator, and there was no letter from the district granting professional status.

According to the teachers' contract, a struggling teacher with professional status could be subject to an improvement plan. Under the procedure, the teacher, a union representation, and the principal jointly composed the plan. When asked, the principal with the most years of experience in the district could not recall an instance when the procedure had been used. In interviews, principals stated that they carefully monitored the performance of non-professional status teachers, and went on to say that these teachers were not rehired when they did not meet performance expectations.

The district presented very little evidence to demonstrate that it had an adequate system of accountability. Overall the district lacked an adequate system of evaluation aligned with the Education Reform Act.

11. Administrators in the district used effective systems of supervision to implement district and 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

Under the leadership of the former superintendent, the administrative team researched ways of improving high performing organizations, but the EQA team found little evidence of an effective system of supervision to implement district and school programs and to raise student achievement. The new superintendent's first year was devoted to getting to know the district, determining district needs, and implementing an entry plan.

For most of the period under review, the district lacked effective systems of supervision and accountability. According to interviewees, the services of curriculum coaches were used to support teachers in need of instructional support, but there was no documentation in teachers' personnel files verifying that coaches were assigned, and no evaluations of the outcomes of coaching.

The current superintendent increased accountability in the district in order to improve educational results and make a good district better. The superintendent told the EQA examiners that this had led to differences with some district administrators who did not perceive the same need for accountability measures. The superintendent also intended to improve supervision and evaluation since this had not been a priority in the district for many years. The superintendent required all new administrators to participate in trainings on analysis of instruction and interpretation of data. This established a common understanding and a common vocabulary. The superintendent acknowledged that the teacher evaluation procedure negotiated in 1997-1998 did not fulfill the requirements of the Education Reform Act, and would likely have to be renegotiated in the next contract.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to the budget documents, professional development was well funded within the district. Groton Dunstable expended \$313,165 in 2003-2004, \$186,350 in 2004-2005, \$445,823 in 2005-2006, and \$487,612 in 2006-2007. Under the director of curriculum and staff development, the district offered ongoing training for teachers on the reader's and writer's workshops. The district attributed the relatively weak performance of middle school students in mathematics to the non-standards based math program implemented prior to the phase-in of the Connected Mathematics Program (CMP). In 2007-2008, professional development in mathematics was given priority at the middle level, based on data analysis, and all teachers of mathematics were required to attend these sessions.

The district addressed the need to increase student achievement in mathematics by allocating funds to purchase the second edition of the Connected Mathematics Program 2 (CMP2), providing additional teacher training, and engaging an additional mathematics coach to help improve teachers' instruction and to co-teach with special education 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**

Groton-Dunstable provided ongoing training for all staff members in dealing with crises and emergencies. This training was school based. The safety plans included procedures for both lockdowns and fire drills. Schools across the district had very similar procedures. The district reviewed the protocols at least annually and published them in the teacher handbooks. In addition, the human resources director produced a substitute teacher handbook containing the district's emergency and crisis plans.

Principals practiced fire drills, bus safety evacuations, and lockdowns at all levels of the school district. They scheduled four fire drills for each school, and at least one lockdown practice annually. The fire drills were coordinated with the local fire departments, and the lockdown with the police departments. According to interviewees, principals announced the first fire drill of the

year, but all subsequent drills were unannounced, even to staff members. Elementary principals notified parents, staff members, and children in advance when a lockdown drill was scheduled. The process used in past years at the middle and high schools could not be confirmed because the principals were new in 2007-2008.

According to the human resources director, the district requested annual CORI background checks on all substitutes and volunteers in Massachusetts and in New Hampshire because of the district's proximity to New Hampshire. All regular employees of the district were checked every three years.

Standard V: Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support														
Ratings ▼ Indicators ►	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Excellent								✓	✓					2
Satisfactory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		10
Needs Improvement													✓	1
Unsatisfactory														

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district made increasing use of data to assess student participation and achievement.
- The district used aggregated data to make adjustments to curriculum and instruction. The use of disaggregated data was limited to the special education subgroup.
- Although the high school's AP scores were good, the total number of students participating remained generally flat, with an average of only 10 percent of all juniors and seniors enrolled in AP courses during the review period. Subgroup representation in higher level courses was minimal and there was little evidence of a narrowing of the achievement gap.
- The district had begun to implement special education programs fostering the inclusion of all students within regular education classrooms, reducing reliance on pull-out programs and services.
- Throughout the period under review, the dropout, absenteeism, in- and out-of-school suspension, and retention rates for every school in the district, including the high school, were significantly better than the statewide averages.
- High performance expectations and a culture of professionalism contributed to instructional staff attendance rates that were uniformly good in each of the district's schools.

Summary

Groton Dunstable's schools provided a range of educational services and supplemental programs designed to meet diverse student learning needs and improve academic achievement. A variety of early intervention services and remedial and support programs in regular and special education had been implemented or expanded during the period under review. The increased use of formative assessments and summative data helped identify students performing below grade-level expectations, and contributed to an overall improvement in student achievement.

Although the district's English language learner (ELL), transient, and homeless populations were small, appropriate written policies and formal procedures were in place to ensure that these student populations were eligible for and received a full range of timely services and targeted assistance. In 2007-2008, the district provided faculty members with sheltered English immersion (SEI) training through the Merrimack Education Center (MEC).

With the exception of students in the special education subgroup, the district conducted very little regular or systematic analysis of disaggregated performance data. As a result, administrators and staff members could not accurately describe whether subgroup enrollment and achievement rates in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) programs were proportionate to overall student population rates. Although students who did not meet qualifying criteria and academic prerequisites could petition for admission through a waiver process, a review of the data revealed that relatively few of them did. The number of grade 7 and 8 students allowed to enroll in the middle school pre-algebra/algebra program declined substantially in 2007, as a result of the implementation of more stringent prerequisites. Enrollments in high school AP courses remained relatively low and flat throughout the review period as well.

Through the implementation of a more inclusionary, co-taught instructional model, increasing numbers of special education students had more direct access to the full academic curriculum in the regular education classroom.

Clear and detailed student attendance policies were developed and published in all of Groton-Dunstable's schools. These policies included specific notification and enforcement practices and consequences when students exceeded attendance limits. Administrators and staff members described an extensive set of proactive procedures employed by the schools to support and

consistently enforce their student attendance and punctuality policies and expectations, including frequent letters, phone calls, and parent conferences. In 2007, the district's daily student attendance rate was 96.1 percent, compared to the state rate of 94.5 percent. Analysis of data revealed uniformly positive attendance rates and patterns in each of the district's schools, including the high school.

The number of disciplinary infractions, suspensions, and dropouts remained well below state averages throughout the review period. Between 2004 and 2007, rates for both in- and out-of-school suspensions in all the district's schools averaged less than half those for the state. In addition, during this same time period, student retention rates at all grade levels also remained significantly below state averages. Groton Dunstable's dropout rate averaged 1.4 percent, compared with the state rate of 3.5 percent during this same three-year period. Administrators and staff members attributed these positive indicators to fair and consistent enforcement of the district's disciplinary and attendance policies, and continuing and constructive communication between school and home.

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

During the period under review, Groton-Dunstable increasingly employed data to assess student achievement and program participation. In interviews, administrators stated that they collected and analyzed aggregated data to inform modifications or adjustments to curriculum or instruction. District use of disaggregated student performance data focused on the special education subgroup. MCAS test results were the primary source of academic performance data in the district, particularly at the middle and high schools. Interviewees told the EQA team that central office and building administrators were primarily responsible for data management, analysis, and distribution in their individual schools. Due to lack of training and inadequate

network infrastructure, classroom teachers had limited individual capacity to access and utilize data. Principals reported that they employed TestWiz-generated data provided them by the director of curriculum and staff development. They subsequently shared them with and distributed them to the grade-level curriculum leaders and content area specialists who worked closely with staff members to carefully review student achievement and conduct detailed item and curriculum analyses. Teachers confirmed that these collaborations served as a valuable tool to evaluate instruction and inform modifications of academic programs and services.

Administrators and staff members identified a number of significant adjustments to curriculum and instruction that the district implemented as a result of MCAS data analysis. For example, in response to an identified grade 3 reading weakness in genre, teachers mapped the K-3 curriculum and made appropriate modifications to scope and sequence. Student performance difficulties in mathematics led to substantial revisions of the elementary and middle school math curricula, including introduction or expansion of new programs such as Investigations in Number, Data, and Space (Investigations) in grades K-5 and the Connected Math Project (CMP) in grades 6-8, acquisition of new standards-based textbooks, and creation of an MCAS math course for low performing students at the high school. In special education, a co-teaching model, first utilized in core subject areas at the high school, was expanded to all grade levels. Additionally, the district offered various before- and after-school programs, as well as summer tutorial programs at the elementary and middle levels, for students scoring in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories on the MCAS tests. The district also implemented modifications of the K-12 English language arts (ELA) curriculum and instruction. As examples of this focus interviewees cited an increasing emphasis on writing through the creation of writing rubrics at all grade levels, fall and spring assessments of student writing, and systematic grade-level analyses of student writing assessments.

Administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that student achievement data were also used in a variety of ways to help identify at-risk students, as well as to develop appropriate remedial strategies and academic supports for them. In addition to the MCAS test results, administrators identified other sources of performance data that they utilized. These included data from the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), Reading Recovery, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and the Iowa

Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The district provided documentation to confirm that these instruments were used to inform Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and 504 accommodation plans. Student assistance and child study teams used student achievement data to determine the needs of individual students, and administrators used the data to design Title I, special education, and other supplemental programs and services.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district made increasing use of formative assessments and summative data to identify underperforming students and provide them with appropriate supplementary or remedial services. At the elementary level, for example, teachers identified DRA, QRI, Reading Recovery, DIBELS, ITBS, and MCAS test results as primary sources of student performance data. Further, interviewees explained that common unit assessments, core assignments with uniform rubrics, mini-benchmarks, and common open-response questions were among the formative assessments that had been developed or adopted in grades K-2 and planned for implementation in grades 3 and 4. The district used results from both standardized and local assessments to identify students in need of academic support and to measure the progress made as a result of those interventions.

Teachers made referrals for support services, remedial reading assistance, and a wide range of other educational interventions and accommodations. The district's emphasis on curriculum coordination and articulation resulted in greatly improved K-12 horizontal and vertical alignment, particularly in ELA and mathematics, and enabled staff members to focus attention on the development of a variety of standardized grade-level assessments and targeted academic services.

At the middle school, interviewees told the EQA examiners that common end of unit and final assessments were in place or under development in all core academic areas. Using district developed rubrics, Groton-Dunstable evaluated and analyzed student writing in the fall and spring of each year. The district used a four-point rubric, including both formative and summative data, to determine student eligibility for the grades 7 and 8 pre algebra/algebra program. Administrators and teachers said that they worked collaboratively to examine student MCAS test performance data in order to identify students who failed to meet academic expectations. They also used data to develop ISSPs and IEPs, and to inform student assistance and special education teams. Title I teachers used the ITBS as a pre- and post-assessment to determine needs and monitor progress.

At the high school, in addition to MCAS test results, interviewees identified the PSAT, SAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, departmentalized common unit assessments, core assignments, final examinations, and twice yearly rubrics-based assessments of student writing as primary sources of data on student achievement. Additionally, students in grades 9-12 had access to a range of courses, academic levels, and educational supports intended to meet diverse learning needs and abilities. These included MCAS test prep classes in mathematics and English, remedial reading services, and courses in all core areas designed for students who required extra academic support. The high school also initiated co-taught classes to improve instruction for special education students by providing them access to the regular education curriculum and targeted academic remediation. At all grade levels, interviewees stated that student assistance and IEP teams used data to identify students with deficient skills, to monitor their progress, and to develop targeted supplementary programs and services,

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district offered a variety of programs and services in literacy at the primary level to ensure that all students were proficient in literacy by the end of grade 4. For example, the School

Improvement Plans of each of the district's elementary schools cited improvements in student literacy skills, supported by enhanced research-based instructional practices and analysis of student performance data, as major educational goals. Interviews with administrators and staff members confirmed that the district used a range of diagnostic tests and performance assessments to determine reading and writing proficiency in grades K-4. At the pre-K level, the district administered tests such as the Carolina Early Childhood Curriculum-based Developmental Assessment and Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL). The district enrolled certain underperforming grade 1 students in the Reading Recovery program. Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that the district used a number of additional pre- and post-assessments to diagnose reading difficulties in grades K-4 including the DIBELS and QRI. They went on to say that students in need were enrolled in remedial and specially designed instructional programs such as Orton-Gillingham, Wilson Reading System, Reading Milestones, and Project READ.

Teachers told the EQA team that common grade-level assessments, core assignments, and common open-response questions provided useful data on student performance. At each elementary school, reading specialists provided identified students remedial or developmental services individually and in small groups. The specialists worked with regular classroom teachers to deliver appropriate and timely academic support to targeted students. The district identified students who failed to make effective progress, monitored them through the use of child study teams, and provided them with additional educational assistance and interventions, including special education services, when warranted. Title I services in reading and math were available to students in grades 5-8.

Groton-Dunstable students performed well on the MCAS tests. Aggregated student test scores were well above state averages at all grade levels and in all subject areas, and all district students made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2006 and 2007, except for special education students in grades 3-5 who failed to achieve AYP in mathematics in 2006 and in ELA in 2007. District administrators described initiatives to address the root causes, including continued implementation of K-3 performance benchmarks; additional training for classroom teachers and specialists to improve early identification and intervention techniques for at-risk students; improving communication between special education staff members and classroom teachers; co-

taught classes to increase the inclusion of special education students; increased use of technology and computer-assisted instruction; identification of instructional focus areas through analysis of student work by collaborative teacher teams; development of formative assessments; differentiated instruction; and increased staff training to improve the administration of the DRA and analysis of the results.

4. The district immediately assessed the skills and needs of entering and mobile students when records were not available or accessible, and made educationally appropriate and effective placements.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Central office and building administrators reported that the district was in compliance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The director of curriculum and staff development, pupil personnel services director, guidance counselors, and nurses ensured that identified students received educational, medical, dental, and mental health services. Interviewees explained that although the district historically had a very small population of homeless and mobile students, each of the district's schools had procedures and practices ensuring immediate registration, enrollment, timely assessment, and appropriate placement of all eligible students.

Groton-Dunstable developed a school committee policy to ensure that homeless children and youth had equal opportunity in the district. Administrators and guidance counselors told the EQA examiners that the district provided transportation to and from school for homeless and transient students, and offered them their choice of district schools to attend regardless of where they resided. The district also provided these students free lunch. District staff members and student support specialists, including social workers, collaborated with community and regional agencies in order to provide services for homeless and mobile students.

5. The district provided programs and services to alleviate the adverse effects of poverty (including delayed language development, lack of readiness skills, low self-esteem and aspirations, high mobility, and family instability) on students' social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district's low-income population was low incident, averaging less than three percent during the period under review, compared with the statewide average of 29 percent for the same interval. Administrators told the EQA examiners that the district had formal programs and procedures to alleviate the adverse effects of poverty on students' social, emotional, and intellectual development. The provision and coordination of appropriate services was under the supervision of the director of curriculum and staff development. In addition to Title I services, special education programs and services, 504 accommodation plans, and before- and after-school learning programs, the district offered other services in collaboration with local, regional, and state agencies and organizations.

For example, the district provided or arranged for the provision of school supplies and food vouchers using funds donated by the Groton Trust Fund, the Angel Fund, and various school-based parent organizations. Interviewees stated that the school district's K-12 social worker provided individualized services to students and their families, served as home-school liaison, and coordinated services with community agencies.

In addition, therapists from the Herbert Lipton Mental Health Center in Fitchburg provided regular in-school counseling services to students and families. Administrators stated that school and athletic fees were reduced or waived for students with identified financial needs, and that each school sponsored a number of fundraising activities to assist needy students and their families.

6. The district directly involved parents and community organizations in the education of their children through their regular communication and outreach, and facilitated their participation by such means as holding meetings and events at convenient times and locations and providing translators, transportation, and child care.

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Administrators stated and a review of documents confirmed that the district involved parents and community organizations in the schools through regular communication and outreach. The District Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plans of some schools, including the middle and high schools, contained goals to improve and expand communication and accessibility, and to strengthen relationships among parents, students, staff members, and citizens. Interviewees stated that during the period under review district schools conducted open house programs and held parent forums focusing on such topics as MCAS test results, student transition issues, curriculum content, course selection, and the district budget. The district increased communication through principals' newsletters and informational packets, periodic surveys, school and district websites, First Class, a school to home groupware, email, online conferencing systems, and introduction of the Connect-ED telephone instant communication system.

The services of non-English and sign language translators were available to parents who requested them through the office of the director of curriculum and staff development. Child care and transportation services were also available to parents in need. In interviews with the EQA examiners, parent council members stated that there was a high level of communication among the schools, parents, and the larger community. They went on to say that they were well informed, and were encouraged to participate in school policymaking and activities and to engage in meaningful dialogue with teachers and building principals. They also stated that the school councils were valued and influential in the schools, and that they believed that parent and community involvement in the schools enhanced academic opportunities and learning outcomes for students.

7. 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

During the period under review, the district developed and implemented effective policies and improved procedures for school, grade level, and program transitions for all students. Interviewees described a variety of activities and initiatives supporting this goal, including alignment of the K-12 curriculum.

Interviewees told the EQA team that communication and articulation within grade levels, between schools, and across content areas was enhanced under the leadership of the director of curriculum and staff development and with the support of curriculum leaders at the elementary, middle, and high schools, providing an increasingly equitable and high quality learning experience for all the district's students.

Administrators and staff members described a number of spring, summer, and fall orientation activities, school visitation opportunities, curriculum nights, parent coffees, and open house programs that were conducted annually for students and parents. These sessions were intended to facilitate the transition at the junctures in the district between pre-K and K, grades 4 and 5, and grades 8 and 9. Administrators and teachers stated that the high school advisory program designed to facilitate the freshman orientation experience had been strengthened and improved. Transitional activities for students receiving special educational services were described as especially detailed. Administrators, guidance staff members, and special education personnel conducted meetings each spring to review the transition needs of all entering students, including those with IEPs, 504 plans, and Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs). The district complied and maintained cumulative records on each student containing formative and summative data. Cumulative record folders were transferred to the receiving schools each year. Interviewees stated that they held articulation meetings to ensure appropriate placements and continuity of services for students with identified needs.

Administrators told the EQA examiners that the district had changed the setting for core academic instruction for special education students from the resource to the regular classroom, and implemented a more integrated service delivery system in response to recommendations from a Department of Education Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) conducted in 2005. In an interview with the EQA team, the former special education director confirmed these changes when asked to describe the program design prior to 2007-2008. Administrators and teachers told the EQA team that special educators now co-taught with regular education content area teachers in regular education classrooms. They went on to say that this model required increased support to be effective. Regular education teachers needed additional professional development training in instructional accommodations, modifications, and curriculum adaptation, and special and regular educators needed more common planning time to enhance teaching and learning,

The director of curriculum and staff development coordinated Groton-Dunstable's ELL program. The population of limited English proficient students in the district had traditionally been low incident, averaging between 6 and 8 students during the period under review. The 2005 CPR cited several concerns about the district's ELL programs and services. According to the CPR report, although the district provided a certified tutor, there was no sheltered English immersion (SEI) program, and support services for ELL students were rendered by regular education teachers without training. In addition, it was not evident how non English speaking parents were identified and encouraged to participate in their children's education.

Interviews with administrators and staff members and review of current published district policies and procedures revealed that the district had worked over the last two years to correct the deficiencies noted in the CPR report. For example, home language surveys were now administered routinely in the district to identify non native speakers. Students with needs were subsequently assessed with appropriate instruments and provided services. In addition, administrators and teachers told the EQA examiners that the district had established a formal collaboration with the Merrimack Education Center (MEC) to provide SEI training to classroom teachers and that this training was on going.

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

Rating: Excellent

Evidence

Each of Groton-Dunstable's schools had written policies for disciplinary referrals, grade retentions, attendance, tardiness, suspensions, and exclusions. Interviewees told the EQA team that the superintendent and administrative council regularly reviewed district policies and procedures to ensure that practices and protocols were current and compliant with statute. They went on to say that school councils helped to develop effective and appropriate site-based policies and regulations.

A review of student handbooks revealed that the schools maintained, communicated, and uniformly enforced fair and equitable policies, procedures, and requirements. Handbooks were clear, consistent, detailed, and comprehensive. Principals and school councils annually reviewed handbooks and distributed them to all families. Each school used the district's student management software system to compile disciplinary and attendance data. Administrators and student support staff members used aggregated data to identify problematic student behavior patterns, and individual student data to identify individual students at risk. Interviewees stated that the schools offered a range of age-appropriate interventions and support services for at-risk students. These included parent meetings, functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans, peer mediation, drug and alcohol counseling risk assessments, learning center support, and progress monitoring and intervention by IEP and child study teams.

The district promptly notified parents of concerns about a student's academic performance, behavior, attendance, or punctuality. When the matter was serious or urgent, administrators and staff members telephoned parents to arrange an immediate meeting. Interviewees told the EQA team that the district's new Connect-ED automated telephone system was used in all schools to promote communication between school and home.

Throughout the period under review, district attendance, in- and out-of-school suspension, retention, and dropout rates for all grades and every school, including the high school, were significantly better than the statewide averages.

9. 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: Excellent

Evidence

The district's dropout rate had historically been very low, and this continued throughout the period under review. Between 2004 and 2007, the high school's dropout rate averaged approximately 1.0 percent, a rate well below the statewide average of 3.3 percent.

An analysis of data for the Class of 2007 revealed that two students from a cohort of 194 students had withdrawn from school. Interviewees stated that administrators and staff members worked in close collaboration in the district to prevent students from dropping out of school. The district's academic and attendance monitoring systems helped staff members identify students at risk of withdrawing from school. Student assistance teams, composed of high school special educators, guidance counselors, the nurse, the social worker, the resource officer, and building administrators, worked to design individualized intervention strategies. This team worked with at-risk students and their families and made use of a number of school- and community-based programs and resources, as well as academic supports and modifications including tutoring and flexible scheduling options, alternative educational placements, and various therapeutic services.

Interviewees stated that the district collaborated with a number of external agencies and organizations to ensure that dropouts remained in appropriate educational placements. These included the Nashua Night School program, Fitchburg Alternative High School, and dual enrollment and GED programs available through Mount Wachusett Community College. Dropouts had the option to return to Groton-Dunstable Regional High School and were encouraged to do so in order to complete high school. Administrators and staff members told the EQA team that the effectiveness of the district's dropout policies, procedures, and practices were reflected in the consistently low incidence of students withdrawing from school.

10. 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

Although the number of homeless and transient students in the Groton-Dunstable school district has been low incident, averaging only two or three students annually during the period under review, central office and building administrators stated that the district had policies and programs to serve this population.

Interviewees stated that the district's policies ensured that all of the services and supports required by state regulations and federal statutes were available and provided to homeless and transient students. These included Title I and special education services, as well as ongoing collaborations with parents, foster parents, other school districts where students opted to enroll, as well as a variety of local and state agencies and organizations. The director of curriculum and staff development coordinated services for homeless and transient students in the district. Documents provided by the district confirmed that Groton-Dunstable collaborated with a number of educational and social service agencies, including the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Youth Services (DYS), and monitored the cases referred to ensure the provision of services. Interviewees told examiners that the district continually monitored its homeless and transient student populations in order to maintain a high level of timely and comprehensive interventions and assistance.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of student handbooks confirmed that clear and detailed student attendance policies were in place and published in each of the district's schools. The district reviewed these policies annually and the school committee approved changes.

Administrators reported that every family received a copy of their school's handbook. High school and middle school policies were alike in that they contained detailed attendance procedures, notification and enforcement practices, and consequences when students exceeded absence limits. At the middle school, staff members met with parents, sent letters to the court after seven unexcused absences, and assigned detentions if absences continued. At the high

school, students could be denied academic credit if they accumulated more than a specified number of unexcused absences in a term. In such cases, students had the right to appeal to the building administration. These appeals were heard by an attendance appeals committee composed of a building administrator, at least one teacher, one guidance counselor, and one student.

Teachers took student attendance daily, and secondary teachers also took attendance by class period. All schools utilized the district's student management software system to compile attendance data. Interviewees explained that school administrators, guidance, and special education staff monitored and compiled attendance data and distributed them to all classroom teachers. Attendance warning and notification letters, phone calls, and parent conferences were among the primary strategies used to improve attendance in the schools.

Interviewees stated that school social workers and school resource officers were highly effective in supporting the district's efforts to promote and enforce regular attendance and punctuality. School personnel enlisted the assistance of outside agencies when circumstances warranted. For example, interviewees told the EQA team that at the elementary and middle schools, counselors filed Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions and 51A reports in the most serious cases. At the high school, administrators collaborated with DSS, DYS, and student support specialists to deal more effectively with at-risk students and their families.

Data submitted by the district and compiled by the DOE confirmed that throughout the period under review, student attendance rates, average days absent, and chronic absenteeism in each of the district's schools were substantially better than state averages. For example, according to the data provided by the state, in 2007 daily attendance in the district was 96.1 percent compared to the state rate of 94.5 percent. This was the case for all schools at all grade levels across the district.

12. 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

The district monitored faculty attendance in each of the district's schools and the central office maintained records. Administrators and staff members interviewed stated that regular faculty attendance was a priority in the district. The district expected principals to promote and maintain high expectations and to address excessive absenteeism and unusual patterns.

The school faculty handbooks contained the procedure for reporting an absence as well as teachers' responsibilities, including maintaining a substitute folder with required contents, such as lesson plans, seating charts, and safety procedures. Administrators told the EQA team that expectations and procedures were discussed with teachers at faculty meetings, teacher induction sessions, and as part of the mentoring program. The central office hired substitutes and arranged coverage for absent teachers. Administrators and curriculum leaders in each school worked closely with substitutes to facilitate and support their efforts. They were responsible for ensuring that the lesson plans provided by the classroom teacher were effectively implemented and that instructional continuity was maintained. The middle school created substitute binders for all substitutes which included all essential information such as fire drill and evacuation procedures and other pertinent information.

In interviews with the EQA examiners, administrators and teachers stated that staff absenteeism was not a concern in the district. They attributed high rates of teacher attendance to a long tradition of professionalism and collegiality in the district. A review of data supplied by the DOE confirmed that absence rates for instructional staff members were low compared to state averages, both in the aggregate and when disaggregated by individual schools. For example, the average teacher absence rate in 2006-2007, excluding days granted for professional development, jury duty, and military service, was 5.1 percent. This amounted to fewer than nine days per teacher each year in each of the district's schools.

13. 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

In interviews with district administrators and curriculum leaders, examiners learned that there was very little advanced or accelerated academic programming available to students at the elementary schools. In focus group interviews, some parents stated the need for gifted and talented programs, curriculum compacting, and more differentiation of expectations and instruction to meet the interests and needs of elementary learners. In interviews with the EQA team, administrators stated that leveled classes were introduced in the middle school and only in mathematics. A newly developed four-point rubric including formative and summative data, teacher recommendations, and MCAS test scores was used to determine which students would qualify for Pre-algebra in grade 7 and Algebra in grade 8. Interviewees indicated that enrollment in this program currently represented approximately 30 percent of the total population in grades 7 and 8. This was a significant reduction in enrollment compared to previous years when the admission criteria were less stringent.

The honors curriculum expanded in grades 9-12 to include classes in all core academic areas. Advanced Placement (AP) courses were available for juniors and seniors. The qualifying criteria for admission to honors level and AP courses were described in the high school program of studies. The criteria included grades earned in previous related classes and teacher and guidance counselor recommendations. Administrators at both the middle and high schools explained that students who failed to meet the academic prerequisites were required to request a waiver to enroll in honors or AP courses. The high school offered AP courses in science, mathematics, English, and history. None were available in foreign languages, even though for many years the district had a comprehensive foreign language program beginning in grade 1.

Overall AP scores were consistently above average. In 2007, 89 percent of all Groton-Dunstable students who took an AP examination scored '3' or above, making them eligible to receive college credit. Students were not required to take their AP tests and interviewees indicated that at least 10 percent of students chose not to do so. Further review of enrollment data revealed that an average of only 45 individual students enrolled in any AP course during each of the years of the review period, representing less than 10 percent of the total junior and senior class populations.

Administrators acknowledged that analyzing the data on subgroup participation in honors and AP classes was not a regular practice. Consequently, with the exception of gender equity, they were unable to accurately describe how closely subgroup enrollment and achievement rates paralleled those of the school overall. The district could provide no evidence of progress in closing the academic achievement gap.

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	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		11
Needs Improvement													✓	1
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: Satisfactory

Findings:

- While the district's net school spending (NSS) requirements increased over the review period, Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained at 41 percent.
- The budget documents were clear, and the budget development process was open and participatory.
- Budgets were based on the needs of students as determined from an analysis of student performance data.
- Due to the state's recalculation of the Chapter 70 formula, town and school officials projected a reduction of Chapter 70 funds, which would impact programs and services provided by the district.
- Based on the perceived wealth of the towns and the recalculated Chapter 70 formula, the state shifted the cost burden to the towns of Groton and Dunstable. The towns' projections indicated insufficient revenue could result in level funded budgets.

- The district's per pupil expenditure fell below the state average for each of the years under review.
- The culture of the communities valued education, and voters historically had supported and approved the district budget at annual town meetings.
- Declining state and local revenues challenged the school district and town officials to maintain the high performance status of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District.
- District financial reports and records were accurate and timely, and the district acted upon recommendations in auditor's reports.
- The district schools were not locked during the school day and therefore not secure.

Summary

During the period under review, the district appointed a new superintendent who developed the 2006-2007 budget. The budget development process under the new superintendent was open and participatory. The district allocated its resources based primarily on reviews of MCAS test results. During budget development, district administrators and directors reviewed student achievement data and allocated resources based on the needs of students. Principals and program directors submitted staffing requests, generated in part by input from teachers and school councils. Principals and administrators identified levels of staffing and support necessary to maintain the current level of service in the subsequent fiscal year. They also identified known costs as well as expenses based on compliance with mandates and regulations and student enrollments. The district allocated funds to each school on a per pupil basis to be used at the principal's discretion for expenses related to professional development, supplies, computers, and the library.

The period under review included a time of budget restrictions on local, state, and federal levels. The superintendent and the administrative council, school committee, and town officials held continuous budget sessions. The superintendent provided detailed budget documents to the school committee. The superintendent disseminated information throughout the budget development process prior to the budget being presented at the annual town meeting for voter approval.

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District exceeded its net school spending (NSS) requirement for each of the years in the period under review, but the per pupil expenditure fell below the state average. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained at 41 percent over this period.

The culture of the towns valued education, and voters historically had supported the district's operational budget and capital improvement projects. Although the district had provided adequate resources based on net school spending during the period under review, declining operating funds resulted in a lack of adequate technology, reduced staffing, and increased class sizes in 2007-2008.

The district requested an override for the 2007-2008 budget because of insufficient Chapter 70 aid from the state. The operational override failed in May 2007 when voters in both Groton and Dunstable voted by a 2-to-1 margin against it. Among the reasons cited for the failure of the override were numerous changes in the amount requested, lack of clarity about whether reductions in staff meant personnel cuts or reduction/reassignment of responsibilities, the perception of community members that district salaries were too high, and concern about the departure of several veteran administrators. In addition, prior to the vote the school committee approved an early extension of the superintendent's contract with a 14-percent salary increase to take effect July 2009, which added to the opposition to the override request, although the superintendent would not have had a salary increase from July 2005 to July 2009.

The district's facilities were clean, well lit, and well maintained by custodians and maintenance workers supervised by a director of buildings and grounds. The district had a written school preventative maintenance schedule and contracted outside vendors each year for preventive maintenance. During the period under review, the district undertook extensive maintenance and renovation projects to address the air quality issue at the Prescott Elementary School.

The schools in the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District were not secure. The district security protocol for its schools included the locking of all doors except front doors. All schools had signs on the front doors instructing visitors to log in with the main office and identify the reason for their visits. Visitors were expected to wear identification badges, but with the exception of one school, staff members were not required to wear badges.

The district funded a pilot project to install a security system at the Boutwell Early Childhood Center, where all doors were locked and a security system was in place. At the Florence Roche Elementary School, the principal implemented increased safety measures, including locking all doors except the front door, and implemented a new parent pick up sign out procedure. At the two middle schools, students traveled between buildings daily, and according to school personnel the front doors needed to remain unlocked. During the period under review, the district installed security cameras both inside and outside the high school.

The director of buildings and grounds developed a long-term capital plan yearly for each building in the district. A facilities task force, acting in an advisory capacity, reviewed enrollment projections, determined facility capacity, and identified available space.

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

During the period under review, the district appointed the current superintendent who developed the 2006-2007 budget. School committee members and town officials stated in interviews that the budget development process was more open and participatory than in prior years.

A review of district documents indicated formal school committee policies existed that established procedures for the development and adoption of the district budget. The district provided the EQA examiners with budget timelines for each of the years under review. The timelines listed dates during the budget process including meetings, hearings, and final town meetings.

The budget process began in October with the review and approval of the budget timelines. In the months that followed, the administration scheduled meetings to develop the budget. Principals and program directors submitted staffing requests generated in part by input from teachers and school councils. They identified levels of staffing and support necessary to maintain

the current level of service in the subsequent fiscal year. They also identified known costs such as salary projections, contracts for transportation services as well as for facilities and equipment, and anticipated increases in utilities and insurance as well as expenses based on compliance with mandates and regulations and student enrollments. The district allocated funds to each school on a per pupil basis. The principals used these funds for professional development, supplies, computers, and the library.

The current superintendent implemented a three-column budget format characterized by the acronym H-O-W in documents provided by the district. The budget had a column with line items for compliance with state and federal requirements and school committee guidelines (Have to); a column with line items to sustain the expectations of parents for a high performing school district (Ought to); and a column with line items to target long-range needs that would be funded in the third year of the budget cycle, or sooner if the funds were available (Want to).

The period under review was a time of budget restrictions at the local, state, and federal levels. The superintendent and the administrative council, school committee, and town officials held continuous budget sessions. Officials from both Groton and Dunstable attended five comprehensive, detailed budget presentation reviews. School committee members stated that administrators and principals reviewed their budgets line by line. Community members posed questions and made comments at these open meetings.

The superintendent provided detailed budget documents to the school committee. The school committee also received information about revenue and expenditure assumptions for the coming fiscal year. In March, following a public hearing, the school committee adopted the budget. The district treasurer certified the budget and submitted it to the Groton and Dunstable selectmen for voter approval at the town meetings scheduled for April and May.

The district budget document included major spending categories such as salaries, professional development, expenses, library, computer, and facilities, including utilities. The final budget document provided a budget history and trends and a narrative explanation and rationale by the superintendent. It also included the budget timeline, projected revenue, new personnel requests, and student enrollment history and projections.

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 stated that analysis of student achievement data informed budget decisions. The district allocated resources based primarily on an analysis of MCAS English language arts and mathematics results. For example, in response to needs identified by data analysis, the district purchased new materials, provided professional development to address student needs and to support the achievement of all students, and increased mediation services. The district allocated funds to purchase supplementary mathematics materials for special education students, and reassigned special education staff members at the middle school in order to increase the effectiveness of student support. Groton-Dunstable also purchased the Wilson Reading program and ensured that each school had someone trained in the technique.

Based on an analysis of the MCAS test results in mathematics, the district shifted more Title I funds to the mathematics program and hired a mathematics specialist at the middle school. Following an analysis of the MCAS test results in reading, the district assigned a reading specialist to the Swallow Union Elementary School to address identified areas of weakness. Central office administrators stated that the district reallocated staff members and requested new positions based on student needs identified by MCAS test results. During the budget development process, district administrators and directors reviewed student achievement data and allocated resources based on identified needs. In response to an identified need, the district hired an additional guidance counselor at the high school for 2007-2008.

According to central office administrators and building principals, the district allocated funds to each school on a per pupil basis. Distribution of the funds was at the principal's discretion for professional development, supplies, expenses, computers, and the library. According to documentation provided by the district, the per pupil expenditure allocation declined during the period under review, except at the high school. Specifically, the district average per pupil expenditure allotment declined from \$237 in 2004-2005 to \$222 in 2006-2007. For each of the

years under review, the district's per pupil expenditure was below the statewide average. Based on the most recent Department of Education data, the 2005-2006 Groton-Dunstable per pupil expenditure was \$9,645, based on expenditures from all funds, compared to the statewide average of \$11,211.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to Department of Education data, during the period under review the district's net school spending (NSS) increased from \$23,387,749 in FY 2005 to \$26,126,887 in FY 2007, and was above its requirement for each year of the review period. During the same period, district Chapter 70 aid increased from \$9,547,245 to \$10,590,960. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained at 41 percent over this period.

The required local contribution increased from \$9,817,152 to \$11,478,206 during the period under review. The 2006-2007 unified tax rates were \$13.77 in Groton and \$11.32 in Dunstable. According to information posted on the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) website, residential taxes amounted to 73 percent of the amount raised through taxation in Groton and 81 percent of the amount raised through taxation in Dunstable in 2006-2007.

Central office administrators as well as school committee members stated in interviews with the EQA examiners that the school committee approved an educationally sound budget each year during the period under review. The district maintained revolving accounts for the school lunch program and the athletic fees and receipts collected. It included funds from all other receipts and state aid in the calculation of the apportionment of assessments to the member towns.

Documents provided by the school district described the financial state during the period under review. The March 2005 quarterly financial report to the school committee stated the district was

in a very strong financial position. According to the quarterly financial report dated September 21, 2005, Groton-Dunstable ended 2004-2005 as projected, and began 2005-2006 in a very good financial position.

The 2005 2006 year end financial report to the school committee stated that the district ended that year in a sound financial position. The report indicated that through early attention to unanticipated challenges including energy costs, special education tuitions, legal costs, and transportation, the district contained costs or made necessary adjustments to meet those financial demands.

The 2006-2007 fourth quarter narrative report to the school committee stated that the district closed its 2006-2007 books on July 13, 2007 recording favorable variances in both revenues and expenses in a year that featured extraordinary expenses in special education legal fees and settlements as well as unexpected building maintenance projects. According to documents provided by the district and End of Year Pupil and Financial Reports submitted to the Department of Education, the school committee approved the use of excess and deficiency (E&D) funds of \$107,081 in 2004-2005, \$634,821 in 2005-2006, and \$104,500 in 2006-2007.

Most interviewees stated that the district provided adequate resources, but it had reduced its efforts to maintain technology during the period under review. Many interviewees expressed concern about reductions in staff and supplies. Class sizes increased in the district in 2007-2008.

The culture of the towns valued education and voters supported the schools. Examples included support of the district's operational budget and capital projects such as the construction of the new high school, rehabilitation of both middle schools, and the installation of new windows and a roof at Prescott Elementary School to address concerns about air quality.

The town officials stated that as Chapter 70 funds declined and state and federal mandates increased, it had become more difficult to support the school department's requests. Town and school officials told the EQA examiners that the recalculated Chapter 70 formula would result in reduced state aid and level funded budgets impacting the programs and services provided by the district.

According to the director of business and finance, the district intended to maintain unencumbered surplus funds in the E&D account at the end of the fiscal year amounting to 2.5 to 3.0 percent of the budgeted operating and capital costs for the succeeding fiscal year. State statute restricted the balance to 5.0 percent.

A \$1,216,645 operational override failed in May 2007, when voters in both Groton and Dunstable voted 2-to-1 against the override. The primary reason for the override request was the insufficient Chapter 70 aid. Interviewees gave a number of reasons for the failure of the override, but the majority agreed that the superintendent did not understand the culture of the community and had not presented the facts clearly. The superintendent represented the impact of a failed override in a list of required personnel reductions. The projected reductions amounted to 22.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, including 5.1 FTE new positions. There was confusion in the community about how many positions would be eliminated and how many staff members would be terminated. In interviews, district administrators told the EQA examiners that when the 2007-2008 override request failed, the actual staff reductions were fewer than projected. At the elementary level, 4.5 FTE positions were eliminated, and at the middle school level 2.5 FTE positions were eliminated, including 1.5 FTE new positions. Interviewees stated that the failed override resulted in reductions in curriculum personnel, secretarial and clerical hours, and supplies, and the elimination of the position of resource officer, among other losses. Class sizes increased in 2007-2008.

Interviewees cited other factors leading to the defeat of the override including limited support except by a vocal group lobbying for a special interest; unfavorable press coverage of the resignations of some district administrators; the perception that salaries for administrators and others entering the district were too high; changes in the amount of the override request; and extension of the superintendent's contract with a salary increase perceived to be too high, at a time when the school committee was requesting an override.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees stated the district implemented an evaluation-based review process to determine the cost effectiveness of its programs, initiatives, and activities. The district used student performance data and needs assessments to determine cost effectiveness as part of the budget development process. Following a review of out-of-district placement costs, the district reduced its reliance on vendors by developing its own applied behavior analysis program at the Swallow Union Elementary School. The district also rented a classroom at the high school to the Merrimack Education Collaborative. The EQA examiners did not find evidence of significant reductions in special education tuition costs during the period under review in documents provided by the district. Administrators stated that the number of special education students requiring highly specialized services was so low-incident that it was often more cost effective to provide external placements than to develop district programs.

In interviews with the EQA team, central office personnel stated that the district conducted several reviews to determine the cost effectiveness of non-instructional programs. Groton-Dunstable engaged a consultant to examine its special education transportation costs, but the district was advised by legal counsel to defer any action because contract negotiations with van drivers were in process at the time. The district also examined the costs of heating utilities and the school lunch program. According to the auditor's management letter, Groton-Dunstable reduced the deficit of approximately \$65,000 in the school lunch program in 2004-2005 to \$14,000 at the end of 2006-2007. The district also instituted a competitive bidding process during teacher contract negotiations resulting in a savings of nearly \$500,000 in health care costs.

The district also participated in cooperative purchasing of school supplies and heating oil, and it procured goods from state contracts.

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: N/A

Evidence

The towns of Groton and Dunstable formed a K-12 regional school district in 1967. The regulations of 603 CMR 10.0 do not apply to a regional school district.

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**

The district exceeded its net school spending requirements of the Education Reform Act in each of the years of the period under review. According to Department of Education data, the district exceeded the required NSS in 2004-2005 by 20.8 percent, or \$4,023,352; in 2005-2006 by 22.9 percent, or \$4,647,703; and in 2006-2007 by 18.4 percent, or \$4,057,721. By comparison, during the same period statewide averages exceeded the NSS requirement by 11.3 percent in 2004-2005, by 13.0 percent in 2005-2006, and by 13.5 percent in 2006-2007.

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**

School committee members received quarterly narrative financial reports including general information and information on revenue and expenditures from the general fund, revolving funds and grants, and building project funds. Corresponding backup materials were attached to the narrative. In 2006-2007, the new superintendent and the interim director of business and finance provided a more comprehensive narrative quarterly report to the school committee. The school committee was kept informed of the rising costs of heating and utilities as well as special education tuition costs and projected needs for additional funds. The EQA examiners reviewed the reports provided by the district and found them to be timely and informative.

Principals and directors received monthly financial reports of their budgets, detailing funds expended and encumbered to date. These documents contained the original appropriation and the revised budget based on transfers and adjustments. The high school and middle school principals had access to the financial program on the district server, but the elementary principals did not. According to central office personnel interviewed, historically there was no need for the elementary principals to access the financial system. Staff members and the public did not receive financial reports, but school committee meetings were public and taped for later broadcast on the local cable channel. The district posted school committee documents on the district website on the day following a school committee meeting.

According to school committee policy DBJ, Budget Transfer Authority, adopted November 5, 1997, "...the Groton Dunstable Regional School Committee will consider requests for transfers of funds as they are recommended by the Superintendent. The committee wishes to be kept abreast of the need for these adjustments so that it may act promptly and expedite financial record keeping for the school system." The director of business and finance described this policy as a gray area.

Principals had autonomy to control and monitor their budgets and manage their funds. Salary and personnel accounts were district- rather than site-based. Principals submitted requests for transfers between their site-based line item accounts to the director of business and finance during the year. These requests did not need to be justified.

The district filed the end of year report with a Department of Education approved 30-day extension during the period under review, and filed timely grant final financial reports. The district also filed timely amendments to the end of year report, when such amendments were required.

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 Groton-Dunstable Regional School District used software developed by KVS Information Systems, Inc. to maintain its financial information. The district upgraded the software in 2005-2006. This fund-based accounting system was in compliance with all financial reporting requirements. Interviewees expressed satisfaction with the ability to produce necessary reports. The computer software system provided district and individual school reports.

The accounting system allowed for encumbrance of salary and other financial obligations prior to the expenditure of funds. The district encumbered contract and salary obligations into the expenditure ledger. Interviewees indicated the district regularly used forecast mechanisms to ensure spending within fiscal budget limits.

Principals received monthly financial reports of their building budget and the school committee received quarterly budget reports. The monthly budget report detailed all funds expended and encumbered to date. The budget document displayed the original appropriation and the revised budget based on transfers and adjustments. The director of business and finance monitored the accounts. The director of business and finance also used spreadsheets to update projected expenditures for all revolving accounts and to monitor energy consumption and expenses in order to project variances in sufficient time to react appropriately. The district used commercial software to analyze utility costs.

Principals and directors approved manual purchase orders and forwarded them to the business office. The director of business and finance reviewed purchase order requests for proper classification and verification of available funds, prior to processing these requests. During the period under review, the prior director of business and finance retired, and an interim director was appointed. The current superintendent approved purchase orders while there was an interim director of business and finance.

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

School committee policy DD, Funding Proposals and Applications, adopted on November 5, 1997, encouraged the administration to seek and secure all possible sources of state, federal, and other special funds to enhance educational opportunities for the children in the schools.

The district employed a director of curriculum and staff development whose responsibilities included the pursuit of new grants. Interviewees stated that the district failed to qualify for most competitive federal and state grants since only three percent of the student population was categorized as low income. During the period under review, district revenue from federal and state grants declined, except for special education. According to Department of Education data, the district received \$823,222 in federal and state entitlement grants in 2004-2005. Groton-Dunstable received \$819,006 in 2005-2006, and \$848,994 in 2006-2007. The district expended its declining Title I funds to provide services to the middle school. The district's 94-142 special education allocation increased during the period under review from \$594,663 to \$637,669. The staff received mini grants from the Groton-Dunstable Education Foundation.

According to information posted on its website, the Groton-Dunstable Education Foundation, Inc. (GDEF) was formed in 2003. GDEF raised funds through private and corporate donations and fundraising events such as dinner dances, silent auctions, raffles, and an ongoing fundraising program including the teaching star program. This program allowed individuals to contribute to the foundation in the name of a teacher or other outstanding educator. The foundation also accepted vehicle donations and maintained a Business Partners for Education program (BPE) to solicit the support of local businesses. The foundation granted funds for innovative programs for the public schools. Teachers submitted proposals for projects and programs to the foundation. During the period under review, the foundation awarded 81 grants totaling \$133,706.

The district Municipal Medicaid reimbursement averaged approximately \$30,000 yearly during the period under review. The funds were considered a revenue offset in the budget development process. Groton-Dunstable also received, deposited, and expended without further appropriation between \$550,000 and \$600,000 in circuit breaker reimbursements. The district used the funds primarily to underwrite special education tuitions.

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District participated in the school choice program. According to Department of Education data, during the period under review district school choice enrollments ranged from a low of 24.8 FTE students to a high of 35.3 FTE students in 2006-2007. The district received \$201,636 in school choice tuition in 2006-2007. An average of fewer than 20 FTE district students yearly opted to enroll in schools outside the district through school choice.

The district charged an annual \$250 per sport, per student athletic user fee at the high school and a \$150 athletic user fee at the middle school with a \$1,000 family limit. The athletic boosters club provided supplemental support for programs. The Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) provided resources to the schools.

The director of business and finance reviewed and monitored all supplemental expenditures. The business office controlled and monitored all grant and revolving funds and student activity accounts. According to interviewees, the district auditors randomly chose two student activity accounts to be audited each year. In response to ongoing concerns about the student activity accounts cited in the auditor's management letters during the period under review, and the investigation of possible criminal activity, the district rewrote the student activity account operations manual. The revised manual was reviewed by district auditors and forwarded for review to the Office of the Inspector General. Groton-Dunstable also purchased an accounting software program to improve management and control of the high school student activities accounts.

The district implemented a purchase order system for the expenditure of goods and services from the grants and revolving accounts. During the period under review, the prior director of business and finance retired, and the district appointed the current director on an interim basis. In 2006-2007 the superintendent authorized all purchase orders.

The business office prepared all payroll and vendor payments from grants and revolving accounts for inclusion on warrants, and the director of business and finance reviewed all warrants to ensure expenditures were appropriate. Adequate internal controls existed in the business office to ensure the district adhered to procurement laws and processed payroll correctly.

Measures existed to assure complete or accurate deposits in revolving accounts and to ensure the expenditures were for the purposes intended. Procedures existed for the handling of cash and for preparing and processing student activity and revolving account deposits and expenditures.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of vendor activity by the EQA examiners indicated that the district followed state procurement laws. When interviewed, the director of finance and operations stated that the district required three quotes for items costing \$5,000 or more, and formally bid goods and services in excess of \$25,000. School committee policy DJE, Advertising and Bidding Requirements, adopted on November 5, 1997, required procurement of multiple bids for all purchases in excess of \$10,000. In response a question on the \$10,000 bidding limit, the director of finance and operations stated that the district would be reviewing and updating school committee policy.

The district advertised invitations to bid in local newspapers and, when applicable, in the Central Register and the Goods and Services Bulletin. The district also participated in cooperative purchasing through the Merrimack Education Collaborative and procured goods from state contracts.

The director of finance and operations was certified as a school business administrator and had completed necessary seminars to obtain MCPPO credentials. The school committee designated the superintendent as the chief procurement officer. The superintendent delegated purchasing authority to the director of business and finance.

The district retained Melanson, Heath & Company, P.C. prior to the period under review to conduct a yearly audit of the district's financial statements. There was no bidding process. The director of business and finance told the EQA team that the district intended to issue an invitation to bid for audit services.

At the time of the EQA review, the district had a draft copy of a student activity account operations manual developed to address chronic issues cited in the auditor's management letters. The district implemented most of the auditor's recommendations, but had not developed the procedures and policy manual for the school lunch program as it stated it would do in its response to the 2005- 2006 management letter.

The district addressed the school lunch deficit, which had increased according to the auditor's report from \$50,000 in 2003-2004 to \$65,000 in 2004-2005. Interviewees stated that the deficit was reduced to approximately \$10,000 by the end of the 2006-2007 school year, largely by increasing the price of school lunch. The fourth quarter narrative report to the school committee, however, cited a \$14,000 deficit in the school lunch revolving account in 2006-2007.

To address the issues the auditor raised concerning the athletic account, the director of business and finance and the athletic director used an accounting software program to monitor revenue and expenditures by season, sport, and individual team. The program also tracked expenditures by category, including but not limited to equipment, coaching stipends, entry fees, and transportation.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a written school preventative maintenance schedule and contracted outside vendors each year for boiler, generator, elevator, fire alarm, and fire extinguisher preventive maintenance. According to the director of business and finance, the district employed 22

custodians, who reported directly to the principal of the building to which they were assigned. The district also employed a director of buildings and grounds who supervised a staff of five maintenance workers.

After visiting and walking through all district buildings, the EQA examiners determined the facilities were clean, well lit, and well maintained. Middle School South and Florence Roche Elementary School had some modular classrooms.

During the period under review, the district undertook extensive maintenance and renovation projects to address the air quality issue at the Prescott Elementary School. The district repaired and refurbished univents in classrooms on the first and second floors, installed temperature sensitive dampers to increase the supply of fresh air, and installed new windows. Interviewees stated and documents provided by the district or posted on the website confirmed that the CO² readings taken since the completion of the projects had improved. There were still pockets of inconsistent CO² readings, especially in rooms located in the basement.

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

The director of buildings and grounds developed a long-term capital plan yearly for each building in the district. The district facilities task force served as an advisory committee to the school committee and the director of business and finance on pending and potential capital improvement projects. The task force reviewed enrollment projections, determined facility capacity, and identified potential space. The facilities task force included 16 voting and 10 non-voting members. During the period under review, the district hired consultants to prepare a site feasibility study for a new elementary school, and Groton-Dunstable planned to hire a consultant to conduct enrollment projection studies.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The schools in the district were not secure. The district security protocol required locking of all doors, except for front doors. All schools had signs on the front doors instructing visitors to log in at the main office. Middle school administrators and teachers told the EQ team that a visitor to Middle School North could enter the building and bypass the main office by turning left down a corridor, without being observed.

Visitor badges were provided at each school. Staff members were instructed to direct adults without a badge to the main office. Staff members were not required to wear identification badges.

As stated above, the district required all schools to lock all doors, except for the front door. When recess was in session, the door designated for recess was unlocked, and staff members monitored the area to prevent unauthorized access. The district equipped aides and teachers with two-way radios connected to the main office at all times for immediate response and assistance. At the conclusion of the outside recess period, students reentered the building, and the designated recess door was locked.

Administrators stated that that front doors of the two middle schools needed to remain unlocked because students traveled between the two buildings. They went on to say that staff members monitored the students in transit.

All doors were locked at the Boutwell Early Childhood Center, and the building had a security system funded by the district as a pilot project through its maintenance budget. Visitors used a buzzer system to enter Boutwell and were required to sign in at the office and wear an identification badge.

At the Florence Roche Elementary School, the new principal instituted safety measures including locking all doors except the front door. The procedure was new and there was lack of consistency in keeping all doors locked. In visits to the school, the EQA examiners found that

teachers often opened the door for them without following the procedure, and the school's side door was sometimes left unlocked.

During the period under review, the district installed security cameras inside and outside of the high school building.

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 three indices: the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI), the Math Proficiency Index (MPI), and the Science and Technology/Engineering Index (SPI).

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 2007 MCAS tests in a given content area:

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 proficiency index is calculated by adding: $0 + 3.75 + 10.5 + 25.5 + 18 = 57.75$. The proficiency index for the Anywhere High School would be 57.75.

The EPI is calculated using the ELA results for all eligible students taking the ELA exam. The MPI is calculated using the math results for all students taking the math exam. The SPI is calculated using the STE results for all students taking the STE exam.

Proficiency Category	Proficiency Index
Very High (VH)	90.0-100
High (H)	80.0-89.9
Moderate (M)	70.0-79.9
Low (L)	60.0-69.9
Very Low (VL)	40.0-59.9
Critically Low (CL)	0-39.9

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY 1998 – FY 2007

	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
FY98	2,163	6.8	12,260,561	9.2	5,777,584	4,647,946	13.8	10,425,530	8.8	11,742,707	0.6	1,317,177	12.6
FY99	2,267	4.8	13,206,997	7.7	6,192,297	5,534,333	19.1	11,726,630	12.5	13,881,231	18.2	2,154,601	18.4
FY00	2,377	4.9	13,895,517	5.2	7,179,756	6,904,616	24.8	14,084,372	20.1	15,377,815	10.8	1,293,443	9.2
FY01	2,455	3.3	14,819,040	6.6	7,482,326	7,336,714	6.3	14,819,040	5.2	17,276,280	12.3	2,457,240	16.6
FY02	2,640	7.5	16,970,154	14.5	7,876,768	9,093,386	23.9	16,970,154	14.5	17,897,448	3.6	927,294	5.5
FY03	2,671	1.2	17,620,357	3.8	8,526,971	9,093,386	0.0	17,620,357	3.8	19,341,235	8.1	1,720,878	9.8
FY04	2,751	3.0	18,080,516	2.6	9,051,733	9,028,783	-0.7	18,080,516	2.6	20,672,095	6.9	2,591,579	14.3
FY05	2,858	3.9	19,364,397	7.1	9,817,152	9,547,245	5.7	19,364,397	7.1	23,387,749	13.1	4,023,352	20.8
FY06	2,856	-0.1	19,963,557	3.1	10,573,496	9,690,045	1.5	20,263,541	4.6	24,911,244	6.5	4,647,703	22.9
FY07	2,909	1.9	22,069,166	10.5	11,478,206	10,590,960	9.3	22,069,166	8.9	26,126,887	4.9	4,057,721	18.4

Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment

Percentage of Foundation

	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
FY98	5,668	2,149	5,429	37.9	85.0	95.8	39.6
FY99	5,826	2,441	6,123	41.9	88.8	105.1	39.9
FY00	5,846	2,905	6,469	49.7	101.4	110.7	44.9
FY01	6,036	2,988	7,037	49.5	100.0	116.6	42.5
FY02	6,428	3,444	6,779	53.6	100.0	105.5	50.8
FY03	6,597	3,404	7,241	51.6	100.0	109.8	47.0
FY04	6,572	3,282	7,514	49.9	100.0	114.3	43.7
FY05	6,776	3,341	8,183	49.3	100.0	120.8	40.8
FY06	6,990	3,393	8,722	48.5	101.5	124.8	38.9
FY07	7,587	3,641	8,981	48.0	100.0	118.4	40.5

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g., FY07 enrollment = Oct 1, 2005 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.