



Holbrook Public Schools Level 3 District Review

July 2010



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members

Ms. Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose
Ms. Harneen Chernow, Jamaica Plain
Mr. Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge
Mr. Michael D'Ortenzio, Jr., Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley
Dr. Thomas E. Fortmann, Lexington
Ms. Beverly Holmes, Springfield
Dr. Jeff Howard, Reading
Ms. Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, Bridgewater
Mr. Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Worcester
Dr. Sandra L. Stotsky, Brookline

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

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

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

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

© 2010 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

This document printed on recycled paper

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



Table of Contents

Overview of Level 3 District Reviews	2
Purpose	2
Methodology	2
Holbrook Public Schools	3
District Profile	3
Student Performance.....	4
Findings	9
Leadership and Governance	9
Curriculum and Instruction.....	13
Assessment.....	16
Human Resources and Professional Development.....	19
Student Support	21
Financial and Asset Management	24
Recommendations.....	30
Leadership and Governance	30
Curriculum and Instruction.....	32
Assessment.....	34
Human Resources and Professional Development.....	35
Student Support	36
Financial and Asset Management	38
Appendix A: Review Team Members.....	39
Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule.....	40

Overview of Level 3 District Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (DSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. This review is focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2009-2010 school year were districts in Level 3 of ESE’s framework for district accountability and assistance¹ in each of the state’s six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The eight districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six standards: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. Team members previewed selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. The teams consist of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

¹ In other words, as Level 3 was defined at the time of district selection, districts with schools in corrective action or restructuring.

Holbrook Public Schools

The site visit to the Holbrook Public Schools was conducted from March 8-March 11, 2010. The site visit included visits to all of the district's schools: John F. Kennedy (JFK) (pre-kindergarten-3), South (4-6), and Junior-Senior High (7-12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile²

Holbrook is a town located in eastern Massachusetts, bordered by Braintree on the north, Weymouth on the east, Abington and Brockton on the south, and Avon and Randolph on the west. Holbrook is six miles north of Brockton and sixteen miles southeast of Boston. In Holbrook, educational, health, and social services and retail trade are the largest sources of employment, followed by manufacturing. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the town had a population of 10,785 people and a median family income of \$62,532.

The town is governed by a representative Town Meeting form of municipal government. There is a five-person school committee in Holbrook and there are three schools serving grades pre-kindergarten to 12. The school district has been experiencing declining enrollment, with the 2010 enrollment at 1161.

The local appropriation to the Holbrook Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2010 is \$11,200,001. In addition to the appropriation to the district budget, school-related expenditures by the town are estimated at \$5,689,159 for fiscal year 2010. In fiscal year 2009, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$11,572,702), expenditures by the town (\$4,972,400), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$1,829,574), was \$18,374,676.

The table below indicates the demographic/subgroup populations in the Holbrook Public Schools. These percentages have been relatively stable over the last few years, despite the declining enrollment.

² School financial data and student demographic data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

**Table 1: Holbrook Public Schools Student Enrollment
by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations—2009-10**

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Percent of Total
African-American	12.2	First Language not English	8.9
Asian	3.7	Limited English Proficient	2.2
Hispanic or Latino	6.7	Low-income	32.1
Native American	0.1	Special Education	21.0
White	72.5	Free Lunch	24.5
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	7.7
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	4.7		

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

Student Performance³

In the Holbrook Public Schools as a result of the 2009 MCAS, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability status in English Language Arts (ELA) was Corrective Action for Subgroups, while in mathematics the status was Improvement Year 1 – Subgroups. In addition, in ELA:

- Holbrook students in the aggregate in grades 3-5 and 6-8 made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009 after not having made it in 2008.
- Students in the aggregate in grades 9-12 did not make AYP in 2009 after having made it in 2008.
- In grades 3-5, low-income students did not make AYP.
- In grades 9-12, White students did not.
- In grades 6-8, all subgroups made AYP.

In mathematics:

- Students in all grade spans failed to make AYP both in the aggregate and for subgroups.
- In grades 3-5, the African American/Black, White, and low-income subgroups did not make AYP.

³ Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

- In grades 6-8, African-American/Black and White students did not make AYP.
- In grades 9-12, White students failed to make AYP.

As the above breakdown demonstrates, there is considerable variability in student AYP status from year to year. In addition, across the grades a number of subgroups failed to make AYP.

Table 2: Percentages of Holbrook Students Achieving Proficiency or Better—2007-2009

Assessment	2007	2008	2009	Difference 2007-2009
Grade 3 Reading	54	48	48	-6
Grade 3 Math	45	49	48	+3
Grade 4 ELA	46	47	60	+14
Grade 4 Math	28	42	43	+15
Grade 5 ELA	54	59	50	-4
Grade 5 Math	49	52	49	0
Grade 6 ELA	64	61	68	+4
Grade 6 Math	53	61	56	+3
Grade 7 ELA	62	60	63	+1
Grade 7 Math	36	26	40	+4
Grade 8 ELA	68	67	68	0
Grade 8 Math	33	40	13	-20
Grade 10 ELA	63	60	65	+2
Grade 10 Math	67	58	49	-18

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

As Table 2 above indicates, although more grades showed an increase in proficiency than showed a decrease, in most grades there was little movement in the percentage of students achieving proficiency in 2009 over 2007. In 9 out of the 14 grade level assessments, the changes over the three test administrations ranged from a decrease of 4 percentage points to an increase of 4. Although they are not, so far, part of trends, the two greatest increases in the percentages of students attaining proficiency occurred in grade 4 where there was an increase of 14 percentage points in ELA and an increase of 15 percentage points in mathematics. In addition, there were two significant decreases, a drop of 18 points in the percentage of students proficient in grade 10 mathematics, and a drop of 20 points in grade 8 mathematics.

**Table 3: Percentages of All Holbrook Students Proficient or Advanced
as Compared with State—2009**

Assessment	District	State	District Difference
All Grades - ELA	60	67	-7
All Grades - Math	44	55	-11
Grade 3 Reading	48	57	-9
Grade 3 Math	48	60	-12
Grade 4 ELA	60	53	+7
Grade 4 Math	43	48	-5
Grade 5 ELA	50	63	-13
Grade 5 Math	49	54	-5
Grade 6 ELA	68	66	+2
Grade 6 Math	56	57	-1
Grade 7 ELA	63	70	-7
Grade 7 Math	40	49	-9
Grade 8 ELA	68	78	-10
Grade 8 Math	13	48	-35
Grade 10 ELA	65	81	-16
Grade 10 Math	49	75	-26

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

As Table 3 above indicates, in 2009 the percentage of students across the state achieving proficiency was higher than the percentage of Holbrook Public School students doing so, in both ELA and mathematics. With the exception of Grade 4 and Grade 6 ELA, this held true for both subjects across the grades.

Table 4: Percentages of Holbrook Special Education Students Proficient or Advanced as Compared with State—2009

Assessment	District	State	District Difference
All Grades - ELA	14	28	-14
All Grades - Math	11	20	-9
Grade 3 Reading	4	23	-19
Grade 3 Math	16	28	-12
Grade 4 ELA	5	16	-11
Grade 4 Math	0	16	-16
Grade 5 ELA	10	24	-14
Grade 5 Math	13	18	-5
Grade 6 ELA	16	26	-10
Grade 6 Math	12	19	-7
Grade 7 ELA	10	28	-18
Grade 7 Math	5	13	-8
Grade 8 ELA	32	40	-8
Grade 8 Math	5	12	-7
Grade 10 ELA	36	43	-7
Grade 10 Math	36	37	-1

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

Table 4 above compares the proficiency in 2009 of special education students in the district with the proficiency of special education students across the state. Across all grades in both subjects, a lower percentage of district students with IEPs attained proficiency than of students with IEPs in the state. Only in grade 10 mathematics was the percentage nearly the same. In a few other cases, the district percentage was close to the state percentage, but in many instances the district percentage was considerably lower.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) has developed a new measure that provides an additional perspective on MCAS results: student growth on MCAS. The Student Growth Model compares students' improvement from year to year to that of their peers statewide with similar test histories. Growth model data is available in ELA and mathematics for grades 3 through 8 for both 2008 and 2009. As a result, it is possible to compare levels of growth between the two years. At the high school level growth model data is available only for 2009, so comparisons are not yet possible.

When the median SGP is over 50, it means that students are improving faster than over half of their peers across the state with similar test histories. When it is under 50, it means that students are improving more slowly than over half of their peers across the state with similar test histories. The median SGP for all students in the Holbrook Public Schools in 2008 (excluding

grade 10) was 43.5 in ELA and 45.0 in mathematics; in 2009, those median SGPs fell to 42.0 in both subjects.

In Holbrook in 2009 in ELA, there were areas of both high and low growth:

- Student groups with relatively high growth included grades 4 and 6 with median SGPs of 60 and 59.5 and Asian students (23 students) with a median SGP of 73.
- Student groups with relatively low growth included grade 5 with a median SGP of 39; grade 7 at 40; grade 8 at 23.5; and grade 10 at 36. Also, special education students had a median SGP of 34.5 and the median SGP for Title I students (21 students) was 39; Holbrook Junior-Senior High had a median SGP of 35.

In mathematics as well, there were areas of both high and low growth in 2009:

- Student groups with relatively high growth included grade 10 with a median SGP of 61, Title I students (23 students) with a median SGP of 71, and LEP/FLEP students (23 students) with a median SGP of 74.
- Student groups with relatively low growth included Black students with a median SGP of 35, grades 7 and 8 with median SGPs of 19 and 30 respectively, and Holbrook Junior-Senior High with a median SGP of 30.

In general, the district as a whole showed decreased rates of growth in both ELA and math in 2009 as compared to 2008, and the district's median SGPs in both subject areas fell short of the statewide median SGP of 50.0 in both years. Specifically, 2009 median student growth in both ELA and mathematics across all tested grades (7, 8, and 10) at Holbrook Junior-Senior High School was notably low compared to peers across the state with similar test histories, except that Grade 10 at this school demonstrated a pocket of relatively high growth in mathematics. The median SGP of students at South School (grades 4, 5, and 6), on the other hand, was almost exactly aligned with the median SGP statewide; their SGP was 51 in both ELA and mathematics.

Findings

Leadership and Governance

In all areas, as the result of the erosion of the district's infrastructure, the Holbrook Public Schools lack systems.

The central office functions of administration, curriculum, human resources, supervision, and finance are carried out by the superintendent supported by two clerks, a newly-appointed data supervisor, a part-time business consultant, and a director of special education supported by an out-of-district coordinator and an administrative assistant.

Over the past few years Holbrook has suffered reductions in personnel due to fiscal constraints. In an attempt to maintain the teaching staff, central office administrative and support positions have been eliminated. The past three years of reductions have left the school system without full-time administrators in the areas of curriculum and business, as well as without an executive secretary to the superintendent.

As a result the central office positions that constitute the infrastructure necessary to move initiatives for improvement forward are noticeably absent. To the degree possible the functions usually carried out by staff in the missing positions are assigned to various other positions. The two clerks provide support for Human Resources while carrying out the daily financial operations of the school system. Curriculum development and supervision are assigned to the three principals, and, in turn, to individual teachers. The interim superintendent, who is also the high school principal, directly supervises the support areas of maintenance/custodial and food service.

Development of the fiscal year 2011 budget this year has been more open and systematic than in previous years. The school committee and its finance subcommittee received line item detail. In addition, the school committee through its budget subcommittee has had substantial input into the development of the school budget. To better represent the true needs of the system, the budget subcommittee this year enhanced the administration's request by 3 percent. Given the current state of the economy and the anticipated cuts in state aid, however, this is little more than a gesture, as the finance committee has projected a 5 percent reduction from this year's funding.

As reported by administrative staff and teachers, however, there is no defined process for soliciting and prioritizing budget requests from the principals, program directors, and their staffs. According to the superintendent and principals, most input comes from the administrators at administrative meetings. The expectation appears to be that the principals and program directors will articulate the needs of the teachers because, according to the principals, there is no teacher involvement. Administrators interviewed stated that there is then no consensus developed among the administrative team regarding what the budget priorities will be. The final allocation of resources appears to be determined by the superintendent.

Principals' access to their school budgets is limited. They access their budgets through the private consultant's website, but they cannot view the detail behind the line items. Principals

reported that responses to their requests for the detail are often not forthcoming. School committee members access monthly reports in the same way; school committee members report that requests for detail are honored promptly.

The current strategic plan runs through June 2010. Planning for the development of “Vision 2014” is in progress. Vision 2014 is to be a comprehensive plan including all the district’s efforts for school and district improvement. Having this plan will hopefully lead to a more systematic approach to school governance. According to the superintendent, the process for developing the strategic plan is planned to be more inclusive of teachers, parents, and community members. However, during interviews with the superintendent the means by which stakeholders will be identified and included remained unclear.

“We make plans and then nothing happens” is a constant refrain in the district. This was the response in interviews to many inquiries about the various functions and initiatives of the school system. The erosion of the system’s infrastructure has left it ill equipped to address the needs of its students.

The rapid turnover of administrators in the Holbrook Public Schools, the practice of not recruiting experienced professionals including those outside the district, and the lack of leadership development for administrators new to their positions have left the district’s leaders without the necessary experience and support to transform the school system to improve student achievement.

The current superintendent is the fifth superintendent in fewer than ten years. Before being appointed as superintendent, on July 1, 2010, he was interim superintendent, while remaining in the position of high school principal to which he was appointed in 2008. The current high school principal, the former assistant high school principal, also assumed her position on July 1, 2010, making her the third principal in four years.

According to administrators, staff, and school committee members, many administrative positions are filled from the present staff with little or no recruitment. For instance, the current superintendent, current principals, and current Junior-Senior High School assistant principal were all hired for their present positions from other positions within the system with no outside competition. Administrators do not always, therefore, have experience in the position for which they are being hired, and the district does not always have the benefit of selecting applicants that meet established qualifications from among a pool of candidates that includes experienced professionals from outside the system. When the administrative staff are hired predominantly from within the system, expectations for performance and benchmarking are unclear. This practice militates against breakthrough initiatives that result in higher achievement.

The rapid pace of personnel change within the administration is not supported by leadership development. For example, although the interim superintendent was appointed after serving less than one year as the high school principal, he has not had one-on-one support in the

superintendent position of a coach with experience as a superintendent.⁴ Similarly, at the time of the site visit the new high school principal was not scheduled to have a coach with experience as a high school principal. New leaders would certainly benefit from having such leadership development. The school committee is appropriately requiring that administrators be held accountable for student performance. In order to meet this important goal, administrators need support, coaching, and opportunities for team building to transform a school system.

Students do not receive the greatest benefit from the few resources available in the Holbrook Public Schools.

The review team was struck by the scarcity of classroom resources, as observed in classrooms and reported by staff. There are few supplemental resources in classrooms throughout the system. Elementary classroom libraries consist of fewer than 200 titles on average, and there are no leveled readers. Everyday Math, which requires substantial augmentation to meet the state curriculum frameworks, is used primarily without supplemental materials. Much instruction in social studies and science at the elementary level is achieved using photocopied material. Science teachers do not have the necessary materials to conduct experiments or provide demonstrations. Teachers report purchasing most of the supplemental materials they use themselves. Instruction at the secondary level relies heavily on texts, many of which have publication dates of several years ago.

Decisions regarding the allocation of resources appear to be inconsistent and based on individual school needs rather than the needs of the whole system. The Collins Writing Program is enjoying a successful return to the system. It was introduced in grades 4-6 three years ago, although the achievement of students in grades 7-12, documented by their performance on MCAS, indicated greater need. Recently Collins Writing has been reintroduced at the Junior-Senior High School, where it had been an unsuccessful initiative several years ago. It was expanded two years ago to grade 3 at the JFK School.

The use of the Scantron assessment system is inconsistent in the district. According to the district, Scantron is to be used in grades 2-10. However, its use is of questionable value at grade 2, and administrators and teachers agree it is not uniformly implemented in grades 7-10. In addition, there appears to be duplication in the system: assessments from Study Island, a computer-based system used primarily for students who need help with MCAS, are used at the South School in addition to Scantron.

There is no apparent systematic plan for replacing or adopting classroom materials. This year the Scott Foresman Reading series was purchased for grade 1 late in August, precluding the professional development that usually accompanies such adoptions. Because of concerns about the fiscal year 2011 budget, it is currently unclear whether the series will be extended to grade 2.

⁴ The superintendent did have mentoring support from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, but this consisted of two mentors for all 30 or more new superintendents; the program consisted of two general meetings, one one-on-one meeting, and occasional follow-up telephone calls.

At the time of the site visit, it was also unclear whether an additional 40 texts would be purchased for a larger entering grade 1 next September.

Arrangements made for the instruction of students with disabilities are not always optimal. Classes at grades 4-6 are large. The review team observed classes at the South School with 27 or 28 students; according to interviews, two classes had 29 students. These large classes seem to have been planned with the understanding that special education students be pulled out for reading and mathematics instruction. This means that the access of students with IEPs to teachers with strong content backgrounds in mathematics and reading is sometimes compromised. It also means that when students with disabilities are included in mainstream instruction, for social studies and science, the class is extremely large. Neither situation is ideal. In addition, classroom observations revealed that when special education teachers are teamed with classroom teachers in some secondary classes, they act as aides, providing little differentiation or support for students.

Further reductions made to preserve instruction in the core areas have left secondary students without courses in performing arts and a greatly depleted choice of electives in other areas. The primary grades have no instruction in art. The last great loss to the system as result of fiscal constraint is the induction and mentoring program for its beginning teachers.

In an attempt to preserve classroom teaching positions, the district operates with a minimum of central office administration and support. In interviews with the superintendent and school committee members it was acknowledged that reductions have been made without a reorganization strategy. Dividing the daily work among the remaining staff and contracting professional services have not yielded an efficient structure.

This year a data specialist was added to the central office staff. The superintendent stated that the purpose of adding this position is to combine data from all the district's assessments into one array for teachers to use to inform instruction. Providing support to increase teachers' ability to analyze data and use it to improve instructional practice is admirable. However, in this district that has been stripped of nearly every vestige of systems to support instruction, both administrators and teachers reported that this expenditure appeared arbitrary and confusing.

The district is beginning to evaluate some of its costs. Earlier this year the district commissioned a study of the costs related to special education transportation. It appears that it may be possible to recover some of these costs by going to an in-district model from a contracted model. In a related effort the district has begun to study the educational and financial efficacy of placing so many of its special education students out of district, as well as the reorganization of the special education department.

These studies are good steps toward looking systematically at allocating the system's resources so as to better support instruction. The lack of an integrated method of allotting and using resources has created inconsistent instructional initiatives and a striking lack of classroom resources that deprives students of the necessary tools with which to learn.

Curriculum and Instruction

The decentralized and uncoordinated practices currently in place for the development of curriculum will not lead to a complete aligned district curriculum.

The district has been without a formal written curriculum for a number of years. Recently there has been a concerted effort to address this need. However, the district's curriculum development practices have limitations, and without significant changes the product of these efforts will not satisfy the basic requirements for a complete and effective curriculum.

There is no single individual charged with curriculum oversight in the district; responsibility falls to the principals in each of the three schools to develop the curriculum for that school for each grade and content area. As might be expected, individual teachers and teams of teachers are then expected to produce the written documents. There are two immediate problems with this. First, since there is no district agreement as to the elements that constitute an effective written curriculum, the teachers have no standard format for the documents they are to produce. As a result, there is wide variation as to whether objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments are included. Second, the district has not laid out from kindergarten through grade 12 the meaningful progression of what students will know and be able to do. Because of this, having independent curriculum development such as that for ELA grades 4, 5, and 6, which is genre-based and has monthly topics and skills, may lead to arbitrary decisions as to what is included and where.

According to interviews with administrators, a few teachers were paid to develop curriculum during summer 2009, but most are expected to work on curriculum when given the opportunity during professional development time. However, curriculum writing is only one of the many demands on that time. In fact, according to teachers and administrators, teachers at all levels are doing large portions of this curriculum work on their own time and with little guidance and feedback.

The curricula produced thus far are in various stages of development. The one similarity across all curricula is the listing of the state framework objectives for the grade level and subject and an attempt to align the details of the developing curriculum with those objectives. At the JFK School, no mathematics curriculum has been developed. For ELA at JFK, the curriculum for grade 1 is nearly complete. Teachers have developed it around the newly purchased Scott Foresman series. Grade 2 works from a curriculum developed for an old Scott Foresman series, and the grade 3 curriculum is partially complete but lacks a timeline and resources. At the South School, mathematics curricula for grades 4, 5, and 6 are lists of Everyday Math objectives matched to state framework objectives. Assessments are unit tests from the math program. Teachers developing curriculum at the Junior-Senior High School (JSHS) are most frequently working alone. The high school is small, and in many cases individual teachers are the only ones teaching a specific course. The resulting documents are inevitably idiosyncratic and vary widely

as to the elements included and the levels of completion. And there was little evidence that the teachers have received feedback on curricula they have submitted.

Vertical alignment from grade to grade and school to school is an issue in the district. In mathematics the core presence of the spiraling Everyday Math program from grades 1-8 ensures some vertical alignment. But teachers reported developing ELA curricula with little reference to what existed or was being produced in the preceding and following grades. Also, in Holbrook building transitions occur between grades 3 and 4 and grades 6 and 7, and there was little evidence that the district had addressed the need for vertical alignment across these divides. During the early release day that occurred during the site visit, grade 6 and 7 ELA, mathematics, and science teachers met for the first time that most could remember to begin to address vertical alignment issues.

The district is working to address its curriculum needs. Administrators and teachers are painfully aware that when they bring new teachers into the district, they frequently have little in the way of curriculum to hand them to guide their work during the coming year. However, without overall coordination of the curriculum work underway, what is being produced will not form a coherent whole. The lack of a fully developed and implemented curriculum is a tremendous disservice to the students.

The necessary and important move toward greater inclusion of special education students in regular education classrooms exposes the need for training of both regular and special education teachers and for more common planning time to allow them to meet.

The district has recently begun to address the relatively low rate of inclusion of students with IEPs in general education classrooms. Figures from 2007-2008 show that 33.9 percent of district special education students were fully included; the state rate at that time was 55.7 percent. In 2008-2009, the percentage of district special education students who were fully included rose to 38.1; however, it was still markedly below the state rate of full inclusion of 56.8 percent. One of the assumptions that underlie the federal mandate that students with disabilities learn in the least restrictive environment (LRE) is that special education students learn best when included in the general education environment, with such supplementary aids and services as are necessary (for instance, modifications), unless the nature of their disability is such that this is impossible. The impact of a low rate of inclusion is that large numbers of students with IEPs are denied the opportunity to learn in the setting where they can learn the most. 2009 district MCAS results showed strikingly low proficiency rates for students with disabilities. Across all grades in English language arts, 14 percent of special education students achieved proficiency, considerably lower than the 28 percent of these students statewide. Also, in mathematics at all grades, 11 percent of students with IEPs attained proficiency, in contrast to 20 percent of special education students in the state. Additionally, students with disabilities demonstrated relatively low rates of growth between 2008 and 2009 when compared to peers statewide with similar test score histories. That is, the special education student in Holbrook with the median Student Growth Percentile in ELA grew at or above the rate of only 34.5 percent of peers statewide, and the special education student with the median Student Growth Percentile in mathematics grew at

or above the rate of only 42 percent of peers statewide. These strikingly low achievement and growth rates of special education students as well as the legal requirement that students receive their education in the least restrictive environment have made inclusion a priority in the district.

Most grade 3 special education students are now included in regular education classrooms, although a pull-out model is still used for kindergarten through grade 2. Students with IEPs in grades 4, 5, and 6 are still pulled out for ELA and mathematics instruction, although this year for the first time students receiving pull-out instruction are taught the grade level curriculum. In grades 7 to 12, inclusion has been the model for only the last year and a half.

However, the move toward inclusion highlights some areas of need. Pull-out instruction is deeply ingrained in the culture of the district's schools. It has been years since special education law began to mandate LRE, but only two years, according to interviews, since the district began to move away from pull-out instruction as the usual model for students with disabilities. Not surprisingly, administrators and teachers reported some initial and continuing teacher resistance to the change. To begin with, teachers find themselves in the novel situation of working as a team member with another teacher, not a simple matter. In addition, teachers in all three schools, when questioned during focus groups, reported that they have had no training, whether as general or special education teachers, on working with students with IEPs in the regular education classroom. Although the district has provided training on differentiated instruction,⁵ these teachers reported some professional development on differentiated instruction approximately five years ago, but nothing since then. Also, common planning time during the school day is extremely limited, sometimes as little as 15 minutes per week, so regular and special education teachers have few opportunities to meet and plan together.

It is critically important for student growth, as well a legal requirement, that all special education students are educated in the least restrictive environment, with as many special education students as possible being included in the general education environment. However, placing special education students in a general education classroom does not necessarily improve those students' learning opportunities. Teachers working as a team for the first time may find it very challenging and so may not be doing their best work. The review team saw a number of special education teachers in classrooms assuming a role similar to that of a paraprofessional, but few functioning as equal members of a team. In addition, teachers may not have the skills to differentiate instruction. And with little time available for working together, new teacher teams cannot establish the understandings necessary for sharing the classroom.

While observations of classrooms showed a number of positive characteristics, instructional practice in the district does not reflect high expectations for students.

Classroom observations during the site visit revealed some positive characteristics. In 83 percent of classrooms, the tone of the classroom was respectful. Instruction linked concepts to students' prior knowledge 75 percent of the time. And presentation of the content was appropriate for the

⁵ See ESE's 2009 Mid-cycle Review Report, criterion SE 20, available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2009/followup/0133.doc>.

students' English proficiency and developmental level in 94 percent of classrooms. Finally, observers noted active student engagement 75 percent of the time.

At the same time, however, the observations revealed that key indicators of high expectations for students were not present with sufficient frequency. In only 39 percent of the 36 classrooms visited did review team members observe the employment of a range of instructional strategies such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. Likewise, questions requiring students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were observed only 39 percent of the time. Only 53 percent of the time did students articulate their thinking and reasoning. Finally, during only 42 percent of the observations did students work with one another in pairs or in small groups—and when students were observed working in pairs or groups, only one instance of differentiated learning was noted.

This last group of indicators—involving teachers incorporating a range of instructional strategies and students using higher order thinking skills, explaining their thinking, and solving problems through interaction with others—requires active engagement of learners in more complex and demanding ways. Without the opportunities provided by the regular incidence of these indicators in their classrooms, students will not grow as learners, and student proficiency levels will remain static.

Assessment

The district lacks a systematic approach to the selection and use of assessment tools to improve student achievement.

In interviews district and school staff acknowledged that each school uses a variety of assessments, sometimes determined by the principal, but in many instances determined by grade level teachers. The district has recognized this as an area of concern since one of the goals in the Holbrook Public Schools Action Plan 2005-2010, the current strategic plan, is the use of common assessments for all students.

Examples of the variety of assessments and their use or non-use were provided during interviews. Last year the high school started to create schoolwide rubrics for use across the curriculum, and this year staff have started to implement them. While high school teachers were trained several years ago in how to use student work as a means of assessment, many teachers are not using this form of assessment. At this time the high school final and midterm exams are used as means of assessment, while teachers at the junior high school do not administer midterm exams, as they feel that it would be “overkill” for students. Teachers at the JFK school use portfolios and also look at student work. There was substantial use at all levels of end-of-unit tests in textbooks. Benchmarks have been developed for all primary and elementary grades and are available in a printed brochure for each level. But the benchmarks do not have accompanying assessments. Interviewees acknowledged that the benchmarks are simply a copy of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and that they are not measurable, but rather are

used to let parents know what is being taught at each level and also as a reminder to teachers. The high school has not developed benchmarks; however, interviewees said that in a few cases staff are working on a basic list of what students should be able to do before the end of a course.

The John Collins Writing Program has been introduced at different levels in the last year or two. The program is being introduced this year at grades 7 and 8. In interviews, high school teachers said that John Collins held workshops at the high school several years ago but that it had not been successfully implemented until recently.

Two years ago, in an attempt to offer a systematic approach to assessment, the district introduced the Performance Series test from Scantron, aligned to the Massachusetts frameworks, that was to be used in grades 2 through 12. However, principals and teachers said that while it is used “faithfully” at some levels, there is not a systematic use of the assessment, especially at the Junior-Senior High School. There, according to the assistant principal, it is used more at some grade levels than others, with more use at grades 7-10 and some use by teachers in grades 11 and 12. The use of the assessment at the 2nd grade was discontinued as students did not have the computer skills necessary to take the test. Principals agreed that the assessment should be administered much more often in order to have an impact on instruction. As the assessment is administered three times a year, in September, January and June, results are used to show growth rather than to provide teachers with more timely information that could have an impact on instruction. In focus groups teachers said that despite this lack of timeliness, they received Scantron positively since they had had little information before the introduction of Scantron to help them assess students. However, in addition to mentioning the infrequent use of the assessment, some teachers also said that it does not correlate with the MCAS, as student scores on the two assessments tend to vary widely.

Until this year not all teachers at the district’s primary school were trained in the use of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Training took place last year for kindergarten and grade 1 teachers but it was not until December 2009, when a grant (Hill Grant) was obtained, that training took place for grade 3 teachers. The grant also provides onsite support visits by a coach who works with teachers to use the results of the assessment to form and change groups for instruction. According to the principal, teachers are just beginning to think about “flexible grouping.” Some teachers also said that the DIBELS has made an impact on their instruction, since when they used the textbook assessments they were not really sure of students’ levels.

At the South School (grades 4-6) teachers use Scantron as well as its component netTrekker, a search tool for teachers for activities, assessments, curriculum, etc., which, according to the principal, provides learning objectives appropriate to the ability of each student. Each week some students receive an individualized student packet derived from netTrekker. Unlike the parent program, Scantron, netTrekker assessments can be used by individual teachers more often than three times a year. South was the only school that reported the use of this component. These same teachers also regularly use another computer program, Study Island, to improve student skills. Unlike Scantron, Study Island is used only for grades 4-6. Although Study Island also

provides assessment information, it was not clear during conversations with staff how Study Island results are used to improve instruction and ultimately student achievement.

There is no problem with a variety of assessments being used in a district provided that there has been a rationale established for the use of each of the assessments. In Holbrook the lack of a systematic way of looking at assessments has created a culture where individual principals and staff members, eager to promote student achievement, have developed numerous assessments that are sometimes less than useful in delivering information on what students have or have not mastered with respect to the state standards.

The district is increasing its teachers' ability to analyze data, but current efforts to improve the correlation and dissemination of data are too recent to have yielded meaningful results.

Principals and teachers said in interviews that MCAS data has traditionally been the data that receives the most intense analysis. Principals were trained in the use of TestWiz, and each school has access to the program. When the MCAS results arrive at their school, principals hold meetings to discuss results. During interviews principals said that they are very comfortable with the level of their ability to analyze the MCAS data and present it to their staff in a meaningful way. All teachers participate in this examination of data; interviewees said that throughout the year attention is focused on the MCAS data at all grade level and department meetings. There are no data teams in the schools or any teachers who assume responsibility for data analyses. In focus groups, teachers agreed that while they had had no training in the use of data, they believe that their MCAS analysis skills are at a level that enables them to understand what student skills need to be addressed.

In meetings, principals and teachers said that their ability to analyze data other than MCAS has improved significantly during the past two years as a result of the introduction of Scantron and DIBELS. Many staff members, at all levels, said that the Scantron workshops they have attended have made them much more consistent in analyzing other data. Also, until the introduction of DIBELS, teachers in grades K-3 were generally not analyzing data other than MCAS data. However, they now have data meetings and are using the information to group students according to their needs.

The district has never had one person solely responsible for data, and the interim superintendent, citing a need for such a person, appointed a full-time accountability and data specialist in October 2009. Since assuming the position this specialist has generated reports from the state's Education Data Warehouse and has been involved in the development of the 2009-2010 MCAS Action Plan. In interviews, the specialist said that the expectation is that she will not only provide data analyses but will also use the Data Warehouse or develop her own system to merge MCAS data with assessment information from Scantron, DIBELS, and Study Island. The merging of this assessment data would provide teachers with valuable information. Thus far, however, the accountability and data specialist has generated three years of MCAS data as well as developing an item analysis benchmark that shows strands on the MCAS where standards were not met.

The district's goal of appointing an accountability and data specialist is to provide teachers with an array of data. The addition of the data specialist has resulted in more correlation and dissemination of data, but a judgment as to how much her efforts will contribute to better use of data among teachers must wait until her efforts are farther along.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Many human resource functions are carried out by individuals who also have other responsibilities in the central office; some recruitment and retention functions are not addressed at all.

The district does not have and never has had one person in charge of human resources (HR) because it is a small district (1161 students) and a full time HR staff person is not necessary. Until this year, the superintendent's administrative assistant along with the accounts payable clerk and payroll clerk carried out many of the HR duties. However, the administrative assistant position was cut due to funding constraints, so that this year the remaining two clerks carry out most of the HR duties. Further, there is no HR person at the Town Office. Fortunately for the district the two clerks work in close harmony and have done so for many years. They handle many duties: they keep track of incoming resumes for job openings, they handle certification issues, paperwork associated with new hires, seniority lists, and payroll, and they maintain personnel folders. However, there is no written protocol that describes who would be responsible for functions if either clerk were absent. Also, they are unable to assume some of the integral functions that are so important to a well-run human resources office in a school district.

For example, the Holbrook schools have a high staff turnover. Data prepared by ESE shows that the teacher turnover rate in Holbrook from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 was 22.6 percent, while teacher turnover in the state was 12.2 percent. All those interviewed were aware of this significant turnover and attributed it to the recurring budget cuts as well as the lack of a consistent mentor program from year to year. However, no exit interviews have taken place through the years to determine whether these assumptions are accurate. Conducting exit interviews is well beyond a clerk's level of expertise. In interviews the superintendent said that he hoped to institute the practice of exit interviews. But it is not clear who could conduct such interviews. The superintendent lamented the fact that budget limitations have led this year to the elimination of the formal mentoring program, and that in past years the programs have been sporadic. He said he planned in the future to be responsible for the district's mentoring program and recruitment since hiring someone for these responsibilities is not financially feasible. However, at this time there is no one responsible for these activities. In interviews principals said that they do their best to provide informal mentoring for the large numbers of new staff members each year. The district provides only one orientation day before school opening each year.

When there have been job openings the district has not made significant efforts to advertise the openings outside the district. They do not participate in any job fairs but do contact local colleges when there is a position available. This year for the first time in many years an

advertisement was placed in the *Boston Globe*. Other areas that require the attention of professional human resources staff are the teacher and administrator evaluation standards. These standards are not aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, respectively, as required by the state in 603 CMR 35.04. Further, the evaluation of teachers is not carried out in a timely manner, as required by 603 CMR 35.06. One-third (10 out of 30) of the teacher evaluations reviewed during the team's visit to Holbrook were not timely.

As previously noted, two clerks carry out the human resources duties assigned to them in a most satisfactory way but cannot be held responsible for the recruitment, retention, or, if the mentoring program is reinstituted, mentoring of staff. The lack of attention to recruitment, mentoring, and retention, if not remedied, will continue to be an area of concern and will be a detriment to the district.

Decisions concerning the prioritized use of professional development time are not made on the basis of data.

Professional development time in the district is extremely limited. Teachers have six designated early release days per year, two extended teacher work days per month, and various but limited amounts of common planning time during the day. At the same time, teachers' needs for professional development are great in a district such as Holbrook with few administrators and no department chairs, coaches, or reading teachers.

The professional development plan lists members of the professional development team; membership is restricted to administrators. Principals agreed that the district does not have a formal professional development team in which teacher representatives bring teacher needs to the attention of the full committee. Administrators indicated that their team meets infrequently and does not centrally coordinate professional development offerings or evaluate the effectiveness of current or previous offerings. Instead each school has its own professional development plan that the principal puts together with little teacher input. There is no routine examination of assessment data and teacher surveys to establish overall district needs. As a result, there is no attempt to prioritize professional development needs for the district and schedule activities on that basis. So professional development does not necessarily support major initiatives in the district. Rather, decisions concerning the use of these precious but limited professional development resources and time are somewhat arbitrary.

A sampling of professional development activities listed by the district for the 2009-2010 school year included department and team meetings, analysis of MCAS, DIBELS, and Scantron results, support for instructional strategies such as Collins Writing and strategic teaching, addressing NEASC benchmark recommendations, introducing 1st and 2nd year teachers to learning styles, and curriculum writing. This is a broad selection of topics. But the activities might just as easily have included other equally worthy topics such as differentiated instruction, mentoring new teachers, SEI training for those who teach ELL students, and much more curriculum writing.

Whether the year's professional development activities addressed the district's most pressing needs is an open question. The district has not prioritized its needs.

The decision to focus on Collins Writing is a case in point. Three years ago South School found that its students' performance on MCAS open response items was a concern. The principal convinced the superintendent at the time to fund a consultant for the introduction of Collins Writing at South School. Interviewees agreed that there was a need at that time since there was no districtwide program for writing instruction. But there appears to have been no discussion as to whether district data supported the need for a districtwide writing program or whether South School was the place to introduce such a program: the MCAS results for students in grades 7-12 indicated a greater need at the time. The program was successfully introduced at South and was gradually extended two years ago to grade 3 and this year to grades 7 and 8. More Collins Writing is part of the budget proposal for 2011. But the review team heard little discussion concerning reasons for the continuation and expansion of the program. It was not clear whether MCAS and other data suggested that the program had led to improved writing proficiency or whether writing instruction was the established priority need in the district.

For student achievement to improve, the district needs to make systematic data-driven decisions on what its areas of greatest need are and then use its professional development time accordingly. Decisions concerning the use of this time are critical for enhancing students' opportunities to learn.

Student Support

The Junior-Senior High School has taken steps to enforce existing attendance policies and to implement new ones to improve its low rates of student attendance.

A review of the district's 2009 attendance data shows that attendance at the JSHS is unacceptably low. In grades 10, 11, and 12 the attendance rates were 91.2 percent, 91.2 percent, and 92.2 percent. All these rates were below the 2009 statewide attendance rates for these grades of 93.4 percent, 93.0 percent, and 92.5 percent. The average number of days absent was unacceptably high: 11.0 for 9th grade students, 14.4 for 10th graders, 14.8 for 11th graders, and 13.2 for 12th graders. Also, two of the district's subgroups, Hispanic and multi-race non-Hispanic students, averaged 10 or more absences a year across all grades. Of Hispanic students, 14.8 percent were chronically absent (absent more than 10 percent of days enrolled), as were 28.8 percent of multi-race/non-Hispanic students.

According to the *Holbrook Junior-Senior High School Student Handbook*, the school can withhold class credit for unexcused absences totaling more than 7 days for a semester course and 15 days for a full-year course. When students accrue four unexcused absences in a semester and 7 in a year course, the school is supposed to mail a warning letter home. The policy also states that the school mails a No Credit letter when a student reaches the maximum number. However, interviewees told the review team that this policy on loss of credit has not been enforced in the

past. This year (2009-2010) the administration has taken steps to ensure that students and parents know that the policy will be enforced. When asked, counselors said they hoped that there would be follow-through this year. However, although guidance counselors would be the first to know about a loss of credit, it was not clear when the review team visited in March that students had lost credit for first semester courses in which they accrued more than 7 unexcused absences.

According to the dean of students, the school adopted a late arrival policy in 2009-2010. Students are charged an absence if they are tardy to a class four times. In addition, students who are more than 30 minutes tardy are considered absent from class. Teachers may assign detention for students who are late to class more than twice in a quarter. After the fifth tardy in a quarter, the teacher may refer the student for administrative discipline.

Guidance counselors and the school adjustment counselor, nurse, psychologist, assistant principal, and principal meet weekly to address teacher concerns about students with attendance problems. The school intervenes with strategies such as referral to the child study team, program modifications, counseling, academic support, placement changes, and parent conferences. When the school has exhausted all its other options, a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition may be filed in the Juvenile Court.

Students who miss school are at greater risk of dropping out. In fact, although it has recently decreased, Holbrook's annual dropout rate is well above that of the state. In 2007, the district dropout rate was 6.0 percent, while the state rate was 3.8 percent. In 2008, the district rate was 4.9 percent and the state rate 3.4 percent. In 2009, the district rate was 4.1 percent and the state 2.9 percent. The district has no dropout recovery programs, but counselors and school leaders try to keep students from dropping out by offering alternatives such as night school and the Gateway program at Massasoit Community College, in which students receive a high school diploma and an associate's degree after two years.

The high school has serious problems with attendance. Students who habitually miss school lose valuable learning time. The enforcement of the existing attendance policy as well as the new policy instituted in 2009-2010 is badly needed. Consistent follow-through on these policies is necessary for improved attendance and increased student learning. It is too early to know whether the steps taken toward enforcement will result in improved attendance.

Changes made in discipline practices at the high school have resulted in a school environment more conducive to teaching and learning,

Interviewees reported that in the past student behavior at the high school was out of control. But when the school's administration changed in 2008-2009, the new principal took steps to improve disciplinary policies and practices. High school leaders and staff instituted a progressive discipline process that has resulted in a more positive school environment. Teachers received professional development to implement the five-step progressive discipline plan. During observations the review team saw classroom plan charts posted in the all of the classrooms visited; they list the rules and consequences.

The dean of students stated that part of his role is to help staff with student discipline and classroom management issues. He said that he does not wait for teachers to come to him; he walks around the building and confers with teachers. However, he can only work informally with teachers since he is still a member of the union. The school's two guidance counselors work closely with the dean of students to follow up on discipline issues. They maintain contact with parents, arrange onsite counseling for students, and file CHINS petitions and reports of abuse or neglect under G.L. c. 119, c. 51A.

The school worked with Bridgewater State College to train staff and students on bullying prevention. There is also a peer mediation program working on relational aggression with girls, a White Ribbon and Yellow Dress campaign to teach respect for women, and a Boys to Men program that supports healthy development of adolescent boys.

Parents, teachers, and school committee members reported they have seen a major difference in student behavior at the school. The policies and procedures put in place by the principal and dean of students have established an environment conducive to teaching and learning within the school. There is follow-through: consequences are applied, and they are timely. An important caveat, however, is that the Junior-Senior High School's rate of out-of-school suspensions is very high—19.6 percent in 2008-2009 as compared with the state rate of 5.3 percent—and increased over the first year of implementation of the new discipline procedures from 19.1 percent in 2007-2008. This rate is a potential concern, as over the long term establishing an environment conducive to teaching and learning should not be accomplished by the removal of students from school and from the opportunity to learn.

To address more serious, violent incidents, the district has a Memorandum of Understanding with the police department and the Norfolk County district attorney's office regarding the reporting of violence or illegal activities that may happen in the schools and the coordination of the response to such reports. School leaders, counselors, representatives from the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), a juvenile prosecutor, and Holbrook police meet monthly to discuss the more serious cases among at-risk students. Interviewees told the team that the school has a better relationship with the Holbrook police than in the past. A police officer checks in every day and walks the halls.

School leaders, parents, and teacher focus groups were of the view that administrative and teacher interventions are leading to fewer discipline problems and a better school climate. Consequences for inappropriate behavior, when combined with supportive counseling, can be powerful tools to change behaviors. In the future, however, if the new positive school environment and these changed behaviors are sustained, it is to be expected that they will manifest themselves in the reduction of the out-of-school-suspension rate noted above.

Because of the lack of appropriate programs in grades 4-12, the district has a high rate of out-of-district special education student placements.

The district's 2008 direct special education expenditures were 32 percent of its operational budget, which is notably higher than the state rate of 19.6 percent. According to the fiscal year

2009 End of the Year Report, Holbrook in that year spent \$1,053,892 on tuition to non-public schools and \$929,053 on tuition to collaboratives. The Holbrook school district has 42 students in out-of-district special education placements. Of the 42 students, 32, or 76 percent, are in grades 7-12.

The district is making an effort to introduce programs to accommodate more students in-district. The Compass Program, developed and implemented in 2009-2010, serves students in grades 9-12 with identified emotional disabilities. This program currently serves the needs of eight students.

The only school with substantial in-district programming is the JFK, which includes pre-kindergarten to grade 3. The school offers an integrated preschool, an integrated kindergarten, a primary learning center for students with moderate to severe special needs, and a kindergarten/grade 1 class for students for whom kindergarten and grade 1 are not appropriate. According to interviewees, these programs result in fewer out-of-district placements.

Students with specific and more acute mental health needs, those with autism and Asperger's syndrome, are placed out of district because of a lack of programming. Interviewees stated that there was formerly an alternative program for these students, but it was not successful. So students were again sent out of district.

Without effective additional programming, the district has to place students with extensive special needs in out-of-district placements. When the review team asked if any students placed out of district were coming back in the near future, interviewees indicated this was unlikely since multiple programs would be required.

The large number of students in out-of-district placements is unfortunate, not simply because of the financial implications for the district. Many of these students are deprived of the opportunity to learn with their peers in less restrictive settings not because they cannot function in the local school environment but because the school district lacks the programs to address their needs.

Financial and Asset Management

The superintendent's ability to communicate school needs effectively to town officials and the community contributes to a cooperative climate in discussions of the allocation of the town's limited financial resources.

The relationship between town and school officials has improved significantly. When the interim superintendent was appointed in fiscal year 2010, the school committee's finance subcommittee requested that the school department provide a line item budget request for fiscal year 2011 so it might better understand the effect on teaching when reductions were made. The superintendent's televised Power Point budget presentation to the school committee included an explanation of the purpose of each line item and how total funds were allocated. The budget format and televised explanation of each line item, as well as the rationale given for additional personnel, provided understanding as to why the increase in fiscal year 2011 was necessary, reducing

questions. In former years the school department presented only a one-page total budget containing categorical lump sums without detailed explanation.

The superintendent and school committee acknowledge not only the reality of shrinking budgets and scarce resources but also the school committee's responsibility to meet the educational needs of the Holbrook students. The fiscal year 2011 proposed school budget represents a needs budget that totals \$12,812,286, an increase of nine percent from the current budget. Transportation costs, which total \$996,349, are included in the total; however, these are voted as a separate article at Town Meeting.

The finance committee has met with the superintendent since the budget presentation and has been provided with priorities for funding. The committee is attempting to understand the specific impact of both the allocation and the reduction of funds; however, the driving factor in its decision-making is how much money will be available. No action will be taken until the final cherry sheet estimates (of state aid and state charges) are made available.

The superintendent's clear, concise line item budget as well as his presentation explained the educational needs of the students. This allows the town officials and the finance committee to make informed decisions when allocating scarce money to fund the school district operating budget. The relationship between the town and the schools has become open and cooperative.

Although the town has exceeded net school spending requirements each fiscal year since 2000, its revenues are not keeping pace with its expenses.

The town has exceeded net school spending requirements each fiscal year since 2000. The expenditure, which includes municipal indirect spending for the schools, has been in excess of \$1,000,000 beyond net school spending requirements each year since fiscal year 2006. There is no written agreement between town and school officials for calculating municipal expenditures in support of schools. Health insurance and retirement costs are calculated on an actual basis. Other costs such as snow plowing by the department of public works are prorated. The lack of a written agreement did not appear to pose a problem to either the town officials or the consultant for school management services; however, such an agreement is recommended.

The town has a deficit balance in free cash for the second fiscal year, a \$367,000 balance in the stabilization fund for a \$32,000,000 town budget, and an unfunded liability to meet projected obligations of post-employment retiree benefits. The town is taxing approximately \$7,000 below the levy limit. Town expenses are increasing five and one-half percent annually while tax revenues increase only two and one-half percent annually. On March 10, 2010, the Department of Revenue set the approved tax rate for fiscal year 2010 as \$15.80 for residential property and \$30.40 for commercial, industrial, or personal property. The bond rating, which was A- in fiscal year 2009, was recently lowered.

In preparing the town's fiscal year 2011 budget, the finance committee projected a 10 percent increase in health insurance premiums, and with all mandatory increases, the finance committee projected level funding for fiscal year 2011. However, information recently received by the town

from the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) concerning mid-year plan changes will result in \$200,000 less in funds available for allocation to the town budget.

Approximately 50 percent of the town budget is appropriated for the school department. Town officials are unsure of how many dollars are available for fiscal year 2011. In prior years if fiscal emergencies arose, the town sold property; but this is no longer an option. All town department budgets have been affected by reductions. Police and fire department personnel have not received pay raises. Town hall staffs as well as department budgets have been reduced.

The school department, when faced with the need to lay off personnel, eliminated those positions that least affected classroom instruction. Resources are limited and inadequate in general, and teachers and parents have routinely bought supplies themselves. School building maintenance has been deferred, which has resulted in facilities that are in poor condition.

State aid is decreasing. The fiscal year 2011 Chapter 70 figure is \$4,573,236, enhanced by a potential allocation of \$89,465 in federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act State Fiscal Stabilization Fund; the total of these two figures is nearly \$200,000 less than the Chapter 70 aid for fiscal year 2010. Any Medicaid reimbursement is deposited in the general fund of the town, whereas at one time the town and school department shared the Medicaid revenues equally. The school department uses circuit-breaker money to offset special education tuitions.

The sewer and water rates were raised 32 percent in fiscal year 2009, and a new \$120 trash fee was instituted. Measures are being taken by the board of selectmen to explore alternate non-tax revenue sources. The town officials are in the process of bringing a transfer station to town. If successful, officials believe the town will realize \$450,000 annually. The town is also exploring a cap at the landfill. A letter of intent has been signed with a company that will annually pay \$10,000 an acre for the 20-acre parcel in order to develop a solar farm on the land. Town officials anticipate the company will be in operation by fall 2010. Town and school officials continue to investigate the option, as a cost-saving measure, of Holbrook entering into an agreement with neighboring communities to regionalize the schools; however, a vote to regionalize has been taken 11 times in the past with no success.

The school committee was to vote at its March 24, 2010 meeting on whether to accept school choice.⁶ One hundred ten slots in the Holbrook Public Schools would be made available. There is not total support for school choice. There are individuals in the community who have spoken out against it because they are concerned about the quality of the students who would be accepted, how they might affect the school environment, and the possible increase in special education costs. At the last annual Town Meeting, voters approved \$450,000 to fund the feasibility study/schematic design that is the initial phase of a project to build a new school. A

⁶ It voted unanimously to accept it. The committee also voted to set aside 115 seats for the program; for each student in the program Holbrook will receive \$5,000 annually from the sending community. Accordingly, if these seats were all filled it would realize \$575,000 annually from the program. See <http://www.wickedlocal.com/holbrook/topstories/x749222756/School-Choice-applications-available-May-1-in-Holbrook>.

meeting is planned between the district administration and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (SBA) to determine the best plan for building a new junior-senior high school. If completed, the school would be the first newly constructed school building in town in over 45 years.

If the town cannot fund the school department needs budget, cuts are inevitable. The budget will be insufficient to support classroom instruction. The only line items with large amounts of money that could be reduced are those where personnel are recorded. Reduction of the amount of money in personnel lines will mean staff layoffs. Staff layoffs in a district already cut to the bone will be detrimental to student learning.

The financial accounting system is inefficient and does not provide necessary information to users.

The financial accounting system was developed by Lawrence Braverman Associates (LBA) and is in use in a number of districts in the western part of the state. Holbrook is the one community outside that area that uses LBA. Both the town and the school department use the system; it has been in the district for 15 years.

The financial accounting system is DOS-based, not integrated between town departments, and does not permit remote access. Since the LBA system is incapable of generating the financial reports needed by school district administrators, the consultant contracted by the school committee to provide school management services prepares monthly reports on an Excel spreadsheet. Reports are provided to the superintendent, school committee, principals, and program directors. Each month the status of the school department budget is posted on the consultant firm's secure website in a pdf form. According to the consultant, each person with budget authority is able to log on individually to a secure area on the firm's website to access the reports. The reports available include expenditures to date, encumbrances, projected expenses and balances for the local budget, grants, and revolving accounts. Information posted on the consultant's website reflects the budget status as of the end of the prior month. The system's limitations necessitate separate financial record-keeping by each principal or program director in order to ascertain up-to-date account balances. If needed, account balance detail and verification of funds are available by contacting the accounts payable clerk in the central office business department. Questions that cannot be answered by personnel in the central office business department are forwarded by email to the consultant for response.

A committee was formed to investigate the purchase of a more modern financial accounting system that would meet the needs of both the town and the school department. The committee reported that the preliminary costs for a new system were \$100,000. Due to limited financial resources, no further action was taken.

The current system is inadequate. If the accounting system fails, the town and school departments could be faced with financial chaos.

Under the current school management services consultant model, some functions are negatively impacted.

When the school business manager departed during the former administration, the school committee entered into a contract with a consultant to provide school management services. The consultant's current contract is in effect from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 at a cost of \$76,014. It states that the consultant's responsibilities will include but not be limited to providing assistance to the district administration and school committee in the following areas: budget development and preparation, financial management and reporting, financial management of the district's grants and other supplemental funding sources, completion and filing of all financial reports, and provision of assistance to the superintendent, administration, and school committee in the management of the school district's resources.

The school committee has asked how long the arrangement will continue, and the superintendent has indicated that the model will be in effect for another year. The superintendent has discussed with the school committee the benefits of hiring a full-time school business manager; however, the superintendent does not believe that the district can afford to hire one. He does not believe that a school business manager can be hired for \$80,000 a year. In addition, the superintendent believes that the consultant has a bullpen of people available that the district could not afford to hire. Opinions on the effectiveness of a consultant performing school management services differed.

Per contract, the consultant is onsite one day a week at a minimum unless the schedule is otherwise arranged with the superintendent. Duties that are normally the responsibility of a school business manager are distributed to others. Non-certified staff such as food service, transportation, and custodial personnel, who normally would report to the school business manager, are supervised by the superintendent. The consultant does not review and approve all purchase orders, another function usually performed by a school business manager. Instead, after the accounts payable clerk has checked the account balance and verified the availability of funds, the superintendent approves all purchase orders submitted by principals and program directors.

Since the consultant's responsibilities do not include the management of assets, the verification of funds available, and the determination of the appropriateness of expenditures, functions usually performed by a school business manager, the district under this consultant model does not have another set of eyes at the administrative level to monitor its scarce resources. When questioned about this, the consultant indicated that since the budget was "frozen" in October 2009 under the former administration and in January 2010 during the current administration, approving expenditures is a non-issue.

In the absence of a school business manager, the daily operations of the central office business department are performed by the payroll clerk and the accounts payable clerk. Formerly the superintendent's administrative assistant assumed responsibilities for some of these business department duties. But in fiscal year 2010, to keep teachers in the classroom, the district eliminated that position. Responsibilities which had formerly been the duties of the

superintendent's administrative assistant then fell to the remaining personnel in the central office business department in addition to their responsibility for processing payroll and accounts payable warrants. According to their job descriptions, the payroll clerk and the accounts payable clerk report to the school business manager; however, these staff members do not interact with the consultant daily. Financial matters that would usually require a school business manager's attention are emailed to the consultant, who responds in a timely manner. Questions regarding personnel are directed to the superintendent.

The central office business department staff indicated that the current arrangement works, and that they are comfortable with the consultant model. The payroll clerk and accounts payable clerk are both residents of the town of Holbrook and have a vested interest in the schools. Their years of experience, their professionalism, and their personal relationship are major factors in the successful operation of the central office business department without the daily presence of a school business manager.

Some interviewees agreed that an advantage of having an onsite school business manager is that he or she can readily interact with district administrators, school committee members, and town officials regarding expenditures and unanticipated needs. And face-to-face interaction frequently leads to further useful discussion. The consultant does forecast and project expenditures; however, a consultant does not necessarily have the same vested interest in a school district that a full-time employee does.

The school management service consultant model may or may not be a viable one long-term. As long as the current central office business department staff is in place, the arrangement may be sustainable. The district needs to be aware that if at any point there is a change in the arrangement and other individuals than the current central office business department clerks hold the positions, it may no longer be viable.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The Holbrook Public Schools should consider reorganizing their resources, human and financial, to provide the systems needed to move the district forward and improve student achievement.

- The district lacks systems for:
 - Developing curriculum: there is no central coordination, and individual schools and teachers produce varying curriculum documents with little guidance or feedback;
 - Developing and managing the budget: most budget decisions are made by the superintendent with little staff input, and administrators are without timely access to budget information;
 - Managing personnel resources: the district does not now have an individual with responsibility for recruitment, mentoring, and retention of staff;
 - Using data to inform instruction: a variety of assessments are used, often determined by teachers, there are no data teams in the schools or teachers who assume responsibility for data analysis, and it is unclear how much the new data specialist's efforts will contribute to better use of data among teachers;
 - Supporting instruction with professional development: there is no data-based prioritization of professional development needs, coordination of offerings, or evaluation of the effectiveness of the professional development delivered.
- In a district that has been severely affected by successive years of fiscal constraint, the reestablishment of infrastructure systems to provide all the district services is imperative.
- Without a systemic approach to teaching and learning and all of its necessary supports, the movement toward proficiency for students in Holbrook will continue to be slow.
- Reestablishing these systems will allow the district to allocate resources more appropriately and then focus its efforts on improving student achievement.

Given its low student achievement, low student growth, and very serious financial situation, the district should implement a formal review to determine the cost-effectiveness of all its programs, initiatives, and activities, so as to get the greatest benefit from its limited resources.

- Across all grades, 60 percent of district students were proficient in ELA, which is below the state rate of 67 percent. And 44 percent of all district students were proficient in mathematics; the state rate was 55 percent.
- In general, the district as a whole showed decreased rates of growth in both ELA and math in 2009 as compared to 2008, and the district's median SGPs in both subject areas fell short of the statewide median SGP of 50.0 in both years. Except in grade 10 in

mathematics, 2009 median student growth in both ELA and mathematics across all tested grades (7, 8, and 10) at Holbrook Junior-Senior High School was notably low compared to peers across the state with similar test histories.

- Resources in the district are extremely limited. The tax levy is almost to its limit, and state aid is decreasing. Town expenses are increasing five and one-half percent annually while tax revenues increase only two and one-half percent annually.
- The district is not receiving the greatest benefit from its current allocation of resources. For instance, decisions regarding the allocation of resources appear to be inconsistent and based on individual school needs rather than the needs of the whole system; there is no apparent systematic plan for replacing or adopting classroom materials; and reductions in staff have been made without a reorganization strategy.
- The district has begun to evaluate some of its costs in the area of special education; a study this last year of special education transportation showed that it may be able to recover some related costs by going to an in-district transportation model. The district has also begun to study the educational and financial efficacy of placing so many of its special education students out of district, as well as the reorganization of the special education department.
- The district should
 - conduct a rigorous data review to determine its areas of greatest need;
 - examine its current allocation of resources in programs, initiatives, and activities as well as through the deployment of its personnel;
 - assess the effectiveness of this allocation and whether it addresses students' most pressing needs; and
 - decide upon and implement the use of resources that addresses students' most pressing needs in the most cost-effective way.
- As part of this review, the district should continue to evaluate special education placements and programs with an eye to returning to the district students currently in out-of-district placements, both to realize cost savings and because it is in students' interest to be educated in the district if possible. See second Student Support recommendation below.
- The reallocation of resources resulting from such a review will ensure that the greatest benefit, in terms of improving instruction and increasing student achievement, is obtained from the district's limited resources.

The Holbrook Public Schools should consider providing mentoring and coaching for all newly appointed staff.

- The induction and mentoring program for new teachers was eliminated this year because of budget constraints.
- The district has a pattern of hiring administrators from within the existing staff; according to interviews, the superintendent, current principals, and current Junior-Senior High School assistant principal were all hired from other positions within the system with no outside competition. Administrators do not always, therefore, have experience in the position for which they are being hired.
- Interviewees attributed the high rate of teacher turnover in Holbrook (22.6 percent from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009) in part to the lack of a consistent mentoring program from year to year.
- New personnel and personnel new to their positions benefit greatly from mentoring and coaching from those with more experience, since they receive support and perspective as they take on new roles.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should establish and implement a plan for the coordinated development of a coherent written curriculum.

- The district has been without a written curriculum for a number of years.
- The district lacks a comprehensive plan that sets out the grade-by-grade progress students are expected to make in specific content areas.
- Current school, grade level, and subject area efforts to write curriculum are producing individual documents with a wide range of content and without a vertical progression across the grades. Teachers at all levels are doing much of this curriculum work on their own time and with little guidance and feedback.
- Before continuing these worthy but isolated efforts to produce a curriculum, the district should, with the participation of teachers as well as administrators, establish a plan for curriculum development that sets out the grade-by-grade progress students are expected to make in specific content areas. The district should decide on the elements to be included in any curriculum it develops and then, in the plan, specify the required format including those elements for all curriculum documents.
- The plan should designate sufficient professional development time for curriculum work. This will clarify expectations for teachers and ensure that a full draft of each curriculum will be completed.

- A single individual should assume overall responsibility for completion of the curriculum work. This will help ensure that the segments of curriculum produced in the future have common elements and are vertically aligned.
- Teachers must receive feedback on the draft curriculum documents they produce. It is not enough that something be submitted and accepted without comment. Feedback on draft curriculum documents can be a mechanism to ensure that they reflect the district format and fit in a sequence with other curriculum documents.
- A coherent written curriculum will be a benefit for Holbrook because with it lessons will be aligned with the state frameworks, will be consistent from classroom to classroom and school to school, will address students' instructional needs as determined from data, and will build on skills developed in previous years. All of these features of a coherent curriculum will contribute to accelerating student learning.

The district should provide teachers with training and supervision in a broad array of instructional strategies that reflect high expectations for student learning.

- There has been little increase in the percentage of students achieving proficiency on the MCAS between 2007 and 2009.
- The review team's classroom observations indicated that instruction showed solid evidence of a range of techniques only 39 percent of the time.
- Also only 39 percent of the time did teacher questions require students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- The district should provide teachers with opportunities to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies, particularly those that will lead to higher levels of student performance.
- Only when teachers arrange learning experiences that reflect high expectations will most students rise to that level.

The district should provide training and support for teachers to improve the education of special education students in inclusion settings.

- It is only two years since the district began to move away from pull-out instruction as the usual model for students with disabilities.
- Teachers in all three schools, when questioned during focus groups, reported that they have had no training, whether as general or special education teachers, on working with students with IEPs in the regular education classroom. Although the district has provided some training on differentiated instruction, these teachers reported that there has been no professional development on differentiated instruction since approximately five years ago.

- Common planning time during the school day is extremely limited, sometimes as little as 15 minutes per week, so regular and special education teachers have few opportunities to meet and plan together.
- Holbrook special education students showed low rates of proficiency and low growth rates as compared with their special education peers statewide.
- The district should provide regular and special education teachers with training and support as they include more special education students in mainstream classrooms. The training should cover team teaching between regular and special education teachers as well as differentiated instruction for students with IEPs, and the support should include the scheduling of common planning time.
- Unless the district trains and supports these teachers, it may not accomplish the worthy goal of providing special education students with effective education in the least restrictive environment.

Assessment

The district should provide a more systematic approach to the use of assessments.

- The district lacks a coordinated approach for determining what assessments should be administered at each grade level and for following through on their administration. For instance, while high school teachers were trained several years ago in how to use student work as a means of assessment, many teachers are not using this form of assessment. Benchmarks have been developed for all primary and elementary grades, but they do not have accompanying assessments.
- Assessments are not always used consistently and in some cases, there is a duplication of assessments. For instance, the Scantron Performance Series introduced two years ago in an attempt to systematize assessments is not used systematically, especially at the Junior-Senior High School. At the South School, in addition to Scantron, teachers also use assessments obtained from its component netTrekker and assessments from the computer program Study Island.
- District and school leaders should be pro-active in seeking out, adopting, and consistently implementing assessments that will provide periodic data on the achievement of individual students. Leaders should also review the value of existing assessments and replace those that do not enhance teaching and learning significantly.
- This strategic use of assessments will enhance the teaching/learning process. Supported by data from these proven and consistently implemented assessments, teachers can make the necessary modifications to instruction.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should appoint one administrator with authority over all human resource functions, including recruitment, mentoring, and retention, and develop a written protocol listing specific responsibilities for human resource duties.

- There is no one person with the responsibility for all human resource activities.
- Two responsible but not professionally trained clerks assume a number of the human resource duties.
- There is no written protocol regarding responsibility for human resource duties, which could cause problems when the two clerks are not available. Such a protocol, listing specific responsibilities for human resource duties, should be developed.
- The district does not now have an individual with responsibility for the recruitment, mentoring, and retention of staff, key areas in human resources. This is a major concern in this district with its high turnover of staff and with an administrative staff largely filled from within the district with little or no recruitment.
- The district should appoint one administrator to supervise the two clerks and to assume responsibility for recruitment and retention of staff, as well as mentoring if the mentoring program is reinstated. The superintendent said that he plans to assume these responsibilities; before he does so, the district should review the various possible appointments and make sure that having the superintendent assume these responsibilities is a reasonable plan and the best possible option.
- Putting an administrator in charge of recruitment, mentoring and retention will 1) lower the district's high turnover rate (22.6 percent from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009) and 2) help bring in from outside the district talented personnel with new ideas, both of which, in turn, will increase the quality of teaching in the Holbrook Public Schools.

The district should develop and implement teacher and administrator evaluation standards that comply with the regulations promulgated under the Education Reform Act of 1993.

- The teacher and administrator evaluation standards are not aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, respectively, as required by 603 CMR 35.04.
- The professional competence of teachers and administrators is not being assessed properly, as they are not being evaluated according to state standards.
- Teacher evaluations are not always carried out in a timely manner: one-third of the teacher evaluations reviewed during the team's visit to Holbrook were not timely.
- Teachers and administrators whose performance reflects the Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership are equipped to bring their students to higher levels of performance.

Decisions concerning district professional development should be made centrally and should as much as possible be data-driven.

- Teacher professional development time is extremely limited. Teachers have six designated early release days per year, two extended teacher work days per month, and various but limited amounts of common planning time during the day.
- Rates of student proficiency, particularly in mathematics, are low. In 2009 the percentage of Holbrook Public School students achieving proficiency was lower than the percentage of students across the state doing so, in both ELA (by 7 percentage points) and mathematics (by 11 percentage points). With the exception of Grade 4 and Grade 6 ELA, Holbrook proficiency rates were lower in both subjects across the grades.
- Improvement of classroom instruction is the key to improved student achievement.
- There is now no system in place for making data-driven decisions concerning the professional development needs of the district as a whole. The professional development team, made up only of administrators without teacher representation, meets infrequently and does not centrally coordinate professional development offerings or evaluate the effectiveness of current or previous offerings. Instead each school has its own professional development plan that the principal puts together with little teacher input. There is no routine examination of assessment data and teacher surveys to establish overall district needs. The result is professional development driven by individual school requests that may or may not address the district's most critical needs.
- The district should seek out teacher input and examine its student achievement data to determine and prioritize its areas of greatest need. Professional development for teachers should then address those needs.
- The district should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its current professional development offerings.
- Using the professional development time available for the training most needed for and most effective in improving teaching and learning will allow the district to make the best use of its limited resources to raise student achievement.

Student Support

The Junior-Senior High School should address issues of student attendance and suspensions so that students do not lose the instructional time they need to be academically successful.

- The Junior-Senior High School has high rates of student absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions.

- Students who are chronically absent or out of school due to suspension are at higher risk of failing courses, performing poorly on high stakes testing, and dropping out of school.
- There has been a lack of consistency in enforcing school rules related to attendance: the policy of withholding class credit for unexcused absences totaling more than 7 days for a semester course and 15 days for a full-year course has not been enforced in the past, and it is unclear whether it is being enforced this year.
- The school should consistently enforce its attendance policy and new tardy policy.
- Administrators and staff should maintain their commitment to improving the climate at the high school, ensuring also that the climate in classrooms promotes positive student behaviors, e.g. through effective classroom management and instructional techniques,.
- The school should develop ways to support at-risk students—including groups of students for whom attendance rates are low or suspension rates are high—and engage them in school, such as an advisory program, after-school clubs, in- and after-school tutorials, supplemental instructional opportunities, and incentives.
- School leaders should systematically monitor the attendance and out-of-school suspensions of individual students so that interventions can occur in a timely manner.
- Increasing the time students are in class and engaged in school will lead to their increased achievement and to reduced rates of dropping out.

To reduce the amount spent on out-of-district placements, the district should continue to develop its own programs for students with special needs, particularly in grades 7-12.

- The district's 2008 direct special education expenditures were 32 percent of its operational budget, which is notably higher than the state rate of 19.6 percent. This high proportion of expenditures is particularly painful in a district with resources as limited as Holbrook's. In fiscal year 2009 the district spent \$1,053,892 on tuition to non-public schools and \$929,053 on tuition to collaboratives.
- The Junior-Senior High School has a disproportionately high number of students in out-of-district placements. Out of the 42 out-of-district placements, 32 are for students in grades 7-12.
- The district should develop its own quality in-district special education programs, particularly for students in grades 7-12.
- Developing these programs will allow the district to reduce the amount spent on out-of-district placements and will have the added benefit of bringing out-placed students into less restrictive environments.

Financial and Asset Management

The town and the school department should investigate the incremental replacement of the financial accounting system.

- A limited number of individuals are trained to support the current system.
- The current DOS-based system is 15 years old, is not integrated between departments, and does not permit remote access. It is inefficient and incapable of generating reports necessary for district leaders to make sound financial decisions.
- A failure of the current system could result in financial chaos for both the town and the school department.
- Reallocation of current budget expenditures could result in funds being available for use toward the replacement of the financial accounting system.
- Modules for the financial accounting system could be acquired separately over successive years. The purchase of payroll, accounts payable and receivable, and human resource modules should be a priority.
- The acquisition of an efficient, integrated financial accounting system will give Holbrook leaders—both central office administrators and principals—the accurate, up-to-date financial information they need to make sound financial decisions, achieving the maximum potential use of Holbrook’s limited resources and the greatest benefit for education in the district.

The district should be more proactive in seeking public and private grants to augment the school budget.

- Town tax revenues are increasing more slowly than town expenses, state school aid is shrinking, and resources are limited.
- Administrators and staff should more aggressively pursue opportunities through agencies, private corporations, and partnerships with other districts to secure additional sources of funding.
- In the current state of the economy, such additional sources of funding will be invaluable in improving the quality of the education provided by the Holbrook Public Schools.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Holbrook Public Schools was conducted from March 8-11, 2010, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Helen Apostolides, Student Support

Rose DiOrio, Financial and Asset Management

Dolores Fitzgerald, Assessment, Human Resources

Dr. Magdalene Giffune, Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development (review team coordinator)

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Level 3 Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Holbrook financial personnel: business consultant, town administrator, town accountant, town treasurer, chair of town council.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Holbrook School Committee: chair, assistant chair, and three other members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Holbrook Teachers Association: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and two school representatives.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Holbrook Public Schools' central office administration: interim superintendent, business consultant, data specialist, director of special education, out-of-district placement specialist, payroll and accounts payable clerks.
- The review team visited all of the schools in the Holbrook Public Schools: John F. Kennedy (pre-kindergarten to grade 3), South (grades 4-6), Junior-Senior High School (grades 7-12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals and teachers.
 - The review team conducted 32 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the three schools visited.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Latest Coordinated Program Review Report or follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
 - Staff contracts
 - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
 - Long-term enrollment trends
 - End-of-year financial report for the district for 2009
 - List of the district's federal and state grants

- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Organization chart
 - District Improvement Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - Curriculum guides
 - High school program of studies
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Program evaluations
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Plan and program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher planning time/meeting schedules
 - Teacher evaluation tool
 - Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools
 - Job descriptions (for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
 - Principal evaluations
 - Randomly selected personnel files

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 3 review of the Holbrook Public Schools, conducted from March 8-11, 2010.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
March 8 Introductory meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents	March 9 Interviews with district staff and principals; John F. Kennedy school visit; classroom observations; interview with union and focus group with parents; review of personnel files	March 10 South and Junior-Senior High School visits; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher focus groups; school committee interviews	March 11 John F. Kennedy, South, and Junior/Senior High School visits; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; follow-up interviews; team meeting; closing meeting with district leaders