

other Latin American countries and from southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam. Lawrence is also home to families who have moved from Puerto Rico.

Lawrence has an active downtown with many small locally-owned businesses along the Essex Street and Broadway corridors. Government buildings including Lawrence City Hall, Lawrence Public Library, the Superior Court, the District Court, Northern Essex Community College, and the U.S. Immigration Service are also located in the busy downtown area. Although it continues to have a small textile manufacturing base, including Malden Mills, and is located in proximity to major highways, Lawrence has experienced high unemployment and poverty rates. The recent global recession worsened the financial situation leading to municipal reductions in force. At the time of the review Lawrence had an unemployment rate of about 18 percent, compared with a statewide rate of about 8 percent. In 2010-2011, low-income students (students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) constituted about 87 percent of the students enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools.

Municipal Financial Management

The City of Lawrence has struggled with financial management problems. After Lawrence accumulated deficits of nearly 24 million dollars in the operating and capital projects budgets in fiscal year 2009, the Massachusetts Legislature approved a bill allowing it to borrow up to 35 million dollars on the bond market.⁵ Under the terms of the legislation, the city was required to consolidate municipal and school business functions⁶, and to join the GIC or a regional health purchasing group. The law also authorized appointment of a state overseer to monitor the city's financial operations. The overseer has the power to call for a financial control board. A mayor elected in 2009 has submitted balanced budgets in fiscal years 2011 and 2012, and according to the mayor's office at the time of the review, it was projected that Lawrence would show a small surplus in fiscal year 2011.

Governance and School Finance

Lawrence has a Plan B, "strong mayor," form of government with a mayor and a city council consisting of nine members, six elected by district and three at large. The school committee consists of six members elected by district and the mayor, who serves ex officio as the seventh member and chair.

The local appropriation to the Lawrence Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$135,516,446, down slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$136,397,621. School-related expenditures by the city were estimated at \$30,760,276 for fiscal year 2011, down slightly from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$31,019,271. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$136,935,987), expenditures by the city (\$30,770,264), and expenditures from other sources

⁵ See St. 2010, c. 58, available at <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter58>.

⁶ A few months after the legislation was passed, the city received a letter from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue stating the conclusion that consolidation of school and city finances did not make fiscal sense at that time; accordingly, it was not in fact carried out.

such as grants (\$36,741,351), was \$204,447,602. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was \$143,451,465.

In 2010 a former superintendent who had served the district for over 10 years was dismissed by the school committee following an indictment. Upon his dismissal, the school committee appointed the assistant superintendent for operations and support, a veteran administrator with over 30 years in the district, as acting superintendent and in the spring of 2010 appointed her interim superintendent through June 2011.

Student Demographics

The Lawrence Public Schools had a 2011 enrollment of 12,784 students in preschool through grade 12. The educational facilities consist of 28 schools with many different grade structures. According to ESE data, enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools has been stable in recent years, with an unusual increase of 500 students from 2010 to 2011 (from 12,284 to 12,784). The district's stability rate (percentage of students enrolled for the entire year), while low in comparison to the statewide stability rate in these years of 95 percent, increased from 83 percent in 2008 to 87 percent in 2010.

As shown in Table 1 below, Hispanic or Latino students constituted 90.1 percent of the district enrollment in 2010-2011. While 77.3 percent of the students enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools in 2010-2011 came from families whose first language is not English, only 30.8 percent of these students (i.e., 3,048 of 9,883) were classified as limited English proficient—in other words, as English language learners (ELLs). District administrators told the review team that many students come from second or third generation immigrant families who are proficient in English, though it is not their first language. As previously mentioned, 87.1 percent of enrolled students were from low-income families. And as in many large urban districts, the percentage of Lawrence's students enrolled in special education (20.1 percent) exceeds the statewide percentage (17.0 percent).

Table 1: 2010-11 Lawrence Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	215	1.7	First Language not English	9,883	77.3
Asian	270	2.1	Limited English Proficient	3,048	23.8
Hispanic or Latino	11,517	90.1	Low-income	11,141	87.1
Native American	0.0	0.0	Special Education	2,601	20.1
White	761	6.0	Free Lunch	10,180	79.6
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	961	7.5
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	20	0.2	Total enrollment	12,784	100.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

According to Table 2 below, the percentage of low-income students in the Lawrence Public Schools (87.1 percent) is more than 2.5 times the statewide percentage (34.2 percent), and the percentage of limited English proficient students or English language learners (23.8 percent) is more than three times the statewide percentage (7.1 percent). The table shows that the percentages of low-income students and English language learners in the Commendation School⁷, South Lawrence East Elementary (SLEE), are higher than in the district as a whole. According to the table, out of the 28 district schools, only 6 schools had a higher percentage of English language learners and only 7 schools had a higher percentage of students from low-income families.

⁷ See footnote 2 on p. 4 above.

**Table 2: Comparison of State, District, and All District Schools by Selected Populations:
2010-2011 (in Percentages except for Total Enrollment)**

	Total Enrollment	Low-Income Students			Limited English Proficient Students	Special Education Students
		All	Eligible for Free Lunch	Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch		
State	955,563	34.2	29.1	5.1	7.1	17.0
Lawrence	12,784	87.1	79.6	7.5	23.8	20.1
Alexander Bruce	541	90.4	83.9	6.5	20.0	19.0
Arlington Elementary	524	92.2	86.8	5.3	49.2	13.4
Arlington Middle	491	96.1	89.8	6.3	21.2	19.6
Business Mgmt. & Finance H.S.	474	91.8	82.7	9.1	8.6	20.3
Edward F. Parthum	586	90.1	80.9	9.2	29.7	13.0
Emily G. Wetherbee	641	87.8	77.7	10.1	24.8	19.7
Francis M. Leahy	493	95.9	90.1	5.9	30.4	12.2
Frost Middle	462	82.3	70.8	11.5	5.6	18.2
Gerard A. Guilmette	581	93.1	87.6	5.5	42.0	14.8
Guilmette Middle	542	94.3	86.5	7.7	16.2	22.3
Health & Human Services H.S.	533	90.6	84.4	6.2	9.9	27.2
Henry K. Oliver	653	88.5	80.6	8.0	27.1	19.3
H.S. Learning Ctr.	270	70.4	65.2	5.2	68.1	6.3
Humanities & Leadership Development H.S.	542	88.0	80.6	7.4	6.6	19.2
International H.S.	477	87.8	82.8	5.0	35.8	14.5
James F. Hennessey	388	71.9	64.4	7.5	47.2	13.7
James F. Leonard	304	96.1	90.5	5.6	19.7	21.7
John Breen	352	66.8	57.4	9.4	45.7	18.2
John K. Tarbox	284	88.7	84.2	4.6	30.6	10.9
Lawlor ECC*	181	68.5	62.4	6.1	36.5	6.6
Math, Science & Technology H.S.	502	89.4	82.7	6.8	7.6	19.9
Parthum Middle	550	89.6	80.2	9.5	8.4	19.1

Performing & Fine Arts H.S.	535	86.5	77.6	9.0	10.1	21.9
Robert Frost	543	74.4	64.6	9.8	17.9	14.7
Rollins ECC*	150	52.0	45.3	6.7	24.7	26.7
School for Exceptional Studies	198	85.9	78.3	7.6	5.1	94.4
South Lawrence East Elementary	495	90.7	83.0	7.7	35.8	14.9
South Lawrence East Middle	492	87.6	80.9	6.7	12.0	28.0

*ECC stands for Early Childhood Center.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Findings

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

Teachers clearly understand the school's philosophy and mission and advance the achievement of the student-centered priorities in the Comprehensive Educational Plan by implementing the school's programs and instructional models consistently and proficiently.

According to its amended 2010-2011 Comprehensive Educational Plan, the mission of the South Lawrence East Elementary School (SLEE) is to "prepare all students . . . with the skills, experiences, and knowledge to successfully advance into middle level education" through a "data-driven and standards-based curriculum" and with the guidance of the ten "Common Principles" of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). The CES principles include the application of goals to all students (while tailoring practice to meet the needs of every group or class of students), the dedication of resources to teaching and learning, and a commitment by staff to the entire school. The principal affiliated SLEE with the CES in 1999.

The review team found that SLEE teachers clearly understand the school's mission and are strongly committed to implementing its programs and instructional models as conceived in order to realize the student-centered goals in the Plan. The SLEE principal and teachers told the review team that teachers who do not meet these expectations are dismissed through the teacher evaluation procedure or transfer to other schools under the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement. According to central office administrators, this type of selection of teachers through dismissal or transfer is uncommon in the district.

In 2006-2007, the district divided South Lawrence East Elementary School (grades 1 through 8) into two separate schools: South Lawrence East Elementary School (grades 1 through 4) and South Lawrence East Middle School (grades 5 through 8). The two schools occupy the same facility. At the time of the review the principal of the current elementary school was in her 16th year as principal, having served as principal of the former elementary/middle school beginning in 1995, a year after it opened in 1994.

The current SLEE shared leadership team consists of the principal, the literacy and mathematics coaches, a teacher representative from each grade level, and representatives of certain special areas, such as the education of English language learners (ELLs), special education, and art. According to documentation and an interview with some leadership team members, the team meets twice each month after school for approximately two hours. Teachers told the review team that the leadership team unifies the school. Although the team discusses specific grade level needs and concerns, the primary emphasis is on improving overall student attendance, behavior, and achievement through a systematic analysis of student performance data.

The principal sets the agenda for the leadership team meetings. The minutes are recorded by a team member, distributed to the faculty, and subsequently discussed at grade level team

meetings. In response to a request for an example of a leadership team initiative, team members described changes in the school's prosocial behavior program made in response to a documented increase in student discipline problems.

According to documentation and interviews with school leaders, teachers meet with coaches or the principal at least twice weekly in grade level teams. At these meetings teachers examine student work and assessment results collaboratively with the assistance of the coaches in order to improve teaching and learning. Teachers told the review team that they have made changes in the content, sequence, and emphasis of the mathematics and literacy programs based on grade level discussions. For example, 1st and 2nd grade teachers told the team that they had developed strategies for improving student writing at their grade level team meetings. The principal and teachers told the review team that grade level meetings help structure the school.

In interviews with the review team, SLEE teachers were readily able to connect the school's programs and services to the CES Common Principles. For example, they told the review team that the school's positive behavior program is consistent with the CES principle of a "tone of decency and trust," and that collective analysis of student work is congruent with the CES principle of "demonstration of mastery." Teachers were also well informed about the contents of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan, including the strengths and needs identified by assessment, the goals for student achievement, and the strategies for accomplishing them. For example, they knew that the monthly review of student writing prompts to assess students' progress in topic development and the use of conventions was a Plan component.

The review team's classroom observations revealed an unusually high level of consistency and proficiency in classroom teachers' implementation of the school's instructional models and programs. These models include readers' and writers' workshop and strategies for problem-solving in mathematics. In interviews with the review team, teachers used common language to characterize teaching and learning and had a common definition of high quality instruction including such characteristics as student engagement, gradual release of responsibility, and student-centered classrooms.

Faculty adherence to the school's philosophy and expectations and commitment to carrying out its programs are critical to the accomplishment of its teaching and learning objectives. SLEE has succeeded in developing such adherence and commitment in its faculty to a great degree, and the results are evident in the improvement in achievement and growth in recent years of low-income students, who constitute 91 per cent of the school's enrollment (see Tables C-3 and C-4 in Appendix C, and Table 2 in the District Profile section above).

The principal sets high expectations for teachers and holds them accountable, while empowering them through a shared leadership model of school governance.

Central office administrators told the review team that the SLEE principal sets high expectations for teachers. According to interviews and documentation, the principal holds teachers accountable for meeting these expectations in a number of ways. For example, teachers submit detailed weekly lesson plans to the principal by Friday of the previous week. The lesson plan

components include a focus for the week and strategies; a listing of relevant texts and materials; questions to help students think more deeply about the topic; discussion topics to help students understand the importance of the learning and its relationship to prior learning; assessment strategies; and preliminary follow-up plans. The principal makes written comments intended to improve the quality of the lesson plans. In a sample of lesson plans examined by the review team, the principal commented on the correspondence of the learning objectives to student needs, the adequacy of the provisions for individual differences, and the range and variety of the instructional materials. Central office administrators stated that this practice was uncommon for district principals.

The principal also reviews and comments on the agendas for and minutes of the twice weekly grade level team meetings. The principal told the review team that with her encouragement most teachers use the time set aside in the collective bargaining agreement for personal planning as additional team planning time. Again, this school practice is not the district norm. The principal went on to say that she monitors the content of the grade level team meetings to ensure consistency across a grade, as well as articulation from grade to grade. Teachers told the review team that their grade level team meetings are purposeful and productive. They added that the principal is organized, informed, and directive, keeping the school “on course and together.”

In order to facilitate teacher accountability, the principal makes clear and specific recommendations for improvement and growth in teachers’ evaluations. A representative sample of SLEE teacher evaluations contained concrete recommendations for improving questioning, pacing, management, and modeling. Even the evaluations of masterful teachers contained targeted suggestions for improvement, such as adjusting the cognitive level of questions and varying expectations for student learning products. The review team found that this was not the practice in the district. Teachers told the review team that they benefit from the recommendations in their evaluations. Many also said that the specificity helps them make immediate improvements.

As part of the supervisory process, teachers are required to observe laboratory classes instructed by the literacy and mathematics coaches nine times each year. These classes are composed of heterogeneous groups of 3rd and 4th grade students. As an accountability measure, teachers are required to specify their purposes for the observations, based in part on the areas for professional growth identified in their evaluations, and to write reflections on their instrumental value. They must also state their intention to implement in their classrooms the strategies they observe. The principal and the coaches review the statements of purpose and reflections to determine common needs and to guide follow-up supervision. Teachers told the review team that the laboratory was a highly useful resource, distinguishing SLEE from other district schools.

In a shared leadership model, SLEE teachers participate in school governance on the leadership team and are empowered to serve on committees and study groups. The principal told the review team that the grade level teachers on the leadership team overcame her skepticism and convinced her to shift the focus of literacy support in grade 4 from reading to writing and from open response questions to the long composition. The principal went on to give her view that the

improvement in 4th grade ELA MCAS scores was attributable at least in part to the emphasis on writing the teachers recommended.

Teachers are responsible for developing sections of the Comprehensive Educational Plan in multi-grade groups. Each group makes a presentation at a faculty meeting where the entire faculty makes comments and recommendations. The principal then organizes the sections into an integrated Plan and completes the final version. SLEE teachers also serve on study groups. For example, according to the principal and teachers, one faculty study group developed a family literacy project, celebrating literacy and bringing books into students' homes.

In interviews, teachers told the review team that they believe all students could learn, support each other and each other's students, and trust what they are doing collectively. They added that the school climate is highly professional, and that teachers are expected to be "on" from the moment they "cross the threshold." The principal told the review team that failure of any kind is not tolerated at SLEE. She added that there is a strong partnership among SLEE administrators, faculty, and families to help every child achieve at the highest level.

The principal has created an uncommon environment for teaching and learning. SLEE teachers are both responsible and empowered. Their commitment to professional excellence and continuous personal growth has produced gains in student achievement.

The South Lawrence East Elementary School has provided tools such as units of study and pacing guides to help teachers deliver the curriculum and carefully monitors its implementation to ensure its consistent delivery to all students. As a result, the curriculum its students are taught is vertically and horizontally aligned within the school as well as being aligned to the state curriculum frameworks.

Interviews with district leaders, the school principal, coaches, and teachers, as well as review of school documents indicated that SLEE has implemented the district's required curriculum in mathematics and science but follows a balanced literacy program rather than the district's Success for All reading program. Within the balanced literacy program, SLEE has developed detailed literacy units of study at each grade level.

The school has following a balanced literacy model for over ten years and has worked closely in professional development with a consultant formerly from Tufts University, and now from the Teaching and Learning Alliance. The school has begun to use the same workshop model in mathematics, in conjunction with the district's texts from Scott Foresman/Addison Wesley, and Pearson Scott Foresman TERC units. Social studies grade level learning outcomes are integrated through the literature units. Full Option Science System (FOSS) science kits are used at all grade levels.

Teachers stated that the coaches provide pacing guides, curriculum frameworks, benchmarks, and scope and sequence documents. The team reviewed sample units of study, which the coaches described as the key documents used in their school to inform and guide teachers. The units of study contained pacing charts, key concepts and strategies, test-taking strategies, and

student performance expectations, such as those exemplified by published pieces in writer's workshop.

Through use of the workshop model in ELA and mathematics, the curriculum is designed to match student interest and learning levels. In 17 of 17 classrooms, the review team found that materials were aligned with students' developmental levels and levels of English language proficiency. The review team observed high student engagement in all 17 classrooms. Supplemental materials from a wide variety of publishers are available to teachers according to district curriculum documents. There was a plentiful trade book library in each classroom visited by the review team consisting of many leveled readers, some with multi-cultural themes.

In interviews, the coaches stated that they are viewed as the curriculum leaders, but that there is "shared ownership" for the curriculum among all staff. Under Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) principles, there should be substantial time for collective planning by teachers and curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement. SLEE teachers described numerous opportunities for curriculum work, ensuring both vertical and horizontal alignment. The faculty and principal told the review team that monitoring of curriculum implementation occurs through the interaction of coaches with teachers at grade level meetings, collegial support and direction during common planning time, and direct accountability to the principal through submitted lesson plans. Close scrutiny of student assessment results, observed by the review team at a grade level meeting and described by coaches and the principal, facilitates a continuously improving curriculum; however, there is neither a district nor a school-based formal curriculum review cycle.

The school has given the necessary guidance to its teachers to translate the district's direction on the framework content to be addressed into a reality—guidance that is not yet in place districtwide (see [district review report](#), pp. 19-22. Instruction at SLEE is based directly on the state frameworks, and the school has developed tools such as units of study and pacing guides to help teachers deliver the curriculum. These tools, as well as the many ways the school uses to monitor teachers' implementation of the curriculum and the use of assessment results to adjust it, contribute to a strong, consistently delivered curriculum.

Instruction at SLEE, which is based on Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) principles, demonstrates many high-quality features including clear objectives, a range of strategies, and high expectations for student learning. The quality of instruction at SLEE is regularly monitored, and teachers are accountable for student achievement.

According to an article on the CES website by the school's principal, CES is the foundation of the school's culture and its students' success.⁸ As mentioned in the previous finding, the workshop model guides instruction in literacy; according to the article, the school adopted this model in large part because it is based on values that are consistent with the CES Common Principles. In 2010-2011, the model was extended to the teaching of mathematics. The review team observed instruction in 17 classes, including two laboratory classes (see second finding

⁸ As of January 19, 2012, the article was available at <http://www.essentialschools.org/resources/371>.

above), and attended a grade level team meeting. The team saw clear evidence of aspects of CES's Common Principles, and consistently skillful instruction.

Learning and language objectives phrased in student-friendly language were posted in all of the classrooms visited by the review team. Teachers typically posted the objectives for all of the content areas to be taught that day. The tone, or classroom climate, was positive and engaging. A grade 4 teacher referred to students as “friends” and asked, “Would you mind writing your feedback on a sticky-note to use with your group?” Some teachers used terms of endearment when making requests, as when a 3rd grade teacher asked, “Will you take off your backpack, honey? Thanks.” Also, there was evidence in all of the observed classrooms of momentum and “un-anxious expectation,” one of CES's common principles. The review team observed teachers validating students as learners. For example, in reviewing Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test results with students one grade 4 teacher asked, “What does the data tell you about yourself as a learner?” In another class exploring mathematics strategies, the teacher told students to “pick a strategy that’s right for your brain.” The CES principle of “student-as-worker” rather than “teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services” was evident in most of the classes observed, where teachers served as concept-introducers, modelers, facilitators of center learning, and checkers of understanding. During the review team’s classroom observations, 14 teachers employed a full range of instructional strategies such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling, and 2 employed a partial range. One teacher engaged in direct instruction using a KWL strategy (“What I Know, what I Want to learn, and what I Learned”) to determine student background knowledge of insects before beginning a unit. The review team observed many student-led learning activities. For example, in one grade 4 class students explained their reasoning using a document reader to display their writing, and in another a student explained his mathematics problem-solving strategy using an InFocus projector to show his work. In a grade 3 class, the teacher asked students to discuss a controversy on personification that had arisen in a class discussion in small groups to help them resolve a disagreement.

In every classroom observed, the transitions from teacher-led instruction to student-to-student discussion, paired problem-solving, and buddy “checking for understanding” were seamless, with available class time maximized for learning. The value of learning time is reinforced by the principal’s written direction at the top of the lesson plan template: “Be sure to complete homeroom activities and student movement by 8:25 DAILY.”

Through observations and in interviews with the principal and the staff it was evident that they share a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction. In a focus group, teachers stated what they thought made the school successful: one stated and the others agreed that teachers teach to the highest level and expect that students will learn. They went on to say that the belief that all students can learn is constantly reinforced because “The principal expects it, we expect it, and the parents expect it.” They added that they support each other and that their cohesive professional relationship provides a model for the students. Teachers said that they would not allow students to fail, and that “there is always a way.” Teachers also credited students

and parents. They told the review team that the students are polite and earnest and that parents respect the teachers and are confident that their children will achieve.

The school maintains high behavioral expectations for all students, and students are active and engaged in their own learning. The review team found evidence of expectations for higher-order thinking in nearly all of the classes observed. Teachers engaged students in inquiry, exploration, and problem-solving in pairs or in small groups in 13 of the 17 classes observed. Teachers used questions requiring students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate and expected students to articulate their reasoning. For example, in a grade 3 ELA class the teacher asked whether the authors' purposes might be the same even when the genres are different, adding, "We need to decode the author's purpose, and you are analysts to understand the meaning of a poem." In a grade 2 ELA class, the teacher asked why the poet had repeated a line and what the effect of the repetition was. In one grade 4 mathematics class the teacher asked students how many different ratios they could make, and in another the teacher asked students to explain how to add unlike fractions. When a student described a different approach, the teacher asked the class to determine whether his answer was correct and then conducted a discussion about the validity of his approach.

Teachers checked for understanding by probing student reasoning. In the classes observed, teachers usually required students to show how they arrived at their answers by explaining the strategies they employed and why they had chosen them. One example of teacher skill in probing student thinking and resolving student confusion occurred in a grade 4 class composed of both ELL and non-ELL students. When some students appeared to equate chance and probability with luck, the teacher discerned by questioning them further that while they understood the concept of probability, they had not mastered the relevant mathematics vocabulary. She used good waiting time to allow the students to explain their reasoning fully, then introduced the appropriate terms and had them practice using the terms in order to develop automaticity.

The review team found that students in 16 of the 17 classes articulated their thinking, and that the teachers expected them to use complete sentences and correct terminology. All of the classrooms presented a rich environment, with word walls in mathematics and ELA and print materials to help with vocabulary. In one class composed of ELL and non-ELL students, some students spoke to each other in Spanish during a mathematics game, but responded to the teacher and other students in standard English. Teachers of classes that included ELL students allowed them ample time to process and demonstrated respect for their ability to contribute.

The consistency and breadth of high quality instruction was evident throughout the school and is a product of the common planning described by both the principal and the teachers. Teachers stated that they generally work together for one hour daily and meet twice a week with the principal, assistant principal, or coach. The meetings have a formal agenda and minutes are recorded. Teaching practice is further strengthened by embedded, ongoing professional development through teachers' observation of a minimum of nine laboratory classes each year conducted by the ELA and mathematics coaches. There is a common design for lesson planning, and teachers submit their plans to the principal weekly for review and comment.

The review team observed a grade 2 team meeting. This team meeting, which according to teachers and the principal was typical, focused on student work and teacher responsibility. One teacher was concerned about the accuracy of her rating of a student writing sample and read it to the team to help determine the score. The team also discussed how another student's vocabulary choices limited her score, deciding that they needed to consult with the coach. When one teacher asked how well students had done on an activity, another responded that her students had had difficulty, and the team began to brainstorm ways to help all of the students make more rapid progress. In the teacher focus group, a teacher stated, "Every score our kids get, we get." It was apparent to the review team that at each grade level, teachers assumed responsibility for the learning of all of the students, not just those enrolled in their classes.

The review team found that accountability for maintaining high quality instruction is a hallmark of the SLEE. High quality instruction and student achievement gains have resulted from collaboration during common planning time; monitoring of teachers' lesson plans; exposure to and practice of new teaching strategies facilitated and followed up through observations in the laboratory classes and consultation with the coaches; classroom visits and observations by the principal and teams of teachers (see description of learning walks in below finding on SLEE's professional development); and careful, close, ever-present monitoring of student learning through a variety of formative and summative assessments (see below finding on use of data).

SLEE has implemented many support programs that contribute to improved student achievement, including an extended day program that continues content instruction, a variety of supports for student attendance and behavior, and multiple activities to involve parents.

The principal told the review team that since the school became a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) in 1999 the philosophy of the school has been based in large part on the Coalition's principles. Accordingly, many student support programs reflect the principles. The principles are displayed in the school and include: Learning to use one's mind well; Less is more, depth over coverage; Goals apply to all students; Personalization; Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach; Demonstration of mastery; A tone of decency and trust; Commitment to the entire school; Resources dedicated to teaching and learning; and Democracy and equity. All interviewees were aware of the school's philosophy and its relationship to CES principles.

Extended day

According to interviews with district support staff, all schools in the district have an extended day on Tuesdays through Fridays with students remaining for one hour and 10 minutes beyond the school day, from 2:50 to 4:00. District administrators told the review team that at all schools except SLEE the extended day is attended only by students who are at risk of failing the MCAS tests. The then interim superintendent told the review team that all district ELL students may also attend the extended day program, but that it is not mandatory. At SLEE, classroom teachers remain with their students during the extended day and continue to provide instruction in the content areas. The principal told the review team that the amount of time for instruction is an

important factor in improved student achievement, and so staff use the extended day to continue the regular program. As a result, SLEE students are receiving additional academic instruction, in what the principal described as a seamless continuation of the school day.

In focus groups teachers said that if a teacher is unable to remain for the extended day because of an appointment, someone always takes over the class. That person might be a special subject teacher or the substitute teacher assigned to the school. The review team was provided with samples of the extended day learning plans that teachers prepare weekly. The elements of the plan include an instructional focus (mathematics, writing, or reading), strategies, texts and materials, questions and discussion, and assessments. The principal and members of the leadership team said all teachers are required to prepare extended day plans for the week. On Fridays enrichment activities such as knitting or chorus take place. Attendance at the SLEE extended day is high, according to the principal, with 443 out of 502 students attending.

MCAS “boot camp”

For four weeks before MCAS testing, the school provides an “MCAS boot camp” on Fridays during the school day. Students taking the MCAS tests spend a period each Friday preparing for the ELA portion and another hour preparing for the mathematics portion.

Family Support Team

The school has a Family Support Team that meets weekly. According to teachers, this team functions as a pre-referral team. The team is composed of teachers, the school nurse, the school counselor, and the assistant principal. Teachers refer students in need to the team by completing a form. Their parents are invited to attend the team meeting when the referral is discussed.

Behavioral programs: PBS and TONE

Teachers and the principal at the SLEE said that they focus on the social and emotional aspects of student behavior in order to establish “a tone of decency and respect” in accordance with CES principles. The school has developed a self-regulation system, known by the acronym TONE, to supplement the district’s Positive Behavior Support program (PBS). This combined approach enables the school to provide many ways to improve student behavior and to encourage and sustain prosocial behavior. The principal said that not all district schools have instituted PBS, but SLEE was one of the first of 10 schools to adopt it. The PBS is a research-based program used by schools throughout the country. The goal of the program is to provide techniques to improve students’ social, emotional, and learning skills, and to provide the means to sustain these skills. In an interview, members of the school leadership team said that they voted in 2005 to institute the program at SLEE. The team recently refined the behavioral reward system used at the school: in accordance with CES principles, all teachers award TONE tickets to students in recognition of acts that show decency and respect. TONE posters throughout the school are reminders of the expected behaviors: **T** Talk it Out—We are safe; **O** Own your behavior—We are responsible; **N** Nurture Feelings—We are kind; and **E** Enjoy learning—We are exceptional.

Students who behave in accordance with these expectations receive TONE tickets during the week; at the end of each week a student is selected as winner of the week. In a culminating activity, the weekly winner goes to the office and is acknowledged and congratulated by the principal. This acknowledgment is broadcast on the district's TV station and all schools view the proceedings. In addition, the names of students awarded TONE tickets are entered in a weekly raffle, with prizes going to the winners' classrooms. School staff and leaders said that behavior had improved at SLEE and that disciplinary problems are minimal. However, teachers did say that behavior must always be monitored and that this monitoring is an ongoing practice in the school.

Supports for student attendance

In interviews, teachers said that improving student attendance is a school goal. The attendance rate at the school was 95.1 percent in 2009-2010, compared to the districtwide rate of 92.8 percent and the statewide rate of 94.6 percent.⁹ The principal said that SLEE student attendance is always among the highest in the district; the principal and faculty make constant reference to the importance of regular attendance and the school nurse and teachers are vigilant. Calls are made to parents when their children are not at school, and a daily attendance report is distributed to all staff. The review team received a copy of the report, listing absent students by name and grade, with the parent's name and telephone number. The space for notes included information on whether the parent had called to notify the school of the absence and whether the absence was repeated. The report summarized the daily attendance percentages for each grade and for the school as a whole. The whole-school percentage for that day in May 2011 was 98.1 percent.

Student Recognition Days

SLEE holds monthly Student Recognition Days that celebrate a Student of the Month and an Ambassador of Peace. According to documents provided to the review team and interviews with teachers, the students chosen as Ambassador of Peace and Student of the Month make great positive efforts in school work and general behavior. Specifically, they complete assigned work to the best of their ability; follow school rules and exhibit politeness; are good friends, are honest, and are helpful to others; demonstrate outstanding growth in a particular educational, social, or behavioral area; and earn TONE tickets. Parents are invited to attend an Ambassador of Peace breakfast held monthly where awards are presented. Teachers said they call parents to encourage them to attend the breakfast.

Other involvement of parents

In interviews with the review team, both teachers and the principal said that efforts to involve parents in the life of the school are constant. The principal, leadership team, and teachers described the various activities that the school provides to encourage parental participation. SLEE sends Spanish or English language versions of its monthly calendar to all parents. The

⁹ It should be noted that the district and state rates are for all grades, not just grades 1-4. High school attendance rates are usually lower than attendance rates for the lower grades.

school furnished the review team with the schedules for and descriptions of school events, including Family Celebrations of Learning. According to the principal these celebrations are intended to acknowledge students as workers. Three days are set aside during the year when parents may come into school to view student work. Work is on display all day and parents may stay as long as they wish. Teachers in focus groups said that the parents of SLEE students expect them to do well in school. In an interview, the then interim superintendent spoke of the strong parent engagement at SLEE as one of the successes of the school.

The school encourages parents to volunteer, and according to interviewees each classroom has at least two parent volunteers. Parent volunteers are acknowledged by having their picture displayed outside the main office along with a short paragraph relating why they chose to become a volunteer.

Other activities for parents include Family Literacy Workshops. Teachers said that these workshops are held five times during the year, with the goal of presenting ways that parents can support their children in acquiring reading skills. Teachers said that they model for parents how to read to their children. Students also work with their parents. Free books are distributed to parents and pizza and snacks are always included. Staff members said that these events are usually “filled.”

Conclusion

SLEE has instituted many support programs for students. According to teachers and the principal, the extended day program is one of the most effective because it augments the instructional program. Teachers also said that in an environment where the expectations for student learning and behavior are high, students want to do well, and that the faculty is committed to helping them to succeed. Procedures to reduce absenteeism and encourage regular attendance contribute to the success of SLEE students. Also, the school involves parents in a variety of programs to help them understand the school’s goals and curriculum and show them how to support learning at home and at school. Teachers say that they have a culture of mutual support where they help each other to succeed with all of the students. One teacher said, and the others agreed, that “We are together; and we won’t let students fail because there’s always a way.” The school’s culture and support programs are calculated to produce gains in student performance, and the results are evident.

Much of SLEE’s professional development is embedded in the form of laboratory classes, extensive grade level planning, and learning walks.

Describing professional development at their school as job-embedded, the SLEE teachers and principal discussed various ways that this type of professional development occurs. SLEE coaches play an important role in professional development, and the then interim superintendent described them as “phenomenal.” She also said that the teachers at SLEE were experienced and accustomed to working with each other.

Laboratory classes

Developed during the summer of 2006, laboratory classes are an important aspect of professional development at SLEE. At that time, according to the interim superintendent, she was involved as assistant superintendent in streamlining the role of the coaches in the schools through trainings conducted by a lead teacher from Tufts University. The SLEE principal asked the lead teacher for advice on better ways to use the coaches to improve instruction. Coaches modeled instruction by teaching demonstration lessons in teachers' classrooms, but this was often ineffective because they were unfamiliar with the students' strengths and needs. Through discussions with the lead teacher, the SLEE principal decided to form heterogeneous ELA and mathematics laboratory classes by assigning the coaches selected students from 3rd and 4th grade classes. The coaches conduct these classes daily for approximately two hours, and teachers observe them to learn new practices. As an ancillary benefit, the laboratory classes have the effect of reducing the class sizes at SLEE for core instruction. The review team visited both reading and mathematics laboratory classes.

The principal requires all teachers to observe nine laboratory classes during the year. The observations include three writing, three reading, and three mathematics classes. The principal told the review team that she has developed a "creative schedule" to enable teachers to make the observations, by using special subject teachers and the "building based educators" to work with students. Building based educators are certified teachers assigned to each school primarily to substitute for absent teachers. Before observing in the laboratory classes, teachers complete a form indicating areas of interest or concern, and the coaches address these areas the next day in the lessons. For example, should a teacher indicate an interest in improving questioning techniques, the coach would demonstrate a variety of these techniques in the subsequent lesson. During the laboratory class observation, teachers record comments about such elements as teacher language, classroom environment and materials, and explicit instruction. The coach collects the teacher's observation record at the end of lesson, then at the end of the day meets with the teacher to discuss the observation. Coaches also observe and model lessons in teachers' classrooms and attend team meetings, providing two other forms of job-embedded professional development.

The interim superintendent said that the while the laboratory class model was not used elsewhere in the district, other district schools were considering adopting it. In an attempt to foster collaboration, the district formed teams of schools whose staff members meet to discuss strategies and visit each other's schools. As a result, some teachers from other schools have observed in the laboratory classes at SLEE. Also, because SLEE was at the time of the review the only school using a balanced literacy approach, many district teachers anticipating the transition to that strategy visited SLEE laboratory and other classes.¹⁰

¹⁰ In 2009-2010 the district decided to discontinue Success for All, partially because of the costs, and adopt a balanced literacy program districtwide. See next finding.

Grade level planning

According to their collective bargaining agreement, teachers are allowed 150 minutes of weekly planning time. According to the principal and teachers, all planning time at SLEE is used for grade level planning. The review team observed two grade level team meetings while visiting the school. Team meetings are conducted by a team leader, who develops the agenda. During team meetings, teachers discuss group and individual student progress, and student work is often examined using a protocol. The team leader also presents data on certain students' progress, and classroom assessment results are analyzed. Results of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing are discussed, and strategies for improving instruction to meet the needs of students are a theme of each meeting. Coaches attend all meetings, but according to the principal the schedule does not allow for the attendance of special subject teachers, and it is also difficult for ELL specialists and special educators to participate.

Learning walks

In interviews with the review team both teachers and principals said that learning walks are now a part of the culture of the school, and that since teachers have become part of the learning walk team there are even more opportunities for professional development to occur. Interviewees told the review team that SLEE was one of the first schools in the district to implement learning walks, and that a representative from ESE had conducted the training for the school. The principal said that learning walks are a tool for shifting practice. In addition to the summary of the learning walk prepared by the learning walk team, the review team learned that the principal prepares a summary that is shared with the staff and was forwarded to the interim superintendent.

District professional development offerings

SLEE teachers describe professional development among teachers in the school as differentiated. New teachers are more likely to attend the district's offerings, while the experienced teachers who constitute the majority of the school's teachers do not attend many of the district offerings, but develop and attend professional development at SLEE instead. They do attend the two half-day district meetings where attendance is required.

Conclusion

SLEE has been proactive in developing job-embedded professional development; its laboratory classes are especially effective in providing support for teachers at all levels of experience. These classes, along with the quality of the information and instructional strategies provided to teachers in the grade level team meetings, all of which are attended by the coaches, have been instrumental in improving student achievement.

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

The district has supported SLEE by allowing it to innovate and recognizing the value of its innovations, but it has not provided the school with different or better resources, with the exception of partial district funding for some years of the balanced literacy program.

The SLEE principal told the review team that in 2000 the former superintendent allowed the school to move from the districtwide Success for All literacy program to a balanced literacy program through partnership with Tufts University because he recognized that a balanced literacy approach was more compatible with CES principles. The partnership between the school and university was underwritten by grant funding for the next three years. According to the principal and central office administrators, when the grant funding ended, the district contributed \$20,000 each year for the next seven years to maintain SLEE's partnership with Tufts.

This funding ended in 2009-2010 when the district decided to discontinue Success for All, partially because of the costs, and adopt a balanced literacy program districtwide. In 2010-2011 SLEE and six other district schools became affiliated with the Teaching and Learning Alliance, the organization SLEE had previously worked with on balanced literacy, under the terms of a grant providing augmented teacher training. According to the SLEE principal and central office administrators, the district encouraged other schools to have their teachers attend the laboratory classes at SLEE to familiarize them with the practices being modeled there, especially the workshop model. Many interviewees stated that the district operates "bottom-up" rather than "top-down," and went on to explain that good practices originating in the schools are often adopted by the district.

The SLEE principal told the review team that she keeps the superintendent informed about innovations such as the laboratory classes. She added that the central office is highly accessible and responsive. SLEE leaders and a central office administrator said that the district's allocation of money to schools is based on enrollment and that the funding of SLEE is consistent with the funding of all other district schools.

Except for the \$20,000 for seven years noted above, the district has not provided SLEE with different or better resources even though, according to ESE data, it has higher percentages of low-income and ELL students enrolled than the district as a whole (see Table 2 above).¹¹ The operations of the school's leadership team and the extended day program were dependent at the time of the review on federal grant funding ending in fiscal year 2011.¹² Under the circumstances, it may not be possible to sustain the rate of progress low-income students are making in the school.

¹¹ Since 2006-2007, the first year of the grades 1-4 school, the school's percentage of low-income students has been from 2.3 percentage points to 6.7 percentage points higher than the district's, while its percentage of ELL students has been from 11.1 to 17.5 percentage points higher.

¹² The federal funding was used to pay some teachers for attending after-school meetings, as well as to pay teachers for their participation in the extended day program. (The teachers were paid less than their hourly rates.)

The district provides data support through its assessment team, made up of its director of assessment and accountability, program evaluator, and supervisor of assessment. Building on this support, SLEE uses data in a variety of ways to improve teaching and learning.

The district has a clear process for using assessment data to increase student achievement and to guide its schools. The three central office administrators who make up the district's assessment team are key to the collection, disaggregation, analysis, and dissemination of data: the director of assessment, who oversees the entire process, the program evaluator, who among other responsibilities assesses the effectiveness of intervention programs, and the supervisor of assessment.

The SLEE principal and coaches told the review team that the director of assessment sets performance expectations for individual schools for the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests. The SLEE principal explained that since MAP correlates highly with the MCAS tests, she establishes targets for SLEE students that are slightly higher than the district's expectations. The director meets each fall with the school's leadership team and with teachers at each grade level to review and explicate data relevant to the school and its grades. Like other schools in the district, SLEE then develops its Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) based on the data.

The review team found that each school's CEP contained an extensive list of school-level performance targets with comparative ratings for the 2009-2010 school year and new targets for 2010-2011. Performance indicators such as attendance, discipline, and the number of highly qualified teachers were included, as was information on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). According to district policy, the CEP identifies specific areas of strength and need in academic areas based on state, local, and classroom assessment data, and refers to student results by grade level, subgroup, learning standard, strand, and question type. The review team found that the SLEE principal, coaches, and teachers closely followed the district data analysis process.

While there is no formal data team at SLEE, the instructional leadership team, composed of the principal, coaches, specialists, and grade-level representatives, assumes the primary functions of a data team. In addition, the coaches meet with other district coaches once a month, and with the district-level assessment staff as needed. The coaches and teachers stated that they receive preliminary MCAS results during orientation in August and more detailed information on subsequent professional development days. SLEE administers the MAP, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Teachers told the review team that they use assessment results to set targets for learning, evaluate and modify the curriculum, improve instruction, assign students to flexible groups, and monitor the progress of students in intervention programs. Teachers develop targeted assistance plans for students not achieving at grade level. Individual student and class progress is tracked on a data wall located in the room where the leadership team meets.

The district provides the community with information about the schools, including SLEE, through an annual school report card. This three-page document is available on the district's

website and provides current information on each school's vision, enrollment, and teachers. The report card also provides statistics about attendance and suspensions, as well as AYP data and MCAS results for a five-year period and MAP results for three-year period. Well organized and informative, the report card provides parents and community members with timely information on each school's progress toward accomplishing state and national achievement goals.

The review team found that the district's process for data collection and analysis has enabled the schools to interpret student achievement results and monitor student progress. SLEE coaches help teachers to disaggregate the data further and use it to inform instruction. The active collaboration of the principal and coaches with the teachers enables SLEE to build on the data support from the district to provide students with continuously improving curriculum and instruction.

The principal uses the district's evaluation procedure to give timely and comprehensive feedback to school staff that holds them to high expectations and promotes individual growth.

The review team examined 14 teacher evaluations completed by the SLEE principal. The district evaluation procedure consists of three components, labeled A, B, and C: pre-observation and reflection, classroom observation, and summative evaluation. The evaluation procedure is fully aligned with the requirements of 603 CMR 35.00¹³ and contains all of the Principles of Effective Teaching.¹⁴ Teacher performance on the summative evaluation is rated on the following continuum: Exceeds Standards; Meets Standards; Developing, and Below Standard.

Fourteen of 26 SLEE teacher files were randomly selected for examination by the review team. Of the 14, three were new teachers whose files did not yet contain evaluations, since evaluation documents are placed in personnel files at the end of the school year. The remaining 11 files contained documentation related to all three components of the evaluation procedure. All teachers with professional status were evaluated every other year, as required, and their previous evaluations were filed in their folders. The pre-observation forms completed by the teachers contained all of the required information about the classroom lesson the principal would observe.

The review team rated each summative evaluation according to three criteria: timeliness (whether it was completed in accordance with contractual timelines); informativeness (whether it adequately described the teacher's performance); and instructiveness (whether it promoted professional growth). All of the evaluations were timely. The descriptions of classroom observations completed by the SLEE principal were comprehensive, containing a running record of the lesson observed and comments on the delivery and results. The observations also contained specific suggestions such as "Refrain from too much teacher talk," "Consider more time for students to talk," "Use a variety of questions," "Model what you want to teach," and

¹³ As they existed at the time of the review. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted on June 28, 2011, to replace the regulations at 603 CMR 35.00 with new regulations on the Evaluation of Educators.

¹⁴ The Principles of Effective Teaching accompanied 603 CMR 35.00 before the Board's action in June 2011 to replace these regulations.

“Extend the feedback to feedback by peers.” The principal’s recommendations included posing higher level questions, differentiating instruction, and using formative and summative assessments to target instruction and evaluate its effectiveness. In all cases, the principal made an explicit statement about the overall effectiveness of the lesson.

The district’s summative evaluation procedure calls for the assessment of the teacher’s performance based on the Principles of Effective Teaching. The SLEE teacher evaluations examined by the review team contained a variety of general comments by the principal relating to overall pedagogical practices, for example, “Continue to learn and apply research based strategies,” “Believe that all students can achieve high standards,” “Continue the delivery of excellent practices,” and “Develop and support students’ awareness of themselves as learners and help them to overcome self doubts.” The comments often acknowledged the contributions of the teacher.

Use of student achievement data

In their evaluations, the SLEE principal referred to the MAP test results of each teacher’s class and sometimes included data on specific students. Her comments about the data were directed toward improving student performance, and included recommendations such as working more closely with the coaches, using formative assessments to determine student needs, and observing laboratory classes to learn about instructional strategies and techniques. In interviews, the principal said that the references to data in teachers’ evaluations were intended to help students improve. She also said that all of the school data was posted on the data wall and accessible to the faculty for review. This made the information public for the professional staff and allowed all of the teachers to know how all of the students were progressing. According to central office administrators, making references to student achievement data in teachers’ evaluations is not a common practice of principals in the district.

References to teachers’ attendance

During interviews, the SLEE principal and teachers said that maintaining high teacher attendance was a school priority. The school has established a goal of 95 percent teacher attendance. Although not district practice, the principal made references to teachers’ attendance in their evaluations and reminded them of its effect on student achievement, commending those who met or exceeded the school goal of 95 percent, and encouraging those who did not to strive harder. Although according to district data SLEE average teacher attendance in 2009-2010 was high, many SLEE teachers expressed concern in interviews about the basis for calculating their attendance. For example, sick leave authorized by a physician and professional development and personal days approved by the district were counted as absences. Some teachers told the review team that they feared they were letting their colleagues down whenever they took time for legitimate personal and professional reasons. Others added that it was unnecessary to set an attendance goal for faculty with a strong work ethic.

Conclusion

The principal of the South Lawrence East Elementary School has used the district's evaluation tool as an effective means to improve student achievement. She makes full use of the instrument by making specific comments and recommendations to improve instruction. In addition, she includes student assessment results to guide and measure instructional improvements. This constructive use of the evaluation process is in contrast with the district evaluation process as viewed by some others in the district, including union representatives and teachers in focus groups. The district review team found that the district's evaluation systems and procedures were well designed, but that their implementation was inconsistent in quality and timeliness (see [district review report](#) at pp. 37-38).

The school review team also reviewed a larger sample of district teacher evaluations. The SLEE teacher evaluations were exceptional when compared with the larger sample because they were timely, comprehensive, and held teachers to high expectations. Teacher evaluation at SLEE is in the service of improving student performance and in the view of the review team has contributed to recent substantial gains by SLEE students.

The one aspect of the teacher evaluations that may be counterproductive, given the concerns expressed by teachers about their fears when they take time off for legitimate reasons, is the reference by the principal to teachers' attendance records. References to attendance in evaluations may be unnecessary, given the existence of other ways of dealing with attendance problems, and may be injurious to teachers' morale even when they meet the goal of 95 percent attendance.

The district does not provide sufficient time for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for its ELL students and has not provided enough opportunities for teachers to receive Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training.

English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the district

Interviewees across the district told the review team that the district's ELL students are not receiving the recommended English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional time. The then interim superintendent said that the district is "not where it should be with ELL supports." She cited the fact that students who test at Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) Levels 1 and 2 (those with the least proficiency in English) are not receiving the recommended minimum of two-and-a-half hours of instruction daily. Students who test at Levels 3 and 4 generally receive their instruction from an ELL tutor rather than a licensed ESL teacher.¹⁵

The review team learned in interviews that the district has had an ELL program for 15 years. In 2010-2011, there were 3,048 ELL students in kindergarten through grade 12, and according to an administrator only 49 licensed ESL teachers available to provide the required instruction. (In data on teacher certification and training submitted to the review team, however, the district reported a total of 39 teachers with ESL certification and 33 teachers with dual certification that included ESL.) Further, according to data provided by the district at the request of the review

¹⁵ For a description of the MEPA performance levels, please see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/pld.html>.

team, 501 ELL students had been determined to have a disability, making them eligible for special education.¹⁶ An administrator said that it is difficult to provide the necessary instruction for these students.

The review team was told in interviews that district elementary schools have 18 ESL teachers assigned and the middle schools have 10, with the remaining 21 teachers assigned to the high school. Interviewees at all levels said that it is a challenge to provide the necessary instruction without adequate staff. In a focus group at the middle school, teachers said that the ELL population had increased from 570 students to 690 in 2010-2011 with no increase in ESL teachers. Teachers reported that one ESL teacher was instructing students from grade 5 through grade 8 in one classroom at the same time.

The high school also has problems meeting the needs of its ELL students. A newcomer program at the high school has an enrollment of 233 students. A district administrator said that many families from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic come to the United States when their children are of high school age. Another administrator said that many of these students have not previously attended school.

The district provides a defined number of teachers to each school. A principal would therefore need to offset an increase in the number of ESL teachers with a reduction in other staff. As a result, ELL students in the district are not receiving the amount of recommended ESL instruction. District leaders reported in an interview that 40 teachers were currently in an ESL licensure program supported by the district, with the requirement of committing to teach in the district for three years.

The ELL coordinator told the review team that in the 2010-2011 school year she began meeting with ESL teachers once a month for two-and-a-half hours to discuss issues related to the program; previously they did not have the time to meet. At the time of the review the ESL teachers were working on a scope and sequence to accompany the ESL curriculum, which is aligned with the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO) in use in the district at all levels.

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training in the district

In 2010-2011, the district had only 258 teachers trained in category 1, 27 in category 2, 523 in category 3, and 84 in category 4.¹⁷ The interim superintendent explained that many teachers in the district were trained in category 2 over the years, but that the training did not meet the criteria established by ESE and that the teachers have to be retrained. According to the interim superintendent, 40 teachers would be trained in category 1 by September 2011, and these

¹⁶ According to data submitted to ESE, the number of ELL students who were also receiving special education services was 519 as of June 2011, having risen from 416 in October 2010 and 464 in March 2011.

¹⁷ Category 1 consists of training on Second Language Learning and Teaching, Category 2 on Sheltering Content Instruction, Category 3 on Assessment of Speaking and Listening, and Category 4 (for teachers who teach ELA to ELLs) on Teaching Reading and Writing to ELL Students.

teachers would be qualified to provide training for other teachers in the district. The district underwrote the training, but according to an agreement, if the trained teacher does not remain in the district for three years, he or she must reimburse the district for the training.

ELL education and achievement at SLEE

The two ESL teachers assigned to SLEE are unable to provide the necessary ESL instruction for the school's ELL students, who according to ESE data numbered 177 in October 2010 and 195 in June 2011. In order to provide as much language instruction as possible, the SLEE principal assigns ELL students to regular classroom teachers who are also certified as ESL teachers; there is at least one at every grade level. Also, she does not assign ELL students to inexperienced teachers.

Tables 9 and 10 below compare the proficiency rates for SLEE's ELL students in grades 3 and 4 on the 2010 ELA and mathematics MCAS tests with district and state ELL students in grades 3 and 4. Table 9 below shows that the 2010 SLEE proficiency rate of 42 percent for grade 3 ELL students in ELA was substantially above the corresponding proficiency rates of 21 percent for the district and 27 percent for the state. Although the differences were smaller, the 2010 proficiency rate for SLEE ELL students in grade 4 also surpassed both the district and state proficiency rates for grade 4 ELL students.

**Table 9: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for ELL Students in South Lawrence East Elementary, Lawrence, and State
ELA**

Grade	South Lawrence East	Lawrence	State
3	42 (42)	21 (224)	27
4	20 (30)	12 (134)	19
<p>Note: Numbers of ELL students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district.</p> <p>*Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles</p>			

Table 10 below shows that 2010 proficiency rates in mathematics for SLEE ELL students in both grade 3 and grade 4 substantially exceeded the proficiency rates for their counterparts in the district and across the state.

**Table 10: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for ELL Students in South Lawrence East Elementary, Lawrence, and State
Mathematics**

Grade	South Lawrence East	Lawrence	State
3	61 (42)	34 (228)	37
4	56 (30)	23 (132)	23
Note: Numbers of ELL students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district. *Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS. Source: School/District Profiles			

Conclusion

The district has serious problems in meeting the needs of its ELL students. It has too few ESL-certified teachers, students do not receive sufficient ESL instruction, and regular education teachers who teach ELL students have not received adequate training in sheltered English immersion (SEI). These problems have a direct effect on the achievement of the ELL students and implications for the high dropout and low graduation rates in the district.¹⁸

In 2010 SLEE students surpassed district and state proficiency rates for ELL students. Though it needs to continue to move students from the Needs Improvement and Warning categories, it is evident that SLEE has had success beyond that of the district or state in moving its ELL students to proficiency, whether because of its classroom teachers with ESL certification or because of the school's other supports, such as its extended day, or the practices modeled for its teachers in the lab classes or its careful monitoring of student progress. Insufficient ESL instruction for SLEE's students and incomplete SEI training for its staff, however, continue to be hindrances to improving achievement for the school's ELLs.

¹⁸ In 2009-2010, Lawrence's annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 was 9.4 percent compared with the state rate of 2.9 percent; its four-year graduation rate for 2010 was 46.7 percent compared with 82.1 percent statewide. (The four-year graduation rate rose to 52.3 in 2011.)

Recommendations

To enhance already strong relationships with the faculty and recognize their professionalism, the SLEE principal might consider discontinuing the practice of including comments on teachers' attendance in all evaluations.

The principal's evaluations of teachers are timely, informative, and contain specific and useful recommendations for improvement. In general, she makes excellent use of the district's evaluation process. But although it is not the district practice, the principal also comments on teachers' attendance in their evaluations, commending those who meet or exceed a school goal of 95 percent and encouraging those who do not to strive harder. Many SLEE teachers expressed concern about the basis for calculating their attendance, telling the review team that they feared they were letting their colleagues down whenever they took time for legitimate personal and professional reasons. Others added that it was unnecessary to set an attendance goal for faculty with a strong work ethic.

The review team recommends that the principal consider other ways of recognizing and improving teachers' attendance. In general, the team found the relationship between the principal and her staff to be a strong one. The leadership team includes teacher representatives, who changed the school's approach to on one occasion in a way that the principal said contributed to improvement in ELA scores. Teachers also serve on committees and study groups and develop sections of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan. The team found teachers both responsible and empowered. For her part, the principal comments on their weekly lesson plans as well as the agendas for and minutes of grade level team meetings; teachers told the review team that the principal keeps the school "on course and together." They also said that they benefit from the specific comments and recommendations in the principal's evaluations. But the reference to teachers' attendance in their evaluations has not been well-received at SLEE, seems incompatible with the evident commitment and professionalism of the faculty, and may be at the expense of their morale. Teachers are more likely to support a combined approach of recognizing excellent attendance and investigating and resolving any individual attendance problems without routine use of the evaluation system. Such an informal approach may be no less effective and may strengthen already strong relationships in the school.

The district should increase the amount of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for ELL students and also increase the number of teachers trained in sheltering content for ELLs.

Interviewees from all levels told the review team that the district's ELLs are not receiving the recommended hours of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction from a licensed ESL teacher. Students at Levels 1 and 2, the lowest levels of proficiency, are not receiving the recommended minimum of 2½ hours a day of ESL instruction, and for students at Levels 3 and 4 services are in many cases provided by a tutor rather than a certified ESL teacher.

In 2010-2011, according to an administrator, the district had only 49 certified teachers able to provide the necessary services for the district's ELL students, with only 18 teachers assigned to the elementary level.¹⁹ Teachers told the review team that services at the middle school did not increase as the ELL population increased from 570 to 690 students in 2010-2011. Further, teachers in focus groups said that services were provided to students in grade 5 through grade 8 at the same time in one class. The high school also had problems meeting the needs of its ELL students. The lack of appropriate ESL instruction places the district's ELL students at risk of failure.

The district also had an insufficient number of teachers who were trained in sheltering content for ELL students. As of the time of the review, only 258 teachers were trained in category 1; 27 in category 2; 523 teachers in category 3; and 84 teachers in category 4.²⁰

Though it has had success beyond that of the district or state in moving its ELL students to proficiency, both of these problems affect SLEE, also.

The district must continue its efforts²¹ to train its teachers in sheltering content and to increase the number of hours of ESL instruction. In 2010-2011 there were 3,048 ELL students in kindergarten through grade 12. The number of ESL teachers assigned was not adequate to meet their needs, and an insufficient number of regular classroom teachers had the training to provide the appropriate instruction so crucial for ELL students to succeed in school and eventually graduate. Providing the recommended amounts of ESL instruction and making sure that teachers are well trained in supporting ELLs in content classrooms are necessary steps to increase the academic achievement of ELLs and improve the low graduation rates and high dropout rates in the district.

¹⁹ The district reported a smaller total of teachers with ESL certification, 39, in data on teacher certification and training submitted to the review team.

²⁰ As previously described (see footnote 17 above), Category 1 consists of training on Second Language Learning and Teaching, Category 2 on Sheltering Content Instruction, Category 3 on Assessment of Speaking and Listening, and Category 4 (for teachers who teach ELA to ELLs) on Teaching Reading and Writing to ELL Students.

²¹ Administrators told the review team of initiatives by the district to increase the number of teachers with ESL licensure and with category training.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Lawrence Public Schools was conducted from May 23-26, 2011, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Differentiated Needs Review Team

Dr. James McAuliffe, Leadership and Governance, School Review Team Coordinator

Christine Brandt, Curriculum and Instruction; Assessment

Dolores Fitzgerald, Human Resources and Professional Development; Student Support

District Review Team

Dr. Nadine Binkley Bonda, Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Linda Greyser, Assessment, Review Team Coordinator

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Human Resources and Professional Development

Willette Johnson, Student Support

Dr. George Gearhart, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Lawrence financial personnel: director of budget and finance, projects assistant, fixed asset specialist, treasurer, comptroller, contract and payroll manager
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Lawrence School Committee: mayor serving as chairperson, and six members
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Lawrence Teachers Union: president, vice president, executive board member, representative
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Lawrence Public Schools central office administration: interim superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of assessment, principals
- The review team visited the following school(s) in the Lawrence Public Schools: Alexander Bruce (2-8); Edward F. Parthum Elementary (K-4); Emily G Wetherbee (K-8); Frost Middle School (5-8); Guilmette Middle School (5-8); Parthum Middle School (5-8); John K. Tarbox School (1-5); Business Management and Finance High School (9-12); Humanities and Leadership Development High School (9-12); International High School (9-12); Math, Science and Technology High School (9-12); and the Commendation School: South Lawrence East Elementary (1-4).
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with principals and focus groups with teachers. During the Commendation School visit, the school review team conducted interviews with principal and coaches and focus groups with teachers.
 - During school visits, the review team also conducted 111 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects. During the Commendation School visit, the school review team conducted 17 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects. (These are included in the district total.)
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE: District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
 - Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report

- Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
- Teacher's contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Organization chart
 - District Comprehensive Educational Plan
 - School Comprehensive Educational Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the past year
 - Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
 - Curriculum guide overview
 - K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - 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 current program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time schedules
 - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
 - Classroom observation tools not used in the teacher evaluation process

- Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
- Teacher attendance data
- All administrator evaluations and certifications
- Randomly selected teacher personnel files
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the South Lawrence East Elementary School visited because it was identified as a “gap-closer” for low-income students:
 - School Comprehensive Educational Plan
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments for the school
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in the school
 - Descriptions of student support programs at the school
 - Student and Family Handbooks for the school
 - Teacher planning time/meeting schedules at the school
 - Teacher schedules
 - Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools used at the school
 - Randomly selected teacher personnel files
 - Lesson plan templates and sample lesson plans
 - Grade level team meeting agendas and minutes
 - Laboratory class observation and response forms
 - Leadership team agendas and minutes

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Differentiated Needs (Low-Income) Review of the Lawrence Public Schools, conducted from May 23-26, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p>May 23</p> <p>Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' union; review of personnel files;</p>	<p>May 24</p> <p>Interviews with SLEE principal, and school staff; interview with SLEE coaches; teacher focus groups; classroom observations; school visits(South Lawrence East Elementary, Wetherbee, Tarbox, Partum Middle);</p>	<p>May 25</p> <p>Interview with SLEE leadership team; Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (South Lawrence East Elementary, Parthum Middle, Bruce, Guilmette Middle); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; focus group(s) with students; school committee interviews; focus group with parents</p>	<p>May 26</p> <p>School visits (Parthum Elementary, Frost Middle, Business Management and Finance High; Humanities and Leadership High; Development High; International High; Math, Science and Technology High)</p> <p>interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principal</p>

Appendix C: Student Achievement Data 2008-2010

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

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Median SGP
Grade 3—District	25	NA*	34	NA*	40	NA*
Grade 3—State	56	NA*	57	NA*	63	NA*
Grade 4—District	24	49.0	27	48.0	34	49.0
Grade 4—State	49	48.0	53	50.0	54	50.0
Grade 5—District	22	40.0	32	47.0	32	45.0
Grade 5—State	61	51.0	63	50.0	63	50.0
Grade 6—District	32	44.0	33	48.0	42	48.0
Grade 6—State	67	50.0	66	50.0	69	50.0
Grade 7— District	38	55.0	36	50.0	46	54.0
Grade 7— State	69	50.0	70	50.0	72	50.0
Grade 8— District	47	54.0	49	51.5	50	56.5
Grade 8— State	75	49.0	78	50.0	78	50.0
Grade 10— District	37	N/A**	46	30.0	48	41.5
Grade 10— State	74	N/A**	81	50.0	78	50.0
All Grades— District	33	49.0	37	47.0	41	50.0
All Grades—State	64	50.0	67	50.0	68	50.0

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

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

**NA: Grade 10 SGPs were not calculated until 2009

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

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

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	<i>Median SGP</i>
Grade 3—District	44	NA*	37	NA*	49	NA*
Grade 3—State	61	NA*	60	NA*	65	NA*
Grade 4—District	33	65.0	29	44.0	34	62.5
Grade 4—State	49	49.0	48	50.0	48	49.0
Grade 5—District	16	38.0	25	36.0	24	29.0
Grade 5—State	52	51	54	50.0	55	50.0
Grade 6—District	21	48.0	19	47.0	29	46.0
Grade 6—State	56	50.0	57	50.0	59	50.0
Grade 7— District	13	44.0	15	49.0	22	54.0
Grade 7— State	47	50.0	49	50.0	53	50.0
Grade 8— District	19	50.0	14	50.0	20	62.0
Grade 8— State	49	51.0	48	50.0	51	51.0
Grade 10— District	30	N/A**	30	33.0	35	36.0
Grade 10— State	72	N/A**	75	50.0	75	50.0
All Grades— District	24	49.0	24	44.0	31	49.0
All Grades—State	55	50.0	55	50.0	59	50.0

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

*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

**NA: Grade 10 SGPs were not calculated until 2009

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in
South Lawrence East Elementary (SLEE), Lawrence Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
ELA**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
State Low-Income Students	41	73.2	45.0	45	75.5	45.0	47	76.5	46.0
State All Students	64	85.2	50.0	67	86.5	50.0	68	86.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	30	67.6	49.0	36	71.0	47.0	41	73.2	50.0
District All Students	33	68.2	49.0	37	71.6	47.0	41	73.7	50.0
SLEE Low-Income Students	21	68.7	52.0	35	74.9	65.0	47	81.2	76.5
SLEE All Students	23	70.3	52.5	36	75.5	65.0	47	81.6	75.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C4: Achievement Trends for Low-Income Students in
South Lawrence East Elementary (SLEE), Lawrence Public Schools, and State,
Compared to All Students
Mathematics**

	2008			2009			2010		
	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>	Percent Proficient or Advanced	CPI	<i>Median SGP</i>
State Low-Income Students	33	63.1	45.0	33	64.5	44.0	37	67.1	47.0
State All Students	55	77.7	50.0	55	78.5	50.0	59	79.9	50.0
District Low-Income Students	24	55.5	49.0	23	56.8	44.0	29	61.4	48.5
District All Students	24	56.0	49.0	24	57.3	44.0	31	62.0	49.0
SLEE Low-Income Students	43	77.6	65.0	50	83.4	76.0	64	87.6	86.0
SLEE All Students	45	78.9	67.5	49	83.3	76.0	66	88.3	87.0

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C5: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Low-Income Students in South Lawrence East Elementary (SLEE),
Lawrence Public Schools, and State
ELA**

Grade	SLEE	Lawrence	State
3	50 (104)	39 (857)	43
4	43 (93)	33 (865)	31
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district.</p> <p>*Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

**Table C6: Comparison by Grade of 2010 Proficiency Rates*
for Low-Income Students in South Lawrence East Elementary (SLEE),
Lawrence Public Schools, and State
Mathematics**

Grade	SLEE	Lawrence	State
3	63 (104)	49 (858)	45
4	64 (93)	34 (864)	28
<p>Note: Numbers of low-income students (n) tested are given in parentheses for school and district.</p> <p>*Proficiency rates are the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.</p> <p>Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website</p>			

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

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

1. Teachers clearly understand the school's philosophy and mission and advance the achievement of the student-centered priorities in the Comprehensive Educational Plan by implementing the school's programs and instructional models consistently and proficiently.
2. The principal sets high expectations for teachers and holds them accountable, while empowering them through a shared leadership model of school governance.
3. The South Lawrence East Elementary School has provided tools such as units of study and pacing guides to help teachers deliver the curriculum and carefully monitors its implementation to ensure its consistent delivery to all students. As a result, the curriculum its students are taught is vertically and horizontally aligned within the school as well as being aligned to the state curriculum frameworks.
4. Instruction at SLEE, which is based on Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) principles, demonstrates many high-quality features including clear objectives, a range of strategies, and high expectations for student learning. The quality of instruction at SLEE is regularly monitored, and teachers are accountable for student achievement.
5. SLEE has implemented many support programs that contribute to improved student achievement, including an extended day program that continues content instruction, a variety of supports for student attendance and behavior, and multiple activities to involve parents.
6. Much of SLEE's professional development is embedded in the form of laboratory classes, extensive grade level planning, and learning walks.

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

7. The district has supported SLEE by allowing it to innovate and recognizing the value of its innovations, but it has not provided the school with different or better resources, with the exception of partial district funding for some years of the balanced literacy program.
8. The district provides data support through its assessment team, made up of its director of assessment and accountability, program evaluator, and supervisor of assessment.

Building on this support, SLEE uses data in a variety of ways to improve teaching and learning.

9. The principal uses the district's evaluation procedure to give timely and comprehensive feedback to school staff that holds them to high expectations and promotes individual growth.
10. The district does not provide sufficient time for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for its ELL students and has not provided enough opportunities for teachers to receive Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training.

Recommendation Statements:

1. To enhance already strong relationships with the faculty and recognize their professionalism, the SLEE principal might consider discontinuing the practice of including comments on teachers' attendance in all evaluations.
2. The district should increase the amount of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for ELL students and also increase the number of teachers trained in sheltering content for ELLs.