Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Lawrence Public Schools
District Review

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

Purpose

The goal of district reviews conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to support districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of systemwide functions using ESE's six district standards: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2010-2011 school year include districts in Level 3 or 4 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance[1] in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.** The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit including visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

[1] See http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/default.html.

Lawrence Public Schools

The site visit to the Lawrence Public Schools was conducted from May 23-26, 2011. The site visit included 60 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 80 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to teachers' unions. The team also conducted visits to a representative sample (12) of the district's 28 schools: Alexander B. Bruce Elementary School (2-8), Emily G. Wetherbee School (K-8), John K. Tarbox Elementary School (1-5), Edward F. Parthum Elementary School (K-4), South Lawrence East Elementary School (1-4), Frost Middle School (5-8), Guilmette Middle School (5-8), Parthum Middle School (5-8), 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). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile[2]

Crossing the Merrimack River and entering the center of Lawrence,[3] located 25 miles north of Boston, immediately brings a sense of history. Founded in 1845 by a group of Boston entrepreneurs led by Brahmin congressman Abbott Lawrence, the "Queen City," sometimes called the "Immigrant City," was one of the nation's first planned industrial centers. Tall brick smokestacks and clock towers still define the city's profile along Canal Street, named for the canals dug on each side of the Merrimack River after it was dammed to provide industrial power. There, in the ordered rows of red brick mill buildings, immigrant workers once produced cotton and woolen textiles for America and Europe, including uniforms for Union soldiers during the Civil War. Today, although many mills stand vacant after most of the companies that had once occupied the mills moved south in the middle of the last century, a third of the city's economy still depends on the mills' light industries, manufacturing shoes and textiles. The mill buildings also house several newer technology and health care companies.

Beginning within a few decades of its founding and continuing into the 20th century, the city attracted immigrant workers from many European countries—England, Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Belgium and Lithuania—as well as Canadians from Québec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The newest group of immigrants, from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, first settled in Lawrence in the mid-1900s and continue to do so today. Their children currently make up over 90 percent of students enrolled in the school district.

[2] Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

[3] Background and information on the city of Lawrence and the Lawrence Public Schools derived from City of Lawrence website, www.cityoflawrence.com, *Lawrence Eagle Tribune:* June 26, 2009, November 24, 2009, March 21, 2010, April 9, 2010, June 8, 2010, February 25, 2011, March 11, 2011, April 7, 2011, April 9, 2011, April 19, 2011, May 19, 2011, June 2, 2011, June 3, 2011, June 4, 2011, June 11, 2011, June 15, 2011; *The Boston Globe,* May 21, 2011.

Table 1 below compares student enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools with state enrollment by race/ethnicity and selected subgroups. The data shows that students in the Lawrence Public Schools are predominantly Hispanic or Latino, at 90.1 percent, compared to 15.4 percent statewide. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, also known as English language learners (ELLs), make up 23.8 percent of students, compared to 7.1 percent statewide. This subgroup has over 3000 students who, by definition, should receive more intensive academic support to boost their language skills. Over 87 percent of students come from low-income families. Special education students constitute just over 20 percent of Lawrence's students, higher than the statewide rate of 17 percent.

Table 1: 2010-11 Lawrence Public Schools Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations, Compared to the State

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number in District	Percent of District	Percent of State	Selected Populations	Number in District	Percent of District	Percent of State
African-American	215	1.7	8.2	First Language not English	9,883	77.3	16.3
Asian	270	2.1	5.5	Limited English Proficient	3,048	23.8	7.1
Hispanic or Latino	11,517	90.1	15.4	Low-income	11,141	87.1	34.2
Native American	0.0	0.0	0.2	Special Education*	2,601	20.1	17.0
White	761	6.0	68.0	Free Lunch	10,180	79.6	29.1
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	0.0	0.2	Reduced-price lunch	961	7.5	5.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	20	0.2	2.4	Total enrollment	12,784	100.0	100.0

*Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

The city has had financial struggles. High unemployment and high rates of poverty are persistent in Lawrence. The recent recession made the already tenuous finances even more tenuous, which led to reductions-in-force for city workers. The current unemployment rate, according to Department of Revenue data, is 18.2 percent, 10 points higher than the statewide rate. In fiscal year 2009 the city of Lawrence ran a budget deficit of nearly 24 million dollars. Under special state legislation, the city was allowed to borrow up to 35 million dollars in bonds to pay its debt,

merge the management of school and city finances[4], and enroll city and school employees in the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) health insurance program. The state also authorized an overseer to monitor city finances and ensure sound fiscal systems and procedures. Under the overseer and a new mayor elected in 2009, the city has balanced its budget for fiscal year 2011 and has proposed a balanced budget for fiscal year 2012.

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 such as grants ($36,748,274), was $204,454,525. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was $143,451,465.

During the two years before the review, the district experienced moments of leadership turbulence. A longtime superintendent, who had served the district for over a decade, was dismissed by the school committee following an indictment. Upon his dismissal, the school committee appointed the assistant superintendent, 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.

At the time of the May 2011 review, the school committee had just announced that it would embark on a broad search for a new superintendent. It was unclear whether or not the interim superintendent would receive an extension in her contract beyond June 30, to allow her to serve until a new leader was appointed. Groups of administrators and teachers lobbied for her retention as superintendent at a school committee meeting that took place during the week the review team was in the district.

The week after the site visit, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education appointed an aide to join the superintendent search task force and then announced plans to support the district as a follow-up to this review. On June 14, 2011, the school committee and the interim superintendent reached agreement that she would continue to lead the district for six months, until a new superintendent assumed leadership.

Amid these circumstances, reviewers found an urban school system enrolling almost 12,800 students in 28 schools. The district has organized the schools using over a dozen grade configurations: PK-K, PK-1, K, K-1, K-4, K-5, K-8, 1-4, 1-5, 1-8, 1-12, 2-8, 6-8, and 9-12--a wide variation in grade level distributions. The interim superintendent has created two leadership teams—an executive team of 20, including supervisors, directors, coordinators, the assistant superintendent, and a representative principal from each level; and a larger leadership team of about 75 consisting of all administrators in the district. The executive team meets with the

[4] 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.

superintendent twice a month and the larger team meets once every two months. The district also has an assessment team, made up of the director of assessment and accountability, the supervisor of assessment, and the program evaluator. Each school has an instructional leadership team (ILT) that works on improvement planning with the principal and the district assessment team.

Student Performance[5]

Note: The review team had available to it MCAS data up through 2010. This report was published just as the 2011 MCAS data became available. Selected 2011 MCAS data may be seen in Appendix D to this report. The description of student performance in this section, however, incorporates only MCAS data from 2010 and earlier.

Table 2 below compares 2010 MCAS proficiency rates, composite performance indices (CPIs) and median student growth percentiles (SGPs)[6] in ELA for selected district subgroups with those of the same subgroups statewide. In almost all cases, subgroups in the Lawrence Public Schools demonstrate proficiency rates and CPIs that fall below those of the state, some substantially below. However, both Hispanic/Latino students and African American/Black students demonstrate achievement on all three measures that is close to their statewide peers'. Also, several subgroups—Hispanic/Latino students, formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students, special education students, and low-income students—demonstrate median SGPs that exceed those of their peers statewide. While proficiency rates and CPIs are still lower than desirable, there has been some growth for key large subgroups shown by the MCAS ELA results for 2010.

[5] Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

[6] "Student growth percentiles" are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student's MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see "MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide" and other resources available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/.

Table 2: 2010 Lawrence Public Schools and State Proficiency Rate, Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Selected Subgroups, for MCAS ELA

STUDENTS	Lawrence Public Schools			State		
	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*
All Students (6292)	41	73.7	*50.0*	68	86.9	*50.0*
Asian (150)	63	86.3	*55.5*	75	89.8	*59.0*
African American/Black (121)	46	77.3	*45.0*	47	76.6	*46.0*
Hispanic/Latino (5597)	40	72.8	*51.0*	43	73.6	*47.0*
White (410)	51	80.2	*42.0*	76	90.5	*50.0*
Limited English Proficient (LEP) (785)	13	52.5	*49.0*	22	59.8	*50.0*
Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP) (874)	32	69.7	*56.0*	53	80.1	*55.0*
Special Education (1489)	13	59.6	*42.0*	28	67.3	*41.0*
Low Income (5776)	41	73.2	*50.0*	47	76.5	*46.0*

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 3 below compares 2010 MCAS proficiency rates, CPIs, and median SGPs in mathematics for selected district subgroups with those subgroups statewide. Again, for the most part, Lawrence's subgroups demonstrate proficiency rates and CPIs that fall below those of the state, with the exception of the African American/Black subgroup. However, as in ELA, median SGPs in mathematics are in the case of some subgroups higher than those of the same subgroup statewide. These subgroups are African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, LEP (ELL) students, special education students, and low-income students. While proficiency rates and CPIs are still substantially lower than desirable, median SGPs in mathematics, as in ELA, demonstrate growth.

Table 3: 2010 Lawrence Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rate, Composite Performance Index (CPI) and
Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Selected Subgroups, for MCAS Mathematics

STUDENTS	Lawrence Public Schools			State		
	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*
All Students (6312)	31	62.0	*49.0*	59	79.9	*50.0*
Asian (150)	56	80.7	*54.0*	75	89.0	*62.0*
African American/Black (119)	37	67.9	*64.5*	35	65.1	*48.0*
Hispanic/Latino (5623)	28	60.7	*49.0*	34	63.9	*47.0*
White (409)	41	71.6	*42.0*	64	84.1	*50.0*
Limited English Proficient (809)	16	49.5	*57.0*	24	56.2	*53.0*
Formerly Limited English Proficient (878)	25	59.6	*50.5*	47	73.3	*55.0*
Special Education (1487)	9	48.0	*44.0*	21	57.5	*43.0*
Low Income (5793)	29	61.4	*48.5*	37	67.1	*47.0*

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 4 compares Lawrence's MCAS proficiency rates and median SGPs in ELA with those statewide for a three-year period, 2008-2010, by grade level and for all grades combined. In every instance, Lawrence's grade level proficiency rate was substantially below the state proficiency rate for that grade. Median SGPs in all grades over all three years show moderate growth—the only median SGP in ELA that fell above or below the moderate range (40.0-59.9) was the median SGP for grade 10 for 2009 (30.0); however, in 2010 the median SGP for grade 10 was 41.5, which is within the moderate range. It is notable, however, that grade-level proficiency gaps between Lawrence and the state were narrower at almost every grade level in

2010 than in 2008. For all grades, this meant a reduction in the proficiency gap of four percentage points between 2008 and 2010.

Table 4: 2008-2010 Lawrence Public Schools MCAS Proficiency Rates, with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State: by Grade, for ELA

District and State by Grade	2008		2009		2010	
	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: ESE did not compute SGP for grade 10 until 2009
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 5 compares Lawrence's MCAS proficiency rates and median SGPs in mathematics with those statewide for a three-year period, 2008-2010, by grade level and for all grades combined. Once again, in every instance, Lawrence's grade level proficiency rate was substantially below the state proficiency rate for that grade. In all three years, the gap between Lawrence and the state in math proficiency was greatest at grade 10. Median SGPs showed two grades, grades 5

and 10, with consistently low growth; in grade 5, furthermore, the median SGP decreased in both 2009 and 2010. Grade 8, on the other hand, showed notably high growth in 2010, and grade 4 showed notably high growth in both 2008 and 2010.

Again, as in ELA, proficiency gaps in mathematics between Lawrence students and students statewide were narrower at almost every grade level in 2010 than in 2008. In mathematics, this meant that the proficiency gap for all grades narrowed modestly, by three percentage points, from 2008 to 2010. In 2010, the proficiency gap between Lawrence students and students statewide was almost the same in ELA and math: in ELA the gap was 27 percentage points, and in math, 28 percentage points.

Table 5: 2008-2010 Lawrence Public Schools MCAS Proficiency Rates, with Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State: by Grade, for Mathematics

District and State by Grade	2008		2009		2010	
	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*
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: ESE did not compute SGP for grade 10 until 2009.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

To sum up student performance on MCAS, although the district's proficiency rates in ELA and math are 27 and 28 percentage points below the statewide proficiency rates, those gaps have narrowed by 3 or 4 points since 2008, and the median student growth percentiles in both subjects for some subgroups (including, for both subjects, Hispanic/Latino and low-income students) are higher than those of the same subgroups across the state.

Table 6 shows changes in selected indicators over the period 2008-2010 for all students in the Lawrence Public Schools and for all students statewide. The table shows some improvement between 2008 and 2010 for Lawrence students on all three types of graduation rates shown: four-year graduation rates, four-year adjusted graduation rates, and five-year graduation rates; however, the four-year and five-year graduation rates in Lawrence were dramatically below the state rates in each of the three years.

Table 6: 2010 Selected Indicators for All Students
Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) and State
(all figures except for average # of days absent are percentages)

INDICATORS	2008		2009		2010	
	LPS	State	LPS	State	LPS	State
Attendance rate	93.4	94.6	92.4	94.6	92.8	94.6
Average # of days absent	10.4	9.2	12.5	9.3	11.8	9.3
Chronic absence rate	19.7	12.9	21.8	13.0	20.1	13.0
In-school suspension rate	10.2	3.6	10.1	3.3	13.8	3.7
Out-of-school suspension rate	12.0	6.2	7.5	5.3	9.2	6.0
Retention rate	4.7	2.4	7.4	2.3	5.7	2.1
Stability rate	83	95	84	95	87	95
Graduation rate (4-yr.)	35.8	81.2	48.1	81.5	46.7	82.1
Graduation rate (4-yr.), adjusted	37.9	**	49.8	**	49.0	**
Graduation rate (5-yr.)	49.7	84.0	46.2	84.2	54.6	84.0
Grade 9-12 annual dropout rate	12.9	3.4	10.2	2.9	9.4	2.9

Note: The chronic absence rate is defined as the percentage of students absent for more than 10 percent of their days enrolled. For information on attendance, suspension, retention, and dropout rates, see http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/help/data.aspx; for information on the stability rate, see p. 9 of the DART User Guide at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html; for information on graduation rates, see Frequently Asked Questions at http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/gradratesfaq.html.

** Not calculated

Source: School/District Profiles and District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) on ESE website and other ESE sources

Table 6 also shows that attendance rates in Lawrence have been consistently lower than the state attendance rate of 94.6 percent. Attendance rates in Lawrence were lower in 2009 and 2010 than in 2008. Similarly, the average number of days absent for Lawrence students was higher in 2009 and 2010 than in 2008, as was the percentage of students identified as "chronically" absent (students absent more than 10% of the time). Not shown on the table is the percentage of high

school students who were chronically absent in 2010: 40.1 percent in grade 9, 33.0 percent in grade 10, 32.2 percent in grade 11, and 29.7 percent in grade 12. And while the out-of-school suspension rate was lower in 2010 than 2008, the in-school-suspension rate rose in 2010, after showing a slight dip in 2009. The retention rate was also higher in 2010 than 2008, though not as high as in 2009.

On the other hand, although it is still more than three times the state rate, the district annual dropout rate has fallen each year since 2008, from 12.9 percent, to 10.2 percent, to 9.4 percent. Also, the stability rate (percentage of students who were enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools all year) has risen each year, from 83 percent, to 84 percent, to 87 percent, indicating a more stable student population. There are districtwide issues related to attendance and chronic absence, and less than half of students graduate from high school in four years. Rates for both in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension are consistently higher than state rates.

These indicators describe a student body with intense needs—academic, language-based, and perhaps social-emotional. This report explores the extent to which the district has developed systems and practices that are strong enough to provide the education its students need.

Findings

Leadership and Governance

Urgent action on important district matters has sometimes been delayed by the school committee. School committee focus has been distracted by members addressing side issues rather than committee priorities, assuming administrative functions that are better addressed by policy or staff, providing a public hearing for individual student issues, and, at times, disparaging staff.

The review found that, overall, the school committee as a whole has not been effectively executing many of its broad and important governance responsibilities, to set policy and oversee district leadership in ways that focus stakeholders on working together collaboratively to raise student achievement. While some members have demonstrated efforts to change the way the committee functions and use school committee meeting time in more constructive ways, without a unified effort, the school committee fails to address some important matters for the school system. The school committee under Education Reform has three main responsibilities: hiring and evaluating the superintendent, policy-making, and oversight over the budget. Stewardship of these three areas is an important role but has been left without necessary leadership. Earlier in the year, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees was invited to conduct a school committee training session for committee members. Only three of the seven members participated in the training.

Hiring the Superintendent

When the prior superintendent was dismissed over two years ago, the assistant superintendent was made acting superintendent for the first year plus two months, then appointed interim for the second year (2010-2011). It was not until the beginning of May of the second year, just before the interim superintendent's contract expired, that the committee voted to conduct a search for a new superintendent. One member had been asking for a review of the interim superintendent's contract for several meetings. The chair would not entertain the request. This left the school district in a state of confusion with many wondering who would lead the district the following year; who would make decisions while the search was in progress; and, since the search would take place after the usual hiring season, whether suitable candidates would be available. Staff indicated that this situation left the district in a state of upheaval.

Policy-making

The school committee too infrequently discusses pertinent data that would help them analyze the costs and benefits of policy decisions. In interviews, school committee members acknowledged receiving sufficient data from the current administration, representing a change from the prior administration's practice. Interviews and a review of documents offered evidence that the interim superintendent provides multiple sources of data to the school committee to inform their decision-making. The school committee routinely receives monthly reports on attendance, special education referrals, suspensions, and finances. When relevant, they receive MCAS

results, AYP updates, summaries of MAP test results, and additional student indicator data. Each year, members receive copies of the District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCEP) and all School Comprehensive Educational Plans (SCEPs) and all school report cards. Recently, they received ESE's District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) data. Data reports are included on the agenda for school committee meetings and represent the same data shared with school principals and others. School and district leaders frequently use data in presentations to the committee. However, a review of the minutes shows that the school committee engages too little in discussion about the data to be able to make informed decisions relevant to its policy-making role.

For example, when the committee received the SCEPs displaying multiple sources of school and student achievement data including improvement targets for each school, no questions or comments or discussion ensued even through principals were present at the meeting. Another example occurred when high school principals were asked to give the school committee a presentation on safety nets—an important topic for a district like Lawrence, where proficiency and graduation rates are low. The review team found that principals prepared a thorough 30-minute presentation that cited a number of data sources. However, at the end of the presentation members' attention to the topic was distracted by a committee member discussion of how many teachers go to Dunkin' Donuts during break periods and requests for the six high schools' faculty sign-out lists. The key points of the presentation were lost and the focus was shifted away from the provision of effective support programs for students. Parliamentary procedure was not used to address the fact that the member was acting out of order.

Financial and Asset Management

Although members have identified building safety as a concern and the committee has received regular reports with financial and maintenance data, it has only recently begun to develop a comprehensive building maintenance and capital improvement plan to provide for safer and more secure school buildings. The review team saw no evidence that the committee has explored financial data to probe in depth whether or not the district's programs and services are adequately funded by the city. Nor was there evidence that the committee has investigated spending on specific student services and staffing in Lawrence compared to spending in districts with similar demographics. For fiscal year 2012 the school committee has identified building maintenance as a priority and budgeted additional funding for a total of $790,000, but documents list $1,958,000 in building maintenance needs for fiscal year 2012, including roof repairs, flooring replacements, bathroom renovations, and re-pointing of brick walls and other water leak mitigation—approximately two-and-a-half times the amount budgeted. Review team members observed such building needs as needs for flooring replacement and repair of water leaks during visits to schools in older buildings.

Unproductive Conduct

Instead of being used as much as possible to focus on the most important district needs, school committee time has been used to address issues other than committee priorities, to begin

initiatives in areas that are better addressed by policy or staff, to provide a public hearing for addressing individual student issues, and to make disparaging comments to staff.

Some school committee members have used meeting time to act in the role of a member of the public rather than the role of a member of the governing body, a practice that has been allowed. Rather than following standard procedure, that a member who wants to discuss an issue puts an item on the agenda, some members use the public participation segment of the meeting to address the committee on issues that are not part of the shared agenda of the committee as a whole.

School committee members sometimes initiate actions in areas that are best dealt with by policy or by staff. For instance, one school committee member held a meeting with high school students, unknown to the administration, and stated at the April 14, 2011, school committee meeting, "I think that we should have pep rallies. So, for the next meeting I am going to put up a motion to have that happen." In another instance, one member of the school committee asked that a survey be sent to parents to see what they would like to see in the curriculum.

Individual student issues are sometimes inappropriately addressed when the committee allows parents to come forward to discuss issues pertinent to their individual children. For example, on April 15, 2010, according to school committee minutes, a concerned parent spoke about her child not being allowed on the high school campus. On April 14, 2011, a man introduced himself by saying that many people might remember him because his son has special needs and he had spoken several times about how he wanted an out-of-district placement for his son. He then went on to discuss, in public session, the intricacies of how that placement occurred. For the protection and privacy of children in the schools, this kind of interaction should not be allowed in a public meeting, especially one televised throughout the city. The school committee has no mandate or authority to be hearing about specific issues concerning individual students. That they do hear about them has a twofold impact: parents then misunderstand the role of the school committee, and issues related to individual students are made public and sometimes politicized. Although the chair of the school committee has tools as chair to inform the public of the inappropriateness of bringing such issues to an open forum or school committee meeting, he does not use them. When parents go to school committee meetings, rather than to the appropriate school department administrator, to discuss their children's needs, and the chair does not intervene to stop inappropriate discussions, those needs may be prevented from being met through proper channels and procedures.

Some school committee members publicly disparage school employees during school committee meetings. For example, after a presentation about a program at the high schools in spring 2011, one school committee member publicly told the director of the program that he had not made enough effort to have the program really succeed. A second example occurred at another spring 2011 school committee meeting when a committee member stated, "This person came to me. He was displaced. He had two good evaluations from principals and one from the food service director. I don't understand why he was displaced. He must have been sabotaged." The school committee member went on to suggest that the "sabotage" was by one of two district

administrators. And later in the meeting, he suggested that the evaluations of teachers completed by one of those administrators be "thrown out" because the administrator was leaving the district. A third example of disrespect occurred when the school committee was approving the warrant, also at a spring 2011 meeting. A member saw a bill from Elite Body Therapies and stated, "They have insurance. Why do we have to pay for it? I'm not going to pay for these bills. If you can't do your job, retire." Still another example was a school committee member statement, again from a spring 2011 meeting, "Now you high-priced principals back there, you let her down. You let [interim superintendent] down by having your kids score low." The chair of the committee does not consistently use tools at his disposal, such as parliamentary procedures or rules of order, to control and manage meetings. This sets up an adversarial relationship between the school committee and the staff that is a hindrance to moving the student learning agenda forward.

Administrators also described intimidating behavior by some school committee members. One of these administrators described one member of the committee as "scary and threatening" because of his behavior toward school personnel and others at public meetings. Another administrator commented that when he meets with a school committee member, he always has someone else in the office with them. In interviews, principals reported that some school committee members arrive in schools unannounced and do not stop at the office, but go directly into classrooms, walk around the school, or arrange meetings with students. Sometimes, a school committee member has refused a request by a security guard to sign in or given no response when greeted by a teacher. Collectively, disrespectful behaviors create an atmosphere of mistrust of employees and interfere with the good work that they can accomplish.

Conclusion

Not urgently executing its role and responsibilities and putting side agendas ahead of the committee's work can impede progress in the district. When a school committee does not act as a unified body with a strong chair working to support student achievement and growth, the priorities of administrators often have to shift from doing the important work of the district to satisfying requests of individual school committee members. This shift in priorities may interfere with the focus that Lawrence needs to put at this time on improving student achievement and providing a productive learning environment for all students. When school committee members assume administrative responsibilities rather than working on policy and budget issues, their behavior undermines the role of the superintendent as chief executive officer of the district and runs counter to the intent of the Education Reform Act of 1993. Disrespectful and intimidating behavior demonstrates insufficient process and decorum on the part of the committee and its leadership. The school committee's failure to fulfill its role as steward of the system has had a negative impact on school district focus on the improvement of student achievement and has eroded public confidence.

The central office staff has worked diligently to put in place many important documents and procedures, but more direction is needed to strengthen practices in schools throughout the district.

During the review, it was apparent to the review team that many professionals in the district well understand the nature of students' needs and are committed to supporting students to succeed in school. In addition, the interim superintendent and her central office team are extremely supportive of and responsive to the individual kindergarten through grade 8 schools. However, the evidence gathered during the review and described in the findings below points to a number of systems and practices being tenuous and incomplete when strong and robust ones are called for.

Many important documents and procedures are in place. For example, a thoughtful and thorough budget has been prepared, and there is a crisis plan, an anti-bullying plan, an up-to-date school building conditions report, and a technology plan, as well as Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) training documents, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training documents, PBS reports and Read 180 reports. Data is considered to be important, and the director of assessment and accountability ensures that it is analyzed and distributed to all schools. She and her team go into each school within the first two months of the school year to discuss the MCAS results and explain the benchmark testing for the year. There is evidence from interviews and focus groups to show that in K-8, administrators and teachers are well aware of data and most use it to inform instruction with varying levels of skill.

The District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCEP) is intended to be the driving improvement plan in the district. It should contain the vision for the district and the goals that will help the district work toward that vision. It should be a guide that all administrators in the district rely on to set direction for their work for the year.

However, the DCEP's curriculum and instruction section is a compilation of school-level goals. It is composed of 13 pages compiling the individual School Comprehensive Educational Plans' goals for curriculum and instruction (according to the interim superintendent, each school has its own School Comprehensive Educational Plan). Thus the DCEP reflects rather than directs in the section that defines the key teaching and learning priorities of the district. With principals left to set the direction in their own schools, priorities for teaching and learning often vary from school to school. For example, at the South Lawrence East Elementary School the principal has set up lab classes taught by coaches. These are the only lab classes in the district. Teachers are urged to come to the lab classes and see master teaching of children who are enrolled in the school. There is a focus, in a living classroom laboratory, on methods that work. The teachers immediately use what they learn in their classes, and the coaches come to classrooms to observe and give feedback. This is a method that has resulted in consistent and excellent instruction, leading to high achievement. There is a different, less comprehensive structure in some other schools called resident classrooms, but the specific lab class model is not replicated in any other school.

Two areas that could benefit from greater direction are supervision and evaluation at the school level. Regarding supervision, the interim superintendent prioritizes administrator visibility as an

important element of leadership, but principals and teachers reported that administrators have varying degrees of visibility depending on the level of the school. The elementary teachers who spoke in focus groups stated that principals were for the most part very visible in their schools. At the middle school level, in two of the three schools represented at the focus group, teachers said that principals were visible in classrooms. At the high school level, teachers said that the principal in only one of the six schools was visible in classrooms. Regarding evaluation, a review of 55 randomly selected teacher evaluations showed that over a third of required teacher evaluations were not completed during the evaluative cycle. Except at the district's Commendation School, most evaluations were uninformative. This presented a problem in the two Level 4 schools[7] when all of their teachers had to reapply for their jobs as a part of the district's state-approved turnaround plan. The interim superintendent reported that performance evaluations at those schools could not be used to make distinctions between levels of practice among the teachers because, for the most part, everyone received a satisfactory evaluation. Therefore, all teachers reapplying for their jobs in the two schools needed to go through an interview process and be evaluated by district administrators using a rubric. The interim superintendent noted that timelines for completion of evaluations had been reviewed, but by the time of the review no specific training on evaluation had been done for the 2010-2011 year.

Formal communication mechanisms for principals at the time of the review were limited given the size and complexity of the school district, in its service of close to 13,000 students in the 28 schools. When asked about her leadership structure, the interim superintendent described two leadership teams. The executive team consists of 20 people, including the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, supervisors, directors, coordinators, and a representative principal from each level. This group meets twice monthly. The larger leadership team consists of all administrators in the district including those in the executive team. Approximately 75 people make up this team, which includes all principals and assistant principals. This larger team meets once every two months. Although individual principals described the central office and the interim superintendent as very supportive and responsive to individual issues, this second team is the only formal means that all principals have to meet with the interim superintendent as a group.

Because the larger leadership team meets infrequently, its meetings do not provide sufficiently frequent opportunities for reinforcement of educational direction, vision, and priorities related to the principals' building responsibilities. For the past two years the interim superintendent has attended meetings of the high school leadership once a month, but selected agendas for those meetings and the review team's interview with the high school principals indicated that those meetings have been devoted more to organizational matters than to in-depth discussions related to teaching and learning. The "PAC 10" process that was put into effect this year (2010-2011) is promising. It clusters schools into 10 groups to break down barriers across schools and encourage collaboration in a variety of areas. The central office has provided feedback on how well each group has collaborated; so far, however, the groups are defining their own direction.

[7] See http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level4/default.html .

High school principals indicated that they were without much direction and support from the central office. Lawrence High School was reconfigured five years ago as six small schools, each with its own theme and principal. Before the 2010-2011 school year when the positions of three of the six high school principals became vacant, the decision was made not to replace those principals. Each of the remaining three principals instead took on leadership of a second small high school. The principals indicated that their attempts to fulfill the original vision for the small schools were hindered by having to lead an additional, unfamiliar school. The interview with the principals revealed their view that there was not a clear role at the high school for the director of secondary curriculum and that their efforts to fulfill the original vision for the small schools were not met with understanding and support from the central office. In addition, during the review team's visit at the end of May, 2011, the principals had not been given a clear idea by the administration as to the high school's future structure and did not know whether they would each continue to have two schools to lead during the next school year.

The review team also learned that in 2011-2012 the International High School was to change focus and take in all high school newcomers to the district. Consequently, approximately 100 students currently in the International High School were to move to other high schools on campus. Principals were concerned because this decision would change the dynamics of each of the six high schools. They reported that the planning for the change was to be done at the school level, and that the principals were left to determine how to mitigate the impacts of the arrangement without assistance or direction from the central office.

Because there are few mechanisms in the school district for principals as a group to receive direction from the interim superintendent on district priorities, there are few shared priorities from school to school. Principals are left to determine what the direction will be in their school, how they will supervise and evaluate staff, and what constitutes good instruction. The insufficient use of systematic mechanisms by central office leaders to communicate and discuss district priorities, strategies, and improvement plans with principals has led to fragmentation within the school system.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), a reorganization of the learning objectives in the state curriculum frameworks, are widely available online and in written form across the district, but do not contain the components of a complete curriculum. Other curriculum components are uneven in their development and inconsistent in their implementation so that instructional staff are without the necessary guidance as to what to teach when, how to teach it, and what tools to use to assess how well students are learning what is taught. The math curriculum is most complete, with pacing guides for teachers for kindergarten through grade 8 and algebra.

The district's website reveals one consistent element in its ELA, math, and science curricula at all levels. Each curriculum consists of the reorganization of every learning objective in each of the three state frameworks by grade and content area. Called the district's Essential Learning

Outcomes (ELOs), they are what principals, coaches, and teachers all said are their district curricula. They are widely available online and in written form across the district. Interviewees voiced their commitment to ensuring that these compilations of framework objectives are addressed in classrooms across the district. However, they do not contain the components of a complete curriculum, such as guidance to teachers concerning the district's goals and objectives, appropriate instructional strategies, available resources, timelines, or assessments to determine how effectively the curriculum has been implemented. In other words, the ELOs do not provide written guidance concerning what is to be taught when, how it is to be taught, what materials are to be used, and what the tools are to determine how well students have learned what has been taught. Without a complete written curriculum as a guide, consistency between grades and schools and alignment from grade to grade are difficult to ascertain or reinforce. This is a major concern in Lawrence where students frequently move from school to school, according to interviewees.

Beyond the written ELOs, curriculum in English language arts, mathematics, and science at the K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 levels is uneven with regard to written documentation and hence with regard to implementation.

Math

Math has the fullest development since it has pacing guides. There are pacing guides with specific mathematics content for grades 1-8 and for algebra, with the following columns: Suggested Time Frames, Units of Study, Massachusetts Framework Standards and Suggested Resources, Misconceptions, and What I Want to Remember for Next Year. The resources for K-4 are a combination of TERC's *Investigations* program and Scott Foresman's *Mathematics* program; the pacing guides provide detailed references to specific sections of each to teach. Interviewees reported that the inclusion of specific sections of each of these resources in the pacing guides depended upon whether the content is required under the framework.

At grades 5-8, the resources are Pearson's *Connected Math Program* (CMP) and Prentice Hall mathematics texts, again a combination deemed appropriate for addressing ELOs. At the high schools, work is underway to establish a syllabus for each mathematics course. The syllabus for a course like Algebra I differs in each of the six high schools, so algebra courses across the high schools are not necessarily aligned.

These mathematics pacing guides provide some guidance to principals, coaches, and teachers, but they do not have references to appropriate instructional strategies or, in particular, to a range of specific assessments to determine how effectively the curriculum has been implemented (although there are some assessments embedded in textbooks).

However, in 2010-2011 for the first time, mathematics teachers under the direction of a consultant from ESE developed and administered two common assessments for grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, and for algebra and geometry. It was not clear from interviews how these common assessments are being or will be used. There was unresolved discussion as to whether common assessments were pre- and post-tests or could be mid-term and final exams. Interviewees did report that future common assessments will most likely be produced from a bank of possible test

items rather than being developed by teachers from scratch. However, staff members regarded the development of common assessments as positive and expressed the hope of having more than two for each grade in the future.

ELA

In ELA, in kindergarten through grade 8, district schools, with one exception, have been using *Success for All* (SFA). To supplement this program, the district has a month-by-month skills calendar and a reading strategy book list. The ELA program does not have pacing guides, so pacing and hence alignment depend upon the leadership of the coaches and principals. Coaches meet twice monthly with central office curriculum staff and then bring curriculum guidance to regular grade-level meetings at their schools. Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) tests and formative assessments included in the SFA program provide indications of student progress in literacy. Also, MAP tests are used as a measure of students' progress toward proficiency on MCAS. Principals noted in interviews that teachers are required to include formative assessments in their lesson plans; however, although formative assessments are included in SFA, it was not clear that teachers have had sufficient professional development to develop formative assessments on their own.

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year the district will no longer formally implement *Success for All*. Interviewees reported that the decision to discontinue the use of SFA came from concerns about the limited increase in MCAS ELA achievement since the district has been implementing the program as well as the program's insufficient emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. During the 2011-2012 year, kindergarten through grade 4 will begin implementing a balanced literacy program, an initiative successfully in place in one elementary school in the district. To support teachers as they move in this direction, the district has purchased ample Rigby Literacy materials. Central office staff reported that they will rely heavily on direction from a consultant to build teachers' capacity to implement balanced literacy. Moving teachers from the tightly structured *Success for All* program to balanced literacy instruction will require skillful and timely professional development. With balanced literacy, teachers will function independently in their classrooms to design their own instructional programs using an assortment of leveled books. Unfortunately, at the close of the school year 2010-2011, given the current lack of development of the ELA curriculum, teachers involved in this transition did not yet have a focused, detailed curriculum to rely on for support in implementing balanced literacy.

In grades 5-8, teachers will continue to use *Success for All* materials, but there will no longer be a formal association with *Success for All* facilitators. Interviewees reported that in the future, grades 5-8 will adopt a program and materials more in line with the balanced literacy shift at K-4. At the six high schools, as for mathematics, each school has its own syllabi for English classes, with variations across schools and no single assessment to measure student progress or achievement and enforce alignment.

Science

In science in kindergarten through grade 8 the district uses Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits, Science Technology Concepts (STC), and Bridge Kits to support the coverage of the state frameworks. However, kits on specific topics also do not constitute a curriculum and do not necessarily address the state frameworks. Alignment is clear since teachers have kits in common, but interviewees reported that there is inconsistent use of the assessments that accompany the kits. As a result, there is little data as to how well students have learned the lessons in the kits. At the high school level, science ELOs are commonly detailed under biology, chemistry, and physics across schools. Specific objectives are included under each ELO, providing teachers with more guidance than other ELOs, but still lacking the specificity of a fully documented curriculum.

Overall

In curriculum, the district has provided content areas and grade levels with firm direction regarding the framework content to be addressed. But beyond that, the level of written specificity about curriculum varies greatly across content areas and at different grade levels. In kindergarten through grade 8, in math as well as ELA, schools rely heavily on the direction and guidance of the coaches and principals. At the high school level, individual teachers generate syllabi, so they establish the curriculum for their own courses. The impact of this lack of a well-developed written curriculum is that horizontal alignment within a K-8 school may be strong due to the direction of a coach, but alignment across schools is less likely—a problem in a district with a great deal of student mobility. The high schools present the possibility for greater differences in curriculum. Each high school maintains its own identity, and common aligned curricula have not yet been developed across the district high schools except in biology, chemistry, and physics. The district is without the written documentation that would lead to an aligned curriculum, one that provides necessary guidance for teachers, administrators, and coaches and addresses the academic needs of all students across the district.

District and school leaders, teachers, and coaches demonstrate strong understanding of the features of high-quality standards-based instruction, but instructional practice varies in strength among grade levels and schools.

Teachers, principals, and central office administrators, when questioned concerning how Lawrence defines good instruction, responded with detailed responses that seemed to indicate a solid understanding of good instruction. They referred to such characteristics of good instruction as a range of teacher techniques, student engagement, students working in groups, differentiation, modeling, questions that require higher-order thinking, and continual assessment.

In addition, there are practices in the district geared to support effective instructional practice. Numerous interviewees discussed the regular occurrence of learning walks in schools. Participants in learning walks use the Instructional Inventory Record, a form based on ESE's template listing 14 key instructional characteristics, to record the rate of occurrence of these important characteristics. Teachers reported in focus groups that they were fully informed

concerning the content of the form in use. From kindergarten to grade 8, every school has both a literacy-writing coach and a math-science coach, and in 2010-2011 four coaches were added, one in each of the four core content areas, to work in all six high schools. These coaches provide teachers with job-embedded instructional support by modeling in classrooms as well as observing teachers and suggesting instructional adjustments. Finally, the district is providing all its principals with National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training, which is heavily oriented toward instructional improvement.[8]

To collect information about instructional practice, review team members observed 111 classrooms across the district, 39 in grades 1-4, 40 in grades 5-8, and 32 at the high schools (grades 9-12). Observers used an Instructional Inventory Record with the same instructional characteristics as the Learning Walkthrough tool the district uses. Team members noted whether there was no evidence, partial evidence, or solid evidence for each of the 14 characteristics.

When elementary, middle, and high school observations are combined, there was solid evidence of three instructional characteristics in 72-80 percent of classes observed:

- In 80 percent, classroom climate was characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. As one reviewer commented, "Students are respectful, focused, and engaged while working together to solve a problem."
- In 75 percent, instructional materials were aligned with students' developmental level and level of English proficiency. A reviewer commented that the "math word wall is rich with posted math vocabulary with examples." Another found a "good range of materials for a wide range of students."
- In 72 percent, the presentation of content was within the students' English proficiency and developmental level. In one classroom, a reviewer noted that "work displayed has labels" (Example: "This is part of our weather unit.") In another instance, however, a reviewer commented: "Seems very basic for a senior project one year in preparation."

For four other characteristics of effective instructional design and delivery, however, solid evidence was observed in 48-60 percent of classes visited:

- In 60 percent of classes observed, the depth of the teacher's content knowledge was solidly evident throughout the presentation of the lesson. A reviewer commented about one teacher, "His questions and the assignment show some good depth." By contrast, in another classroom, the observer wrote, "She [the teacher] reads grammar definitions from the book and then copies examples on the board."
- In 48 percent, there was solid evidence that instruction included a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. In 29 percent of classes, however, there was no evidence of a range of techniques. For example, one observer commented that the lesson was mainly "teacher talk with only two students responding." By contrast,

[8] See http://www.doe.mass.edu/edleadership/nisl/ and http://www.nisl.net/.

in another classroom the review team member observed group work with the teacher facilitating followed by students talking with a partner about what they were learning.

- In 59 percent, the team found solid evidence that the teacher paced the lesson to ensure that all students were actively engaged. In 17 percent, there was no evidence that students were actively engaged. Review team members saw some highly engaged students as well as instances of teachers making smooth transitions from one activity to the next. However, in one classroom the observer commented, "Pace is slow. Students cannot hear one another because they speak so softly."
- Solid evidence of student engagement was observed 59 percent of the time.

Concerning instructional practices that elicit higher-order thinking:

- In 47 percent of the classrooms observed there was solid evidence that questions required students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation. In 22 percent there was no evidence of this higher-order thinking.
- In 45 percent it was solidly evident that students were articulating their thinking and reasoning. In 25 percent, there was no evidence of this. With some frequency, instead, observers found students responding with one word answers. In one classroom where this characteristic was in evidence, students were seated in groups of six and the teacher instructed them to turn and "talk to their partner."
- In 43 percent there was solid evidence of students inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together, in pairs or in small groups. In 34 percent there was no evidence of this characteristic.
- In 54 percent it was solidly evident that opportunities for students to apply new knowledge and content were embedded in the lesson. In 34 percent, there was no evidence of this characteristic.

Almost as important as the relatively low rate of occurrence of solid evidence of instructional practices that foster higher-order thinking skills is the high percentage of classrooms in which there was no evidence, as opposed to partial evidence, of such instructional practices.

When observations of elementary and middle school classes and high school classes are analyzed separately, it becomes clear that a lower frequency of effective instructional characteristics was found in the high schools. A comparison of the occurrence of solid evidence of certain key characteristics illustrates the difference between the high school level and the lower grades.

- Available class time is maximized for learning:
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 72 percent; high school classes: 50 percent.
- Depth of teacher content knowledge:
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 67 percent; high school classes: 44 percent.

- Instruction includes a range of techniques:
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 58 percent; high school classes: 22 percent.
- The teacher paces the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged.
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 72 percent; high school classes: 29 percent.
- Questions require students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation.
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 54 percent; high school classes: 28 percent.
- Students articulate their thinking and reasoning:
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 53 percent; high school classes: 25 percent.
- Students are inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together, in pairs or in small groups:
    - Elementary and middle school classes: 56 percent; high school classes: 13 percent.

This analysis shows considerably less strength in instruction at the high schools; however, the observations also showed a need for improvement in instruction at the elementary and middle school levels. Teachers are familiar with the instructional characteristics of ESE's learning walkthrough. They have either used the record themselves while participating in learning walks or seen the record applied in their classrooms when observations in their classrooms were discussed in meetings with coaches or principals. And learning walks have been occurring in the district for five years. Though in interviews teachers and administrators seemed to have a solid understanding of good instruction, there is more work to be done to support staff in using their strong knowledge about instruction as demonstrated in interviews. For example, instructional strategies are not currently incorporated in curriculum documents, as mentioned in the finding above. Consistent application of instructional strategies that support student learning is key in moving the students in all schools to higher levels of achievement.

The vision for Lawrence High School at the time of its reconfiguration, as six small high schools with distinct identities but continuity in curriculum, has not been supported with the full-time principals and common curriculum needed to realize its full potential and increase students' proficiency and growth.

Five years ago, under the previous superintendent, the comprehensive Lawrence High School moved to a new campus and was reconfigured as six small schools, each with a particular theme such as performing arts or math and science or leadership. The plan, according to the principals, was that each school would have its own identity while at the same time there would be

continuity across the schools in the curriculum of core courses. To ensure that each high school would develop and maintain its own identity, each was given its own principal, who has considerable autonomy regarding the scheduling and staffing of the school. When the individual high schools were created, the district also created the position of director of secondary curriculum to ensure that all the high schools would have a common core curriculum aligned with the state frameworks and designed to help students fulfill graduation requirements. However, the district has not maintained Lawrence High School as six separate high schools each with its own principal, and common course requirements across schools have not yet been developed and implemented.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the number of high school principals went from six to three, so each principal assumed responsibility for a second school. Each principal doubled his responsibilities and assumed control of two themed high schools, one of which he was largely unfamiliar with. The concept of smaller learning communities was compromised by this staffing change. At the time of the review team's site visit, there was discussion about the possibility of restoring the six original principal positions.

With regard to continuity of curriculum, the high schools have not made much progress. Over the five years, syllabi have been developed for all of the courses taught in the schools. These syllabi are not common across schools for core courses. So, for example, the syllabus for English 9 or algebra is different in each school. The one exception is the group of syllabi completed for biology, chemistry, and physics, which are the same across schools.

The central office as it currently operates focuses support on the kindergarten through grade 8 schools. In interviews, central office administrators aside from the interim superintendent discussed curriculum, assessment, and professional development K-8. K-8 principals made clear that they work cooperatively with the central office, and coaches that they receive their direction from central office leaders.

The high schools, however, operate quite separately from the central office. High school principals indicated that for the most part they have the autonomy and responsibility to resolve issues with minimal assistance or intervention from the central office. The director of secondary curriculum works to establish common curriculum across the high schools, but the high school principals report to the superintendent and the director's authority vis-à-vis the principals is limited. The principals reported that they had previously met regularly with the director concerning curriculum, but that those meetings no longer take place. At the same time, the interim superintendent's interaction with the high school principals is limited to periodic meetings with a large group of administrators and monthly meetings of the high school leadership that are focused on more on organizational than educational matters.

The minimal centralized oversight, the reduction in the number of principals, and the discontinuity of curriculum across the schools create challenges. High school teachers in a well-attended focus group reported dissatisfaction with the lack of consistency across schools in curriculum, discipline, and leadership. Each principal now leads and manages two schools, attempting both to maintain each school's separate identity and to ensure that students have

access to a common core of knowledge. But overall achievement at the high schools is not strong. In 2010, 48 percent of 10th grade students achieved proficiency in English language arts, compared to 78 percent of state 10th graders, and 35 percent did so in mathematics, compared to 75 percent of 10th graders statewide. The median SGP for 10th grade students in ELA in 2010 was 41.5, at the lower end of the range (40.0-59.9) indicating moderate growth; in math their median SGP was 36.0, below that range. The organizational structure within the high schools and the nature of the communication between the high schools and the administration currently do not provide the high school campus with the direction it needs to help its students meet high standards.

Assessment

The district continues to develop a comprehensive and balanced assessment system that uses multiple types of assessments. The culture of accountability envisioned by the district assessment team is hindered only by the absence of a fully-developed curriculum and by the varying capacity of instructional staff at different levels to use assessment data to monitor student progress and modify instruction.

Interviews with teachers and leaders and a review of documents indicated that the district continues to develop and implement a more balanced and comprehensive assessment system that includes benchmark, formative, summative, and common assessments. The district expects that teachers and leaders will use multiple forms of assessment data to guide and inform improvement decisions.

MAP and MCAS tests

Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) tests and MCAS tests provide key sources of data to inform improvement decisions. All students through grade 10 take benchmarked MAP tests three times a year in reading/ELA and mathematics. K-8 teachers and coaches use MAP results in grade-level team meetings to monitor students' progress, group students for instruction, and target interventions. High school principals and coaches and some high school teachers also monitor MAP results and use them to guide instruction; grade 9 teachers and the grade 10 teachers in most of the high schools also collaborate in grade-level teams during regularly scheduled planning time. Interviewees described MAP results as fair predictors of success on MCAS tests; therefore teachers also use MAP scores to modify instruction in preparation for MCAS testing.

MCAS results are disseminated to schools as soon as they are available. An extensive MCAS analysis forms one portion of the data package that members of the district assessment team[9] present to principals, members of school instructional leadership teams, and grade-level teams in the first weeks of school to set the stage for improvement planning. In addition, once MCAS

[9] The district assessment team comprises the director of assessment and accountability, the supervisor of assessment, and the program evaluator.

results are analyzed, all schools provide multiple opportunities for support—through MCAS prep sessions during extended day, at summer school, or during school vacations—for students who have either failed MCAS tests or scored poorly on them. There is also an "MCAS boot camp" taught during the school day in the weeks before MCAS testing. MCAS results are tracked carefully, and at most schools it is common to see data rooms or data walls where MAP and MCAS results are publicly displayed and easily accessible for team meeting discussions. District leaders, principals, and coaches monitor MAP and MCAS results using school report cards that track progress over multiple years by school and even by classroom. School report cards also include attendance, demographic, and some teacher data.

Teachers in an elementary focus group reported that some schools or teachers administer the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test (a vestige of a prior Reading First grant) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) several times a year to measure reading comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. They consider these test results along with MAP test scores when planning and grouping for instruction. Since the grant ended, however, the district has not taken a position on whether or not these assessments should be administered.

Formative assessments

Documentation and interviews showed that the use of formative assessments is expanding in the district, but most are components of textbooks or workbooks. Formative assessments are embedded in the *Success for All* literacy program used in kindergarten through grade 8. According to interviews with principals and teachers, most principals look for evidence of formative assessments when checking teachers' lesson plans. Teachers use formative assessments to understand progress in learning for an individual, a group, or a whole class and adjust teaching or grouping accordingly. In September 2011, the district plans to introduce a new balanced literacy program for K-8. As the district works with a consulting group to implement balanced literacy, district leaders have identified the need to create new formative literacy assessments, although work on creating them had not yet begun at the time of the review.

Formative assessments in mathematics through grade 8 mainly include pre-tests that accompany mathematics programs, and sometimes other assessments developed by teachers to signal students' progress and their learning needs. In science, formative assessments accompany the inquiry-based FOSS kits used through grade 6, but teachers reported that these assessments are used unevenly across schools.

As part of the new "Keeping Learning on Track" (KLT) professional development initiative in the middle and high schools, teachers, leaders, and coaches described the development and expanded use of "informative" assessments to keep teachers informed about what students understand and can do. Many of these resemble the "dip sticking" techniques used in the lower grades, such as asking for "thumbs up," or using A-B-C-D cards. Interviewees also noted that some teachers create formative assessments by drawing questions from an Educational Testing Service (ETS) item bank. The goal at the high school level, according to an administrator, is to use more formative and fewer summative assessments. However, secondary teachers and leaders also indicated that although there has been progress in using formative and informative

assessments to guide instruction, most teachers require additional professional development before they can develop them effectively for all core courses.

Common assessments

Common assessments are also a developing initiative. Some grade-level teams collaborate to develop and share common assessments in ELA and mathematics in addition to the assessments that accompany textbooks, such as the mathematics pre-tests and post-tests for *Investigations* in kindergarten through grade 4 and the *Connected Mathematics Program* in grades 5-8. This practice varies from school to school. At the high school level, a teacher with multiple sections of the same course gives common assessments, but interviewees indicated that it is not usual for multiple teachers teaching the same course to administer common assessments such as mid-year or final exams as a common summative measure of learning over time or a way of evaluating the curriculum.

Last summer, 40 middle school and high school mathematics teachers worked with consultants from ESE to develop two common assessments for grades 5-8 and for algebra and geometry courses. These were administered during the school year, and teachers and leaders reported learning a great deal about question design. The need to expand the use of common assessments to other courses and grades at the secondary level now presents a challenge to the district. Because of the extensive time and resources required to train all teachers to develop well-designed common assessments, district leaders noted the intention to purchase a testing product with question banks for teachers to use in developing additional common assessments.

Performance and project-based assessments

According to interviewees, performance assessments and project-based assessments have recently been introduced in at least one high school in several courses; these were observed by the review team in several classrooms. For example, after studying a novel, students in an English class created videos, virtual displays, reports, or PowerPoint presentations, integrating communication skills and their understanding of the text. This assessment format is relatively new and evolving and its use has not yet expanded to all six high schools.

Limitations on the effectiveness of the assessment system

Fundamentally, however, the effectiveness of the assessment system is limited because it is linked to curricula with insufficient detail, described in the first Curriculum and Instruction finding above. Without clearly documented curriculum that includes multiple assessment options linked to specific objectives, skills, and knowledge, assessments can lack precision and focus or be mistimed, even though some are already embedded in texts. The absence of a fully-developed curriculum makes it harder to develop common mid-terms and final exams at upper grade levels to check students' knowledge and understanding at key intervals, and to develop common assessments in core subjects across the district.

Assessment use in the schools continues to increase and the number of formats for assessment continues to expand. Yet interviews with teachers and coaches revealed that the frequency and skill with which assessments are analyzed to aid in decision-making vary among teachers and

coaches across the district. In several interviews and focus groups, secondary teachers and leaders themselves noted that teachers, coaches, and principals at the elementary level were more prepared than personnel at higher levels to use data to make the daily decisions that support their work, either individually or collectively or both. Though elementary teachers in a focus group noted the need for continued professional development in how to analyze data well, the review team learned that teachers' skill in data analysis is even less secure at higher grade levels. Some high school teachers in a focus group claimed that they rarely receive achievement data and described their skills in analyzing data as limited.

Classroom observations demonstrated differences in how frequently formative assessments are used in elementary, middle, and high schools. In the 110 classrooms observed, review team members found solid evidence of the use of on-the-spot formative assessments to check for understanding to inform instruction in 76 percent of elementary classrooms, in 79 percent of middle school classrooms, and in only 38 percent of high school classrooms. They observed solid evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning (another demonstration of formative assessment) in 66 percent of elementary classrooms, 39 percent of middle school classrooms, and 25 percent of high school classrooms. From the review team's observations it appears that formative assessments are more firmly embedded in instruction through grade 8 and their use to inform teaching is less frequent in higher grades.

Conclusion

Evidence from interviews and documents suggests that the assessment system is evolving into a more comprehensive and balanced system by the expansion of assessments to include various types. It is a work in progress that currently relies largely on assessments that accompany instructional programs in the lower grades, while a number of assessments continue to be created by teachers. The assessment system is self-limiting because it is linked to curricula that are often not fully developed. Without curricular guidance on assessment, there is little clarity across schools about what the options are for assessments, which assessments are key, when will they be administered, and how they will be used. In addition, teachers reported varying levels of ability to use assessment data. Without curriculum, instruction, and assessments that are fully aligned and documented and professional staff who are skilled in their use of assessment data and have the time to discuss data with peers, the assessment system cannot be made fully comprehensive and balanced and the culture of accountability described by the assessment team in interviews cannot be fully realized.

The district has structured a well-conceived improvement process that relies on the collection, dissemination, and analysis of data from multiple sources to inform planning, practice, and policy.

In an interview, the director of assessment and accountability clearly articulated the district's expectation that leaders and teachers use multiple sources of data to inform decision-making. The director explained that this principle is based on the work of Victoria Bernhardt[10], who

[10] Victoria L. Bernhardt, Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement, Eye on Education, 1998.

advocates, for systemic school improvement, for analyzing a variety of data to guide decisions. In addition, a review of the District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCEP) indicated a broad goal for districtwide assessment and accountability: to "continue to actively promote and encourage a learning environment focused on using data-driven decision making to meet the goal of academic proficiency and college readiness for all students."

From interviews, focus groups, and documents, it is clear that the district's office of assessment and accountability has communicated to both veteran and new teachers and leaders the expectation for the creation of a data-driven instructional system in which data is used to inform all discussions and decisions at the district, school, and classroom levels.

The district expects principals and instructional leadership teams (ILTs) to use data to develop School Comprehensive Educational Plans (SCEPs). It expects teachers, coaches, principals, and specialists to use data at school- and grade-level meetings to measure and monitor student progress, to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, and to adjust instruction. It expects principals and other stakeholders to conduct learning walks, for which it provides training, and it monitors learning walk reports to find trends and areas of strength or concern. To support improvement, the district also disseminates data regularly to the schools in the form of student achievement profiles and school report cards based on MCAS, MAP, and other student and teacher data.

Review of a dozen SCEPs and evidence from interviews shows clearly that data does drive improvement planning at the school and grade levels. In September and October, each school's instructional leadership team (ILT) and principal meet with a member of the district's assessment team[11] to review the most current school data, including MCAS results, and to set the scene for improvement planning. The assessment team member also meets with each grade-level team at the school to review pertinent achievement data, sometimes drilling down to the classroom and individual student levels. These are conversations supported by data displays that model how to look at data, how to talk about data, and how data can be used to craft solutions to teaching and learning problems.

As described in a standardized SCEP template, the ILTs use data to guide holistic improvement planning developed from the context and needs of each school, including:

- Demographic data including student population statistics and school organizational data, trends for attendance, enrollment figures, the dropout rate, and, for the high schools, the graduation rate
- School process data relating to instructional programs and intervention strategies as well as initiatives for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development
- Perception data revealing stakeholders' insights about school culture and the learning environment

[11] The district assessment team comprises the director of assessment and accountability, the supervisor of assessment, and the program evaluator.

- Student learning data showing achievement trends, including MCAS proficiency rates, CPIs, median SGPs, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators, and for some schools, MAP trends for reading/ELA and mathematics

There are no required districtwide curricular or instructional goals for schools to address in SCEPs other than the broad goal in the template, to "meet AYP participation, attendance and CPI Improvement Targets for English Language Arts and Mathematics in the Aggregate and for All Subgroups." High school plans add a goal to improve the four-year graduation rate. In examining SCEPs, the review team learned that the district's data-rich planning process is carefully followed. The SCEPs from the 12 schools visited by the review team indicate that ILTs analyze their schools' demographic contexts, do a needs assessment, and also set 21 improvement targets related to MCAS, MAP, and AYP. SCEPs also identify priorities and strategies to meet those targets. In 2010, 8 of the 12 schools whose SCEPS were reviewed met only 3 or fewer of the 21 targets; 4 of 12 schools met between 6 and 12 of the 21 targets. In retrospect, how school leaders calibrate realistic improvement targets appears to need improvement.

Overall, the improvement process is an intricate one, requiring significant coordination, with checks and balances to guarantee that all involved meet their responsibilities and exert appropriate influence over the process. The balance of oversight and effort are organized, for the most part, as follows:

- District leaders hold major systemic responsibility for providing oversight, professional development, and coordination
- K-12 supervisors for ELA, mathematics, and science work with coaches and meet with coaches and the assistant superintendent twice monthly to provide guidance and structure
- Principals work with their school leadership teams to develop their SCEPs and then guide and oversee implementation, consulting and collaborating with coaches
- Teachers work with grade-level colleagues, with coaches, and with principals to measure and understand student progress, define instructional improvements, and modify what is taught.

The district has designed a well-thought-through data-driven improvement process that relies on small learning communities organized by grade-level teams. This structure operates in grades K-9 and in four of the six high schools in grade 10, with common planning time set aside for grade-level teams to meet. Improvement decisions are informed by multiple sources of data: the district identifies a variety of data to use in planning and decision-making at the school, grade, and classroom levels and is efficient in getting data to practitioners in a timely way. In designing the process, the district has structured a number of roles to support the improvement process at the district, school, and grade levels. When it functions effectively, this data-driven improvement process can serve the district well in making the needed modifications to what is taught and in improving instruction. To ensure that it functions effectively, it needs close surveillance and a strong system of accountability carried out by those in oversight roles, which includes district leaders, supervisors, principals, and coaches.

Implementation of the data-driven improvement process is inconsistent, especially at the high school level, but examples of excellence also exist.

Work of K-8 coaches

Teachers and coaches interviewed described how the ELA/writing coaches and the math/science coaches are the linchpins of the improvement process in grades K-8. Their work with grade-level teams is deemed key to ensuring that data analysis is consistent and used to identify areas for instructional improvement. Coaches and teachers explained how coaches sometimes provide model lessons for discussion, either by teaching them or by arranging visits to the resident classrooms and lab classrooms in various schools in the district. For example, a number of teachers have observed balanced literacy classes in the South Lawrence East Elementary School's lab classrooms in anticipation of adopting balanced literacy in the next school year (2011-2012).

Modifications to curriculum and instruction based on achievement data

There were a number of examples of modifications to curriculum and instruction introduced based on discussions of achievement data. At the Arlington Elementary School, for example, the district assessment team used the school's MAP data during professional development aimed at teachers improving their data analysis skills. To address weaknesses shown by the data, the teachers were asked to plan "center activities" to support student learning. Interviewees also described how teachers were trained to identify anchor papers to support the writing of long compositions when MCAS results demonstrated students' weaknesses in writing. Because MAP and MCAS data showed that boys scored lower than girls in literacy tests, the district used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money to purchase high interest books for boys to read to engage them more intensely in reading. Teachers have developed writing rubrics to use to better communicate good writing skills and to evaluate writing for open response questions. When MCAS biology tests had poor results, the high schools decided to offer grade 9 students the opportunity to prepare for the physics MCAS test because they considered physics more concrete, more hands-on, and less dependent on verbal strengths than biology, according to interviewees.

Use of data at the high school level

Overall, the high schools are less well-positioned to use data to guide instructional and curricular improvements. There is one coach for each core subject—ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies—assigned to work with all teachers for that subject across all six high schools. High school coaching positions were new in 2010-2011 and, according to interviewees, the role has yet to be firmly defined in terms of how coaches will work most effectively with teachers and principals to support improvement efforts.

At the high school level, the fact that grade 9 teachers and some grade 10 teachers work in teams helps focus improvement efforts. This year, the district assessment team shared entering students' grade 8 MAP and MCAS results with grade 9 teachers, facilitating their understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses. When teachers work in teams, they can track student

progress across subjects. When there are no teams or common planning time (in grades 11 and 12 and, in two high schools, in grade 10), coaches have to find ways to work more intensively with individual teachers and with departments. In several interviews and focus groups, when participants discussed the role high school coaches and principals play in supporting improvement efforts, they described how the closeness of oversight and the regularity of the use of data with teachers as part of improvement efforts seemed to wane from elementary schools to high schools. "It is like two school systems," one leader commented, "a K-8 system and a 9-12 system."

Opportunities for principals to discuss data

In addition, principals at all levels have too few opportunities to discuss data and improvement efforts with each other and with the interim superintendent as a group. Principals do not meet as a group or in elementary/middle/high school clusters with the interim superintendent other than in the large group of 75 district leaders, as noted in the Leadership and Governance section above. Without such meetings, there is the risk of too little oversight from the central office and a lack of continuity in monitoring and implementing improvement plans, as well as a lack of understanding among principals of district priorities. In fact, when asked, many interviewees were unsure and unclear that what happened at their schools in the way of improvement activities also happened at other schools.

Looking at student work

Coaches have identified looking at student work systematically as a practice to use with grade-level teams to better understand strengths and weaknesses in instruction. Samples of student work demonstrate how well students understand material and what they know and can do. In 2008, the district worked with consultants from the University of Massachusetts Medical School in collaboration with a consultant from ESE to develop and implement a protocol for looking at student work, with a focus on mathematics work. Looking at student work is embedded in grade-level teams' practice at South Lawrence East Elementary School. However, based on interviews, the frequency and clarity with which student work is analyzed and used by grade-level teams elsewhere in the district seem to vary greatly by school. Teacher focus groups and interviews revealed that not all grade-level teams use student work as a regular focus of team meetings.

Use of learning walks

Learning walks have been conducted in the district for five years but they have more recently been given more prominence as a data-rich improvement tool. Using learning walks to look at teachers' work in the form of classroom instruction can also provide data to demonstrate effective practice and areas of concern. The DCEP indicates that the district assessment team has the responsibility to monitor and summarize the strengths and weaknesses in instruction gleaned from learning walks and communicate them to the interim superintendent. The district expects a team of district administrators, the principal, coaches, and (now) several classroom teachers to conduct a 30- to 35-minute learning walk at least twice each semester in each school. In a learning walk, observers look for evidence in classrooms of one or more of the characteristics of good instructional practice delineated in the instructional inventory record.

The review team learned from interviews, however, that the nature of feedback from learning walks and the use of learning walk data to improve instruction can vary from school to school. Some schools are more assiduous than others in implementing improvements as the result of learning walks. Learning walkers typically give the principal constructive feedback by means of an immediate summary and, within two or three days, a written report. It is the principal's responsibility to share feedback with the classroom teacher. Some share learning walk reports with teachers and coaches at a school or grade-level meeting to promote discussion of good practice or identify characteristics of practice in need of attention. Some, according to interviews and focus groups, are less diligent.

Interviewees and teacher focus group members underscored the usefulness of learning walks as a strategy to improve instruction, yet they also noted that it may be about "once every two years" that a teacher either is observed by a learning walk or participates in one, which limits the first-hand impact of learning walks for individual teachers. However, those who had had the opportunity to either participate in a learning walk or be observed commented on how useful the exercise was for their professional growth.

Observation of instruction in lab and resident classrooms

Lab classrooms at South Lawrence East Elementary School and resident classrooms in other elementary and middle schools provide two models of living laboratories for teachers to observe best practices. Watching good instruction take place in these classrooms provides observational data that can be used to improve practice as grade-level teams discuss and try out what they have seen. Through the new, collaborative, and light-hearted competition[12] of the PAC 10 activities, many more teachers and coaches have been able to observe and discuss good practices by watching their colleagues teach.

Evaluation of intervention programs

As another example of the use of instructional data, as the result of study by the district's program evaluator of the effectiveness of a number of intervention programs that use technology, such as Read 180, System 44, and Fast Forward, the district recommended the elimination of Fast Forward. However, the program evaluator has not conducted evaluations of other core programs or support services to determine their effectiveness.

Administration of school culture surveys

Data for improvement also came from common school culture surveys used in the fall of 2010 to guide improvements to school climate. The district returned data from the surveys to school principals in a timely way and requested each principal to share results with stakeholders and develop plans to address identified weaknesses. There were broad concerns identified across schools about the general lack of parent engagement and about issues related to student discipline, especially at the high schools. Interviewees and focus group members reported inconsistent responses by schools to the results of the school culture surveys. Some schools

[12] Groups of schools receive points for participating in various activities.

addressed the survey results meaningfully while others did not, and some made no attempt even to discuss the surveys after they were administered. From the reports in interviews and focus groups, there appears to have been no follow-up by district leaders after survey results were returned to the schools.

Use of Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)

A district leader noted that some schools introduced structured Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), intended to cultivate stronger school cultures, in response to data showing high rates of disciplinary infractions and chronic absenteeism. While the leader noted that the district expects that schools have PBS, schools can opt in at whatever level of intensity they want. The leader believed that about half of the district's 18 elementary schools have "full blown" PBS in place and "14 of 18 at least do something." The high schools do not use any formalized behavioral support system even though high school student indicators are problematic, especially chronic absentee rates, which ranged from 40.1 percent for grade 9 to 29.7 percent for grade 12 in 2010. (Several middle schools also show high rates of chronic absenteeism.) Also, in-school suspension rates were higher at the six high schools than at most other schools; rates at the high schools have risen lately as more students have been disciplined by supervising them on campus.

Conclusion

The district has designed and structured a complex continuous improvement process that relies on multiple sources of data to meet the improvement needs of leaders, teachers and students, and the district as a whole. The expectation is that data will provide the underlying foundation for all decisions, including understanding instructional improvement needs, planning for improvement, setting policy, and implementing procedures to ensure that students have opportunities to learn and experience strong instruction to guide their learning. The district has taken creditable steps forward in realizing the vision for improvement planning. As noted above, data often shapes conversations and drives educators' decisions. Improvement planning is stronger than in the past, and stakeholders are aware of practices and areas in need of focused efforts. Capacity to implement and sustain improvement in the district, however, especially in the high schools, is less than what is needed for the process to be consistent and coherent across schools and so across the district—for such practices as looking at student work, engaging in learning walks, analyzing data disseminated by the district, or using Positive Behavioral Supports to be equally well implemented at all levels and schools. Capacity can be built over time to bring the district to the level of its vision. Until there is more consistency in the proficiency and frequency with which data is used, the district will have a challenge meeting all of its improvement goals.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district is missing an opportunity to use its well-designed evaluative systems and procedures as essential tools to monitor, assess, and improve leadership and teaching. Current implementation is not consistent enough in quality or timeliness to develop the system's human capital.

Review team members examined the performance evaluations of 55 faculty members randomly chosen from across the district. A total of 32 administrator evaluations were also reviewed; these included evaluations of all principals and central office administrators. In the case of faculty evaluations, reviewers found them to be generally descriptive and informative, with supporting factual and instructional details appropriately cited. With respect to their instructiveness, however, very wide variations were apparent in the quality and quantity of comments and recommendations for specific strategies to improve lesson design and delivery, subject-based pedagogies, and instructional methodologies. Some of the district's principals produced teacher evaluations that were rich in detailed evidence-based feedback and recommendations that served to support and encourage individual growth and promote overall professional effectiveness. Others, however, appeared perfunctory, containing evaluative comments that were relatively few in number, vague or superficial, and formulaic in nature. Review team members found that almost two-thirds of teacher evaluations examined were not instructive. Instead of providing specific, detailed comments and helpful, pertinent feedback, overly generic evaluator comments such as, "Keep up the good work," "Students should know the objectives for the day," or "Continue working toward your degree" too often prevailed. Although state regulations required evaluations to identify all areas needing improvement and specify what the individual needs to do to meet performance standards,[13] some teacher evaluations contained no instructive comments of any kind.

In focus group interviews, many teachers confirmed that the quality of evaluations varied widely and depended largely on the principal under whom they worked. They noted that in some schools the principal regularly visited classrooms and demonstrated instructional leadership by subsequently providing useful and timely feedback to teachers. They noted, too, that learning walks were beginning to be used in schools across the district as a supervisory data gathering tool, although with varying degrees of regularity and effectiveness. On the other hand, staff in some schools reported that they seldom saw their principal except for the required formal class period observation/evaluation. These staff members also stated that important contract-based procedures (e.g., pre- and post-conferences) were not consistently carried out and that relevant procedural timelines and deadlines for document completion were not consistently met.

Of particular concern to the review team was the issue of timeliness of evaluations for both teachers and administrators. The problem of timeliness was identified in the 2005 and 2007 reviews of the Lawrence Public Schools by the former Office of Educational Quality and

[13] See 603 CMR 35.06(3)(b) and (c), as in force 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.

Accountability (EQA),[14] and there continues to be a pattern of untimeliness within the district. For example, reviewers found that over one-third of the teachers who were scheduled to be evaluated over the past two years according to state regulation and district policy had not been evaluated. When reviewers looked at the district's record on conducting annual written evaluations for principals and central office administrators, they found even more of an issue.[15] No summary evaluations had been written for any of the district's 32 administrators during the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, at the time of this district review in late May, 2011, no evaluations had been submitted for the 2010-2011 school year.

Progress toward achieving specific objectives for student academic performance, as well as targeted efforts to enhance the growth, competencies, and effectiveness of teachers and administrators, is compromised without the consistent and regular evaluation of staff. In the review team's judgment, the district is missing an opportunity to use its well-designed evaluative systems and procedures as essential tools to monitor, assess, and improve teaching and learning and to promote the implementation of school objectives and district goals. The district's current supervision and evaluation practices lack the consistency, reliability, and uniformly high quality needed to serve the needs of teachers and students effectively and advance the district's educational goals.

The district provides appropriate amounts of in-service and release time and some valuable offerings, but professional development is not systematically aligned to any well-defined core district goals.

The district's professional development program contains a number of educationally progressive components. A committee of administrators and teachers representing faculty from the elementary, middle, and high schools collaborates to plan professional development for district staff. The district provides sufficient funding and scheduled in-service time to support their efforts adequately. For example, each year the district provides approximately 45 hours of mandatory professional development for each teacher. Much of the professional development is school-based and job-embedded. District leaders explained that professional learning formats include biannual districtwide "job alike" days; teacher visits to resident classrooms to observe effective practices; team meetings to reflect on student achievement data for instructional planning; monthly school-based half-day professional learning sessions; and a wide variety of activities, courses, workshops, and trainings offered both during and after the regular school day throughout the year. In June 2010, the professional development committee surveyed staff at each school to find out what school and district professional development activities they would like to see in the following year; the plan for school and district professional development for 2010-2011 was based on the survey results.

Administrators and teachers expressed the view that the district's professional development programming serves as an essential vehicle for meeting a range of important district needs. They

[14] Available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/default.html?district=L.
[15] M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38, as well as the written policies of the Lawrence School Committee require annual evaluations.

cited as significant examples ongoing monthly offerings such as the induction workshops for new teachers, the district initial licensure program, ELL category training[16], and, for school administrators, National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training. Interviewees and district documentation confirmed that Lawrence's mentoring program for teachers is comprehensive, of good quality, and in full compliance with state regulations (603 CMR 7.12). All beginning and incoming faculty are assigned trained and compensated mentors. When deemed appropriate, mentoring support can be and has been extended beyond the initial year. Principals indicated that the district has provided them with qualified mentors, as well. Some faculty noted, however, that because of the district's relatively high teacher turnover rate the mentoring program is at times hard pressed to provide all new staff with mentors from appropriate grades and subject areas—and in some cases, from the same school—and to do so in a timely manner.

Although the Lawrence professional development model is sound in its design, collaborative in its organization, and adequately funded, and it provides numerous ongoing professional learning opportunities for staff, the comprehensive needs of the district are greater. A number of operational concerns were voiced by staff. They included concern about a need for more opportunities for two-way communication between teachers and their supervisors and evaluators and concern about a need for more regular and frequent professional development committee meetings (several of the committee's meetings were canceled in 2010-2011)—about a seemingly "top down" approach to program offerings. There was also concern about too few content area workshops at the secondary level; a "topic du jour" approach rather than the type of sustained professional development needed to develop strong understanding and mastery of an educational practice; and difficulty in participating in the many professional development programs offered during the school day because of the limited availability of classroom coverage. Finally, interviewees explained that the monthly half-day sessions that constitute almost 80 percent of the 45 hours of mandatory professional development provided by the district annually are primarily school-based. The quality, value, relevance, and focus of the professional development programming offered in each of the district's 28 schools were described by teachers as varying considerably across the district.

Professional development is not yet sufficiently tied to a set of key elements to drive continuous improvement in the district. This would typically include needed improvements in academic programs and instructional practice as well as core goals that are articulated in the DCEP and that guide development of the SCEPs, including priorities set for curriculum development, instructional improvement, teacher evaluation, and needs assessment, for example. In the view of the review team, the separation between professional development and such priorities is in part the result of the fact that many of these systems themselves are not highly developed and effective, as well as the fact that for curriculum and instruction the DCEP does not contain district goals, only school goals (see second Leadership and Governance finding above). Consequently, professional development programming is fragmented and lacks clear focus. The

[16] See note to Table 11 in the Student Support section below.

primary goal of professional development is to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning and ultimately enhance student academic achievement. The lack of formal and systematic alignment between professional development planning on the one hand and academic needs and district goals on the other significantly diminishes capacity to provide appropriately targeted and sustained support to teachers and leaders.

Student Support

The district provides a wide range of programs and services to support its students, but evaluation of programs and services has been limited to the past evaluation of several intervention programs.

The professional staff has recognized the need to aggressively build strong student support services for students struggling academically and students at risk of not graduating. In focus groups and interviews, district leaders, supervisors, coordinators, and teachers described the frequency with which they analyze student data and reported their awareness that some students are still "falling through the cracks." The district's website documents a profusion of support services available to students and families. In the DCEP for 2010-2011, the student support services goal states, "Continue to grow and institutionalize the network of student support services and safety nets for students and expand professional learning opportunities in creating and sustaining the well-managed classroom." To meet this goal, district leaders have identified improvement objectives in the DCEP focusing on programs that ensure appropriate academic support as well as a safe, supportive school climate.

The review team learned in interviews that professional staff presented overviews of a number of programs with documented protocols at a districtwide fair, such as initiatives for special learning services, parent outreach and involvement, student data management, health and nursing services, and attendance, to name a few. Each initiative is intended to address specific student needs and provide services through school-based and/or community-based resources. Also, in interviews, district leaders described a number of academic support services in the district. For example:

A Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) system has been introduced in a number of the district's schools, but not all. Schools involved with PBS are also involved in the PAC 10 initiative, which encourages collaboration and shared professional development among clusters of district schools. Teachers and staff have received training on a Positive Behavioral Support/Response-to-Intervention (PBS/RTI) toolkit focusing on classroom management and Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention strategies. Other interventions have also been implemented for students, such as Read 180, System 44, Waterford-Pearson, and Odyssey math, which is linked to MAP results.

After-school tutoring by classroom teachers is available for students who scored warning/failing on MCAS tests and for students who simply need additional help. In addition, MCAS prep classes are conducted during extended day for students at risk of failing MCAS. MCAS tutoring

is also available during the summer and during school vacations. The district offers additional tutoring through Supplemental Educational Services (SES), supported through Title I.

Early-warning at-risk screenings are targeted to students in grades 5-8 each spring. The district accesses multiple forms of student data looking for indicators that students are at risk of failing or dropping out of school. These include course failure rates in ELA, math, science, and social studies; Reading Lexile Risk scores; and low attendance rates. All collected data related to these three risk factors is uploaded into PowerSchool, a web-based student information system, to provide a profile that enables school personnel to immediately target students at risk of failure or of dropping out. Students in grades 5 through 8 who are identified as potential at-risk students (PARS), especially those transitioning into 9th grade, are prioritized for interventions and may even be directed to work closely with specific teachers or advisors for additional support.

The Family Support Team (FST) is reported by district leaders and teachers as a key support strategy in all K-8 schools, and an equivalent Student Support Team (SST) functions at the six Lawrence high schools. These are pre-referral teams comprising teachers, assistant principals, the school nurse, and a school counselor who serves as team coordinator. Teams meet in each school approximately twice a month. They focus on students demonstrating academic, social, emotional, behavioral, or language weaknesses in regular education classes. Once teachers submit the names of students with evidence that shows them to be at risk, the FST uses team members' expertise in a pre-referral structure to explore options to help these students succeed. In focus groups, the review team learned that the FSTs and SSTs collect extensive student data to create a clear visual display of areas of concern such as attendance, grades, test results, and triggers for disruptive behaviors. Parents are often invited to participate in team meetings. The FST develops an individual plan for each student consisting of interventions to address concerns and informs the principal of its findings and recommendations. Teachers and the at-risk student are expected to follow the plan for a specified time before a re-evaluation takes place. Academic supervisors from the central office work with schools to assist in the implementation of intervention plans, and the FST does several follow-up meetings to monitor progress. According to interviews, 75 to 80 percent of students typically experience positive results from these referrals and are not referred for special education services.

In addition to academic support services, district leaders also described a number of other support services operating in the district. For example:

- A McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grant provides needed services for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Help and support are provided through the Lawrence Office of Housing and Community Development, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (domestic violence unit and financial assistance), and the Lawrence Public Schools student support services. Interviewees noted that it is usually difficult to identify homeless students, making it challenging to ensure that they receive appropriate support services.
- A dropout task force schedules monthly meetings to monitor the dropout rate in the district and identify students who give indications that they might leave school. This initiative was

designed to reduce the overall dropout rate by from 2 to 5 percentage points. In fact, the dropout rate declined from 12.9 percent in 2008 to 10.2 percent in 2009 to 9.4 percent in 2010 although it remains well above the 2010 statewide dropout rate of 2.9 percent. One tactic used to prevent dropping out is to assign strong teachers to teach students in grades 9 and 10, considered crucial years, especially for high school students who are newly enrolled in the district.

- A credit recovery program for over-aged students offers them the opportunity to participate in Diploma Plus, a program shaped after a national model for helping older students graduate from high school by recovering high school credits after school hours and on Saturdays.
- A wellness committee was organized to receive and review feedback from schools on the implementation of a wellness policy. To support better health maintenance for students, schools are expected to address healthful habits, nutrition, and physical activity. Interviewees noted that obesity is widespread among students, there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy, and wellness activities are now being targeted to these student populations.
- An anti-bullying committee was established to receive and review feedback from schools on the implementation of the new anti-bullying policy and procedures. Schools are expected to monitor and addresses issues of bullying, including cyber-bullying, to ensure a bully-free learning environment.

Although district leaders spoke with confidence about the existence of these support services as well as academic support services, teachers in focus groups responding to questions about the effectiveness of support programs either spoke with vague knowledge about them or had no response. One teacher reported her awareness of a transitional program targeting 8th grade students going to 9th grade. Other teachers talked about extended day and after-school programs for MCAS support. Another teacher stated that she believed that the district is beginning to address the needs of at-risk students earlier but that students with special education needs are still not being adequately supported.

District rates of attendance, chronic absence, suspension, retention, and graduation clearly show a student population in need of multiple support systems both to stay in school and to succeed in school. Limited progress can be seen from this data. Table 7 below shows a higher average number of days absent in the district in 2010 (11.8) than in 2008 (10.4). It details a lower overall district attendance rate in 2010 (92.8) than in 2008 (93.4), compared to a state rate that remained constant at 94.6 percent. And it demonstrates a higher rate of chronic absenteeism in 2010 (20.1) than 2008 (19.7), though the 2010 rate is lower than the rate in 2009 (21.8). High school attendance rates were substantially lower than districtwide rates, according to data from ESE's Education Data Warehouse: 2010 attendance rates were 86.7 percent for grade 9, 89.9 percent for grade 10, 90.1 percent for grade 11, and 88.0 percent for grade 12, while chronic absence rates in these grades were correspondingly higher (see discussion under Table 6 in the Student Performance section above).

Table 7: 2008-2010 Attendance Data
Lawrence Public Schools and State

INDICATORS	2008		2009		2010	
	LPS	State	LPS	State	LPS	State
Average # of days absent	10.4	9.2	12.5	9.3	11.8	9.3
Attendance rate (%)	93.4	94.6	92.4	94.6	92.8	94.6
Chronic Absence (%)	19.7	12.9	21.8	13.0	20.1	13.0

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

The most recent attendance data was provided to the team during the review in the April 2011 monthly report given to principals by the interim superintendent. The review team learned in the report that year-to-date student attendance slightly improved or remained constant in 19 schools in April 2011 compared to April 2010. The year-to-date district attendance rate was 92.9 percent as compared with 92.5 percent for April 2010. However, five of the six high schools were among the schools for which year-to-date attendance rates were lower than in the previous April, and the overall year-to-date attendance rate for the high schools was lower in April 2011 (87.9 percent) than in April 2010 (88.6 percent).

Table 8 shows that while the out-of-school suspension rate was significantly lower in 2010 (9.2) than in 2008 (12.0) and had been even lower in 2009 (7.5), the in-school-suspension rate increased from 10.2 percent in 2008 to 13.8 percent in 2010, after showing a slight dip in 2009. Though the total number of students receiving one or more suspensions of either kind dropped from 2,464 in 2008 to 2,158 in 2009, it rose in 2010 to 2,525. However, the April 2011 report provided to the review team indicated that the number of students receiving one or more suspensions of either kind would probably drop again for 2011: the number of students who had received either an in-school or out-of-school suspension during the 2010-2011 school year as of April 2011 was 2152, lower than the comparable number as of April 2010 of 2326.

Table 8: 2008-2010 Suspension Data
Lawrence Public Schools and State

INDICATORS		2008	2009	2010
Out-of-School Suspensions	Number of District Students*	1,330	922	1,008
	District Rate	12.0	7.5	9.2
	State Rate	6.2	5.3	6.0
In-School Suspensions	Number of District Students**	1,134	1,236	1,517
	District Rate	10.2	10.1	13.8
	State Rate	3.6	3.3	3.7

*Who received one or more out-of-school suspensions
**Who received one or more in-school suspensions
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 9 below shows 2010 four-year graduation rates for the Lawrence Public Schools, including the four-year graduation rates for selected subgroups. Special education students, males, and LEP (ELL) students had the lowest four-year graduation rates of the major subgroups.

Table 9: 2010 Four-Year Graduation Rates
Lawrence Public Schools

Student Group	Number in Cohort	Percent Graduated	Percent Still in School	Percent Non-Grad Completers*	Percent GED**	Percent Dropped Out	Percent Permanently Excluded
All Students	989	46.7	17.9	4.1	4.4	26.6	0.2
Male	493	36.7	22.5	4.5	3.4	32.9	0.0
Female	496	56.7	13.3	3.8	5.4	20.4	0.4
LEP	231	41.6	13.4	8.2	2.6	34.2	0.0
Special Ed	194	20.6	34.0	4.1	1.5	39.7	0.0

*Non-Grad Completer includes 1) students who earned a certificate of attainment, 2) students who met local graduation requirements but the district does not offer certificates of attainment, and 3) students with special needs who reached the maximum age (22) but did not graduate.
**GED stands for General Educational Development; it is the Massachusetts State High School Equivalency Diploma.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 10 below displays three types of graduation rates for the period from 2008 to 2010. There has been some improvement in the percentages of students graduating—particularly, there was more than a 12-percentage-point increase in the four-year graduation rate from 2008 to 2009 and a more than 8-percentage-point increase in the five-year graduation rate from 2009 to 2010.[17] Yet both the four-year graduation rate and the five-year graduation rate are dramatically below

[17] There has also been a decrease since 2008 in the annual grade 9-12 dropout rate, from 12.9 percent to 10.2 percent to 9.4 percent (see Table 6 in the Student Performance section above).

state rates for each of the last three years. In fact (not shown in Table 10), in all three years the district's four-year graduation rate was the lowest of any multiple-school district in the Commonwealth.

Table 10: 2008-2010 Graduation Rates
Lawrence Public Schools and State

INDICATORS	2008		2009		2010	
	LPS	State	LPS	State	LPS	State
Four-year Graduation Rate	35.8	81.2	48.1	81.5	46.7	82.1
Four-year Adjusted Graduation Rate	37.9	*	49.8	*	49.0	*
Five-Year Graduation Rate	49.7	84.0	46.2	84.2	54.6	84.0

Note: For information on graduation rates, see Frequently Asked Questions at http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/gradratesfaq.html.

* Not calculated
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Finally, as noted in the Student Performance section above, the overall retention rate for the district was higher in 2010 (5.7 percent) than in 2008 (4.7 percent), though not as high as in 2009 (7.4 percent), and almost three times higher than the state retention rate (2.1 percent) in 2010.

In focus groups, professional staff spoke about efforts to strengthen support programs in the form of wrap-around services for students, ensuring that all students have access to supports to promote their academic, social, emotional, and physical growth and development. The indicators discussed above, however, taken as a whole, shape a key message that the district has not yet found the best programs and services to support students' academic and social needs.

The review team learned that the district's program evaluator had evaluated several intervention programs in the past, but had not undertaken reviews of other programs or services. With a program evaluator on staff, the district has the in-house capacity to evaluate its programs and services in order to identify, strengthen, and replicate those that work and eliminate those that do not—as it eliminated the Fast Forward intervention program after the program evaluator's study (see last Assessment finding above). This can also help the district husband its limited resources in support of the district's neediest students. In the judgment of the review team, without systematic evaluation of programs and services, the district is not putting the resources it has to the best use to support students, improve its attendance, suspension, retention, dropout, and graduation rates, and minimize the number of students "falling through the cracks."

The district currently has too few certified ESL teachers, resulting in too few hours of ESL instruction. It also has too few regular education teachers with sufficient training in sheltered English immersion. These insufficiencies are hindrances in raising the achievement of ELL students, who make up nearly one-quarter of the district's student population. The district has taken some action, with 40 teachers in an ESL licensure program.

In 2011, the district enrolled 3,048 English language learners (ELLs), representing 23.8 percent of enrolled students. Since 2006, the number of ELL students has fluctuated from about 2,750 to the present number. Over those years, the percentage of ELLs has varied between 22.4 percent and 24.2 percent.

In an interview, district leaders described the process for identifying ELL students and the subsequent procedures the district follows to provide them with appropriate programs and services. Upon entry into the schools, students are tested in their native language so that language skill gaps can be identified early. In addition, a home survey is completed by the family to determine how much English is spoken at home. Support is available to ELL students after school, Monday through Thursday, during extended day. A Summer Program for ELL Students (SPELL) provides additional instruction and support during the summer months. Most schools also host family literacy nights and invite parents to learn about instructional programs, support programs, and the need to provide opportunities for their children to read stories or books and to discuss what they are reading with them. Teachers reported in focus groups that because mobility is high among ELL students, it is difficult to address content and language development gaps with continuity. When asked to name what they would need to enable them to do their work better, teachers in focus groups noted that the district needs many more professional staff with the knowledge and training to work effectively with the large number of ELL students enrolled in the district.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the ELL coordinator began meeting with ESL teachers once as month to discuss ESL instruction and curriculum. At the time of the review, ESL teachers were working on a scope and sequence to accompany the ESL curriculum, aligned with the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO), that is used in the district from kindergarten through grade 12.

Interviewees reported that a newcomers' program has been established for the 233 high school students new to Lawrence. The review team learned that many families from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic come to Lawrence when their children are of high school age so that they can receive an American high school diploma. Many of these students have not had prior schooling. Next year (2011-2012), the International High School will focus specifically on the needs of newcomers. Some staff members expressed the belief that this initiative will assist them in identifying the needs of older newcomers so that appropriate teaching and support services can be designed and provided.

During interviews, review team members learned that ELL students in Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) Level 1 and Level 2 do not receive the 2.5 hours of English

language development recommended as a minimum by the state. One teacher reported that he was the only ESL teacher in his school with a caseload of 144 ELL students. School schedules, which are built by each school, do not always include appropriate instructional time for ELL students, partly because of an insufficient number of ESL teachers.[18] At some schools, however, ESL staff members assist principals with creative scheduling to increase the ESL instructional time available.

An administrator reported that there are 49 certified ESL teachers currently on staff to serve over 3000 students: 18 assigned to the elementary schools, 10 to middle schools, and 21 to the high schools. 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. The enrollment of ELL students is always substantial, but it fluctuates. For example, this year, the review team learned in interviews, it increased from 570 students to 690 students in the middle schools alone, with no increase in certified ESL teachers. District leaders reported in an interview that 40 teachers are currently in an ESL licensure program supported by the district and are required to commit to teaching in the district for three years.

In addition to the insufficient number of certified ESL teachers in the district to provide the level of ESL services needed for over 3000 ELL students, the review team learned from data submitted to it by the district that there are not enough regular education teachers who have had sufficient sheltered English immersion (SEI) training (see Table 11), given the fact that nearly 1 in 4 students in the district is an ELL. In teacher focus groups, regular education teachers expressed concern that they were not adequately equipped or trained to teach ELL students or formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students well.

Table 11: Regular Education Teachers Receiving Sheltered English Immersion Training (Category Training) in Lawrence Public Schools by 2011

Total Teachers	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	All Four Categories
1089	258	27	523	84	8

Note: 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.

Source: Lawrence Public Schools data submitted to the review team

District leaders explained that in the past many teachers had been trained in category 2, but that the training did not meet state criteria and the teachers have to be retrained.

How have the district's ELL students performed, given the insufficiency of the amount of ESL instruction in the district and the limited number of staff trained to meet their language and

[18] In the Department's spring 2007 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) of the Lawrence Public Schools, the Program Quality Assurance team found that no ESL instruction was delivered at the elementary or middle school level. See pp. 75 and 77 of the CPR report at http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2007/0149.doc.

learning needs? ESE data shows that Lawrence ELL students did not meet Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in 2010 for progress toward English language proficiency and for attainment of English language proficiency. Fifty-seven percent of 2,025 K-12 ELL students showed progress from spring or fall 2009 to spring 2010 on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), less than the target of 60 percent. And 21 percent of 2,756 K-12 ELL students scored in the upper half of Level 4 or in Level 5 on the spring 2010 MEP, less than the target of 27 percent. In 2009 the district's ELL students met the objective for attainment but not progress; in 2008 they met both objectives; in 2007 they met neither. For further information about AMAOs, see http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/amao/amao_report.aspx?linkid=35&orgcode=01490000&fycode=2010&orgtypecode=5& and http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/amao/2010/.

As for academic achievement, Table 12 gives a summary of MCAS data for Lawrence's ELL students and ELL students statewide from 2008 to 2010.

Table 12: Lawrence Public Schools and the State
CPIs and Median SGPs of ELL Students
2008–2010
ELA and Mathematics

	2008		2009		2010	
	CPI	*Median SGP*	CPI	*Median SGP*	CPI	*Median SGP*
ELA						
Lawrence ELLs	46.7	*55.0*	51.1	*51.0*	52.5	*49.0*
State ELLs	54.1	*46.0*	57.2	*48.0*	59.8	*50.0*
Gap	-7.4	*+9.0*	-6.1	*+3.0*	-7.3	*-1.0*
MATH						
Lawrence ELLs	43.8	*55.0*	44.9	*38.0*	49.5	*57.0*
State ELLs	51.9	*48.0*	53.1	*48.0*	56.2	*53.0*
Gap	-8.1	*+7.0*	-8.2	*-10.0*	-6.7	*+4.0*

Source: School/District Profile data on ESE website

Lawrence's ELL students demonstrate substantially lower CPIs than their ELL peers statewide. With one exception, the median SGP for mathematics in 2009 of 38.0, all median SGPs for Lawrence ELL students have been in the moderate range during these years. It is notable that in two out of the three years for both ELA and math, the median SGP for Lawrence ELLs was higher than for ELL students statewide, but it must also be noted that the median SGP in ELA for Lawrence ELLs has fallen each year since 2008.

Lawrence ELL students' ELA CPI improved each year from 2008 to 2010, though the gap between Lawrence ELL students' CPI and state ELL students' CPI was nearly the same in 2010 (-7.3) as it was in 2008 (-7.4). In mathematics, not only did the Lawrence ELL students' CPI increase each year, but also the gap between Lawrence ELL students' CPI and that of state ELL

students narrowed in 2010 (-6.7) as compared with 2008 (-8.1). In spite of the improvement over these years, though, CPIs for the district's ELL students are still very low.

Lawrence 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). Meanwhile, 2010 English language proficiency targets were not met and in spite of some promising growth as shown by some of the median SGPs for Lawrence ELL students since 2008, CPIs for ELLs in ELA and mathematics are substantially lower than CPIs for their state peers. Without providing additional SEI training for regular education teachers and providing enough trained and certified ESL teachers to be able to give ELLs the recommended levels of ESL instruction, it will be difficult to increase ELL student achievement meaningfully.

Financial and Asset Management

The city of Lawrence has not met the Net School Spending (NSS) requirement for the past several years, and its funding for the schools has not been adequate to provide the resources necessary for sustained educational progress.

According to ESE figures[19] the district's funding has consistently been below NSS requirements since fiscal year 2006; the district has been underfunded by as much as $5 million, or 3.9 percent (in fiscal year 2009). Its NSS budget for fiscal year 2011 was $141,807,131, which is under the requirement by 0.5 percent.

Table 13: FY2008-FY2011 Lawrence Public Schools School Committee and City Expenditures for Education, State Aid, and Net School Spending (NSS)[20]

	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011 Budget
School committee	$129,886,607	$123,941,737	$136,935,989	$135,516,446
City	65,547,208	31,110,029	30,770,263	30,760,276
State aid*	130,624,890	123,397,457	135,436,405	136,988,059
Required NSS	135,952,700	131,171,799	144,273,313	142,498,359
Actual NSS	132,414,125	126,045,683	143,451,465	141,807,731
% over/under Required NSS	-2.6%	-3.9%	-0.6%	-0.5%

*Includes Chapter 70 and Charter aid
Sources: 2010 End of Year Financial Report, ESE Chapter 70 & Charter Reports

Interviewees described several areas of need in the district. The amount of ESL instruction for ELL students is inadequate under state guidelines; as mentioned previously, one teacher reported that he was the only ESL teacher in his school with a caseload of 144 ELL students. Principals noted needs for parent liaisons, counselors, and security, and teachers emphasized the need for more special education, ESL, and parent supports. Administrators and teachers reported that staff vacancies for support staff positions and positions in such areas as music and library services often go unfilled; the number of high school principals has been reduced from six to three; and an assistant superintendent position is currently unfilled. Maintenance of some buildings has been neglected, as described in a subsequent finding. The fiscal year 2012 budget approved by the school committee includes funding for initiatives to meet some of these needs, such as funding for goals to explore the re-opening of a Parent Information Center, to employ a wrap-

[19] See http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/profile.xls.
[20] Net school spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures, transportation, grants, and revolving funds.

around zone model for support services, and to improve repairs of infrastructure. It also funds goals to align the curriculum and to implement the Level 4 schools' turnaround plans.

The primary explanation for underfunding the district stems from the financial stress of the city. The city audit for fiscal year 2010 emphasized that the city's net assets have declined over the past several years (by almost $40 million in 2010), resulting in state legislation establishing a fiscal overseer with comprehensive authority over all of the city's finances along with a fiscal stability fund of $35 million of borrowing. The declines in net assets have been primarily due to overspending in general government and public works along with local tax revenues below anticipated levels. The fragile fiscal position of the city has restricted the funding available for education along with funding for other city services. In addition, severely reduced funding for the Department of Public Works has drastically reduced the maintenance and building repair services the city can provide to the schools. Administrators reported that the savings from enrolling city and school employees in the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) ($2 million) had to be diverted to cleaning up mold and associated reconstruction at the Guilmette School earlier this year. However, the NSS requirement combined with substantial state aid for education has insulated the schools somewhat from the severity of the cuts the city has confronted.

ESE documents show that in fiscal year 2010 the district received $30,511,506 in federal and state grants administered by ESE; the district uses them to for additional funding for academic and support programs. Over $12 million of this was in ARRA grants, which will no longer be available next year; administrators reported that ARRA funds were used primarily for extended day and summer programs, support services, and instructional technology. According to the district's End-of-Year financial report for 2010, approximately $9 million in grants was unspent and carried over into fiscal year 2011. Lawrence's Level 4 schools have also been eligible for state grant funding for extended day and support programs. This infusion of grant funding has been essential to funding programs; ESE data reveals that for fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2010, district per-pupil expenditures of all funds ($13,955 for fiscal year 2010) exceeded the per-pupil expenditures for the state ($13,053) and for most comparable districts.[21] Its per-pupil expenditures on teaching and school leadership are higher than the state per-pupil expenditures, while those on administration and maintenance are lower.

The level of city funding and the reliance on grants have made it difficult for the district to maintain stable programs, fully implement its goals in instruction and support services, and properly maintain its buildings. Fiscal stability for the city and continued state and federal support are essential to long range planning, viable programs, and educational progress.

The district's systems for managing and controlling finances are sound, documented, and well implemented.

According to interviewees and newspaper accounts, the previous superintendent has been charged with embezzlement and fraud for the use of school employees and school resources for non-school purposes. Concerns about the city's financial management were evident in its 2010

[21] Per-pupil expenditures of comparable districts may be seen on the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) for Staffing & Finance, expenditure detail tab, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html.

audit, which included recommendations for an internal audit of the city, the documentation of financial management policies and procedures, and a fraud risk program.

However, the school district has well-established procedures for the management of its finances, and the school committee has adopted written policies for budgeting (policy DBC), transfers between accounts (DBI), grant applications (DD), financial reports (DI), procurement and contracts (DJ, DJ-R, and DJE), and the approval of warrants (DK). Administrators reported that the district follows these procedures consistently, and that the school committee approves warrants for accounts payable (but not for payroll). Both the payroll manager and the superintendent certify payrolls, and city officials also approve payroll and accounts payable warrants. The review team examined a random selection of purchase orders, contracts, invoices, warrants, appointment letters, and payroll approvals (including extra time and stipends) and found them to be in accordance with the district's policies and state law. Administrators pointed out that because of previous abuses, the district has increased its monitoring and restricted access to certain resources such as cell phones, printing, vehicles, and grants, and the school committee is closely involved with the approval of transfers between certain categories of accounts, contracts over $25,000, rentals, out-of-state travel, and grants over $50,000, as well as the approval of warrants. The city attorney has established procedures for bidding and language for procurement contracts and signs them along with the city and school purchasing agent, the city comptroller, and the mayor; the state overseer signs off on all multi-year contracts. Both school and city officials approve purchase orders as well. Invoices and warrants are uploaded to the city's MUNIS accounting system electronically and city officials' approval of them adds another layer of scrutiny to financial expenditures. The director of budget and finance holds state certification as a business manager, and the contract/payroll manager, who serves as procurement officer and purchasing agent for both the district and the city, holds Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) certification.

Administrators reported that the school committee receives financial reports monthly. A sample report indicated that both payroll and purchase orders are encumbered; the percent spent for each account is given, along with expenses for the previous year for comparison purposes. Reports on grants and revolving funds are also available on request, and the administrators managing budget, grant, and fund accounts have access to reports and current balances. They reported that the district has not overspent its budget or other accounts in recent years and that they have carried over balances in federal ARRA, Educational Jobs and Title I grants. Grant balances were confirmed in the district's 2010 End-of-Year financial report. They also described several cost-saving measures taken by the district, including collaborative purchasing with other districts, the use of state contracts, an energy audit and lighting upgrades by National Grid, changes in copier and postage meter contracts to take advantage of discounts, and contracts with parents to drive students who would otherwise be eligible for transportation. Enrolling school and city employees in the GIC health insurance program in 2010 saved the district approximately $2 million.

There are several layers of control over spending and contracts, and diligence by those responsible for approvals can prevent overspending and misuse of funds. Their review of

purchases, appointments, and warrants is important. All of these measures should restore confidence in the district's management of its resources.

The city has newly built or renovated several of its schools, but others have major maintenance and repair needs.

District documents show that 5 of its 28 schools have been newly built since 2002 and 4 others have been renovated. This has been accomplished with substantial state assistance. Other schools are as old as from 1888, and many need updating.

Administrators and city officials reported that the school department is responsible for cleaning the schools, while school maintenance and construction are the responsibility of the city's Department of Public Works (DPW). Because the city had to reduce funding for the DPW drastically in 2010 after the state became involved in its finances, maintenance of buildings by the DPW has been curtailed. For example, one electrician and two painters are now employed by the DPW, an insufficient number of workers to meet all the schools' needs and other city needs. Another example is snow removal, done by school department personnel and equipment in 2011 because the DPW was unable to get to the schools in time to open them. Because DPW resources have been stretched so thin, the district has had to fund many maintenance contracts even though its maintenance budget for fiscal year 2011 was only $497,000.

Budget documents and minutes indicate that for fiscal year 2012 the school committee has identified building maintenance as a priority and budgeted additional funding for a total of $790,000, of which nearly $280,000 is earmarked for boiler and plumbing repairs and repair of water damage. However, documents list $1,958,000 in building maintenance needs for fiscal year 2012, including roof repairs, flooring replacements, bathroom renovations, and re-pointing of brick walls and other water leak mitigation—approximately two-and-a-half times the amount budgeted. Review team members observed such building needs as needs for flooring replacement and repair of water leaks during visits to schools in older buildings. According to administrators, the Guilmette School had water leakage for several years after its completion in 2001 and its renovation in 2004, and mold problems finally made it necessary to close and remediate the building in 2010, with the costs shared by the city and the schools. Administrators also reported that building and fire inspections of school buildings have not been consistently performed by the city.

Administrators and district officials reported that the city and schools do not have a long-range capital or maintenance plan for schools but are currently working on one. The district maintains a running list of needed repairs and maintenance projects, and a current report on school building conditions has been prepared for the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

Limited funding by the city has led to deterioration for the district's school buildings, which have needs far surpassing the resources available. As city finances stabilize, the repair and maintenance of buildings can become a priority and a realistic capital plan can be implemented.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The school committee must work with the superintendent to redirect its focus to promoting high student achievement, creating a collaborative culture among school committee members, demonstrating respectful behavior towards employees in the school district, and effectively and efficiently carrying out its responsibilities as defined in state law.

The main powers and duties of school committees are described in Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 37.[22] The Lawrence School Committee, with its chair, needs to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the role of the school committee in setting the tone, establishing leadership, and ensuring that the school budget and policies provide a strong foundation for district operations. To do so, the school committee should change its mode of operation so as to serve as a collaborative and deliberative body that hires and evaluates an appropriate superintendent, oversees the budget, and creates appropriate policy to guide the work of the district. The review found that the school committee has spent too much time on unproductive activities that distract attention away from the important work of a governing body. Insufficient action and attention to critical district needs has threatened to undermine the stability of the district. For instance, the committee has delayed action on determining the superintendent for 2011-2012, has only recently started to develop a comprehensive building maintenance and capital improvement plan, and has not used the data presented to the committee to make informed policy decisions.

Several members of the school committee act in ways that are not conducive to the orderly and effective operation of the committee and prevent a strong focus on student academic growth and achievement. Not every member of the committee engages in this behavior—there are members who act in a constructive way and are committed to change in how the committee functions — but it nevertheless negatively affects the district. For example, some school committee members speak as if they were in the role of a member of the public during public participation, assume administrative responsibilities that are better addressed by policy or staff, distract the committee's focus from district priorities to other issues, and are at times disrespectful and even intimidating to school employees in schools and during school committee meetings. As a whole, the school committee allows parents to discuss their children by name during public participation. The chair has not reliably used governing procedures he has available as chair to ensure that these kinds of actions do not continue. As a result, a culture has been established on the committee that hinders its effective functioning and is seen by others as dysfunctional.

It is suggested that the chair of the committee consult ESE to find training and assistance for himself and for the committee. It is suggested that the chair work individually with a coach to

[22] Mass. Gen. Laws c. 77, s. 37, provides in part:

> The school committee in each city and town and each regional school district shall have the power to select and to terminate the superintendent, shall review and approve budgets for public education in the district, and shall establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the board of education.

help him effectively execute his role and responsibilities as school committee chair and the tools available to him to control and redirect inappropriate behavior by any member either at a school committee meeting or, when the member is acting in an official capacity, outside of a meeting. All of the members of the school committee should participate as a group in retraining. As part of this training, group norms should be developed concerning school committee behavior, including how committee meetings will be conducted, how school committee members will interact with employees and with each other, and what the boundaries of their roles will be.

The school committee should also seek assistance in learning how to refocus meeting time on important school district issues. It is important for school committee members to be advocates for students, to understand the use of data and to use data well in making decisions, and to focus meetings on working toward high achievement for all students. With more attention from the school committee to policy, particularly policy related to improving student achievement, the new superintendent will have the direction and support he or she needs to make well-thought-out changes in the district that will lead to that improved achievement.

The school committee must make the hiring of a talented and experienced new superintendent its primary goal in the next few months.

Before interviewing candidates for superintendent, the school committee should carefully consider the multiple needs in the school district and develop a process that highlights those needs to all candidates. The school committee should use a professional firm to conduct a search that casts a wide net for highly qualified candidates. The hiring decision must be based on identifying an educational leader who can address the important leadership, curricular, and instructional needs in the district so that the schools are well supported in making continuous improvement, to provide the students of Lawrence with the high quality education they deserve. It would be helpful for ESE to offer guidance in defining district needs, in the recruitment and screening of candidates, and in the selection process for a new superintendent. Hiring a superintendent is arguably the most crucial decision a school committee makes. The stakes are high now for the committee to make a solid appointment to benefit the community's young people.

The new superintendent needs to establish clear educational priorities for the district, organize the work of the central office to support the key district-wide strategies to address these priorities, and develop delivery mechanisms that provide all principals with both the direction and the support needed to carry out the goals and respond effectively to arising needs.

A clear and unified educational vision has not yet been established for the district as a whole, with shared priorities and shared improvement goals districtwide. The school district's District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCEP) is intended to be the driving improvement plan in the district. It should contain the vision for the district and the goals that will help the district work toward that vision, serving as a guide for district administrators as they set the direction of their work. However, the 2010-2011 DCEP provided to the team reflects rather than directs with respect to the key teaching and learning priorities; its curriculum and instruction section is simply a compilation of school-level goals from the individual School Comprehensive

Educational Plans rather than district priorities and strategies that would direct central office functions in supporting schools. Also, there are few mechanisms in the district for principals to receive direction from the superintendent.

Accordingly, the review team found an insufficient number of shared priorities from school to school. While principals have been given opportunities for collaboration, they could use more direction and structured support in determining school priorities, supervising and evaluating staff, and identifying and providing leadership around defined instructional priorities. The new superintendent needs to set a high priority on developing a unified vision that drives improvement in the district, and collaborating with and directing principals in service of that vision.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should prioritize the development of a full written curriculum aligned to the new Massachusetts Common Core framework. The curriculum should contain district goals and objectives, appropriate instructional strategies, available resources, timelines, and assessments. The curriculum should be written in a way that provides staff with the guidance needed to ensure that all students within a grade level will have access to the same content and instruction, so that skills and information at each grade level build upon each other from one year to the next, to allow all students to gain proficiency.

The curriculum posted on the district's website and discussed by administrators and coaches during interviews is a district reconfiguration of the state curriculum framework objectives for English language arts, mathematics, and science, known as Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). The ELOs do not include many of the traditional elements of a full written curriculum: district goals and objectives, instructional strategies, resources, assessments, and timelines. The district has moved toward a more complete mathematics curriculum in the math pacing guides and in the recent development of math common assessments. However, the math pacing guides do not have assessments, and it was unclear how the common assessments will be used. A result of not having a full written curriculum is the absence of full horizontal and vertical alignment across and between schools: horizontal alignment within a K-8 school may be strong because of direction by a coach, but alignment across schools at the elementary and middle school levels is less likely, and common aligned curricula have not yet been developed across the high schools except in biology, chemistry, and physics. In this district with its high rates of student mobility, this is a problem. Beyond its use in facilitating horizontal and vertical alignment, a fully-developed written curriculum is desirable because it gives guidance to administrators, coaches, and teachers in addressing students' academic needs. It also makes curriculum review and revision easier.

The district should make decisions concerning the nature of the curriculum it wants and then design curriculum documents with all of the components noted above. This is important for all levels and content areas. In elementary ELA, the district is moving toward balanced literacy, which is an instructional program or strategy. A strong curriculum would provide a framework

for the introduction of balanced literacy, which would be of great assistance to elementary teachers in making this transition. As a decision is made at the middle school level about a new ELA program to replace *Success for All*, a well-defined written curriculum would provide the backdrop against which such a decision could be made well. In mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels, there is and will continue to be a need for assessments to determine the extent to which the curriculum has been effectively implemented. In elementary and middle school science, a fully developed curriculum would clarify how the kits being used address and assess the state requirements in science. Finally, at the high school level, a common core curriculum in use across the six schools would specify how all students are to address the state frameworks.

The district should move its administrators and teachers beyond an understanding of what constitutes high quality standards-based instruction to a consistent ability to provide this instruction in classrooms.

Teachers as well as administrators indicated in interviews that they have a very specific understanding of what constitutes quality instruction; however, classroom observations by review team members did not consistently indicate that the teachers have moved from this basic understanding to the skilled use of high quality instructional strategies in the classroom. The district already has in place several structures to support teachers as they implement instructional strategies in classrooms. Each school from K-8 has an ELA-writing and a math-science coach whose role it is to help teachers refine their classroom instruction. In 2010-2011 four coaches were added, one in each of the four core content areas, to work in all six high schools. And the district has been doing learning walks for five years as a way to assess the quality of instruction in classrooms and to provide feedback to teachers for their improvement.

To build on these structures and bring instruction to a consistently high level, the district should approach this area of need in several different ways. It should decide on specific instructional strategies that need attention. Principals should have fresh training on effective observation of classroom instruction to sharpen their observational techniques. Teachers should have focused professional development on the key strategies selected, both during the half-day early release time and through working with coaches in their own classrooms. And administrators should use classroom visits and the evaluation process to clarify for teachers what they need to do to improve the level of instruction in their classrooms. Only with a concerted effort like this will the quality of instruction improve substantially, with a commensurate increase in student proficiency levels.

The district should establish a mechanism for direction and oversight of its six high schools.

The current organizational structure for the high schools is not providing the high school principals with the support and direction they need to effectively lead and manage their schools. The three principals currently leading the six high schools have a vision of the power of smaller learning communities to serve the needs of high school students, but that vision has become more difficult to carry out now that they each have two learning communities to lead. The

district should consider whether the six original principal positions at the high schools should be restored.

In addition, it is not clear where in the central office the high school principals receive support and direction for the implementation of their vision for their schools. The interim superintendent's large meetings with all district administrators take place only every two months, and the monthly meetings of high school leaders which the interim superintendent has attended are focused mostly on organizational matters. While there is a director in place whose responsibility it is to ensure the implementation of a core curriculum at the high schools, the high school principals do not directly report to him, so his authority and leverage are limited and he must rely on establishing effective cooperative relationships with them to accomplish the task. But the principals' main area of concern is the needs of their individual schools.

The high schools need increased attention from the central office. High school proficiency rates and median student growth percentiles are low. From 2008 to 2010 in ELA, the only median student growth percentile (SGP) for a tested grade that fell below the moderate range was for grade 10 (in 2009). In mathematics in all three of those years, the gap between Lawrence Public Schools' students and students statewide was the greatest at grade 10; the median SGP for grade 10 fell below the moderate range in both 2009 and 2010. Also, review team members found a low occurrence of effective instructional characteristics at the high schools. About the use of data with teachers as part of improvement efforts, one leader told the review team, "It is like two school systems, a K-8 system and a 9-12 system."

It has been five years since the reconfiguration of Lawrence High School into six small schools. The high schools need close direction and support from a firm hand with the authority and determination to make them work better for students. What form this will take can be determined by district and school leaders working together, but some mechanism should be put in place to provide the high schools with firmer and clearer direction.

Assessment

The district should continue to strengthen and expand the assessment system and build teachers' and leaders' capacity to use data to improve curriculum and instruction, especially in the high schools.

The district's assessment system is evolving into a more comprehensive and balanced system that uses multiple assessment formats. In addition, the district expects that teachers and leaders will use data from multiple forms of assessment to guide improvement decisions. Information and trends derived from multiple sources of data provide valuable guidance in making improvements to curriculum and instruction. It is commendable that the district uses Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) tests in reading/ELA and mathematics as benchmarks as well as formative indicators of student progress and needs. The assessment system, however, continues to be a work in progress. Components of the assessment system need to be developed across subject areas and grade levels in parallel with the development of the curriculum recommended

above. For example, although formative assessments are embedded in the *Success for All* literacy program, as district leaders recognize, new classroom formative assessments will be needed in ELA in kindergarten through grade 8 as the district moves to a balanced literacy initiative in 2011-2012. Some elementary teachers use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) as formative assessments, but the district has not recently taken a position on whether or not they should be required. Formative assessments need to be developed in most core subjects though grade 12. At the high schools and middle schools this has already begun with the "Keeping Learning on Track" initiative and should continue, with the additional professional development teachers and leaders indicated was necessary.

Common assessments also need further expansion. In 2010, working with ESE, mathematics teachers for grades 5-8 and algebra and geometry began to develop common assessments. More are needed. Overall, all schools can profit from additional common assessments for most core subjects; the high schools can benefit by uniformly administering common midterm and final exams in core subjects, a practice that is not now usual. Some at the high schools have used performance and project-based assessments as formats to assess student understanding, but these formats also need further development and need to be expanded across schools. Such examples point to the need for the district to continue to develop multiple types of assessment—formative, summative, benchmark, and performance—across core subjects, and expand their use at all grade levels.

In addition, the review team learned that there are inconsistencies across schools in teachers', leaders', and coaches' capacities to analyze and use data well. Capacity is especially in need of strengthening at the high schools, where teachers described their skills in data analysis as limited. Leaders and coaches need to be skilled examiners of data in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of programs, curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers need to be comfortable with collecting and analyzing assessment data and other student indicators and using this information to determine and address students' remedial and enrichment requirements. In addition, the district is encouraged to expand professional development opportunities in data analysis, especially for coaches at the high schools, to build capacity in using data well. Expanding the capacity to make data-driven decisions, along with completing the development of the curriculum and a comprehensive, balanced assessment system, will create a stronger culture of accountability that can enhance improvement work and promote student achievement in all content areas.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district must make improving performance evaluation a high priority to ensure that all teachers and administrators receive evaluations that are timely and of high quality as it makes its evaluation system consistent with the new state regulations for educator evaluation at 603 CMR 35.00.[23]

The review team found serious problems with evaluations in the district. The primary areas of concern are the instructiveness and timeliness of evaluations. In the 55 teacher evaluations reviewed, there were very wide variations in the quality and quantity of comments and recommendations for improving teachers' instruction: almost two-thirds of the reviewed evaluations were not instructive. For both teachers and administrators, the district often did not produce evaluations when required to do so by state law and local procedure. Over one-third of teachers scheduled to be evaluated over the previous two years had not been evaluated, and no summary evaluations had been written for any of the district's 32 administrators for the 2009-2010 school year or, by the time of the review in late May, 2011, for the 2010-2011 school year. Problems with timeliness were identified earlier in the Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) reviews of 2005 and 2007.

The district must address the problems with its evaluations without delay. In June 2011 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace the previous regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership at 603 CMR 35.00. As detailed in 603 CMR 35.11, the district is required to make its evaluation procedures and instruments consistent with the new regulations, beginning right away, in the 2011-2012 school year, with the adoption and implementation of new evaluation systems for its Level 4 schools that are consistent with the new regulations. The district should not wait until its new evaluation system is fully implemented, however, to ensure that all teachers and administrators are given effective evaluations once every two years for teachers with professional status and every year for teachers without professional status and administrators. When implemented properly, the evaluation system is one of the most effective tools a district possesses to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning within its schools. The superintendent and district leaders should clearly articulate improvement of evaluation as an overarching goal, one that could be prominently included in, communicated by, and monitored through the improvement plans of the district and each of its schools. Systems should be established or strengthened to ensure that all evaluators are consistently held accountable for producing high-quality staff evaluations that are timely, instructive, and, at the time required by 603 CMR 35.11, consistent with the requirements of the new regulations. Evaluators should themselves be evaluated in part on the basis of the evaluations they write.

[23] On June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations on Evaluation of Educators to replace the regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership adopted in 1995, at 603 CMR 35.00. The new regulations are available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html.

The superintendent should also make certain that all evaluators have proper and current training in the principles of supervision and evaluation and see to it that additional training is made readily available to all administrators. In general, a high performance standard for all evaluators should be clearly established and consistently enforced across the district. For example, all principals should be expected to visit classrooms regularly to closely monitor the quality of teaching and learning and provide timely and relevant feedback to their staff. District and school leaders should make more systematic use of learning walks as an effective supervisory tool for advancing professional competencies and improving overall teacher quality. For both evaluators and those evaluated, excellence must become the expectation.

An effective supervision and evaluation system will make an important contribution to the betterment of the Lawrence Public Schools. By systematically identifying the strengths and needs of staff, good evaluation has the capacity to enhance the skills and significantly improve the performance of teachers and administrators alike. It will enable the district to identify needed school-level improvements and appropriate systemwide programs and initiatives, and to monitor progress toward implementing them. A consistent, rigorous evaluation process will empower school and district leaders to make meaningful and sustained improvements to teaching and learning and thus enhance academic outcomes for all students.

The district's professional development program should be revised so that its scope is narrowed and its focus more clearly aligned with and better supportive of key district goals, needs, and initiatives related to school improvement objectives.

The district evidences a genuine commitment to providing ample learning opportunities for its professional staff. However, the district's professional development system does not make sufficient use of assessments of programs or instructional practice and is not clearly aligned with district goals. Consequently, it has diminished capacity to enhance teachers' content expertise and instructional practice or effectively advance district priorities or initiatives. The Lawrence professional development program offers staff an appropriate variety of professional learning formats. These include bi-annual job-alike days, job-embedded learning activities, and monthly school-based half-day sessions, as well as activities, courses, workshops, and trainings offered both during and after the regular school day. In general, though, the programming provides an overly broad array of largely unrelated topics to choose from, rather than the type of focused and sustained professional development needed to develop a strong understanding and mastery of specific educational practices or to systematically promote the district's core educational and strategic goals.

The Lawrence Public Schools should revise the professional development program so that it better identifies and serves the needs of students, teachers, and the school district as a whole. Professional development should be planned using information from such sources as program assessments, staff evaluations, and learning walks, as well as student achievement data and research on instructional practice. Further, professional development should be directly aligned with what is driving continuous improvement within a district, such as the goals typically found in a district improvement plan. For example, the district's plan to implement balanced literacy, a

major curriculum and instruction initiative, should be reflected in targeted professional development programming and appropriate support services. By concentrating attention and resources on fewer, better defined, and more sustained professional development initiatives that are clearly supportive of prioritized goals, the district will create an integrated professional development system that better serves the needs of staff and students, thus advancing the district's educational mission.

Student Support

The district should evaluate its support programs and services to determine their effectiveness, with the goal of expanding those that add value, improving those that can benefit from retooling, and eliminating those that are ineffective.

The professional staff has recognized the need to be aggressive in building strong student support services. Staff in focus groups spoke about efforts to strengthen support programs in the form of wrap-around services for students, and the 2010-2011 DCEP had as a goal to "Continue to grow and institutionalize the network of student support services and safety nets . . .." Though the district has a profusion of student support services, both academic and non-academic, district leaders, supervisors, coordinators, and teachers reported their awareness that some students are still "falling through the cracks."

Behavioral indicators have shown little meaningful improvement since 2008. For instance, though the dropout rate has decreased since 2008 and graduation rates are higher in 2010 than they were in 2008, the four-year graduation rate is still the lowest in the state for any multiple-school district.

Other than evaluating several intervention programs, the district has not reviewed its support programs and services. It should evaluate their effectiveness to arrive at an understanding of which ones improve trends in student attainment and behavior significantly. The district has a program evaluator on staff capable of conducting these evaluations. Programs and services that do not serve their purpose in meeting student needs should either be re-thought and re-tooled or replaced by others that may prove to be more effective. Evaluation and revision of programs and services are needed if students' social, emotional, and physical health and their academic outcomes are to be improved.

The district should revisit hiring and training priorities to ensure that there are enough ESL-certified teachers on staff and that more regular education teachers receive sheltered English immersion (SEI) training. It should also re-visit school scheduling and staffing to ensure that ELL students receive the recommended amount of ESL instruction.

In 2010, English language proficiency targets were not met and in spite of some promising growth as shown by some of the median SGPs for Lawrence ELL students since 2008[24], CPIs for

[24] In two out of the three years for both ELA and math, the median SGP for Lawrence ELLs was higher than for ELL students statewide; in 2010 the median SGP in math is four points higher for Lawrence ELLs (57.0) than for

ELLs in ELA and mathematics are substantially lower than CPIs for their state peers (52.5 compared with 59.8 in ELA and 49.5 compared with 56.2 in math). See Table 12 above. Lawrence 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). With over 3,000 ELL students enrolled (about 24 percent of the student population), focus on the educational needs of this particular population is critical. The keys to providing a stronger school experience for ELL students in the district are to increase the number of qualified ESL teachers and to increase the capacity of regular education teachers to work effectively with second language learners through sufficient SEI training. With adequate numbers of ESL teachers on staff, ensuring that students meet state guidelines for hours of ESL instruction can be ensured. With adequate time for ESL instruction, enough appropriately-trained regular education teachers, and appropriate resources and interventions, the district can bring up the academic performance of ELL students. It is important for the district and the city to consider how resources can be allocated to provide both the staff and the training to meet the needs of this large subgroup of students.

Financial and Asset Management

The city must meet its obligation to fund the schools at the required Net School Spending (NSS) level.

The city has not funded its schools at the required NSS level since 2005. The formula provides that when the district does not meet the net school spending requirement the unexpended net school spending be carried over and added to the requirement for the next fiscal year. State regulations require that any unexpended net school spending carried over be included in the subsequent budget. The city must appropriate the required amount and amend its appropriation if necessary to include any adjustments made by ESE in the required NSS, and the district must spend the full amount.[25]

The schools are in need of services the district cannot afford, especially maintenance and support services. For example, the city Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance of the school buildings, but because of severe budget reductions the city does not have the resources needed to fulfill this obligation. Although a small increase proposed for the fiscal year 2012 district maintenance budget is intended to offset this problem, it is insufficient to fully maintain the school buildings. Increased support services for special education and ELL students are also clearly needed in the district, as emphasized by teachers during the review team's visit. Meeting the NSS requirement will make some additional dollars available for these needs.

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the statewide subgroup (53.0). In ELA, however, the median SGP for Lawrence ELLs has fallen each year since 2008.

[25] Net school spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures, transportation, grants, and revolving funds.

The district and the city should continue to follow diligently the policies and procedures in place to manage school finances.

The district and the city have established appropriate procedures for handling school finances, with policies calling for frequent reports and for financial approvals involving multiple parties at both the district and city levels. The policies are clear and in writing. However, recent allegations of the misuse of school resources and finances by the previous superintendent jeopardize the district's reputation for integrity and sound financial management. District administrators and the school committee have taken steps to prevent similar abuses in the future by increasing oversight of certain resources, such as printing, cell phones, and vehicles; expenditure warrants are approved by at least two administrators and, for accounts payable, by the committee. The approvals of expenditures by city officials—who approve payroll and accounts payable warrants and sign procurement contracts—add an important layer of independent oversight which can help prevent future mismanagement. Both school and city officials need to be vigilant in noting questionable expenses and calling them to the attention of the proper authorities, such as the director of budget and finance, the superintendent, the procurement officer, the city comptroller, or the mayor. These steps should help restore public confidence in district fiscal affairs.

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.

Nadine Binkley, Ed.D., Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction

Linda L. Greyser, Ed.D., Assessment (Review Team Coordinator)

Frank Sambuceti, Ed.D., Human Resources and Professional Development

Willette Johnson, Student Support

George Gearhart, Ed.D., Financial and Asset Management

Christine Brandt, Review Team Member

Dolores Fitzgerald, Review Team Member

James McAuliffe, Ed.D., Review Team Member

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, director of facilities and plant management, projects assistant, fixed asset specialist (school district employees), assistant comptroller (city employee), contract/payroll manager (shared position).
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Lawrence Public Schools School Committee:
  - Six members
  - Mayor/chairman
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Lawrence Teachers Union (LTU): LTU president, LTU vice-president, two members of the LTU executive board, one LTU representative.
- The review team conducted interviews with several representatives of the administrators union.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Lawrence Public Schools central office administration: interim superintendent, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, director of assessment and accountability, director of secondary curriculum, director of human resources, director of nutrition services, supervisor of ELA, supervisor of mathematics, supervisor of science, supervisor of early childhood, supervisor of ELL, supervisor of assessment, supervisor of special learning services, supervisor of instructional technology, program evaluator, coordinator of health and nursing, coordinator of special learning services (special education), Title I coordinator, facilitator of student support services, facilitator of ELL, facilitator of supplemental educational services, co-chair of professional development committee.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Lawrence Public Schools: Alexander B. Bruce Elementary School (2-8), Emily G. Wetherbee School (K-8), Frost Middle School (5-8), John K. Tarbox Elementary School (1-5), Edward F. Parthum Elementary School (K-4), South Lawrence East Elementary School (1-4), Guilmette Middle School (5-8), Parthum Middle School (5-8), 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).

- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers, and multiple elementary and middle school mathematics-science and reading-writing coaches, the high school assessment coach, and two high school content coaches.
    - The review team conducted 111 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the 12 schools visited of the district's 28 schools.
- 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
    - 2007 and 2005 District Accountability Reports produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)
    - Teachers' 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 for the dozen schools visited
    - 2010-2011 Annual School Report Cards for 12 schools visited
    - Emily Wetherbee Detailed Data analysis by grade level, 2010
    - School committee policy manual
    - School committee minutes for the past year
    - CDs of school committee meetings from April 10, 2010, July 22, 2010, August 26, 2010, September 23, 2010, October 28, 2010, January 13, 2011, April 14, 2011, April 28, 2011, May 12, 2011

- Most recent budget proposal with accompanying narrative or presentation; and most recent approved budget
- Essential Learning Outcomes
- NEASC Standards 1-7, 2011
- K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents including pacing guides
- Balanced literacy units of study provided by South Lawrence East Elementary School
- High school program of studies
- Matrix of assessments administered in the district
- Copies of data analyses/reports/data Power Point presentations used in schools
- Descriptions of student support programs
- PBS/RTI Toolkit
- Student and Family Handbooks
- Faculty Handbook
- Mentor/Peer Program Booklet
- Professional Development Plan and current program/schedule/courses
- Teacher certification and qualification information
- 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
- 55 randomly selected teacher personnel files
- Facilities and plant management documents
- MSBA School Needs Survey
- FY2012 Building Maintenance Projects
- Facilities and Plant Management School Building Conditions
- Report of examination of basic financial statements
- City of Lawrence Management Letter
- Available resources by function

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the Lawrence Public Schools, conducted from May 23-26, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
May 23 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' association	May 24 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (John K. Tarbox School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups; focus group with parents; interview with mayor/school committee chair	May 25 Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits and classroom observations (Parthum Middle School, Alexander Bruce Elementary School, Emily Wetherbee School, Guilmette Middle School); interviews with school leaders; teacher team meetings; school committee interviews	May 26 School visits and classroom observations (Frost Middle School, Parthum Elementary School, Lawrence high schools: Business Management and Finance High School, International High School, Humanities and Leadership Development High School, Math, Science and Technology High School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals

Appendix C: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. Urgent action on important district matters has sometimes been delayed by the school committee. School committee focus has been distracted by members addressing side issues rather than committee priorities, assuming administrative functions that are better addressed by policy or staff, providing a public hearing for individual student issues, and, at times, disparaging staff.
2. The central office staff has worked diligently to put in place many important documents and procedures, but more direction is needed to strengthen practices in schools throughout the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

3. The district's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), a reorganization of the learning objectives in the state curriculum frameworks, are widely available online and in written form across the district, but do not contain the components of a complete curriculum. Other curriculum components are uneven in their development and inconsistent in their implementation so that instructional staff are without the necessary guidance as to what to teach when, how to teach it, and what tools to use to assess how well students are learning what is taught. The math curriculum is most complete, with pacing guides for teachers for kindergarten through grade 8 and algebra.
4. District and school leaders, teachers, and coaches demonstrate strong understanding of the features of high-quality standards-based instruction, but instructional practice varies in strength among grade levels and schools.
5. The vision for Lawrence High School at the time of its reconfiguration, as six small high schools with distinct identities but continuity in curriculum, has not been supported with the full-time principals and common curriculum needed to realize its full potential and increase students' proficiency and growth.

Assessment

6. The district continues to develop a comprehensive and balanced assessment system that uses multiple types of assessments. The culture of accountability envisioned by the district assessment team is hindered only by the absence of a fully-developed curriculum

and by the varying capacity of instructional staff at different levels to use assessment data to monitor student progress and modify instruction.

7. The district has structured a well-conceived improvement process that relies on the collection, dissemination, and analysis of data from multiple sources to inform planning, practice, and policy.

8. Implementation of the data-driven improvement process is inconsistent, especially at the high school level, but examples of excellence also exist.

Human Resources and Professional Development

9. The district is missing an opportunity to use its well-designed evaluative systems and procedures as essential tools to monitor, assess, and improve leadership and teaching. Current implementation is not consistent enough in quality or timeliness to develop the system's human capital.

10. The district provides appropriate amounts of in-service and release time and some valuable offerings, but professional development is not systematically aligned to any well-defined core district goals.

Student Support

11. The district provides a wide range of programs and services to support its students, but evaluation of programs and services has been limited to the past evaluation of several intervention programs.

12. The district currently has too few certified ESL teachers, resulting in too few hours of ESL instruction. It also has too few regular education teachers with sufficient training in sheltered English immersion. These insufficiencies are hindrances in raising the achievement of ELL students, who make up nearly one-quarter of the district's student population. The district has taken some action, with 40 teachers in an ESL licensure program.

Financial and Asset Management

13. The city of Lawrence has not met the Net School Spending (NSS) requirement for the past several years, and its funding for the schools has not been adequate to provide the resources necessary for sustained educational progress.

14. The district's systems for managing and controlling finances are sound, documented, and well implemented.

15. The city has newly built or renovated several of its schools, but others have major maintenance and repair needs.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The school committee must work with the superintendent to redirect its focus to promoting high student achievement, creating a collaborative culture among school committee members, demonstrating respectful behavior towards employees in the school district, and effectively and efficiently carrying out its responsibilities as defined in state law.
2. The school committee must make the hiring of a talented and experienced new superintendent its primary goal in the next few months.
3. The new superintendent needs to establish clear educational priorities for the district, organize the work of the central office to support the key district-wide strategies to address these priorities, and develop delivery mechanisms that provide all principals with both the direction and the support needed to carry out the goals and respond effectively to arising needs.

Curriculum and Instruction

4. The district should prioritize the development of a full written curriculum aligned to the new Massachusetts Common Core framework. The curriculum should contain district goals and objectives, appropriate instructional strategies, available resources, timelines, and assessments. The curriculum should be written in a way that provides staff with the guidance needed to ensure that all students within a grade level will have access to the same content and instruction, so that skills and information at each grade level build upon each other from one year to the next, to allow all students to gain proficiency.
5. The district should move its administrators and teachers beyond an understanding of what constitutes high quality standards-based instruction to a consistent ability to provide this instruction in classrooms.
6. The district should establish a mechanism for direction and oversight of its six high schools.

Assessment

7. The district should continue to strengthen and expand the assessment system and build teachers' and leaders' capacity to use data to improve curriculum and instruction, especially in the high schools.

Human Resources and Professional Development

8. The district must make improving performance evaluation a high priority to ensure that all teachers and administrators receive evaluations that are timely and of high quality as it makes its evaluation system consistent with the new state regulations for educator evaluation at 603 CMR 35.00.

9. The district's professional development program should be revised so that its scope is narrowed and its focus more clearly aligned with and better supportive of key district goals, needs, and initiatives related to school improvement objectives.

Student Support

10. The district should evaluate its support programs and services to determine their effectiveness, with the goal of expanding those that add value, improving those that can benefit from retooling, and eliminating those that are ineffective.

11. The district should revisit hiring and training priorities to ensure that there are enough ESL-certified teachers on staff and that more regular education teachers receive sheltered English immersion (SEI) training. It should also re-visit school scheduling and staffing to ensure that ELL students receive the recommended amount of ESL instruction.

Financial and Asset Management

12. The city must meet its obligation to fund the schools at the required Net School Spending (NSS) level.

13. The district and the city should continue to follow diligently the policies and procedures in place to manage school finances.

Appendix D: Selected LPS MCAS Data for 2011

The review team had available to it MCAS data up through 2010. This report was published just as the 2011 MCAS data became available. Selected 2011 MCAS data has been described in this appendix.

Table D1 below shows that between 2010 and 2011 overall rates of proficiency in ELA across all grades in Lawrence remained flat. Only 41 percent of students were proficient in Lawrence in ELA in 2010 and 2011, compared to the state rates of 68 percent and 69 percent in those two years. At the same time, the median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) declined by 5 points (from 50 in 2010 to 45 in 2011). For math, overall rates of proficiency dropped from only 31 percent in 2010 to only 28 percent proficient in 2011, compared to the state rates of 59 percent and 58 percent in the same years. Further, the median SGP in math for all grades fell from 49 in 2010 to 39 in 2011, below the range considered to be moderate growth (40.0-59.9). District rates of proficiency declined or remained flat or nearly flat for every grade level and every subject—except for grade 5, which had a 5 percentage point gain in the proficiency rate in ELA and a 6 percentage point gain in math. As shown by Table D1, some trends are of particular concern:

- The median SGP in grade 4 math declined by almost 20 points, from one that was notably high in 2010 (62.5) to one near the bottom of the range considered to be moderate growth in 2011 (43).
- The median SGP in grade 5 ELA declined by 9 points, from one showing moderate growth in 2010 (45) to one showing low growth (36).
- The median SGP in grade 5 math remained precipitously low at 29.
- The median SGP in grade 6 math declined by 11 points, from one showing moderate growth in 2010 (46) to one showing low growth (35).
- The median SGP in grade 8 math declined by 9 points, from one that was notably high in 2010 (62) to one in the moderate range in 2011 (53).
- The median SGP in grade 10 ELA declined by 4.5 points, from one in the moderate range in 2010 (41.5) to one below that range in 2011 (37). In addition, although the state gained 6 percentage points in the rate of proficiency for grade 10 ELA, the Lawrence rate remained flat.
- The median SGP in grade 10 math rose 2 points but remained below the moderate range, at 38.

Table D1: 2010-2011 LPS and State Proficiency Rate, LPS Composite Performance Index (CPI), and LPS Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Grade, for ELA and Math

Grade and Subject	2010				2011			
	Proficient or Higher		CPI	*Median SGP*	Proficient or Higher		CPI	*Median SGP*
	DISTRICT	STATE			DISTRICT	STATE		
GRADE 03 - ELA	40	63	75.7	*N/A*	36	61	71.1	*N/A*
GRADE 03 - MATHEMATICS	49	65	75.4	*N/A*	45	66	73.5	*N/A*
GRADE 04 - ELA	34	54	68.8	*49*	35	53	67.9	*51*
GRADE 04 - MATHEMATICS	34	48	71.1	*62.5*	30	47	67.6	*43*
GRADE 05 - ELA	32	63	68.5	*45*	37	67	70	*36*
GRADE 05 - MATHEMATICS	24	55	57.1	*29*	30	59	59.6	*29*
GRADE 06 - ELA	42	69	73.5	*48*	36	68	70	*42*
GRADE 06 - MATHEMATICS	29	59	61.3	*46*	25	58	57.7	*35*
GRADE 07 - ELA	46	72	76.5	*54*	47	73	77	*51*
GRADE 07 - MATHEMATICS	22	53	53.3	*54*	19	51	50.3	*43*
GRADE 08 - ELA	50	78	77.1	*56.5*	50	79	75.4	*46*
GRADE 08 - MATHEMATICS	20	51	52.2	*62*	21	52	49.8	*53*
GRADE 10 - ELA	48	78	76.3	*41.5*	48	84	76.7	*37*
GRADE 10 - MATHEMATICS	35	75	65.2	*36*	31	77	62.3	*38*
ALL GRADES - ELA	41	68	73.7	*50*	41	69	72.4	*45*
ALL GRADES - MATHEMATICS	31	59	62	*49*	28	58	60.0	*39*

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

In ELA in 2011, Asian students, African-American students, and white students in Lawrence had proficiency gains (of 6, 7, and 4 percentage points respectively) and increases in their median student growth percentile (of 5.5, 1.5, and 4.5 points respectively) from the 2010 school year. (Compare Table D2 below with Table 2 in the body of the report above.) Other subgroups saw their proficiency rates decline by 1 or 2 percentage points as their median SGPs also fell, except that the proficiency rate for FLEP students rose by 2 points (although their median SGP declined by 5 points).

Table D2: 2011 Lawrence Public Schools and State Proficiency Rate, Composite Performance Index (CPI), and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Selected Subgroups, for ELA

STUDENTS	Lawrence Public Schools			State		
	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*
All Students (6468)	41	72.4	*45.0*	69	87.2	*50.0*
Asian (129)	69	89.0	*61.0*	77	90.2	*59.0*
African American/Black (109)	53	81.0	*46.5*	50	77.4	*47.0*
Hispanic/Latino (5808)	39	71.2	*45.0*	45	74.2	*46.0*
White (408)	55	81.7	*46.5*	77	90.9	*51.0*
Limited English Proficient (LEP) (1,039)	11	50.0	*45.0*	22	59.4	*48.0*
Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP) (927)	34	69.0	*51.0*	56	81.7	*54.0*
Special Education (1528)	12	56.2	*33.0*	30	68.3	*42.0*
Low Income (5877)	40	71.6	*45.0*	49	77.1	*46.0*

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

In math, Asian students' proficiency rate increased in 2011 by 17 percentage points over the 2010 school year. (Compare Table D3 below with Table 3 in the body of the report above.) Two other subgroups, white students and FLEP students, had smaller increases in their proficiency rates, of 2 and 3 percentage points respectively. Other subgroups' proficiency rates declined by 1 or 2 points except for African-Americans' rate, which declined by 5 points. Except for the median student growth percentile for Asian students, which rose by 9 points, the median SGP for all subgroups declined, in many cases substantially, from 2010 to 2011; the median SGP fell by 35 points for African-American students, by 16 points for LEP (ELL) students, by 14 points for special education students, and by 12.5 points for FLEP students.

Table D3: 2011 Lawrence Public Schools and State Proficiency Rate, Composite Performance Index (CPI), and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) by Selected Subgroups, for Mathematics

STUDENTS	Lawrence Public Schools			State		
	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*	% Proficient or Advanced	CPI	*Median SGP*
All Students (6474)	28	60.0	*39.0*	58	79.9	*50.0*
Asian (129)	73	87.2	*63.0*	77	89.5	*64.0*
African American/Black (112)	32	60.7	*29.5*	34	65.0	*47.0*
Hispanic/Latino (5804)	26	58.5	*39.0*	34	64.4	*46.0*
White (416)	43	71.1	*40.0*	65	84.3	*50.0*
Limited English Proficient (LEP) (1,050)	15	45.6	*41.0*	26	56.3	*52.0*
Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP) (925)	28	60.6	*38.0*	50	75.1	*53.0*
Special Education (1524)	7	45.1	*30.0*	22	57.7	*43.0*
Low Income (5880)	28	59.1	*39.0*	37	67.3	*46.0*

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

As shown by Table D4 below, most schools in Lawrence had lower performance on the ELA test in 2011 than in 2010. Out of the 24 schools in Lawrence with tested grades, 19 declined in ELA performance from 2010 to 2011, within a range of 0.3-19.2 CPI points. Only 5 improved from 2010 to 2011, within a range of 0.3 to 7.4 CPI points. Further, the ELA median SGP declined in most schools. Out of the 23 schools with tested grades for which data can be reported (no data is reported if N<20 for SGP), 15 had lower median SGPs in ELA in 2011 than in 2010, with declines in median SGP ranging from 0.5 to 44 points. Six had higher median SGPs in ELA, the increases ranging from 0.5 to 9.5 points, and the median SGPs of two schools remained the same. The South Lawrence East Elementary was the only school with a median SGP in ELA

above the moderate range (40.0-59.9) in 2011, with a high median SGP of 75 in both 2010 and 2011.

Table D4: 2008-2011 LPS ELA CPIs and Median SGPs, for District and by School, and 2010-11 changes to CPIs, SGPs	English Language Arts									
	CPI					Median SGP				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2010-11 CPI Change**	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2010-11 SGP Change**
State	**85.2**	**86.5**	**86.9**	**87.2**	**0.3**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**0.0**
District	**68.2**	**71.6**	**73.7**	**72.4**	**-1.3**	**49.0**	**47.0**	**50.0**	**45.0**	**-5**
Arlington ES	55.2	61.1	64.1	61.6	-2.5	36.0	27.0	39.0	39.5	0.5
Arlington MS	61.7	66.5	68.9	65.4	-3.5	49.0	56.0	55.0	42.0	-13
Bruce 2-8	68.0	68.7	69.8	69.5	-0.3	62.0	49.5	53.0	53.0	0
Business, Management & Finance HS	72.3	79.9	80.7	72.7	-8		24.0	37.0	36.5	-0.5
Frost ES	75.3	73.9	76.1	76.4	0.3	45.5	33.0	32.0	41.0	9
Frost MS		81.3	81.5	84.6	3.1		52.0	50.0	53.0	3
Guilmette ES	59.2	70.3	72.9	68.8	-4.1	55.0	53.0	46.5	40.0	-6.5
Guilmette MS	66.9	69.7	67.2	72.4	5.2	48.0	43.0	45.5	44.0	-1.5
Health and Human Services HS	70.9	83.0	79.5	73.5	-6		30.0	31.0	25.0	-6
HS Learning Center			81.7	62.5	-19.2					
Humanities and Leadership HS	78.1	87.4	91.4	90.8	-0.6		39.0	44.5	51.0	6.5
International HS	54.6	47.6	52.8	60.2	7.4		17.5	36.0	45.5	9.5
Leahy ES	69.3	72.4	74.2	73.8	-0.4	60.5	63.0	57.0	56.0	-1
Leonard MS	73.6	69.1	72.0	67.6	-4.4	57.0	44.0	46.0	31.0	-15
Math, Science & Technology HS	78.5	82.6	85.5	81.5	-4		40.5	50.0	37.0	-13
Oliver K - 8	68.5	69.1	73.2	67.0	-6.2	48.0	43.0	53.0	44.5	-8.5
Parthum ES	60.9	69.0	72.7	69.9	-2.8	47.5	52.0	49.0	52.5	3.5
Parthum MS	76.8	81.2	82.4	80.2	-2.2	48.0	58.0	56.0	46.0	-10
Performing and Fine Arts HS	72.7	79.8	84.4	81.4	-3		27.0	50.0	40.0	-10
School for Exceptional Studies	66.5	64.1	78.1	74.1	-4	20.0	23.0	65.0	21.0	-44
So. Lawrence East ES	70.3	75.5	81.6	80.4	-1.2	52.5	65.0	75.0	75.0	0
So. Lawrence East MS	67.8	71.7	73.7	71.3	-2.4	41.0	42.0	47.0	37.0	-10
Tarbox ES	61.8	68.8	70.4	71.6	1.2	63.0	56.0	58.0	43.5	-14.5
Wetherbee K - 8	75.3	79.1	80.8	77.6	-3.2	51.0	52.0	49.0	48.0	-1

Source: ESE data

As in ELA, most schools in Lawrence declined in math performance from 2010 to 2011. See Table D5 below. Out of the 24 schools in Lawrence with tested grades, 18 declined in math performance from 2010 to 2011, within a range of 0.8-27.9 CPI points. Only 6 improved from 2010 to 2011, within a range of 0.9 to 3.7 CPI points. Further, the math median SGP declined in most schools. Out of the 23 schools for which data can be reported (no data is reported if N<20 for SGP), 17 had lower median SGPs in math in 2011 than in 2010, with declines in median SGP ranging from 1 to 27 points. Six had higher median SGPs in math, the increases ranging from 2 to 20 points. Thirteen of the 23 schools had median SGPs that fell below the range (40.0-59.9) considered to represent moderate growth; in 2010, only six fell below that range. The Frost Middle School and the South Lawrence East Elementary School were the only schools with median SGPs in math above the moderate range in 2011, although the median SGP for the South Lawrence East Elementary School declined 19.5 points from 2010.

Table D5: 2008-2011 LPS Math CPIs and Median SGPs, for District and by School, and 2010-11 changes to CPIs, SGPs	Mathematics									
	CPI					Median SGP				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2010-11 CPI Change**	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2010-11 SGP Change**
State	**77.7**	**78.5**	**79.9**	**79.9**	**0.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**50.0**	**0.0**
District	**56.0**	**57.3**	**62.0**	**60.0**	**-2.0**	**49.0**	**44.0**	**49.0**	**39.0**	**-10**
Arlington ES	61.5	61.2	59.4	61.6	2.2	41.0	33.5	48.0	44.0	-4
Arlington MS	39.4	42.7	52.1	44.9	-7.2	43.0	46.0	61.0	35.0	-26
Bruce 2-8	50.5	51.9	56.3	54.5	-1.8	50.0	49.0	54.0	44.0	-10
Business, Management & Finance HS	53.9	68.8	61.2	50.0	-11.2		29.0	14.0	20.0	6
Frost ES	67.3	70.3	78.0	77.2	-0.8	64.0	22.0	51.0	36.0	-15
Frost MS		64.6	70.3	74.0	3.7		65.0	60.0	62.5	2.5
Guilmette ES	72.8	72.6	72.4	73.3	0.9	71.0	37.0	57.0	54.0	-3
Guilmette MS	48.7	49.0	52.5	54.4	1.9	52.0	37.0	41.0	40.0	-1
Health and Human Services HS	57.2	59.2	66.8	60.2	-6.6		26.0	26.0	33.5	7.5
HS Learning Center			80.4	52.5	-27.9					
Humanities and Leadership HS	68.1	69.1	80.1	75.7	-4.4		41.0	61.0	44.5	-16.5
International HS	48.4	43.2	48.2	41.9	-6.3		23.0	19.0	28.0	9
Leahy ES	68.3	65.2	71.7	70.7	-1	64.5	51.0	58.0	46.0	-12
Leonard MS	52.1	46.4	48.2	43.2	-5	51.0	45.0	45.0	25.0	-20
Math Science & Technology HS	72.6	77.6	76.8	79.3	2.5		47.0	49.5	51.5	2
Oliver K - 8	47.9	49.1	60.6	54.4	-6.2	40.0	43.0	61.0	34.0	-27
Parthum ES	67.8	69.0	72.9	70.2	-2.7	70.5	44.0	52.5	38.5	-14
Parthum MS	53.0	57.1	58.6	55.6	-3	46.0	48.0	45.0	41.0	-4
Performing and Fine Arts HS	54.8	62.3	64.6	59.4	-5.2		29.0	18.0	38.0	20
School for Exceptional Studies	66.2	56.6	67.5	60.8	-6.7	41.0	22.5	39.0	19.0	-20
So. Lawrence East ES	78.9	83.3	88.3	85.0	-3.3	67.5	76.0	87.0	67.5	-19.5
So. Lawrence East MS	44.3	46.9	54.1	57.2	3.1	24.0	29.0	34.0	30.5	-3.5
Tarbox ES	58.3	57.5	67.5	65.2	-2.3	58.5	51.0	63.0	39.5	-23.5
Wetherbee K - 8	68.1	69.8	71.6	66.1	-5.5	46.0	45.0	42.0	33.0	-9

Source: ESE data