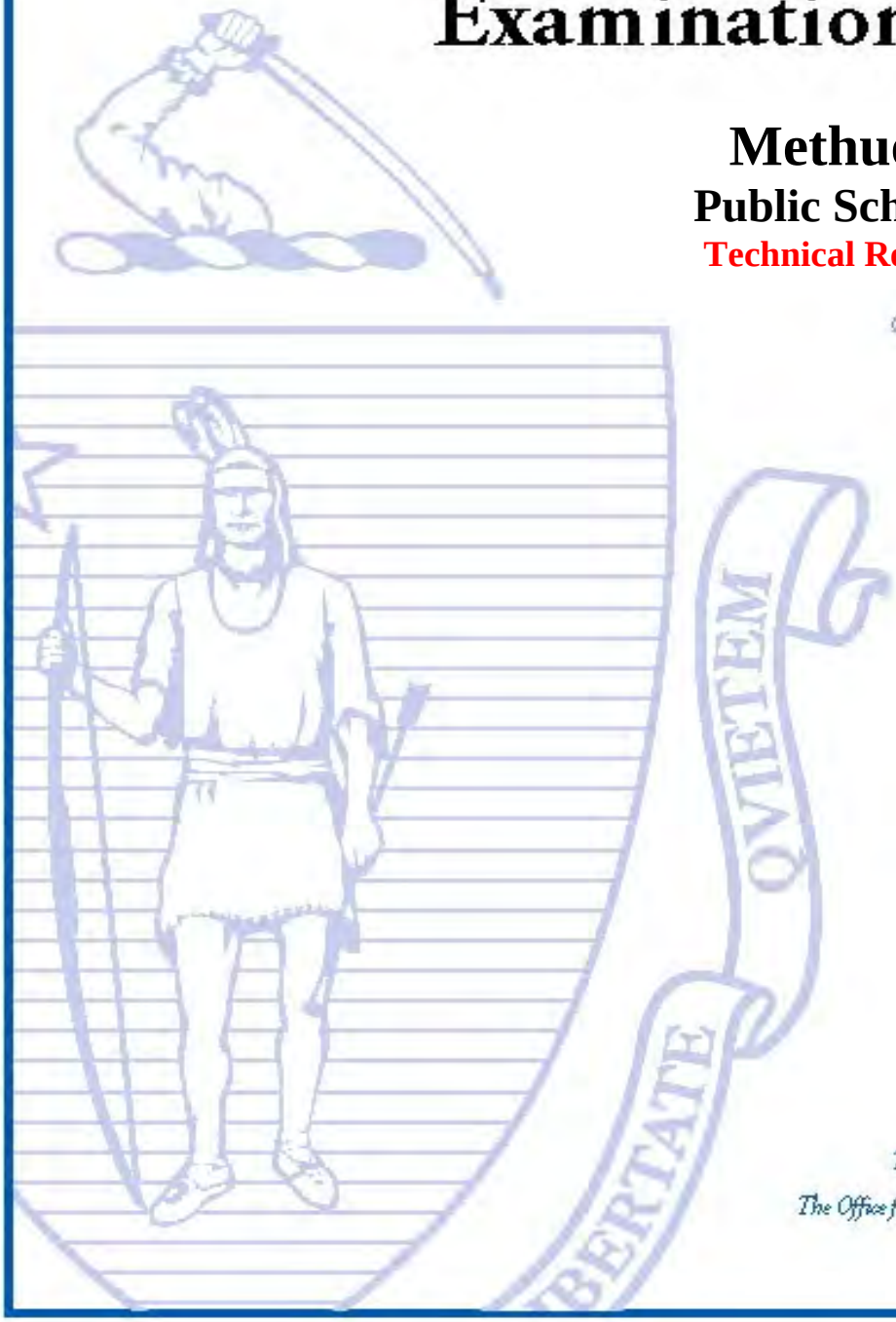
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Methuen
Public Schools
Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered



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

2005 - 2007

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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The Educational Management Audit Council accepted this report at their meeting of April 11, 2008, and issued a management letter to the district expressing commendations and concerns based on the findings contained herein.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of the Methuen Public Schools, Jeanne Whitten; the school department staff of the Methuen Public Schools; and the city officials in Methuen.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Methuen Public Schools in December 2007. With an English language arts (ELA) proficiency index of 84 proficiency index (PI) points and a math proficiency index of 73 PI points based on the 2007 MCAS test results, the district is considered a 'Moderate' performing school system according to the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement below the state average. On the 2007 MCAS tests, 62 percent of Methuen's students scored at or above the proficiency standard in ELA and 48 percent did so in math.

District Overview

The city of Methuen is located in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts, along the border of New Hampshire. As part of the lower Merrimack River Valley, the city has an industrial history and was the home to mills for textiles, hats, and shoes. The diverse city consists of areas that have rural, suburban, and urban components. The largest sources of employment within the community are manufacturing and educational, health, and social services. The city is governed by a Mayor/City Council.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Methuen had a median family income of $59,831 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 213 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city had a total population of 43,789, with a population of 8,587 school-age children, or 20 percent of the total. Of the total households in Methuen, 36 percent were households with children under 18 years of age. Twenty-three percent of the population age 25 years or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2006-2007 the Methuen Public Schools had a total enrollment of 7,447. The demographic composition in the district was: 73.2 percent White, 20.9 percent Hispanic, 2.6 percent Asian, 2.0 percent African-American, 0.4 percent Native American, and 0.9 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 5.8 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 29.6 percent low income, and 12.8 percent special education. Ninety-one percent of school-age children in Methuen attended public schools. The district does not participate in school choice. In 2006-2007, a total of 303 Methuen students attended public

schools outside the district, including 176 students who attended Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational Technical School, 78 students who attended other vocational and agricultural technical high schools, and 28 students who attended charter schools.

The district has six schools serving pre-kindergarten through grade 12, including one preschool, four grammar schools serving kindergarten through grade 8, and one high school serving grades 9 through 12. The administrative team includes a superintendent, a director of curriculum and grantsmanship, a director of pupil services, a director of assessment and instructional personnel, a business administrator, and a director of human resources. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2007, Methuen's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was $9,635, compared to $11,789 statewide, ranking it 248 out of the 302 of 328 school districts reporting data. According to the Department of Education, the district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in FY 2006 but was below it in FY 2005 and FY 2007, although the district is disputing the FY 2007 figure. According to the DOE, from FY 2005 to FY 2007 net school spending increased from $53,806,669 to $60,386,723; Chapter 70 aid increased from $28,932,255 to $33,253,977; the required local contribution increased from $25,078,541 to $27,289,639; and the foundation enrollment increased from 7,280 to 7,477. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending increased from 54 to 55 percent over this period. From FY 2005 to FY 2006, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending decreased from 67 to 65 percent.

Context

Unlike many districts, Methuen's school configuration consists of four K-8 grammar schools and one high school with grades 9-12. Each of the K-8 grammar schools has a student population of about 1,300, while the high school's population is about 2,000. The grammar schools, constructed in the past 15 years, are in good condition, but the architecture of the high school has presented a problem through the years as it was designed and built as a large space school. Consequently, the high school's open instructional areas are adjacent to one another, with the resulting teaching/learning process noticeably audible in surrounding areas. Teachers said they were "used to it," but in interviews district leaders said they were pleased that the district was

approved by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for a feasibility study of building a new high school."

New to the district, the superintendent began her leadership duties on August 1, 2006. The previous superintendent had been the district's leader for 17 years prior to his retirement. The present superintendent continues to have the support of the school committee, which recently gave her a five-year contract.

Although the District Improvement Plan (DIP) includes eight goals, the superintendent said in interviews that the district's focus must primarily be on improving the achievement of all students. In the past, the district had focused on aggregated MCAS data, but it is now focusing on how to improve the achievement of its subgroup students, especially its Hispanic students, as the high school has a growing Hispanic population and two of the district's grammar schools have a high number of English language learner (ELL) students as well. The district has already provided training in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to some teachers, and it plans to provide more of this training. Since none of the district's subgroups has achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP), the superintendent views this as a priority.

The district has conducted data analysis for a number of years as each of its schools has worked voluntarily with the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process. In 2004, the district hired a full-time (12-month position) director of assessment and instructional personnel to analyze an extensive amount of data, and the district continues to provide training for teachers in data analysis. The superintendent said she believes that with data analysis plus more emphasis on informal testing to determine student needs, the district can begin to decrease the gap in MCAS achievement between its regular education students and its student subgroups. At the time of the EQA visit, the district was ready to embark on using the PIM process to determine root causes of the low achievement of its special education students.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the superintendent provided opportunities for staff members to work on curriculum documents to align them with the state frameworks, and in 2007-2008 she appointed ELA and math coaches at the grammar schools and grade 7-12 curriculum coordinators to provide support for teachers.

District funding is adequate, and in 2007-2008 the district added 24 teaching positions to a highly stable staff. The district has generally met its net school spending (NSS) requirements, except in FY 2005 when it was $204,127 below the requirement, and its budget has increased over the years. According to the Department of Education, the district was $156,893 below its required NSS in FY 2007, but the district is disputing this. The district has not made any requests for a budget override.

The district provides teachers with adequate professional development on site as well as funding for courses taken off site. Principals attempt to provide supervision of staff members by walk-throughs, but the district has no formal protocol for this. The formal evaluation process does not comply with the requirement of the Education Reform Act. Professional status teachers in the district receive a formal evaluation every four years rather than every two as prescribed by the state. The superintendent said that the teacher evaluation process had been reviewed by the district's legal counsel, who told her the process was acceptable. Evaluation of administrators, however, complies with state mandates.

Recommendations

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

- Renew the ELA curriculum for grades K-6, and complete the social studies curriculum.
- Fully integrate technology into the instructional programs as a whole, especially at the high school.
- Negotiate a written agreement with the city to provide a basis for the calculation of indirect charges levied on the school district by the city.

The EQA Examination Process

The Massachusetts Legislature created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in July 2000 to provide independent and objective programmatic and financial audits of the 350-plus school districts that serve the cities and towns of the commonwealth. The agency is the accountability component of the Education Reform Act of 1993, and was envisioned in that

legislation. The EQA works under the direction of a five-person citizen council, appointed by the governor, known as the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC).

From December 10-13, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Methuen Public Schools for the period 2005-2007, with a primary focus on 2007. This examination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the on-site visit.

For the period under examination, 2005-2007, Methuen Pubic Schools is considered to be a 'Moderate' performing school district, marked by student achievement that was 'High' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Moderate' in math on the 2007 MCAS tests. Over the examination period, student performance improved by slightly more than three PI points in ELA and by four and one-half PI points in math, which narrowed the district's proficiency gaps by 17 percent in ELA and 15 percent in math.

The following provides a summary of the district's performance on the 2007 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and the findings of the EQA examination.

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, more than three-fifths of the students in Methuen Public Schools attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) on the 2007 MCAS tests, nearly half of Methuen

students attained proficiency in math, and nearly one-quarter attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-five percent of the Class of 2007 attained a Competency Determination.

- Methuen's ELA proficiency index on the 2007 MCAS tests was 84 proficiency index (PI) points. This resulted in a proficiency gap, the difference between its proficiency index and the target of 100, of 16 PI points, almost one and one-half points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of more than two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- In 2007, Methuen's math proficiency index on the MCAS tests was 73 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 27 PI points, three points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of nearly four PI points per year to achieve AYP.
- Methuen's STE proficiency index in 2007 was 63 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 37 PI points, 10 points wider than that statewide.

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

Between 2004 and 2007, Methuen's MCAS performance showed slight improvement in English language arts, more improvement in math, and a slight decline in science and technology/engineering.

- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, ELA performance in Methuen improved slightly, by approximately one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 59 percent in 2004 to 62 percent in 2007.
- Math performance in Methuen showed more improvement over this period, at an average of slightly more than one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in math rose from 42 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2007.

- Between 2004 and 2007, Methuen had a slight decline in STE performance, by one-half PI point over the three-year period. This resulted in a widening of the proficiency gap by nearly one and one-half percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 29 percent in 2004 to 24 percent in 2007.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2007 varied considerably among subgroups of Methuen students. Of the nine measurable subgroups in Methuen, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in Methuen in 2007 was 37 PI points in ELA (regular education students, limited English proficient students, respectively) and 44 PI points in math (Asian students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Methuen in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, limited English proficient (LEP) students, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program).
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, Asian students, and non low-income students.

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

In Methuen, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA was 40 PI points in both 2004 and 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 46 to 47 PI points over this period.

- All student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in ELA was African-American students.
- In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Methuen improved between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in math also was African-American students.

Fidelity of Implementation

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

In general, the fidelity of implementation in Methuen was strong, but variable. The District Improvement Plan (DIP), which was widely circulated and understood by teachers and administrators, contained the district's goals and objectives. The improvement of student achievement was the plan's major goal. The plan listed a number of ancillary objectives: curriculum development and revision; effective instruction; improved assessment practices; time for meaningful staff development; increased student learning time and resources for struggling learners; and improved accessibility of technology for students, which the superintendent described as being "woefully inadequate." In interviews, all principals agreed on the instructional priorities of the district. They revised their respective School Improvement Plans (SIPs) to reflect the goals in and align with the DIP. Principals also cited the need for improving data analysis skills and using more informal formative assessments to ascertain the needs of students.

The district supported the fidelity of implementation of its goals by providing various ways to reach its goals: teacher time to work on curriculum and assessment; increased supervision through the administrative walk-through; and teacher training in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and differentiated instruction. The district also provided MCAS and Advanced Placement (AP) performance data and training in data analysis to teachers. Finally, the district assigned technology support staff to buildings and provided SmartBoards to schools on a limited basis.

District administrators and teachers verified the district's efforts in promoting a strong fidelity of implementation, and observations conducted by the EQA in 50 randomly selected classrooms provided evidence of this in most areas. In some areas, however, evidence was lacking or inconsistent, such as in incorporating ELA language acquisition and development into all subject areas in grade 3, or in effectively engaging additional teachers and aides in the instructional process. Building principals and teachers agreed on the need for additional professional development in a recently acquired math program and in informal and formative methods of assessment of student work. Finally, the examination found limited evidence of the effectiveness of the administrative walk-throughs, which lacked a formal protocol and only occasionally resulted in meaningful feedback to teachers. While teachers confirmed that they were observed on a regular basis, the main feedback for teachers with professional status was provided through the formal evaluation procedure, which the district conducted on a four-year cycle.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

The EQA examiners gave the Methuen Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Excellent' on two, 'Satisfactory' on 11, and 'Needs Improvement' on one of the 14 performance indicators in this standard.

During the examination period, the Methuen Public Schools had employed two superintendents. The current superintendent was hired effective August 1, 2006, due to the former superintendent's retirement. The school district was served by seven school committee members, including the mayor who also served as the school committee chairman. An extensive District Improvement Plan (DIP) covering 2006-2008 served as the guiding document for the district and its established goals. The primary goals of the district and its schools were to improve student achievement and make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all schools and for all student subgroups.

The district formed a Leadership Academy for administrators at which they met at least eight times annually, in addition to the monthly meetings of district administrators. These provided forums for the review and discussion of student assessment data and the goals in the DIP and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

Principals were given site-based management responsibilities for their respective schools, with the exception of curriculum. The current superintendent implemented a leadership structure for curriculum standardization at the K-8 grammar schools and established grade 7-12 curriculum coordinators in English language arts (ELA), math, science, social studies, and guidance. The current superintendent also worked with four central office administrators responsible for assessment and instructional personnel, curriculum and grants, pupil services, and business and finance. The school committee evaluated the superintendent annually based on job responsibilities and district goals. The superintendent evaluated central office administrators and principals annually following the provisions of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act.

The district's commitment to use data to promote student achievement and make decisions was evident. Each school monitored student performance utilizing the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, which incorporated the use of the district's extensive data analysis reports. District administrators recently initiated the process of using assessment data to review and modify curriculum and instruction.

The School Improvement Plans (SIPs) of the four K-8 grammar schools and Methuen High School aligned with the DIP. The district established a yearly calendar for the development of the SIPs to ensure uniformity of data analysis and the establishment of action plans for all schools. The district budget was openly developed based on school and student needs, with a focus on making AYP in all district schools for all student populations. Principals were responsible for developing their budgets based on identified student and school needs.

During the period under review, the goals in the DIP and the analyses of student assessment data directed modifications to programs and services. Examples included increased staffing in the English language learner (ELL) department, addition of a bilingual high school guidance counselor, initiation of planning for a new science curriculum to align with the state curriculum framework, and expansion of the balanced literacy program to all grammar schools. In 2007-2008, the district added ELA and math coaches at each of the grammar schools and teachers at all schools to reduce class size.

The district communicated to all stakeholders its goals of improving student achievement and making adequate yearly progress for all schools and for all student subgroups. Interviews with

stakeholders affirmed the importance of district and school goals as delineated in the DIP and SIPs. The goal of improved achievement of all students was central in discussions with the district and school administrators, school committee members, teachers, and parents who the EQA team interviewed. The district communicated to its stakeholders and the general public through its website, open school committee meetings including those in January and December of each calendar year when the DIP and the SIPs were presented, school council meetings, school newsletters, and newspaper articles.

Curriculum and Instruction

The EQA examiners gave the Methuen Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on seven and 'Needs Improvement' on four of the 11 performance indicators in this standard.

Methuen Public Schools aligned its curricula to the state frameworks and standards and ensured that the curricula in all tested content areas were aligned horizontally within a grade and vertically across grades. During the review period, the district devoted considerable time and effort to adopting new texts and reviewing and revising ELA, math, and science curricula. For the most part, newly developed curricula included objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and measurable outcomes or assessments. At the time of the EQA visit, the district was still in the process of updating the ELA curriculum for grades K-6 and the social studies curriculum.

When initiating new curriculum development, the district conducted a screening process for new texts and then shaped the curriculum review and revision to the new texts and to the state frameworks and standards, taking into consideration MCAS test results, research, and best practices. However, the district did not have a fully developed protocol for the timely review and revision of curriculum; administrators expressed their intention to develop one as a priority for the 2007-2008 school year.

Multiple educators shared curriculum leadership roles. Key central office personnel responsible for curriculum, assessment, ELL education, and special education monitored curriculum development and student achievement within their spheres of responsibility. Supervising principals and associate principals at the district's four grammar schools monitored curriculum

implementation through regular walk-throughs, analyses of MCAS results, and formative and summative assessments. Feedback from walk-throughs was inconsistent and sporadic according to interviewees, but principals shared analyses of achievement data with coaches, coordinators, and classroom teachers. In addition, they convened school-level, grade-level, and content-level meetings to identify curricular gaps and weaknesses and to improve coverage, pacing, and pedagogy, with a focus on improved student achievement.

Late in the review period, the district focused in more depth on the achievement and needs of student subgroups. A full inclusion model has been in place in the district for over a decade. Inclusion classes used the same curriculum with appropriate adjustments, and inclusion classes were co-taught by content- or grade-level teachers and a trained special educator.

Although instructional leadership was provided primarily by supervising principals in their respective buildings, they shared supervisory and evaluation responsibilities with a number of other school leaders. At the grammar schools, associate principals conducted walk-throughs and evaluated teachers according to the district's four-year evaluation protocol. Supervisory and associate principals worked with teams of teachers in content- and grade-level meetings to implement more effective instructional strategies in order to address gaps in topic coverage, to ensure more effective pacing, and to strengthen instruction. The use of extensive data analysis reports shared by the director of assessment and instructional personnel ensured rigor and insight in developing new and improved programs and instructional strategies. In addition, during the 2007-2008 school year, the district added a literacy coach and a math coach at each grammar school to model lessons and support improved teaching skills. Similarly, new grade 7-12 coordinators monitored instruction in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, and performed supervisory and evaluative duties to improve instruction. Multiple school and district leaders also conducted frequent walk-throughs at all grade levels, but interviewees stated that feedback and walk-through protocols were inconsistent.

The district identified the integration of technology as a priority in the District Improvement Plan. Grammar school teachers cited appropriate uses of technology, websites, and educational software in both regular and special education classes. However, the high school's building

limitations related to its open spaces and complicated wiring needs prevented it from meeting high standards of technology use and access.

Observations of 50 randomly selected classrooms by EQA examiners revealed strong classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, and student activity and behavior at all grade levels. Examiners saw evidence of positive classroom climate at the K-5 level.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

A review of the district's documents revealed that the district was deeply engaged in the continuous collection, analysis, and use of assessment results during the period under review. The district provided the EQA team with documents that addressed its MCAS test results in a comprehensive manner. The director of assessment and instructional personnel developed these documents and provided them to each school administrator, who in turn shared the results with school staff members. In addition to the analyses of MCAS test results, the district prepared grade distribution reports that compared grades achieved by the district's students at the different levels, and analyses of PSAT, SAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) test performance of the district's high school students.

The District Improvement Plan and each School Improvement Plan contained information about student achievement on the MCAS exams and included specific goal projections for student achievement. All the district's schools used the Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process to identify and analyze weaknesses in their respective schools' programs. The PIM process began several years ago in Methuen, and the district's use of the process in all its schools, regardless of the level of student achievement, was motivated by the need to learn to analyze data in order to promote improved student achievement. During the 2006-2007 school year, the PIM teams analyzed the relatively poor performance of the district's special education students.

The district acknowledged that it had an abundance of data available and that it needed to focus more attention on their use. The district's subgroups, including special education, low-income, and Hispanic students, had not met their adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets in ELA and mathematics during the 2004 through 2007 school years.

The district used a variety of assessment tools other than the MCAS tests to measure student progress. While testing was not consistent at grade levels in all schools, the assessment tools used included the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Students in grades 6-8 were assessed with summative common exams, although the district used no formative assessments in ELA above grade 6. Interviewees stated that the district needed to do more work to develop local benchmarks.

During the several years prior to the EQA review, the district had used the PIM process and MCAS test results to evaluate its programs. However, interviewees acknowledged the need to develop a formal program evaluation protocol and planned to do so in the future. The DIP contained a goal for program evaluation that included developing a protocol and schedule for evaluation of programs likely to have the most impact on improving student achievement.

Interviewees provided the EQA team with several examples of how the district had used assessment results to evaluate its programs and services. The district had developed a math curriculum team in 2004-2005 to evaluate the effectiveness of its math program, and it adopted two new math series as a result of the team's findings. The district added a writing block for grade 7-8 students after a review of student MCAS test performance on the short and long compositions. During 2005-2006, the high school adjusted its science course sequence in response to analysis of MCAS performance. In the 2007-2008 school year, the district appointed full-time math and literacy coaches at each of its four grammar schools to support teachers in their the development and use of formative assessments and in data analysis, among other activities.

The district engaged in only one voluntary external audit during the review period. The Consulting Partners conducted an audit during the 2006-2007 school year to determine the

efficiency of operations in the district. A report of the audit had not yet been published at the time of the EQA review.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The EQA examiners gave the Methuen Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on 12 and 'Needs Improvement' on one of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

Methuen Public Schools had policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of an effective teaching staff. The district had a comprehensive website that listed openings in all its schools, and advertised in newspapers such as The *Boston Globe* and the Manchester *Union Leader*. The district also participated in the Merrimack Valley Teacher Recruitment Fair, where district representatives provided information about teaching opportunities in Methuen. The principal and administrators conducted job interviews. After initial interviews and "to assure a good fit," the teachers affected by the final selection had the opportunity to interview the candidates. The hiring process for administrators involved central office administrators, school council members, and parents.

The district's leaders had no financial restrictions when hiring personnel and could select the most qualified candidate. Salary was commensurate with experience and within the guidelines of the collective bargaining agreement. Interviewees stated that the district enjoyed a high teacher retention rate. The district's policy was to hire certified and highly qualified personnel. The human resources director and the director of assessment and instructional personnel monitored licensure to ensure that personnel had the appropriate license for their respective positions. A review of teacher licensure information provided to the EQA team indicated that 98 percent of the teachers (489 of 497) had appropriate licensure. Ninety-five percent of the administrators (42 of 44) had appropriate licensure.

In 2007-2008, the district added 24 staff positions, including ELA and math coaches for the grammar schools, and changed the structure of department heads to grade 7-12 coordinators to improve articulation between the grammar schools and the high school. Many of the new positions added were to reduce class size where needed.

The district had a formal mentoring program for new staff members, with a coordinator for the program. A consultant from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell met four times a year with the mentors and provided them with training. The district had a Mentor Program Handbook that explained the purpose and goals of the mentor program.

The district conducted a four-day orientation program for new staff members. The four days included workshops on topics such as teaching strategies, classroom management, teaching English language learners, teaching students with special needs, integrating technology into instruction, implementing balanced literacy for grammar school staff members, and teaching in a culturally diverse setting for high school staff members. The new teacher orientation addressed the importance of assessment and included a workshop entitled Using Assessment to Improve Student Achievement.

The district enjoyed stable teacher and administrative staffing, and it provided appropriate levels of funding to support professional development and other programs that would improve the performance of teachers and administrators. The district had a formal professional development program that linked to the DIP and SIPs. Professional development focused on balanced literacy, building teaching skills, differentiated instruction, using assessment to improve student achievement, gaining a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) by current and aspiring administrators, expanding ELL teacher training, and curriculum implementation. The district offered professional development programs for its staff before the school year started and during one professional day during the school year. The district provided in-house professional development and used substitutes to release teachers for offerings. Attendance at after-school and summer workshops and courses was voluntary.

All schools participated in the PIM process, which involved substantial collection and analysis of aggregated and disaggregated data. Each school had a PIM team and used the data to inform its SIP and its goals for improving student achievement. Principals received training in TestWiz. The district conducted weekly leadership meetings and established a Leadership Academy to expand professional development for all administrators.

Professional status teacher evaluations did not comply with state law. Principals conducted summative evaluations every four years instead of the mandated two. They met with teachers

each year to discuss goals for their professional growth plans. Growth plans included written goals, and the teachers reported on their progress toward and attainment of the goals to the principal or supervisor.

The district's administrators conducted informal walk-throughs of classrooms. Principals and supervisors could not use the walk-through as part of the teacher evaluation process. Principals stated that they used the walk-through to see that objectives were on the board and that the teacher implemented what he/she learned in professional development offerings, and they provided informal feedback to the teacher. Principals looked at teacher lesson plans and plan books. Some principals required teachers to submit a form with the learning objective of the lesson or activity and a student work sample. Principals collected the forms monthly and used them to check compliance with SIP objectives and the state frameworks. Principals used a teacher improvement plan to support struggling teachers, and the district took action against low-performing teachers.

Evaluations of principals followed the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, and the superintendent evaluated the principals annually. The superintendent gave raises based on job description and performance. Principals' goals had to match the district's goals regarding student achievement. The superintendent stated that improved achievement was part of the evaluation process.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The EQA examiners gave the Methuen Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on 10 and 'Needs Improvement' on three of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

The use of aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data led the Methuen Public Schools to provide a variety of programs and services to assist all students, including its subgroup populations. By 2007, all grammar schools used the Reading First three-tiered model of balanced literacy instruction. The district provided Title I services in ELA and math at two of the four grammar schools. Science offerings changed at the high school to include microbiology in grade 9 and macrobiology in grade 10, with more emphasis on physical science at grades 7 and 8. At the elementary levels, after-school and summer school programs provided targeted

support in ELA and math for at-risk populations and included transportation. In fall 2007, the PIM leadership team recognized specific weaknesses reflected in the special needs students' MCAS results and identified strategies to assist their progress.

Subgroup participation in the MCAS tests ranged from 98 to 100 percent. However, subgroup participation in the district's accelerated programs, particularly the Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the high school, did not reflect proportionate representation. However, the district had begun to track AP scores, course grades, and subgroup participation, and planned to use the data to make decisions to enable more students to participate.

During the period under review, the district monitored student attendance and used procedures to reduce excessive absenteeism and promote attendance. The district's attendance rate corresponded closely to the state average. At the high school level, the absenteeism rate was slightly lower than the state average. A report prepared by the director of assessment and instructional personnel cited higher absence rates among subgroups and listed recommendations to improve their attendance.

Teachers received 15 sick days and three essential days each year. Some administrators said that teachers used their essential days which, when taken at the end of the year, created issues regarding continuity of programs for students and availability of substitute teachers. The staff absenteeism rate for short-term illnesses and other absences, which included essential days (but not jury or military service), averaged 10.5 days per year. For the same categories of absence, teachers at the Marsh Grammar School averaged 15.5 days per year. The district's rate for absences that included short- and long-term illnesses, professional development, and other absences averaged 12.2 days per year. For the same categories, absences at the Marsh Grammar School averaged 17.3 days per year.

The district's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates fluctuated over the review period, and the high school had high rates of both types of suspension. The in-school suspension rate at the high school increased from 22.9 percent in 2005 to 27.9 percent in 2006 before dropping to 20.3 percent in 2007. The high school's out-of-school suspension rate increased from 18.3 percent in 2005 to 20.2 percent in 2006 to 25.4 percent in 2007. Interviewees mentioned that the district preferred to keep students in school as opposed to sending them home for misbehavior.

However, some disciplinary infractions resulting in in-school suspension were minor and included missing a teacher detention, using inappropriate language, and tardiness. In addition, the district policy on "student decorum," dated July 1985, related only to the high school. The school committee expected to begin policy manual revisions in January 2008.

The district implemented programs to reduce the number of students dropping out of school. In addition to providing guidance services, the high school offered alternative programs during and after school and in the evening for students to make up courses, take additional coursework, and complete classes leading to attainment of a GED. The Alpha program, held after school for three hours daily, provided 21 students with additional support in order to continue their education.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Methuen Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on 11, 'Needs Improvement' on one, and 'Unsatisfactory' on one of the 13 performance indicators in this standard.

School committee policy defined the budget process, which the superintendent adhered to. The budget was developed based on the district's and schools' short- and long-term goals as delineated in the DIP and SIPs. The district improvement planning process followed a protocol that had been developed to emphasize data-driven decision-making, and the development of the budget reflected this by making use of the Performance Improvement Mapping process. Improving student MCAS test performance and making AYP at all district schools were the driving forces in the development of the budget. The school committee, superintendent, teachers, and members of the school councils and parent-teacher organizations participated in the budget's development to ensure that students' educational needs would be met. The school committee and the superintendent had been committed to preserving small class sizes, a goal which the district prioritized in the budget development process.

The district developed the budget, and the city funded it, based on the anticipated required local contribution and Chapter 70 aid. The budget document did not include information from state and federal grants, revolving accounts, and from other financial sources. The budget process commenced in September when principals, supervisors, and department heads assessed their budget needs, after which they met with the superintendent, business manager, and the

administrative team. The superintendent convened a leadership team to determine staffing needs. The superintendent then reviewed and finalized the budget and presented it to the school committee, which was followed by approximately four budget workshops by the full school committee. The school committee held a public hearing for the FY 2007 budget on June 29, 2006, followed by the adoption of the budget. The approved district budget was sent to the mayor for incorporation into the city budget. The school district budget had been finalized upon receipt of state aid, which occurred sometime in April or May.

The superintendent, administrators, and faculty members stated in interviews that the city provided adequate support to meet the educational needs of Methuen's students. The teaching staff members stated that they were well provisioned with instructional supplies and materials, and allocations were made based on student and school needs rather than a per pupil basis. The 2007-2008 budget added 24 teaching positions including ELA and math coaches for each of the four K-8 schools and additional teachers to maintain low class sizes. The district lacked a capital plan for several years, and the budgets for the period under review did not include capital items. The district exceeded it's net school spending (NSS) requirement in FY 2006 but was below it in FY 2005. In FY 2007, according to the Department of Education, the district's NSS fell below its required amount, although the district is disputing this. The district's FY 2007 per pupil cost from all funds was $9,635, compared to the state average of $11,789.

The district did not have a signed written agreement or memoranda with the City of Methuen that detailed the manner by which indirect costs would be allocated. The two most recent audit reports cited a need for the city and the school district to reach an agreement on the indirect charges. The mayor and superintendent had been aware of the need for an agreement, and planned to meet to resolve the issue. The current auditing firm had been employed by the district for several years, and the district did not plan to competitively bid the procurement of an independent financial auditing firm.

City and school officials had concurred about the need to renovate and expand the high school, as the current high school, built in 1975 with an open-space concept, was not conducive to the learning process, although it was well maintained. City and school officials jointly submitted a statement of interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which placed this

project on a state-approved shortlist of approximately 45 school building projects approved for a feasibility study. The mayor appointed a school building committee made up of city council members, school committee members, and other interested parties.

The district had safety and security systems in place to ensure student safety. Its emergency procedures manual addressed multiple types of emergencies to allow the district to respond effectively to critical situations. Each school had a crisis management team, and the district had a safety and facilities education task force. EQA examiners found adequate security to be evident in all district schools, which conducted fire, bus, and lockdown safety drills and had police resource officers paid by the district budget.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

The EQA's analysis of student achievement data focuses on the MCAS test results for 2004-2007, with primary attention paid to the 2007 MCAS tests. This analysis is framed by the following five essential questions:

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

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA subjected the most current state and district MCAS test results to a series of analyses to determine whether there were differences between the mean results of district students and those of students statewide or among student subgroups within the district. Descriptive analyses of the 2007 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Methuen and the average scores of students in Massachusetts.

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

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

The basis for gap analysis is the *proficiency index*, which is a measure of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, or meeting the state standard. The unit of measure is proficiency index (PI) points, and a score of 100 indicates that all students in the aggregate or in a subgroup are proficient. It can be calculated for overall achievement as well as achievement in an individual subject. Please see Appendix A for more detailed information about the proficiency index

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

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

Achievement

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

Findings:

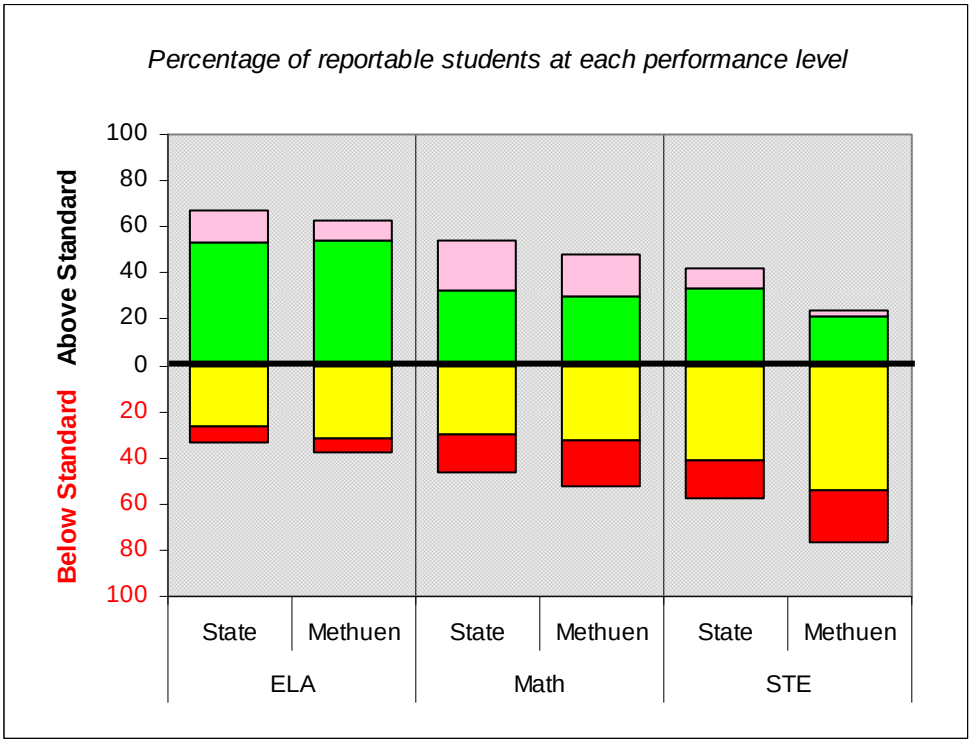
- On average, more than three-fifths of the students in Methuen Public Schools attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) on the 2007 MCAS tests, nearly half of Methuen students attained proficiency in math, and nearly one-quarter attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-five percent of the Class of 2007 attained a Competency Determination.

- Methuen's ELA proficiency index on the 2007 MCAS tests was 84 proficiency index (PI) points. This resulted in a proficiency gap, the difference between its proficiency index and the target of 100, of 16 PI points, almost one and one-half points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of more than two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).

- In 2007, Methuen's math proficiency index on the MCAS tests was 73 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 27 PI points, three points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of nearly four PI points per year to achieve AYP.

- Methuen's STE proficiency index in 2007 was 63 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 37 PI points, 10 points wider than that statewide.

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



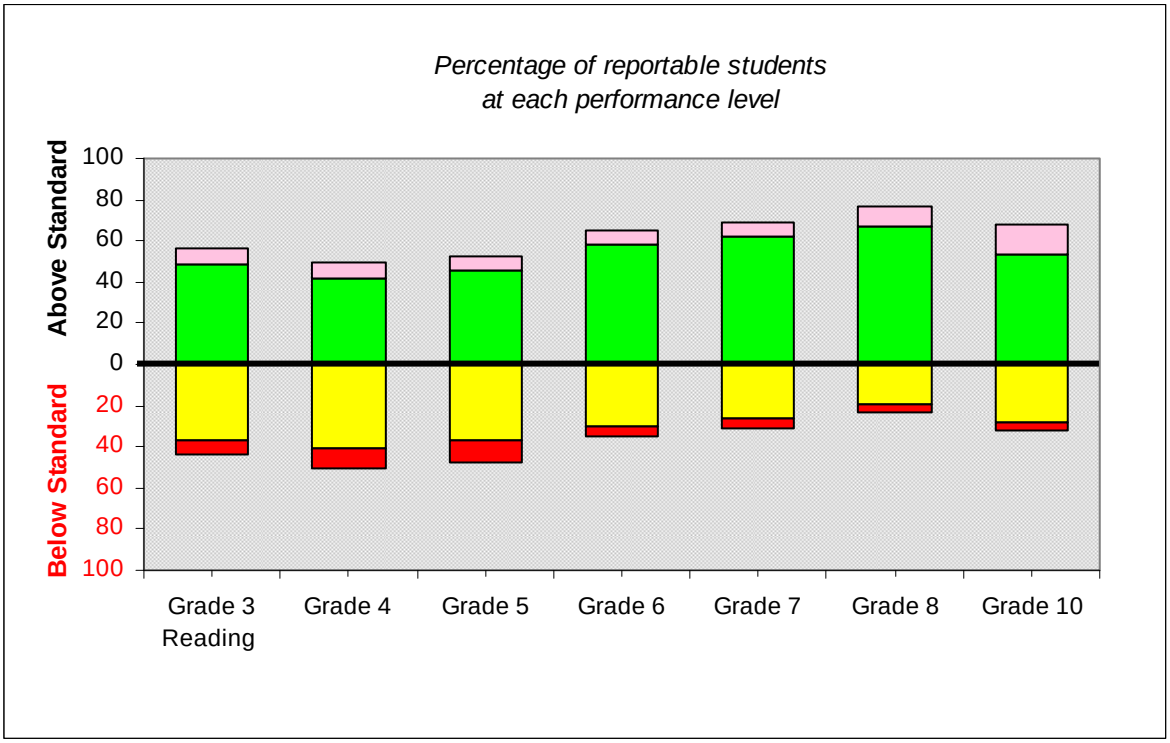
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	13	8	22	18	9	3
Proficient	53	54	32	30	34	21
Needs Improvement	27	31	30	33	41	54
Warning/Failing	7	6	17	20	17	22
Percent Attaining Proficiency	66	62	54	48	43	24
Proficiency Index (PI)	85.7	84.4	76.1	72.6	72.1	62.5

In 2007, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was lower in Methuen than statewide. In Methuen, 62 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 66 percent statewide; 48 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 54 percent statewide; and 24 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 43 percent statewide.

The 2007 proficiency index for Methuen students in ELA was 84 PI points, compared to 86 PI points statewide; in math it was 73 PI points, compared to 76 points statewide; and in STE it was 63 PI points, compared to 72 points statewide.

The ELA proficiency gap for Methuen students in 2007 was 16 PI points, compared to 14 PI points statewide, and would require an average improvement of more than two PI points annually to make AYP. Methuen's math proficiency gap in 2007 was 27 PI points, compared to 24 PI points statewide, and would require an average improvement of nearly four PI points per year to make AYP. Methuen's STE proficiency gap was 38 PI points, compared to 28 PI points statewide.

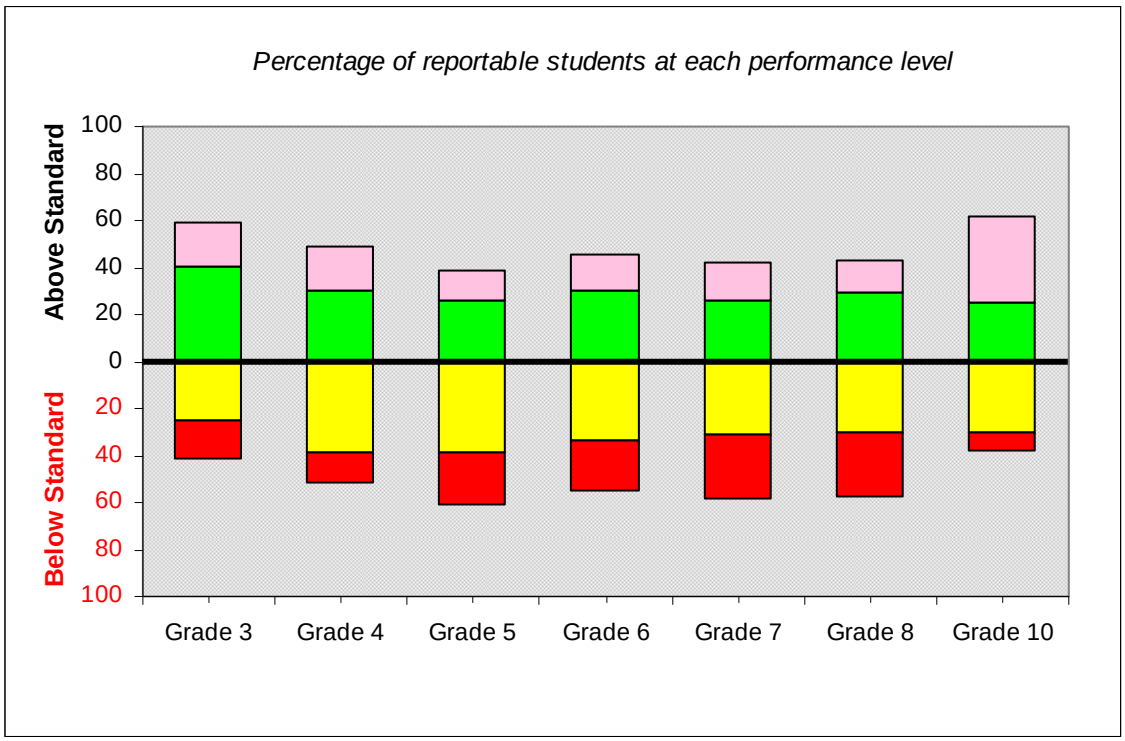
Figure/Table 2: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Grade, 2007



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	8	7	7	6	7	10	15
Proficient	48	42	45	59	63	67	54
Needs Improvement	37	41	37	30	27	20	28
Warning/Failing	7	10	10	5	4	4	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	49	52	65	70	77	69

The percentage of Methuen students attaining proficiency in ELA in 2007 varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 49 percent at grade 4 to a high of 77 percent at grade 8.

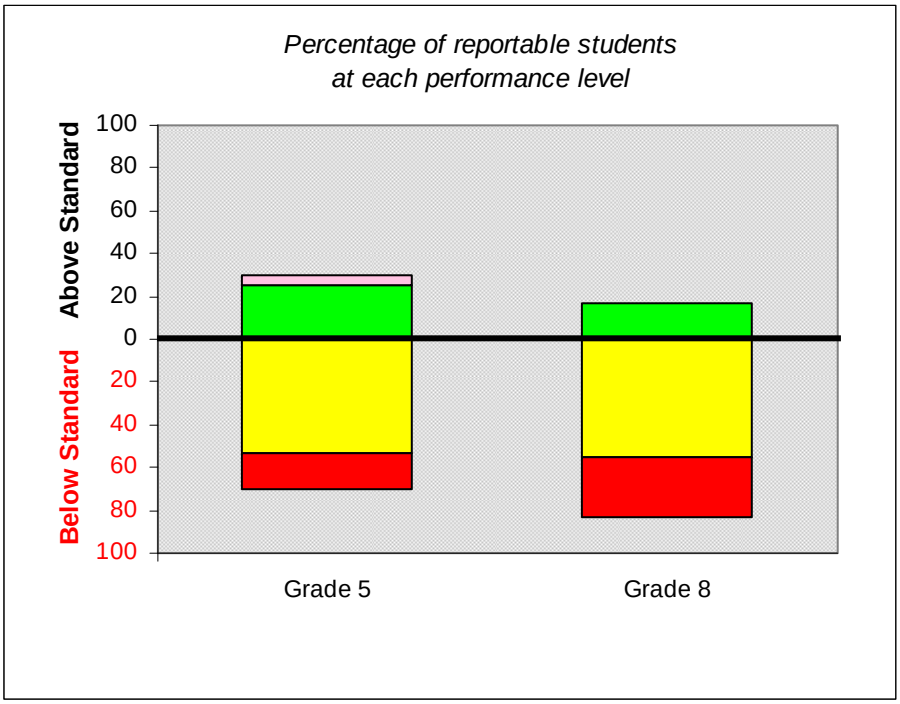
Figure/Table 3: MCAS Math Test Performance by Grade, 2007



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	19	19	13	15	16	14	36
Proficient	40	30	26	30	26	29	25
Needs Improvement	25	39	38	33	31	30	31
Warning/Failing	16	12	23	21	27	27	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	49	39	45	42	43	61

The percentage of Methuen students attaining proficiency in math in 2007 also varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 39 percent at grade 5 to a high of 61 percent at grade 10.

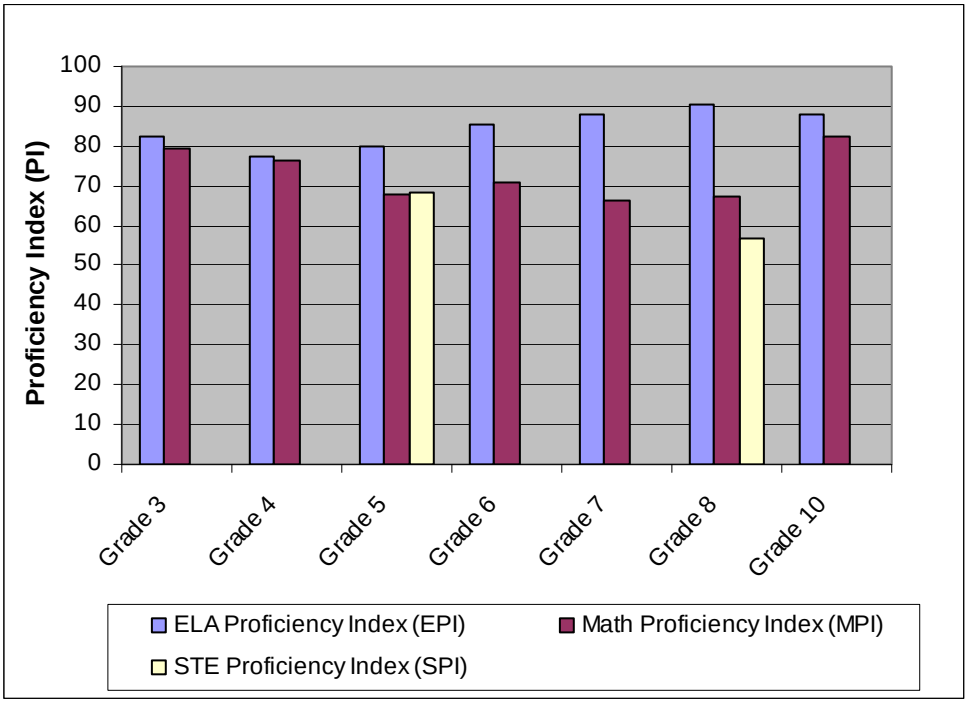
Figure/Table 4: MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance by Grade, 2007



	Grade 5	Grade 8
Advanced	5	0
Proficient	25	17
Needs Improvement	53	55
Warning/Failing	16	28
Percent Attaining Proficiency	30	17

In Methuen in 2007, 30 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 17 percent of grade 8 students did so.

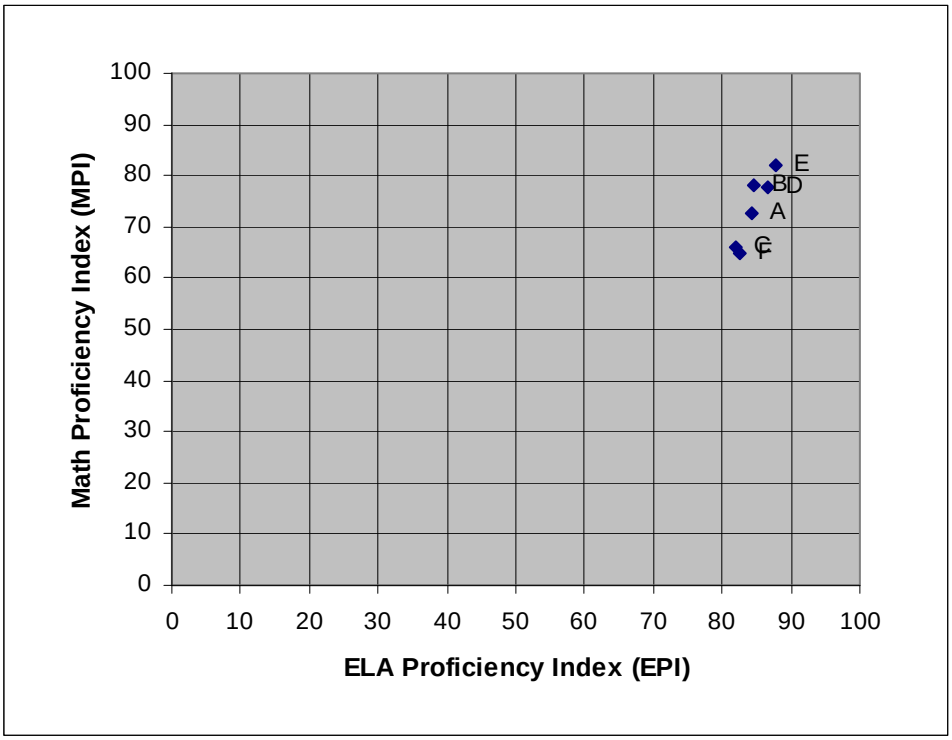
Figure/Table 5: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Grade and Subject, 2007



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	82.5	77.4	80.0	85.5	87.8	90.3	87.9
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	79.3	76.4	67.7	70.8	66.5	67.3	82.2
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			68.4			56.6	

At every grade level, the performance of Methuen students on the 2007 MCAS tests was strongest in ELA. Methuen's ELA proficiency gap in 2007 ranged from a low of 10 PI points at grade 8 to a high of 23 PI points at grade 4. Methuen's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 18 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 33 PI points at grade 7 and grade 8. Methuen's STE proficiency gap was 32 PI points at grade 5 and 43 PI points at grade 8.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Methuen district average	84.4	72.6	7,935
B	Comprehensive Grammar School	84.5	78.2	1,441
C	Donald P. Timony Grammar School	82.1	65.9	1,901
D	Marsh Grammar School	86.5	77.8	1,822
E	Methuen High School	87.9	82.2	962
F	Tenney Grammar School	82.7	64.8	1,809

Among Methuen's schools, the ELA proficiency gap in 2007 ranged from a low of 12 PI points at Methuen High to a high of 18 PI points at Timony Grammar. Methuen's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 18 PI points at Methuen High to a high of 35 PI points at Tenney Grammar.

Equity of Achievement

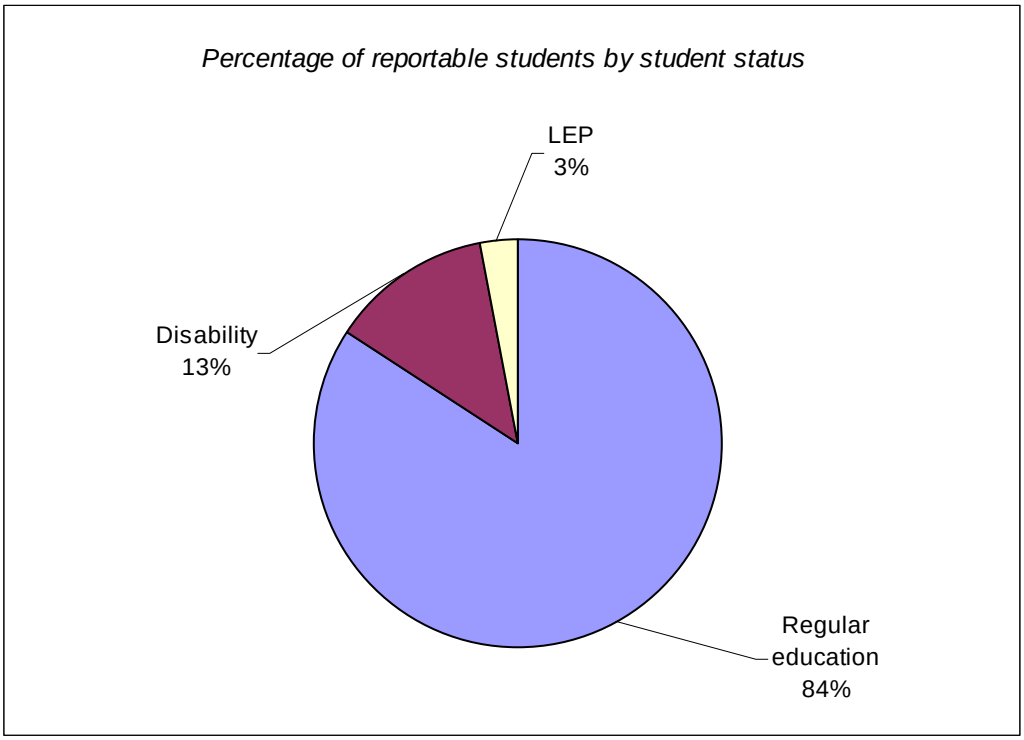
Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

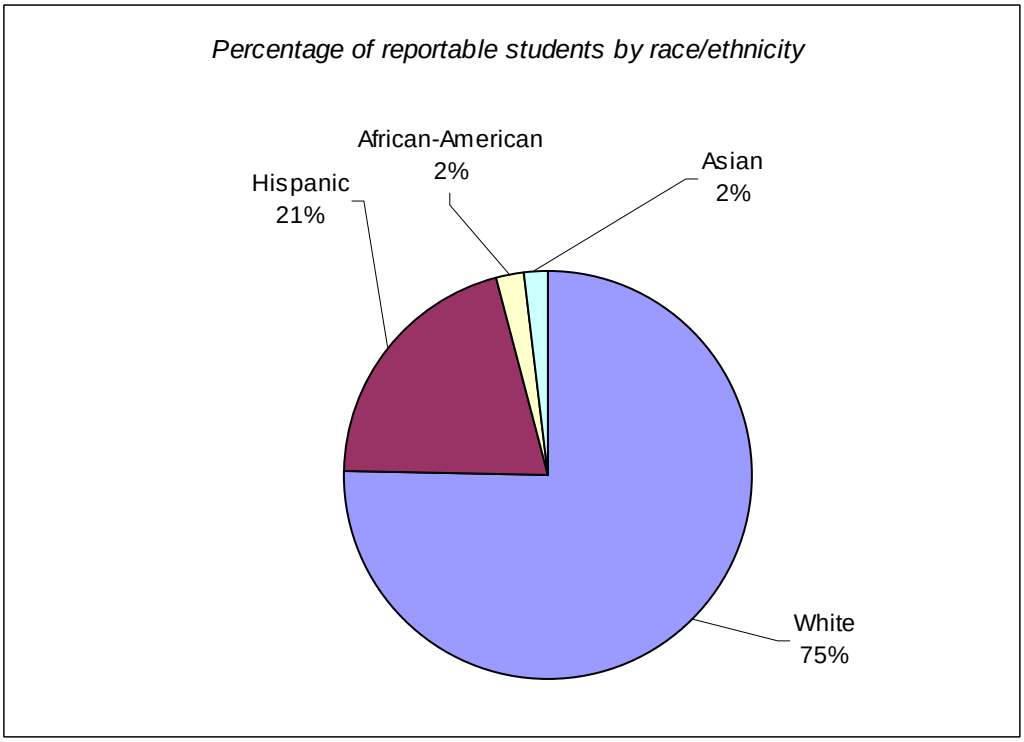
- MCAS performance in 2007 varied considerably among subgroups of Methuen students. Of the nine measurable subgroups in Methuen, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in Methuen in 2007 was 37 PI points in ELA (regular education students, limited English proficient students, respectively) and 44 PI points in math (Asian students, students with disabilities, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Methuen in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, limited English proficient (LEP) students, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program).
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, Asian students, and non low-income students.

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

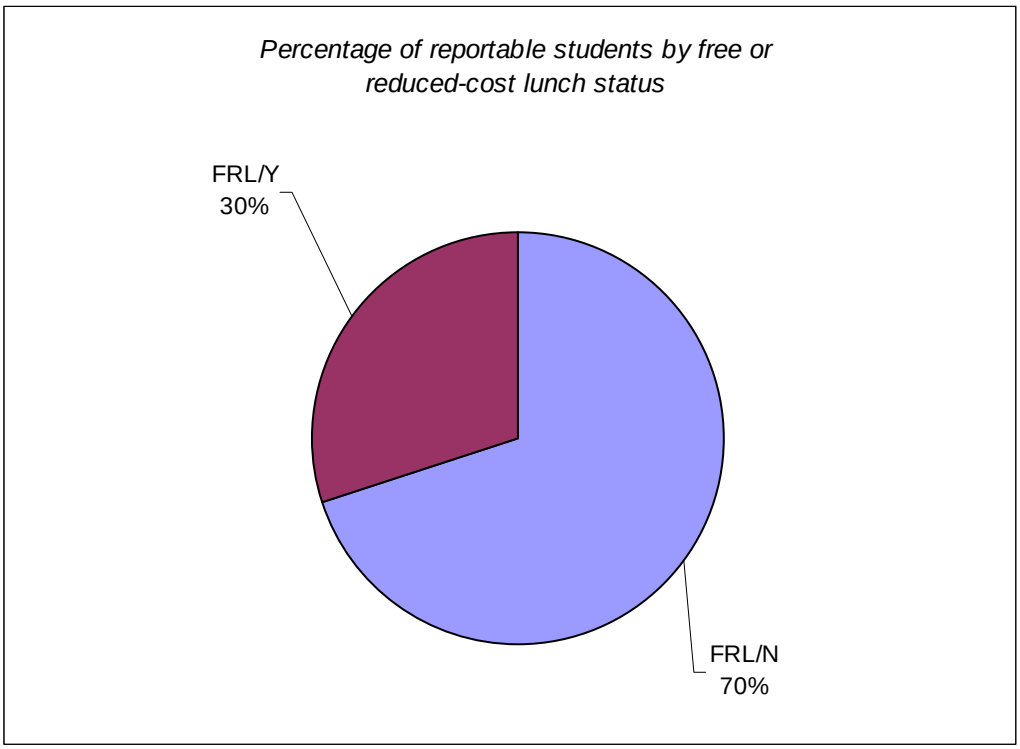
A.



B.



C.

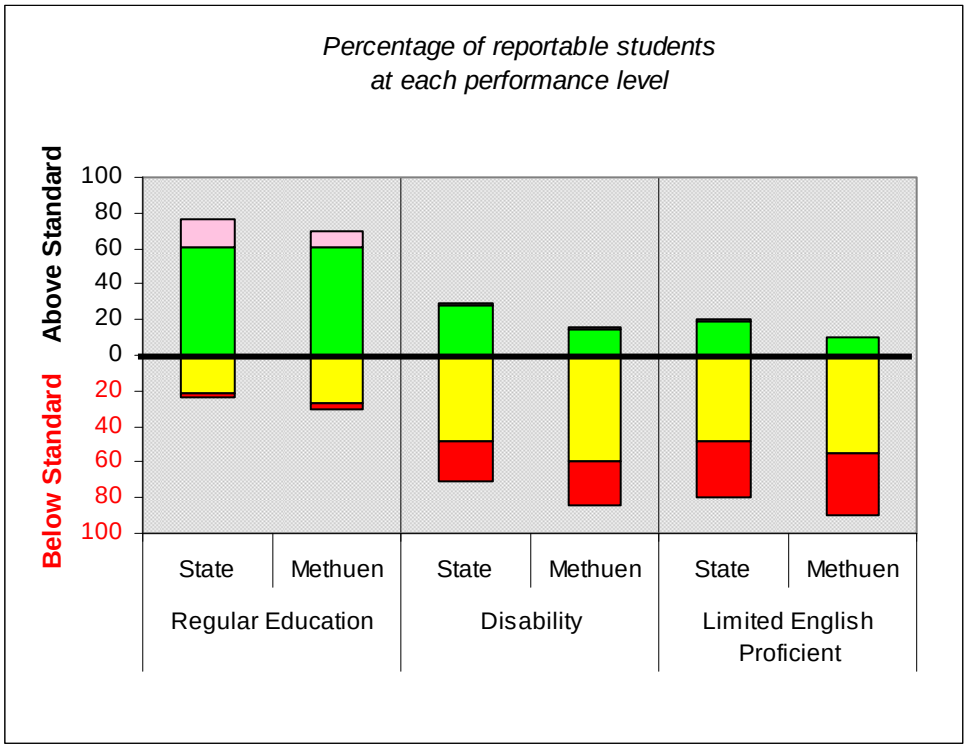


	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	3,419
	Disability	515
	LEP	126
Race/ethnicity	White	3,007
	Hispanic	820
	African-American	86
	Asian	80
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	2,847
	FRL/Y	1,213

Note: Data include students in tested grades levels only.

In Methuen in 2007, 13 percent of the students tested were students with disabilities and three percent were limited English proficient (LEP) students. One-fourth of the students tested were non-White, including 21 percent Hispanic, two percent African-American, and two percent Asian. Thirty percent of the tested students participated in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

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

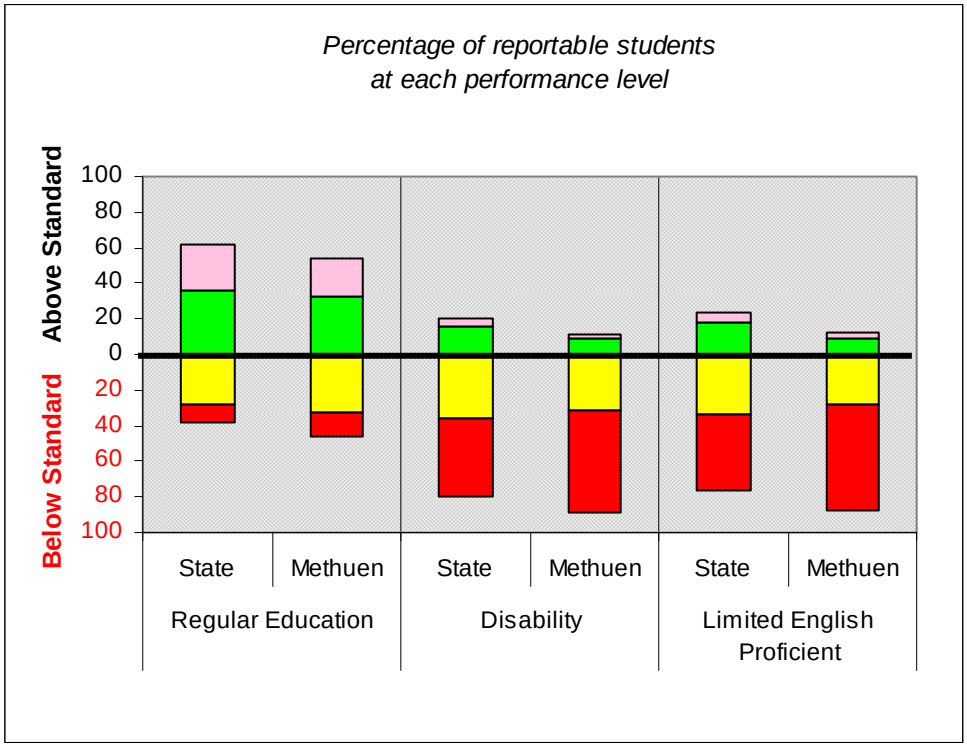


	Regular Education		Disability		Limited English Proficient	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	16	10	2	1	1	0
Proficient	60	61	28	15	19	10
Needs Improvement	21	27	48	59	48	55
Warning/Failing	2	3	22	25	31	35
Percent Attaining Proficiency	76	71	30	16	20	10
Proficiency Index (EPI)	91.3	88.9	64.8	57.8	57.3	52.4

In Methuen in 2007, the proficiency rate in ELA of regular education students was over four times greater than that of students with disabilities and seven times greater than that of limited English proficient students. Seventy-one percent of regular education students, 16 percent of students with disabilities, and 10 percent of LEP students attained proficiency in ELA on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Methuen's ELA proficiency gap in 2007 was 11 PI points for regular education students, compared to nine PI points statewide; 42 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 35 PI points statewide; and 48 PI points for LEP students, compared to 43 PI points statewide. The performance gap in ELA between Methuen's regular education students and students with disabilities was 31 PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it was 37 PI points.

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

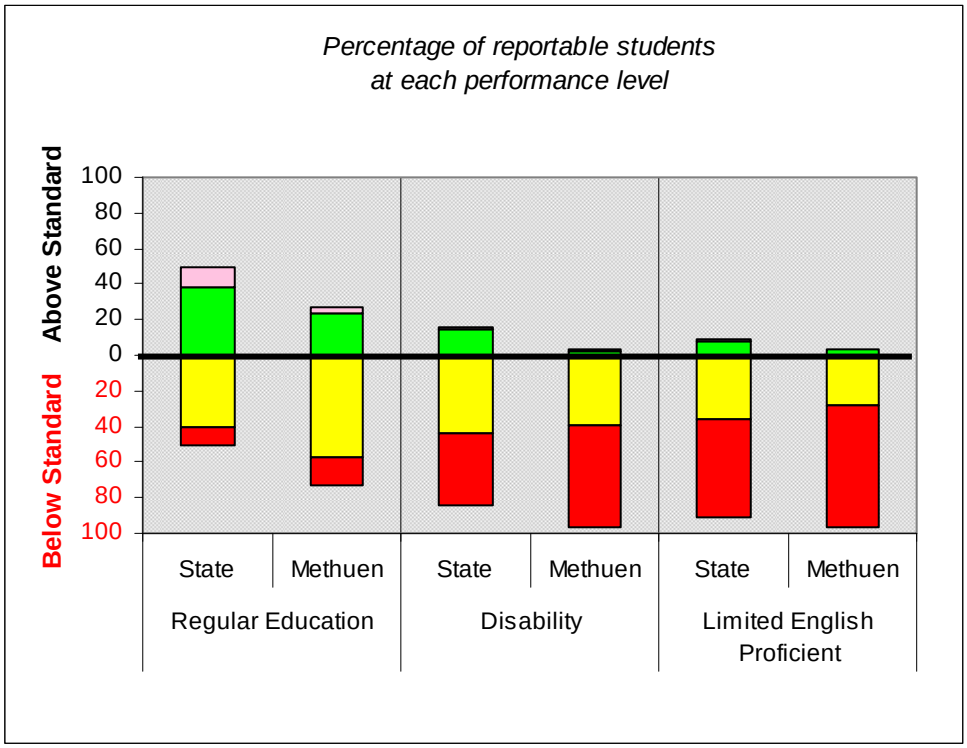


	Regular Education		Disability		Limited English Proficient	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	26	21	4	1	6	3
Proficient	36	33	16	9	18	9
Needs Improvement	28	33	36	32	34	28
Warning/Failing	10	13	44	58	43	59
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	54	20	10	24	12
Proficiency Index (MPI)	82.2	77.5	51.0	42.3	53.0	42.9

In Methuen in 2007, the proficiency rate in math of regular education students was over five times greater than that of students with disabilities and over four times greater than that of limited English proficient students. Fifty-four percent of regular education students, 10 percent of students with disabilities, and 12 percent of LEP students attained proficiency in math on the MCAS tests in 2007.

Methuen's math proficiency gap in 2007 was 23 PI points for regular education students, compared to 18 PI points statewide; 58 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 49 PI points statewide; and 57 PI points for LEP students, compared to 47 PI points statewide. The performance gap in math between Methuen's regular education students and students with disabilities was 35 PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it was also 35 PI points.

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

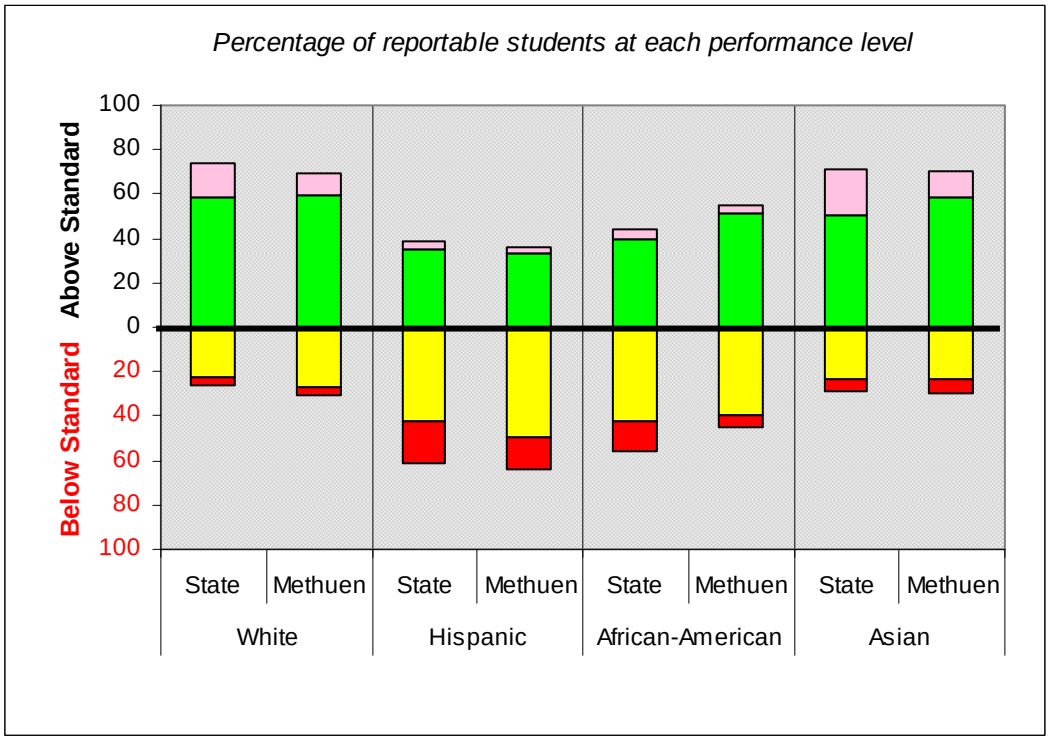


	Regular Education		Disability		Limited English Proficient	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	10	3	2	1	1	0
Proficient	39	24	14	2	8	4
Needs Improvement	41	57	44	40	36	29
Warning/Failing	10	17	40	57	55	68
Percent Attaining Proficiency	49	27	16	3	9	4
Proficiency Index (SPI)	77.5	66.1	51.8	38.9	42.2	34.8

In Methuen in 2007, the proficiency rate in science and technology/engineering of regular education students was nine times greater than that of students with disabilities and nearly seven times greater than that of LEP students. Twenty-seven percent of regular education students, three percent of students with disabilities, and four percent of LEP students attained proficiency in STE on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Methuen's STE proficiency gap in 2007 was 34 PI points for regular education students, compared to 23 PI points statewide; 61 PI points for students with disabilities, compared to 48 PI points statewide; and 65 PI points for LEP students, compared to 58 PI points statewide. The performance gap in STE between Methuen's regular education students and students with disabilities was 27 PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it was 31 PI points.

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

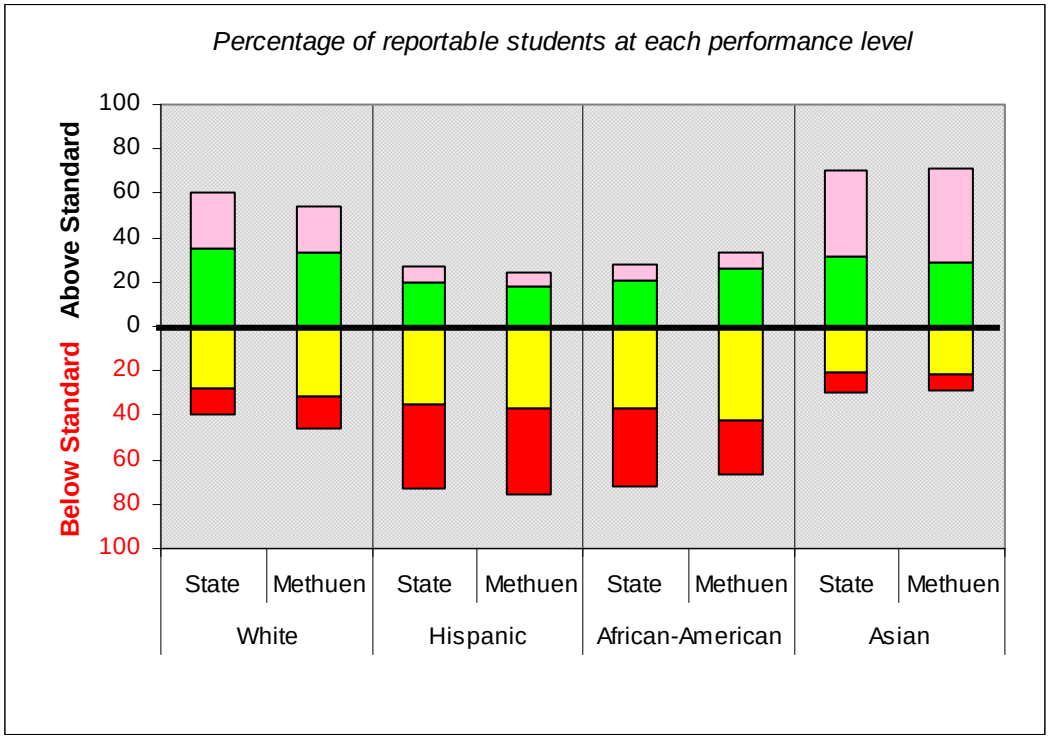


	White		Hispanic		African-American		Asian	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	16	10	3	3	4	4	21	11
Proficient	58	60	35	33	40	51	50	59
Needs Improvement	22	27	43	50	42	39	23	24
Warning/Failing	4	4	19	14	14	6	5	6
Percent Attaining Proficiency	74	70	38	36	44	55	71	70
Proficiency Index (EPI)	89.8	87.9	69.8	71.2	73.9	80.7	87.7	87.8

In Methuen in 2007, performance on the MCAS ELA tests varied widely by race/ethnicity, as 70 percent of White students, 70 percent of Asian students, 55 percent of African-American students, and 36 percent of Hispanic students attained proficiency in ELA on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Methuen's ELA proficiency gap in 2007 was 12 PI points for White students, compared to 10 PI points statewide; 12 PI points for Asian students, the same as that statewide; 19 PI points for African-American students, compared to 26 PI points statewide; and 29 PI points for Hispanic students, compared to 30 PI points statewide. The performance gap in ELA between Methuen's White and African-American students was seven PI points, and between White and Hispanic students it was 17 PI points; there was no performance gap between White and Asian students.

Figure/Table 12: MCAS Math Test Performance by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup, 2007

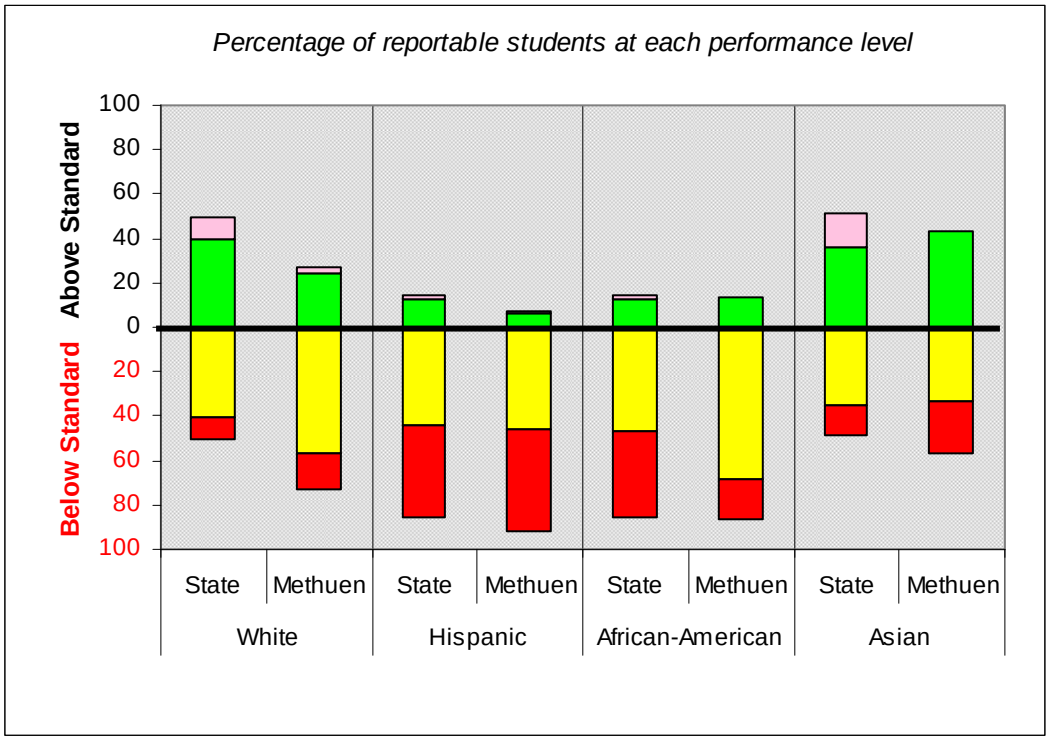


	White		Hispanic		African-American		Asian	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	25	21	7	6	7	7	39	43
Proficient	35	33	20	18	21	27	31	29
Needs Improvement	28	32	35	37	37	42	21	21
Warning/Failing	11	14	37	39	35	24	9	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	60	54	27	24	28	34	70	72
Proficiency Index (MPI)	80.9	77.2	56.9	54.8	58.4	64.8	85.4	85.9

In Methuen in 2007, performance on the MCAS math tests also varied widely by race/ethnicity, as 72 percent of Asian students, 54 percent of White students, 34 percent of African-American students, and 24 percent of Hispanic students attained proficiency in math on the MCAS tests in 2007.

Methuen's math proficiency gap in 2007 was 14 PI points for Asian students, compared to 15 PI points statewide; 23 PI points for White students, compared to 19 PI points statewide; 35 PI points for African-American students, compared to 42 PI points statewide; and 45 PI points for Hispanic students, compared to 43 PI points statewide. The performance gap in math between Methuen's Asian and White students was nine PI points, between Asian and African-American students it was 21 PI points, and between Asian and Hispanic students it was 31 PI points.

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

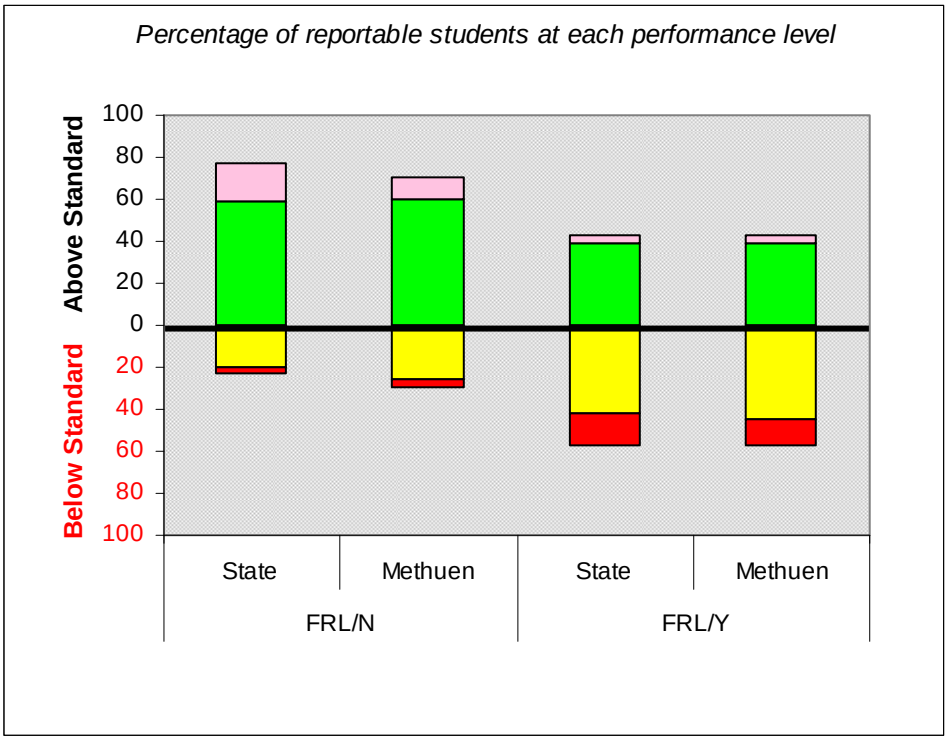


	White		Hispanic		African-American		Asian	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	10	3	2	1	1	0	15	0
Proficient	39	24	13	6	13	14	36	43
Needs Improvement	40	57	44	45	47	68	35	33
Warning/Failing	10	16	41	47	39	18	14	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	49	27	15	7	14	14	51	43
Proficiency Index (SPI)	78.0	66.8	50.6	44.3	51.3	61.4	76.8	67.9

In Methuen in 2007, performance on the MCAS STE tests likewise varied widely by race/ethnicity, as 43 percent of Asian students, 27 percent of White students, 14 percent of African-American students, and seven percent of Hispanic students attained proficiency in STE on the 2007 MCAS tests.

Methuen's STE proficiency gap in 2007 was 32 PI points for Asian students, compared to 23 PI points statewide; 33 PI points for White students, compared to 22 PI points statewide; 39 PI points for African-American students, compared to 49 PI points statewide; and 56 PI points for Hispanic students, compared to 49 PI points statewide. The performance gap in STE between Methuen's Asian and White students was one PI point, between Asian and African-American students it was seven PI points, and between Asian and Hispanic students it was 24 PI points.

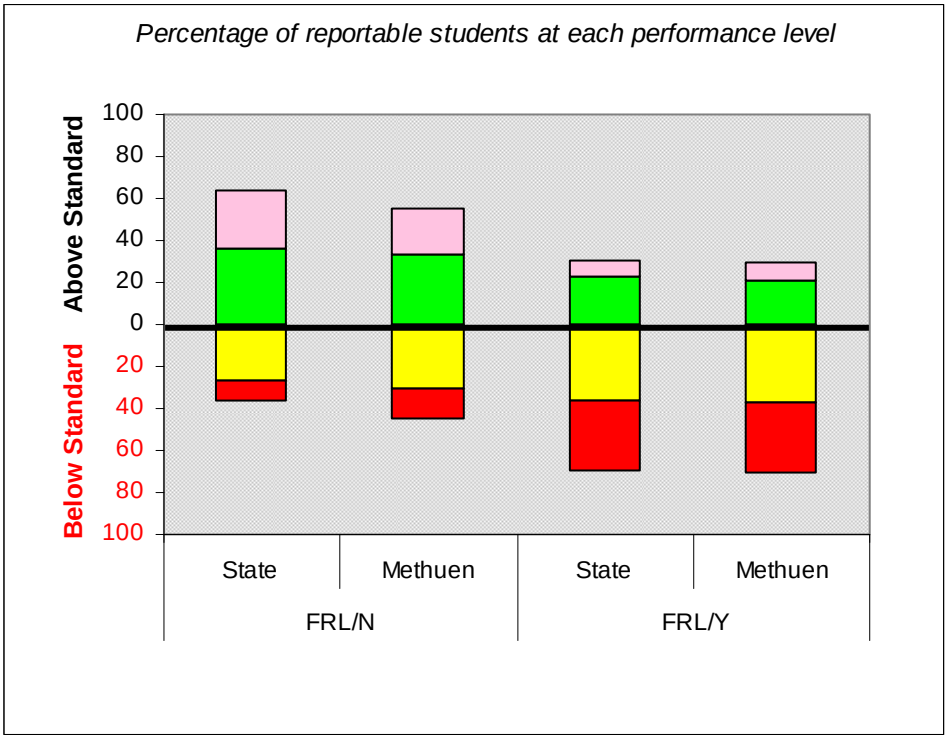
Figure/Table 14: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



	FRL/N		FRL/Y	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	17	10	4	4
Proficient	59	60	39	39
Needs Improvement	20	26	42	45
Warning/Failing	3	4	15	12
Percent Attaining Proficiency	76	70	43	43
Proficiency Index (EPI)	91.0	88.4	73.4	74.6

In Methuen in 2007, 43 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in ELA on the MCAS tests, compared to 70 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The ELA proficiency gap was 25 PI points for low-income students, compared to 27 PI points statewide; and 12 PI points for non low-income students, compared to nine PI points statewide. Methuen's performance gap in ELA between the two subgroups was 14 PI points.

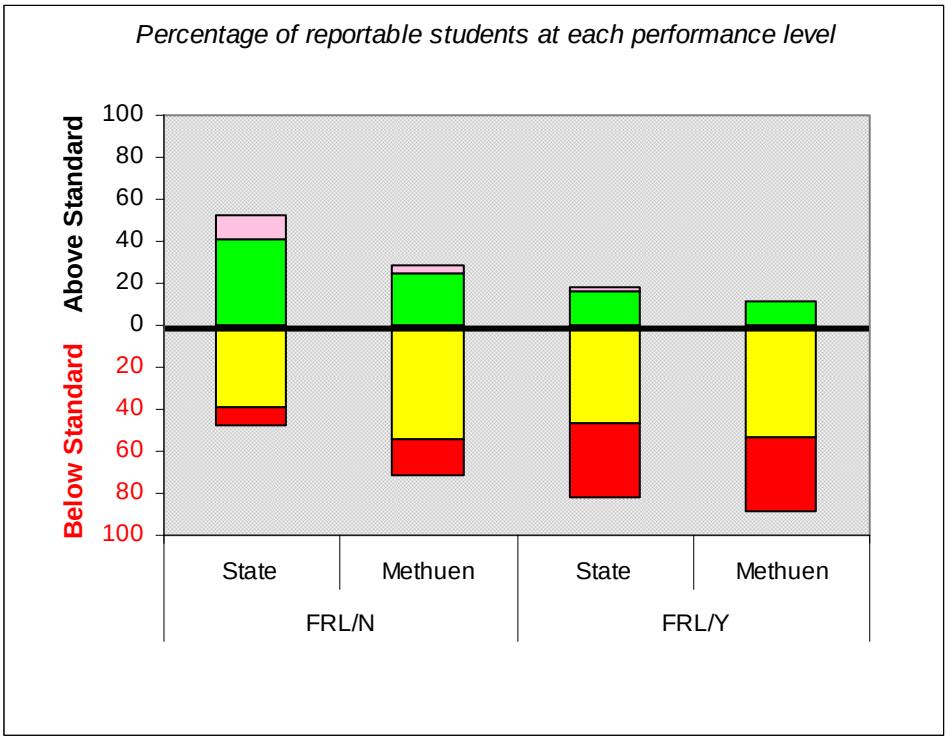
Figure/Table 15: MCAS Math Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



	FRL/N		FRL/Y	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	27	22	8	8
Proficient	36	33	23	21
Needs Improvement	27	31	37	37
Warning/Failing	10	14	33	33
Percent Attaining Proficiency	63	55	31	29
Proficiency Index (MPI)	82.7	78.0	60.3	59.5

In Methuen in 2007, 29 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in math on the MCAS tests, compared to 55 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap in math was 40 PI points for low-income students, the same as that statewide; and 22 PI points for non low-income students, compared to 17 PI points statewide. The performance gap in math between the two subgroups in Methuen was 19 PI points.

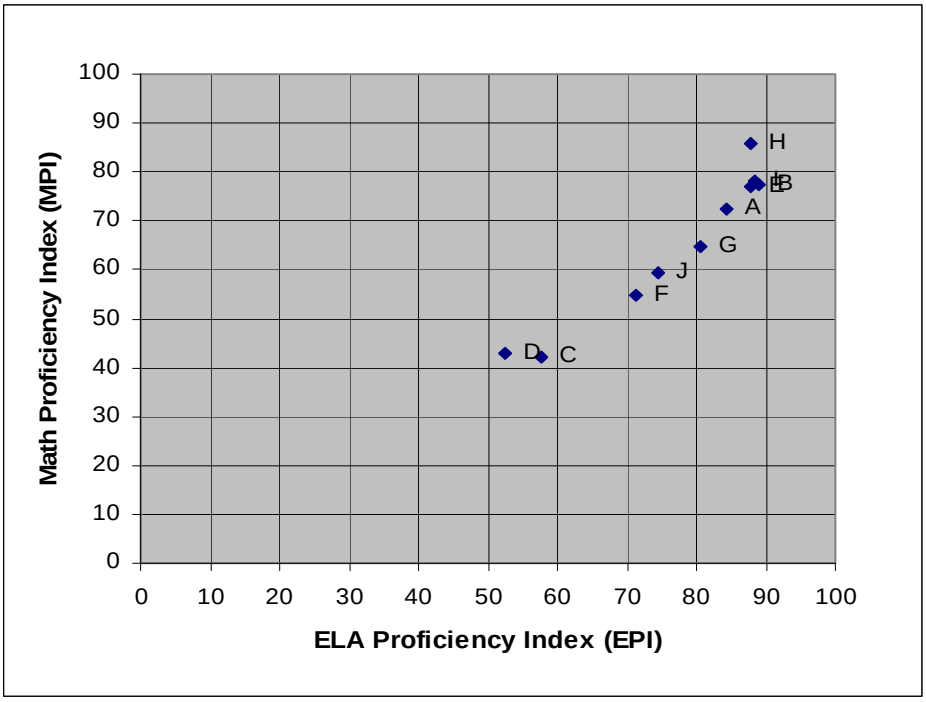
Figure/Table 16: MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2007



	FRL/N		FRL/Y	
	State	Methuen	State	Methuen
Advanced	11	3	2	1
Proficient	41	25	17	11
Needs Improvement	39	55	47	53
Warning/Failing	9	17	34	35
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	28	19	12
Proficiency Index (SPI)	79.4	67.1	55.2	51.1

In Methuen in 2007, 12 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained proficiency in STE on the MCAS tests, compared to 28 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap in STE was 49 PI points for low-income students, compared to 45 PI points statewide; and 33 PI points for non low-income students, compared to 21 PI points statewide. Methuen's performance gap in STE between the two subgroups was 16 PI points.

Figure/Table 17: MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index by Subgroup, 2007



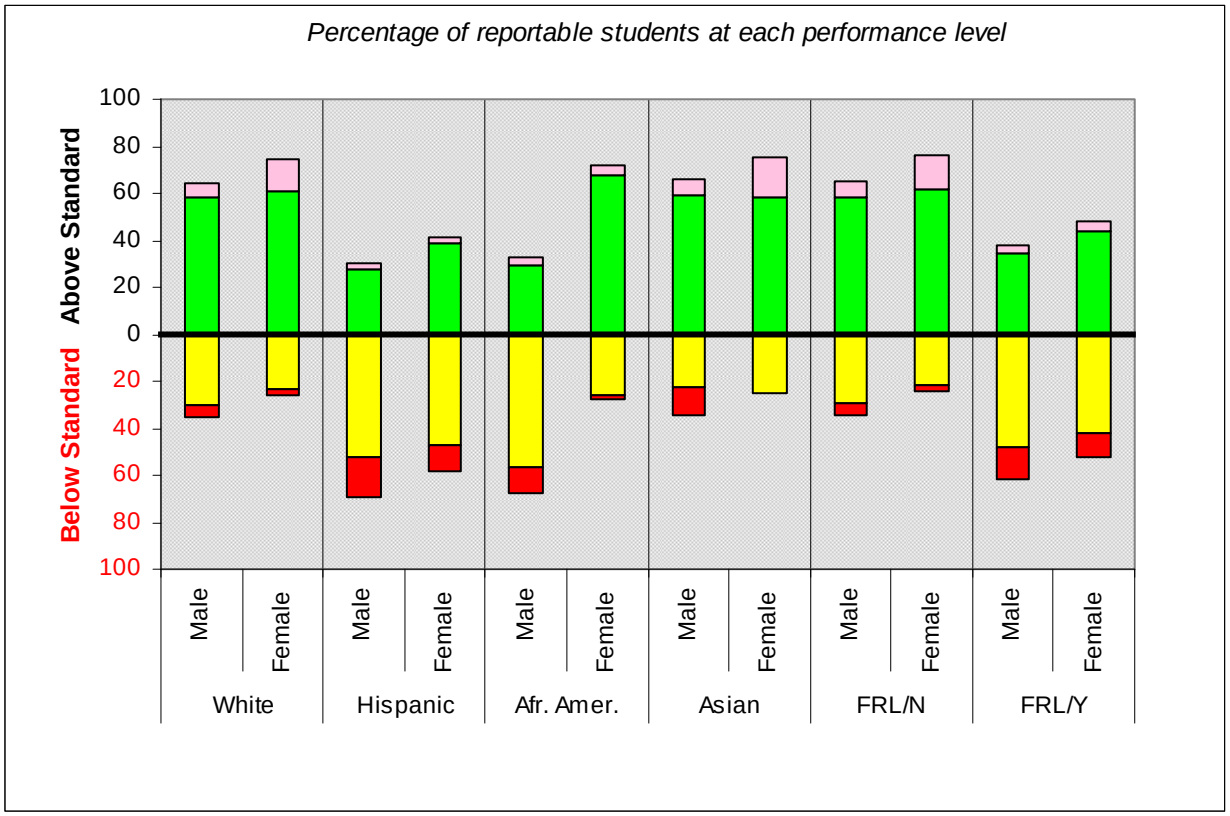
		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Methuen	84.4	72.6	7,935
B	Regular Education	88.9	77.5	6,823
C	Disability	57.8	42.3	856
D	LEP	52.4	42.9	256
E	White	87.9	77.2	5,905
F	Hispanic	71.2	54.8	1,574
G	African-American	80.7	64.8	167
H	Asian	87.8	85.9	160
I	FRL/N	88.4	78.0	5,600
J	FRL/Y	74.6	59.5	2,335

The gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in Methuen in 2007 was 37 PI points in ELA (regular education students, LEP students, respectively) and 44 PI points in math (Asian students, students with disabilities, respectively).

Regular education students, White students, Asian students, and non low-income students in Methuen performed above the district average in both ELA and math in 2007, while students with disabilities, LEP students, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students performed below the district average in both subjects.

Each subgroup in Methuen had stronger performance in ELA than in math on the 2007 MCAS tests. While the gap between performance in ELA and math for most subgroups in Methuen ranged between 10 and 16 PI points, this gap was only two PI points for Asian students.

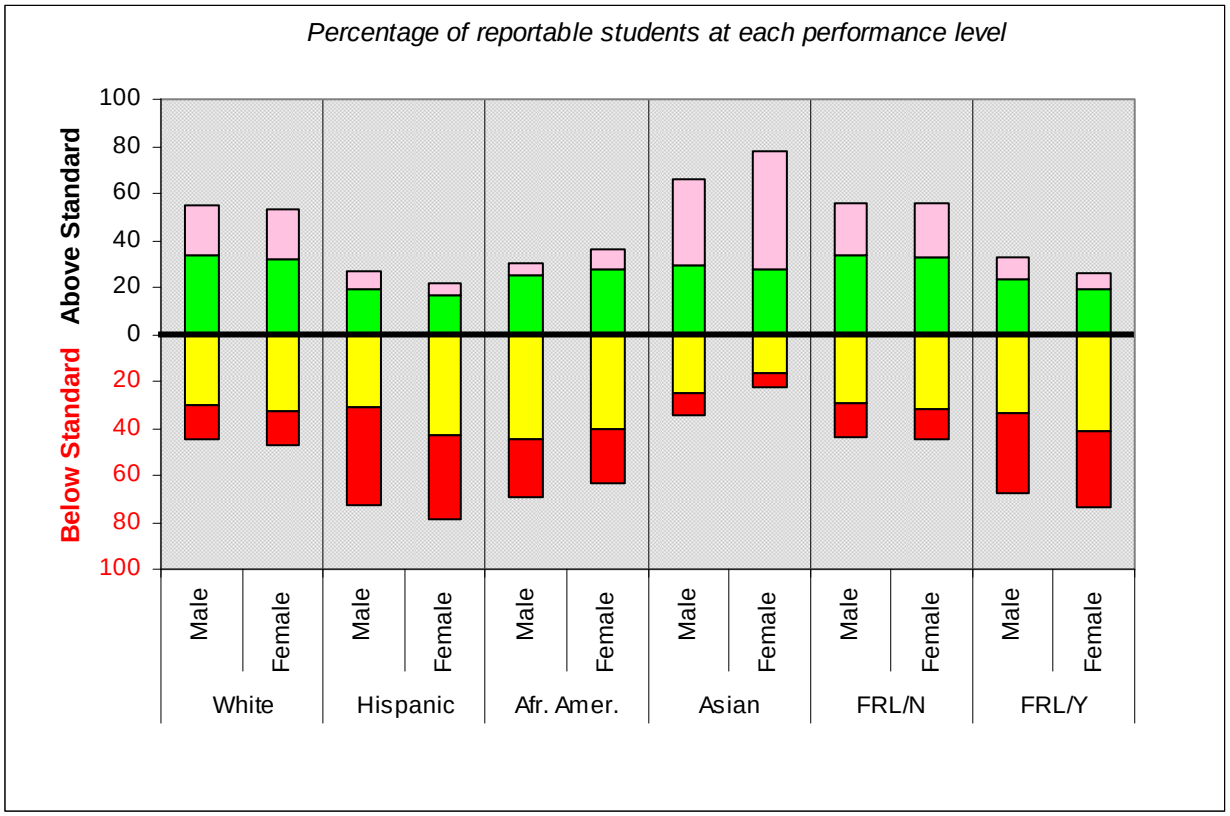
Figure/Table 18: MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status by Gender, 2007



	White		Hispanic		Afr. Amer.		Asian		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	6	13	3	3	3	4	7	17	7	14	3	4
Proficient	58	61	28	39	30	68	59	58	59	62	35	44
Needs Improvement	30	23	52	47	57	26	23	25	29	22	48	42
Warning/ Failing	5	3	17	11	11	2	11	0	5	2	14	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	74	31	42	33	72	66	75	66	76	38	48
Proficiency Index (EPI)	85.8	90.1	67.0	75.3	70.9	88.3	83.5	93.1	86.0	91.0	71.4	77.8
Number of Tests	1,497	1,461	392	393	37	47	44	36	1,425	1,379	581	587

On the 2007 MCAS tests in ELA, Methuen's female students outperformed male students in all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups. The performance gap in ELA between female and male students was narrowest for White students (four PI points) and widest for African-American students (17 PI points).

Figure/Table 19: MCAS Math Test Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status by Gender, 2007



	White		Hispanic		Afr. Amer.		Asian		FRL/N		FRL/Y	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	21	21	8	5	6	9	36	50	23	22	9	7
Proficient	34	32	19	17	25	28	30	28	33	33	23	19
Needs Improvement	30	33	31	43	44	40	25	17	29	32	33	41
Warning/ Failing	15	14	42	36	25	23	9	6	15	13	34	33
Percent Attaining Proficiency	55	53	27	22	31	37	66	78	56	55	32	26
Proficiency Index (MPI)	77.3	77.1	55.2	54.5	61.8	67.0	82.4	90.3	77.8	78.3	60.2	58.9
Number of Tests	1,491	1,456	393	396	36	47	44	36	1,419	1,377	580	587

On the 2007 MCAS tests in math, Methuen's female students outperformed male students in the African-American, Asian, and non low-income subgroups, and male students outperformed female students in the White, Hispanic, and low-income subgroups. The performance gap in math between female and male students was narrowest for White, Hispanic, and non low-income students (less than one PI point) and widest for Asian students (eight PI points).

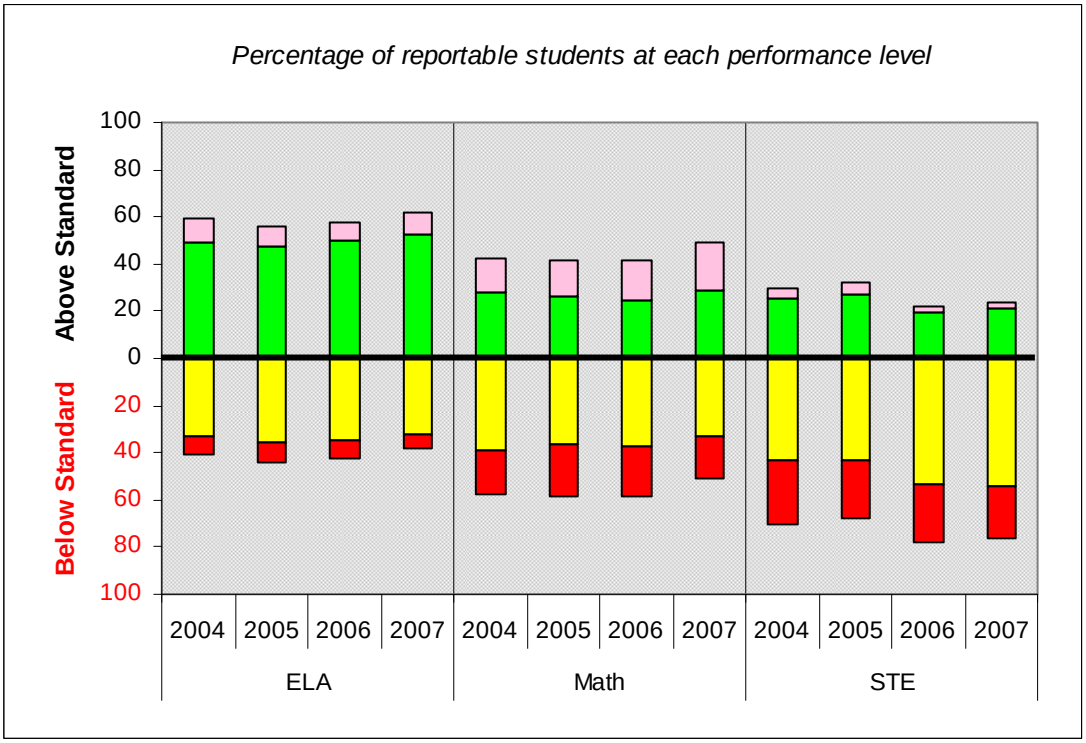
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2004 and 2007, Methuen's MCAS performance showed slight improvement in English language arts, more improvement in math, and a slight decline in science and technology/engineering.
- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, ELA performance in Methuen improved slightly, by approximately one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 59 percent in 2004 to 62 percent in 2007.
- Math performance in Methuen showed more improvement over this period, at an average of slightly more than one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to achieve AYP. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in math rose from 42 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2007.
- Between 2004 and 2007, Methuen had a slight decline in STE performance, by one-half PI point over the three-year period. This resulted in a widening of the proficiency gap by nearly one and one-half percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 29 percent in 2004 to 24 percent in 2007.

Figure/Table 20: MCAS Test Performance by Subject, 2004-2007



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Advanced	10	8	7	9	14	15	17	20	4	5	2	3
Proficient	49	47	50	53	28	26	25	29	25	27	19	21
Needs Improvement	33	36	35	32	39	37	37	33	43	43	54	54
Warning/ Failing	8	9	8	6	19	22	21	18	27	25	24	22
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	55	57	62	42	41	42	49	29	32	21	24
Proficiency Index (PI)	82.5	80.8	82.0	84.1	70.4	69.3	69.6	73.8	63.0	64.8	60.9	62.5

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

The percentage of Methuen students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 59 percent in 2004 to 62 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from 18 to 16 PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of nine percent, a rate lower than that required to make AYP.

The percentage of Methuen students attaining proficiency in math increased from 42 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 30 to 26 PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 12 percent, also a rate lower than that required to make AYP.

The percentage of Methuen students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 29 percent in 2004 to 24 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in STE widened from 37 to 38 PI points over this period.

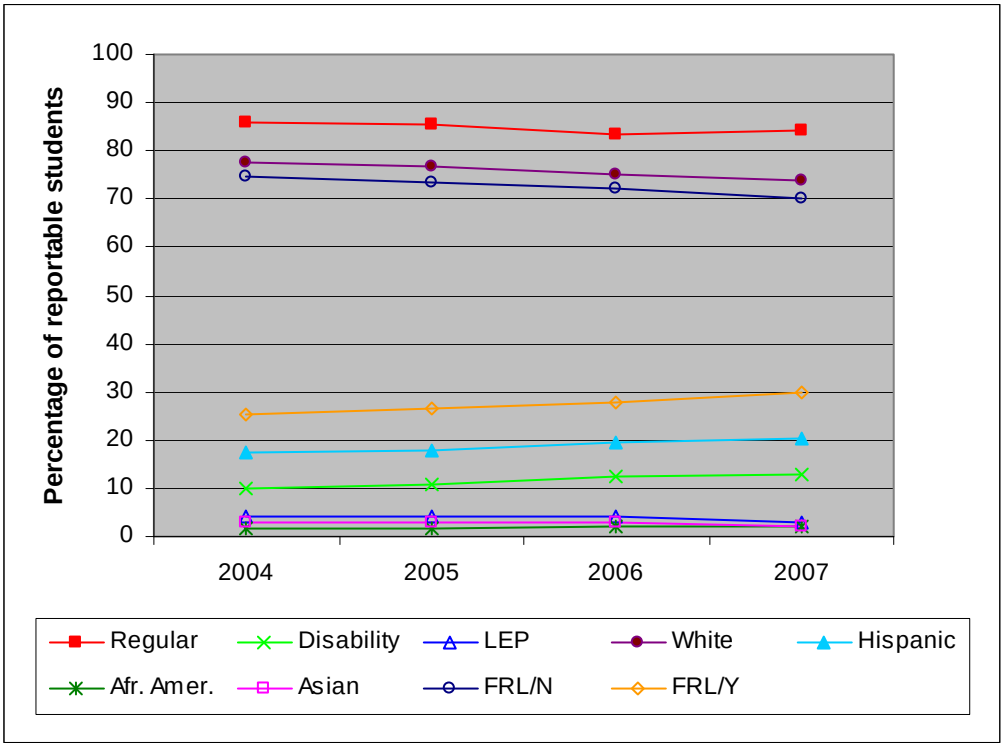
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Methuen, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA was 40 PI points in both 2004 and 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 46 to 47 PI points over this period.
- All student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in ELA was African-American students.
- In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Methuen improved between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in math also was African-American students.

Figure/Table 21: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2004-2007



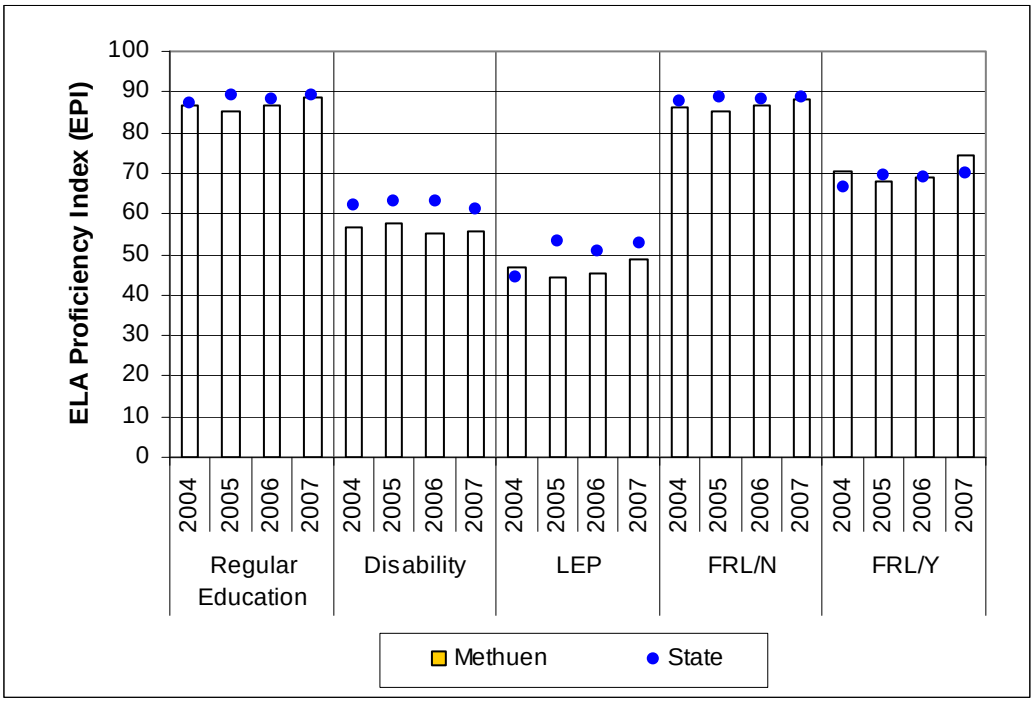
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2004	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**
Methuen	3,333	3,268	4,022	4,060	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	2,861	2,787	3,351	3,419	85.8	85.3	83.3	84.2
Disability	330	348	505	515	9.9	10.6	12.6	12.7
LEP	142	133	166	126	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.1
White	2,583	2,509	3,028	3,007	77.5	76.8	75.3	74.1
Hispanic	581	586	786	820	17.4	17.9	19.5	20.2
Afr. Amer.	54	56	79	86	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.1
Asian	99	101	110	80	3.0	3.1	2.7	2.0
FRL/N	2,488	2,400	2,907	2,847	74.6	73.4	72.3	70.1
FRL/Y	845	868	1,115	1,213	25.4	26.6	27.7	29.9

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

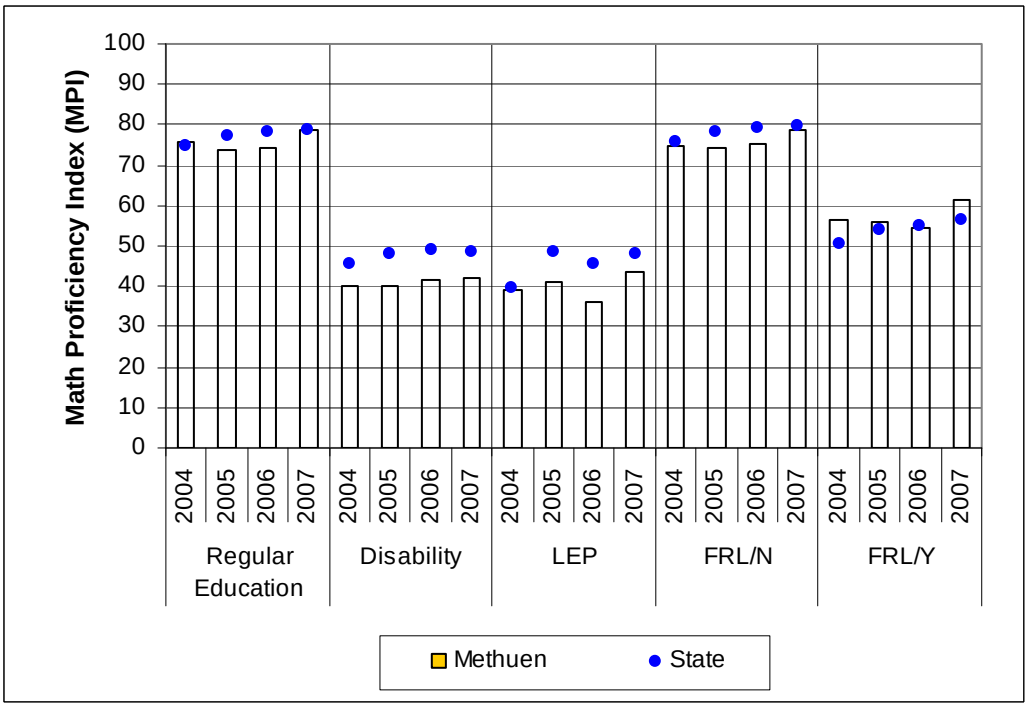
Between 2004 and 2007 in Methuen, the proportion of regular education students declined by two percentage points, that of students with disabilities increased by three percentage points, and LEP students decreased by one percentage point. The proportion of White students decreased by three percentage points, that of Hispanic students increased by three percentage points, African-American students increased by one-half percentage point, and Asian students decreased by one percentage point. The proportion of low-income students increased by four and one-half percentage points.

Figures 22 A-D/Table 22: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Subgroup, 2004-2007

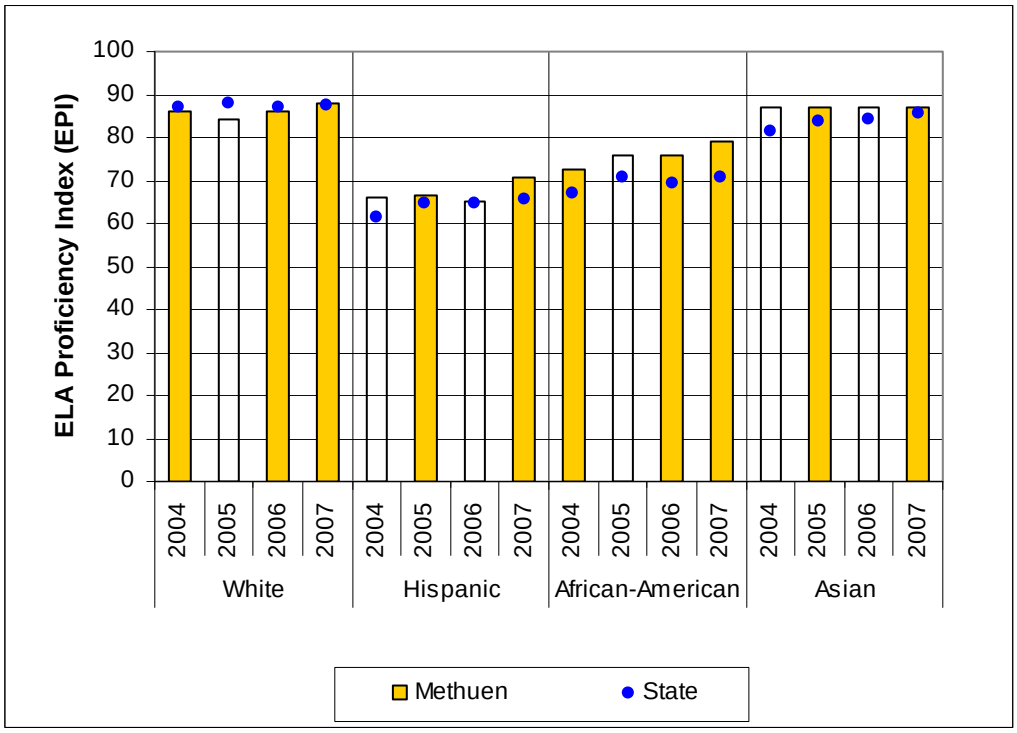
A. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



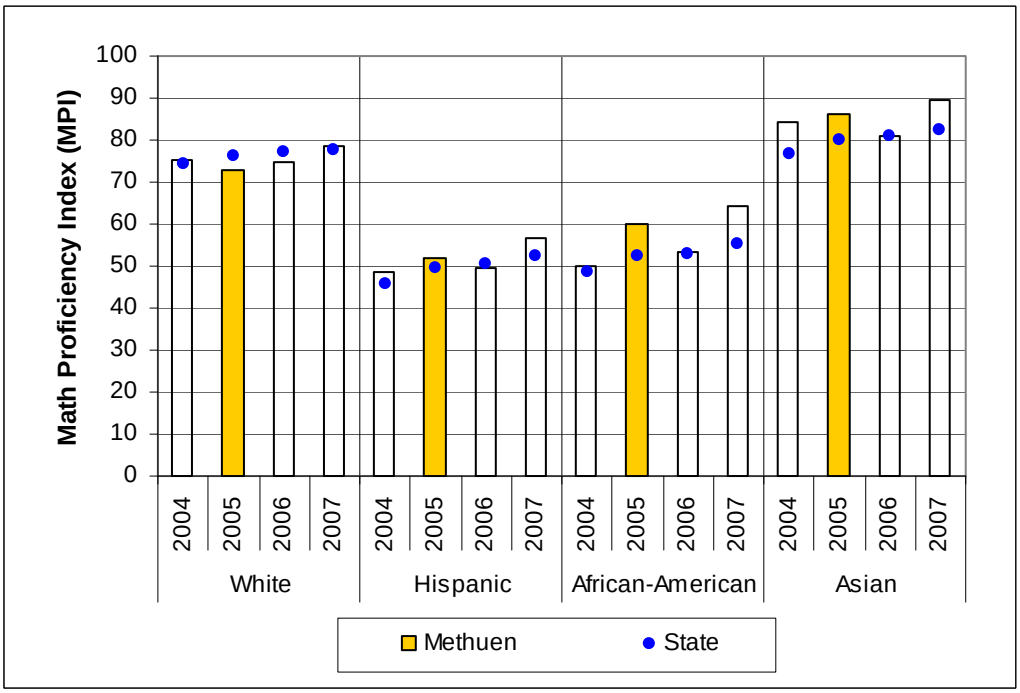
B. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



C. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup



D. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Race/Ethnicity Subgroup



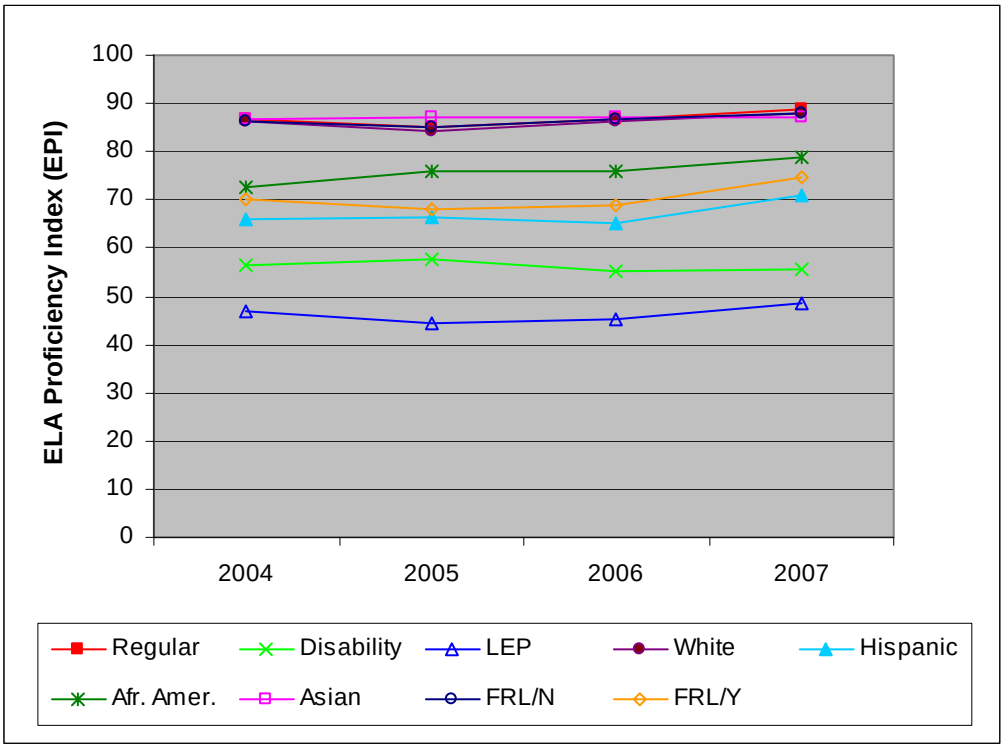
State				Methuen			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2004	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2004	86.6	75.6
	2005	89.2	77.4		2005	85.0	74.0
	2006	88.3	78.2		2006	86.7	74.4
	2007	89.0	78.9		2007	88.7	78.8
Disability	2004	62.1	45.3	Disability	2004	56.5	39.9
	2005	63.3	47.9		2005	57.5	40.1
	2006	62.9	49.0		2006	55.1	41.8
	2007	61.2	48.4		2007	55.5	42.2
LEP	2004	44.4	39.6	LEP	2004	46.9	38.9
	2005	53.4	48.4		2005	44.3	41.0
	2006	50.9	45.6		2006	45.4	36.1
	2007	52.9	47.9		2007	48.6	43.7
FRL/N	2004	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2004	86.3	74.8
	2005	88.9	78.1		2005	85.1	74.1
	2006	88.3	79.0		2006	86.7	75.4
	2007	88.6	79.7		2007	88.0	78.7
FRL/Y	2004	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2004	70.2	56.6
	2005	69.7	53.9		2005	68.2	55.7
	2006	68.8	55.0		2006	68.8	54.3
	2007	70.0	56.3		2007	74.6	61.3
White	2004	86.9	74.4	White	2004	86.1	75.4
	2005	87.7	76.2		2005	84.3	73.0
	2006	87.1	77.2		2006	86.1	74.8
	2007	87.4	77.8		2007	87.9	78.4
Hispanic	2004	61.4	45.7	Hispanic	2004	65.9	48.5
	2005	64.8	49.3		2005	66.3	51.8
	2006	64.6	50.6		2006	65.3	49.3
	2007	65.8	52.2		2007	70.8	56.9
African-American	2004	67.1	48.4	African-American	2004	72.6	50.0
	2005	70.5	52.3		2005	75.9	60.1
	2006	69.4	52.8		2006	75.8	53.2
	2007	70.9	55.2		2007	78.9	64.1
Asian	2004	81.2	76.6	Asian	2004	86.8	84.5
	2005	83.7	80.2		2005	87.0	86.2
	2006	84.3	81.0		2006	87.2	81.1
	2007	85.5	82.5		2007	87.2	89.4

Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15.

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

Also during this period, the performance of White students improved by two PI points in ELA and by three points in math. The performance of Hispanic students improved by five PI points in ELA and by eight points in math. The performance of African-American students improved by six PI points in ELA and by 14 points in math. The performance of Asian students improved by one-half PI point in ELA and by five points in math.

Figure/Table 23: MCAS English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



	ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Methuen	82.5	80.8	82.0	84.1	59	56	57	62
Regular	86.6	85.0	86.7	88.7	66	62	64	70
Disability	56.5	57.5	55.1	55.5	16	15	14	12
LEP	46.9	44.3	45.4	48.6	9	8	8	6
White	86.1	84.3	86.1	87.9	66	62	64	69
Hispanic	65.9	66.3	65.3	70.8	30	33	30	35
Afr. Amer.	72.6	75.9	75.8	78.9	43	34	45	56
Asian	86.8	87.0	87.2	87.2	67	62	73	67
FRL/N	86.3	85.1	86.7	88.0	66	63	65	69
FRL/Y	70.2	68.2	68.8	74.6	37	35	35	44

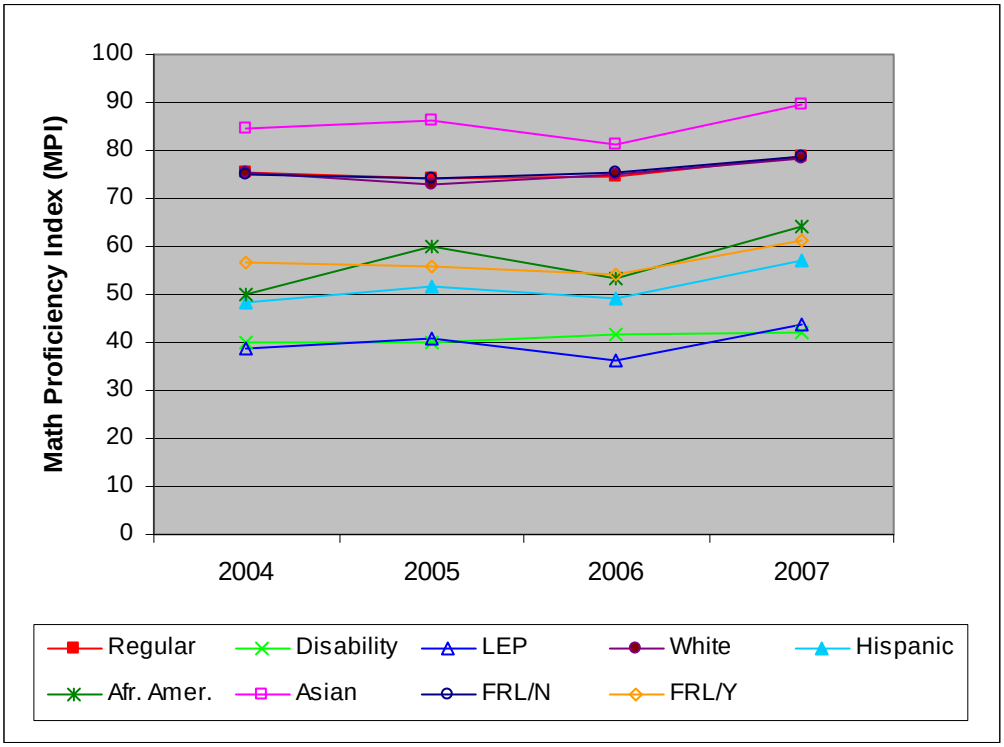
Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 8, 11, and 14.

All student subgroups in Methuen with the exception of students with disabilities had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The ELA proficiency gap for Methuen's regular education students narrowed from 13 to 11 PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 16 percent; for students with disabilities it widened by two percent from 44 to 45 PI points; and for LEP students it narrowed from 53 to 51 PI points, an improvement rate of three percent. The proficiency gap in ELA for White students narrowed from 14 to 12 PI points, an improvement rate of 13 percent; for Hispanic students it narrowed from 34 to 29 PI points, an improvement rate of 14 percent; for African-American students the gap narrowed from 27 to 21 PI points, an improvement rate of 23 percent; and for

Asian students it narrowed by one-half PI point or three percent. The ELA proficiency gap for non low-income students narrowed from 14 to 12 PI points, an improvement rate of 12 percent; and for low-income students it narrowed from 30 to 25 PI points, an improvement rate of 15 percent.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in ELA between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by three PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it widened by one-half PI point. The ELA performance gap between White and Hispanic students narrowed by three PI points, between White and African-American students it narrowed by five points, and between White and Asian students it widened by one point. The performance gap in ELA between non low-income and low-income students narrowed by three PI points over this period.

Figure/Table 24: MCAS Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



	Math Proficiency Index (MPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Methuen	70.4	69.3	69.6	73.8	42	42	42	49
Regular	75.6	74.0	74.4	78.8	48	47	47	55
Disability	39.9	40.1	41.8	42.2	10	7	9	10
LEP	38.9	41.0	36.1	43.7	12	9	5	11
White	75.4	73.0	74.8	78.4	49	46	49	55
Hispanic	48.5	51.8	49.3	56.9	13	19	15	26
Afr. Amer.	50.0	60.1	53.2	64.1	14	29	13	31
Asian	84.5	86.2	81.1	89.4	69	69	61	79
FRL/N	74.8	74.1	75.4	78.7	49	48	49	56
FRL/Y	56.6	55.7	54.3	61.3	21	25	21	32

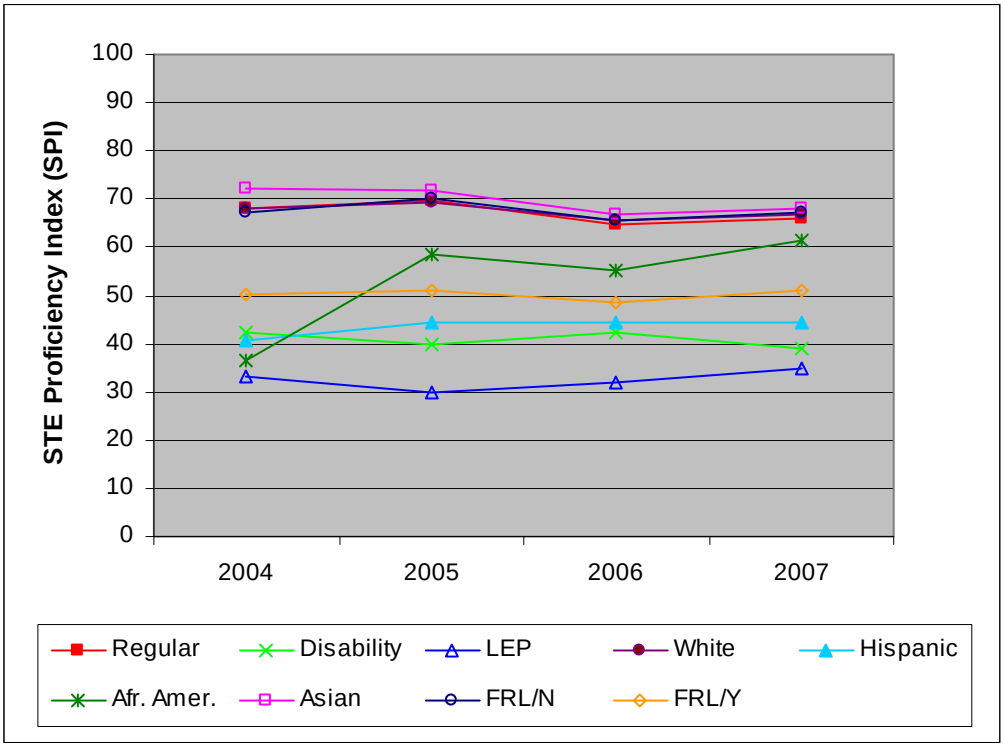
Note: Trend data include grades at which testing was administered in each subject in all four years; therefore, 2007 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Tables 9, 12, and 15.

In math, the performance of all student subgroups in Methuen improved between 2004 and 2007. The math proficiency gap for Methuen's regular education students narrowed from 24 to 21 PI points over this period, resulting in an improvement rate of 13 percent; for students with disabilities it narrowed from 60 to 58 PI points, an improvement rate of four percent; and for LEP students it narrowed from 61 to 56 PI points, an improvement rate of eight percent. The proficiency gap in math for White students narrowed from 25 to 22 PI points, an improvement rate of 12 percent; for Hispanic students it narrowed from 52 to 43 PI points, an improvement rate of 16 percent; for African-American students the gap narrowed from 50 to 36 PI points, an improvement rate of 28 percent; and for Asian students it narrowed from 16 to 11 PI points, an improvement rate of 32 percent. The math proficiency gap for non low-income students

narrowed from 25 to 21 PI points, an improvement rate of 16 percent; and for low-income students it narrowed from 43 to 39 PI points, an improvement rate of 11 percent.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in math between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by one PI point, and between regular education students and LEP students it narrowed by two points. The math performance gap between White and Hispanic students narrowed by five PI points, between White and African-American students it narrowed by 11 points, and between White and Asian students it narrowed by two points. The performance gap in math between non low-income and low-income students narrowed by one PI point over this period.

Figure/Table 25: MCAS STE Proficiency Index (SPI) by Subgroup, 2004-2007



	STE Proficiency Index (SPI)				Percent Attaining Proficiency			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Methuen	63.0	64.8	60.9	62.5	29	32	22	24
Regular	67.9	69.6	64.7	66.1	34	37	25	27
Disability	42.4	39.7	42.4	38.9	11	7	5	3
LEP	33.1	29.7	31.8	34.8	2	0	0	4
White	67.9	69.3	65.7	66.8	35	37	27	27
Hispanic	40.8	44.4	44.2	44.3	6	10	6	8
Afr. Amer.	36.4	58.3	55.2	61.4	0	28	17	14
Asian	72.4	71.7	66.7	67.9	41	42	22	43
FRL/N	67.3	70.0	65.6	67.1	35	39	27	28
FRL/Y	50.2	51.1	48.4	51.1	12	14	9	12

In science and technology/engineering, the only student subgroups in Methuen with improved performance between 2004 and 2007 were LEP, Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students. The STE proficiency gap for Methuen's regular education students widened by six percent from 32 to 34 PI points over this period; for students with disabilities it widened by six percent from 58 to 61 PI points; and for LEP students it narrowed from 67 to 65 PI points, resulting in an improvement rate of three percent. The proficiency gap in STE for White students widened by three percent from 32 to 33 PI points; for Hispanic students it narrowed from 59 to 56 PI points, an improvement rate of six percent; for African-American students the gap narrowed from 64 to 39 PI points, an improvement rate of 39 percent; and for Asian students it widened by 16 percent from 28 to 32 PI points. The STE proficiency gap for non low-income students remained at 33 PI points; and for low-income students it narrowed from 50 to 49 PI points, an improvement rate of two percent.

Between 2004 and 2007, the performance gap in STE between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by two PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it narrowed by four points. The STE performance gap between White and Hispanic students narrowed by five PI points, between White and African-American students it narrowed by 26 points, and between White and Asian students it widened by three points. The performance gap in STE between non low-income and low-income students narrowed by one PI point over this period.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2007

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Methuen	ALL LEVELS	**3,972**	**3,963**	**1,167**
	Advanced	333	723	30
	Proficient	2,145	1,175	245
	Needs Improvement	1,247	1,292	633
	Warning/Failing	247	773	259
Regular Education	Advanced	330	713	29
	Proficient	2,068	1,123	241
	Needs Improvement	924	1,120	576
	Warning/Failing	95	450	169
Disability	Advanced	3	6	1
	Proficient	64	40	3
	Needs Improvement	254	135	49
	Warning/Failing	108	246	71
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	4	0
	Proficient	13	12	1
	Needs Improvement	69	37	8
	Warning/Failing	44	77	19
White	Advanced	288	618	26
	Proficient	1,762	972	214
	Needs Improvement	788	930	501
	Warning/Failing	120	427	143
Hispanic	Advanced	23	49	3
	Proficient	260	142	14
	Needs Improvement	390	292	101
	Warning/Failing	112	306	104
African-American	Advanced	3	6	0
	Proficient	43	22	3
	Needs Improvement	33	35	15
	Warning/Failing	5	20	4
Asian	Advanced	9	34	0
	Proficient	47	23	9
	Needs Improvement	19	17	7
	Warning/Failing	5	6	5
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	291	628	28
	Proficient	1,686	927	207
	Needs Improvement	719	857	452
	Warning/Failing	108	384	141
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	42	95	2
	Proficient	459	248	38
	Needs Improvement	528	435	181
	Warning/Failing	139	389	118
Male	Advanced	114	376	19
	Proficient	1,038	607	117
	Needs Improvement	696	610	308
	Warning/Failing	158	406	129
Female	Advanced	219	347	11
	Proficient	1,107	568	128
	Needs Improvement	551	682	325
	Warning/Failing	89	367	130

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2004-2007

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2004	559	0	0
	2005	552	0	0
	2006	576	574	0
	2007	557	557	0
Grade 4	2004	542	541	0
	2005	560	559	0
	2006	582	583	0
	2007	583	583	0
Grade 5	2004	0	0	572
	2005	0	0	558
	2006	557	560	560
	2007	585	585	583
Grade 6	2004	0	563	0
	2005	0	582	0
	2006	572	573	0
	2007	585	583	0
Grade 7	2004	623	0	0
	2005	579	0	0
	2006	585	585	0
	2007	590	591	0
Grade 8	2004	0	623	624
	2005	0	639	638
	2006	590	588	589
	2007	588	586	584
Grade 10	2004	476	474	0
	2005	440	438	0
	2006	468	464	0
	2007	484	478	0
All Grades	2004	2,200	2,201	1,196
	2005	2,131	2,218	1,196
	2006	3,930	3,927	1,149
	2007	3,972	3,963	1,167

Notes

Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years. The following grades are included in the trend data for 2004-2007 reported in Figure/Tables 20-25 and in the table of n-values by grade and year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4, 7, 10
Math: 4, 6, 8, 10
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5, 8

The highest performance level for grade 3 reading in 2006 and 2007 was Advanced/Above Proficient; this level did not exist in prior years, when the highest level was Proficient.

Subgroup inclusion is based on the number of students and the number of schools in the district. To be included as reportable, a subgroup must have at least 10 times the number of schools in the district. Subgroup inclusion for all years of the trend data is based on the 2007 data.

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

Standard I: Leadership, Governance, and Communication															
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**Total**
Excellent	✓			✓											**2**
Satisfactory			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**11**
Needs Improvement		✓													**1**
Unsatisfactory															

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- Methuen Public Schools utilized site-based management except in the area of curriculum, which was standardized across the district.
- The district adopted the collaborative, data-driven Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process and implemented it in all schools to address the need for improved student achievement.
- The district developed an extensive District Improvement Plan that far exceeded the expected components of a vision statement, goals, and priorities.
- The district's director of assessment and instructional personnel prepared comprehensive data analysis reports and annually distributed them to administrators and school committee members.
- The superintendent evaluated principals and central office administrators in compliance with the education reform legislation's Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.

- The district developed its annual budget based on school and student needs, with a focus on making AYP for all student subgroups.
- School committee members acknowledged that during the review period they did not receive the required eight hours of training relative to their role and responsibilities. The committee formed a subcommittee to update it's policy manual.
- The district has never implemented users' fees for athletics and student transportation.

Summary

During the examination period, the Methuen Public Schools had employed two superintendents. The current superintendent was hired effective August 1, 2006, due to the former superintendent's retirement. The school district was served by seven school committee members, including the mayor who also served as the school committee chairman. An extensive District Improvement Plan (DIP) covering 2006-2008 served as the guiding document for the district and its established goals. The primary goals of the district and its schools were to improve student achievement and make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all schools and for all student subgroups.

The district formed a Leadership Academy for administrators at which they met at least eight times annually, in addition to the monthly meetings of district administrators. These provided forums for the review and discussion of student assessment data and the goals in the DIP and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

Principals were given site-based management responsibilities for their respective schools, with the exception of curriculum. The current superintendent implemented a leadership structure for curriculum standardization at the K-8 grammar schools and established grade 7-12 curriculum coordinators in English language arts (ELA), math, science, social studies, and guidance. The current superintendent also worked with four central office administrators responsible for assessment and instructional personnel, curriculum and grants, pupil services, and business and finance. The school committee evaluated the superintendent annually based on job responsibilities and district goals. The superintendent evaluated central office administrators and principals annually following the provisions of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act.

The district's commitment to use data to promote student achievement and make decisions was evident. Each school monitored student performance utilizing the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, which incorporated the use of the district's extensive data analysis reports. District administrators recently initiated the process of using assessment data to review and modify curriculum and instruction.

The School Improvement Plans (SIPs) of the four K-8 grammar schools and Methuen High School aligned with the DIP. The district established a yearly calendar for the development of the SIPs to ensure uniformity of data analysis and the establishment of action plans for all schools. The district budget was openly developed based on school and student needs, with a focus on making AYP in all district schools for all student populations. Principals were responsible for developing their budgets based on identified student and school needs.

During the period under review, the goals in the DIP and the analyses of student assessment data directed modifications to programs and services. Examples included increased staffing in the English language learner (ELL) department, addition of a bilingual high school guidance counselor, initiation of planning for a new science curriculum to align with the state curriculum framework, and expansion of the balanced literacy program to all grammar schools. In 2007-2008, the district added ELA and math coaches at each of the grammar schools and teachers at all schools to reduce class size.

The district communicated to all stakeholders its goals of improving student achievement and making adequate yearly progress for all schools and for all student subgroups. Interviews with stakeholders affirmed the importance of district and school goals as delineated in the DIP and SIPs. The goal of improved achievement of all students was central in discussions with the district and school administrators, school committee members, teachers, and parents who the EQA team interviewed. The district communicated to its stakeholders and the general public through its website, open school committee meetings including those in January and December of each calendar year when the DIP and the SIPs were presented, school council meetings, school newsletters, and newspaper articles.

Indicators

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

Rating: Excellent

Evidence

Methuen Public Schools' District Improvement Plan (DIP) for 2006-2008 clearly stated its priorities as a school system, including "a belief in world-class standards for all students and working rigorously to meet them." It described school improvement as a continuous and evolving process requiring ongoing examination of data and monitoring of student performance. The district acknowledged that the Massachusetts Education Reform Act and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation have had a major impact on curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district. Interviewees stated that the district took the MCAS tests very seriously, and that the district and school improvement planning processes emphasized data-driven decision-making, utilizing the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process in each of the district's schools.

The DIP addressed eight district goals that focused on the improvement of student achievement at all levels. District administrators, representatives from all units of the Methuen Education Association, and all cost center district managers were involved in the development of the DIP, with student achievement data paramount in the discussions. Goals in the DIP included: continued curriculum development and revision; effective instruction that communicated high expectations for all learners; improvement of classroom assessment practices and use of formative and summative assessment data; increased time and opportunities for meaningful staff professional development; increased student learning time and allocation of resources for struggling learners; improved technology and access to prepare students for the technological world; supporting students' learning by providing a physical environment and school culture that ensure safety and wellness; and expanding parental communication and involvement in the schools.

A descriptive narrative accompanied each goal along with implementation procedures and initiatives designed to enhance goal accomplishment. As an example, the goal related to assessment practices and use of assessment data described the PIM process used to develop the SIPs. It was further indicated that the director of assessment and instructional personnel provided each principal and district administrator with MCAS data analyses individualized for each school to support the work of each school's PIM team.

In addition to the clearly stated district priorities described in the introduction and the subsequent eight district goals, the 118-page DIP included 13 additional areas. These included areas related to student performance goals and learning objectives, Title I, language acquisition, MCAS remediation initiatives, grants, curriculum, professional development plans, teacher induction and mentoring, and parent involvement. The DIP also had an appendix of MCAS data that included charts and bar graphs of Cycle IV AYP data (2006); AYP trend data in ELA and math for 2003 to 2006; 2006 accountability status; AYP data by grade span; 2006 score distribution of student subgroups in ELA and math; score projections to meet AYP targets for Cycle IV (2006) to Cycle V (2007-2008); analysis of 2006 MCAS objectives; and 2006 item analyses for all student subgroups with comparisons to state averages.

EQA interviews with teachers, principals, district administrators, and school committee members affirmed that improvement of student achievement and making AYP for all students and for all subgroups were both district and school priorities as reflected in the DIP and the SIPs. During the period under review, the goals in the DIP and the analyses of student assessment data directed modifications to programs and services. Examples included increased staffing in the English language learner (ELL) department, addition of a bilingual high school guidance counselor, addition of a parent liaison in each school, implementation of a new K-8 math program, initiation of planning for a new science curriculum to align with the state curriculum framework, and expansion of the balanced literacy program to all grammar schools. In school year 2007-2008, the district added 24 staff positions such as ELA and math coaches for each of the four K-8 grammar schools and additional teachers to reduce class size at both the grammar schools and the high school. The district also established grade 7-12 coordinators for ELA, math, science, social studies, and guidance.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

School committee members indicated in interviews that during the review period they did not receive the eight hours of training required under MGL Chapter 71, Section 36A relative to their role and responsibilities. They also said that a member of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) would be visiting the district to provide training in January 2008. They further stated that the school committee formed a subcommittee to update the school committee policy manual, and that the role and responsibilities of school committee members and the training requirements would be updated to comply with the Massachusetts Education Reform Act.

When interviewed, school committee members said that their role was to hire and evaluate the superintendent, and to approve the annual school budget. When asked what parameters determined budget priorities, they mentioned MCAS student achievement data and their relation to AYP. They said that improving the achievement of student subgroups in the district and making AYP at all schools were priorities when budget development was discussed. Examples of 2007-2008 budget approvals that addressed student achievement included the hiring of additional teachers to reduce class size where necessary, hiring ELA and math coaches for all K-8 grammar schools, and creating and filling grade 7-12 positions for coordinators of ELA, math, science, social studies, and guidance.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In May 2004, the district developed a job description for the position of director of assessment and instructional personnel, and subsequently filled the position on a 12-month basis. Job responsibilities related to data selection, generation, gathering, and interpretation were listed as

follows: maintaining and analyzing standardized tests, state-mandated tests and other system-wide educational data and reports on strengths and weaknesses and steps to correct them; coordinating the use of common software packages for the analysis and reporting of assessment data; and conducting and supervising the analyses, interpretation, and reporting of test results for the district. These tests included but were not limited to the MCAS, PSAT, SAT, and Terra Nova assessments. The director also held responsibility for analyzing grade distribution reports, and complying with federal and state assessment regulations associated with AYP and NCLB. The district provided the EQA team with numerous comprehensive data analysis documents.

The district's commitment to use data to promote student achievement and make decisions was evident. The director of assessment and instructional personnel prepared, presented, and discussed data analysis reports with district administrators, principals, and school committee members. EQA examiners noted the extensive scope of the district's MCAS, AYP, and grade distribution reports. The data analysis reports were used in the ongoing PIM meetings held in all district schools. Interviews with district administrators, business office staff members, and school committee members confirmed that the district made decisions based on analysis of student achievement data in developing and approving the annual budget. District administrators recently initiated the process of using assessment data to review and modify curriculum and instruction. As cited above, the DIP included an appendix with comprehensive data analyses.

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

Rating: Excellent

Evidence

The SIPs of the district's five schools aligned with the DIP and were developed with a primary focus on the analysis of student achievement data. The DIP included a protocol for school improvement planning and the development of SIPs using the PIM process. The standardized format of each SIP contained the following components: introduction; school mission statement; 2006-2008 district goals; report on 2006 goals; 2007-2008 student performance goals; 2007 student learning objectives and outcome benchmarks; 2007 improvement objectives strategies and implementation benchmarks; 2007 social/civic goals; professional development; parent

involvement; and a calendar for the annual operating plan. An appendix in each SIP contained a template for the action plan of each school. Each ELA and math action plan listed strategies for the aggregate student population, activities, individuals responsible, resources needed, and specific timelines. The student achievement data section of the appendix included the Cycle IV accountability status, 2004-2014 Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) improvement trajectories for the aggregate and subgroup populations, 2007 subgroup cross-tabulation, and the 2007 MCAS performance PIM worksheet.

The SIPs reviewed by the EQA team covered the period January 2007 to December 2007. District administrators and school committee members indicated that the components of the DIP and the SIPs regarding student achievement as measured by the MCAS tests, AYP status, and district and school goals were discussed twice during each calendar year at school committee meetings in January and December.

A review of the SIPs showed that each school reported on the 2006 MCAS test results in narrative form. Topics included a general overview, ELA achievement, math achievement, subgroup achievement, and a conclusion. The section following the 2006 MCAS test results contained the established 2007-2008 student performance goals and student learning objectives. Student performance goals in ELA and math were expressed in quantitative terms, such as increasing the percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories, decreasing the percentage of students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category, and/or increasing ELA and math Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) scores. Each SIP further included a narrative report on 2006 performance goals and the extent of their accomplishment.

The superintendent and school committee approved the DIP and SIPs of the Methuen Public Schools and posted them on the district's website.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews with district administrators, principals, business office staff members, and school committee members, the budget process was described as being open, transparent, and predicated on student needs, with decision-making based on analysis of student assessment data. Allocations for instructional supplies, materials, and resources were determined based on school and program needs as submitted and advocated by principals, rather than on a per pupil expenditure basis. District administrators indicated that the district intended to standardize the curriculum among the four K-8 schools, but that site-based budgeting was appropriate to address specific student needs and to make AYP.

Teachers indicated during focus group discussions that, for the most part, they were well provisioned with instructional materials and supplies. The superintendent indicated that 24 new teachers were hired for fiscal year 2008, some to address overcrowded classrooms, and some to serve as ELA and math coaches in each of the four grammar schools. At the high school level, alternative day, late afternoon, and evening programs allowed students to make up credits, to take credit courses for graduation, or to pursue a GED. High school administrators indicated that these programs had reduced the dropout rate.

Administrators said that student and school needs were often identified through the PIM process. As described in the SIPs, it entailed compiling and analyzing data with teams of teachers and administrators in the development of schoolwide action plans, and enumerating those resources necessary to improve student achievement.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews, the superintendent, district administrators, and school committee members emphasized that the annual budget was based on the analysis of student MCAS achievement data and the need to make AYP. Interviewees described all stages of the budget process as open and transparent. At the beginning of each school year, principals sought budget input on student and

school needs from staff members, school councils, and PIM teams. Site-based school budgets were developed and submitted to central administrators for presentation and discussion. Instructional materials and supplies were requested and were allocated based on student and school needs rather than on a per pupil expenditure.

Within the district, principals and cost center managers presented budget requests at Leadership Academy meetings and at monthly central office administrative meetings. The superintendent said that principals were informed that budgets should be built based upon identified needs. During the interview process, school committee members said that principals presented budgets to them on a scheduled basis during the school year, and that addressing the need to make AYP and improve MCAS test performance were the prime factors in considering budget requests. They further indicated that the superintendent brought forward a final, proposed budget to the school committee, using a PowerPoint presentation. The school committee held the annual required open budget hearing for public presentation and input.

City officials who were interviewed also indicated that MCAS test data and making AYP were important considerations in the development of the budget. When asked what guidelines were used in establishing annual budget increases, they responded that net school spending (NSS) was the prevailing factor. All stakeholders in the district felt that the annual budget approved by the city during the period under review was educationally sound and was particularly so for fiscal year 2008. That budget allowed the district to increase staffing to address some high class sizes, add coaches in each of the four grammar schools for classroom support in ELA and math, and create the positions of grade 7-12 coordinators to articulate and standardize curriculum and instruction in ELA, math, science, and social studies.

During the period under review, the district did not have a long-term capital plan due to financial constraints of the city. However, city officials indicated that a city capital plan that would include the schools would be developed and presented in fiscal year 2009. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) recently informed the district that Methuen High School was chosen to receive funding for a feasibility study to address its aging facility and its educational space needs.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews, the superintendent and school committee members said that the DIP and the SIPs were presented and discussed in January and December of each calendar year. School committee members said they received copies of the DIP and the SIPs, and that the presentations and discussions at the school committee meetings focused on AYP status of the district as well as of each school. Student performance goals and learning objectives listed in the SIPs were also scrutinized.

Principals stated that the SIPs and particularly MCAS results, AYP status, and action plans to improve student achievement were discussed at staff and department meetings, at the Leadership Academy, and at regularly scheduled PIM team meetings. Teachers and parents who participated in focus group discussions indicated that MCAS data, AYP status, and student goals for improved achievement were also presented and discussed at school council meetings. At the grammar schools, principals distributed copies of their respective SIPs to staff members, and both the DIP and the SIPs of all schools were posted and kept current on the district's website. Parents and community members, therefore, also had access to the DIP and SIPs.

At the high school, department heads were responsible for presenting the information in the DIP and the SIP to staff members. Interviews with teachers revealed a familiarity with district and high school goals, and that making AYP was a school priority. Some teachers were given a copy of the SIP while others accessed it from the district's website. Collectively, during interviews and focus group discussions, stakeholders in the district expressed awareness that improving student achievement, particularly of student subgroups, increasing graduation rates, and making AYP were well publicized priorities of the Methuen Public Schools. The district's website, school newsletters, local newspaper articles, and school council meetings were cited as means of disseminating school and district information.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Beginning in 2005-2006, the development and approval of the SIPs followed a calendar year timeline from January 1 through December 31. This timeline allowed the district and its schools to make immediate use of MCAS and AYP data released the previous fall. The DIP contained a graphic illustration and narrative describing the practices related to use of student assessment data. The steps outlined were: review and analyze student data from the MCAS and other tests, grade patterns, retentions, dropouts, attendance, and discipline; solicit and analyze feedback from school councils, staffs, parents, and students on issues relevant to curriculum, instruction, student management, school culture, and resources; and identify academic goals and write student performance goals and student learning and improvement objectives. The DIP also described the selection of strategies for achieving the established goals, which included identifying benchmarks and timelines. The SIPs were developed using the standardized format and were subsequently monitored.

The director of assessment and instructional personnel prepared extensive MCAS data reports, and they were forwarded to all district principals for inclusion in the appendices of their respective SIPs. These data, which included MCAS test score distributions in ELA and math for all student groups, ELA and math subgroup cross-tabulations, and ELA and math CPI improvement trajectories from 2003-2014, served as a basis for further disaggregation of MCAS data. Examples of 2007 improvement objectives listed in SIPs as a result of analysis of MCAS data included the following: continuously use, review, and apply math vocabulary; apply math concepts to real life situations; practice higher-order thinking skills through problem extension; interact with word walls in math; receive explicit instruction in acquiring vocabulary through the context of reading and writing; and read literature of various genres such as fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The introduction of the 2006-2008 DIP indicated that administrators and teachers were using MCAS results, through in-depth analysis, to inform changes in programs and services. The district monitored student achievement data during the school year through the PIM process established in each of the five district schools. Each SIP contained academic goals with activities to achieve the goals and assessment tools to evaluate achievement.

Approximately 50 percent of the agenda items at monthly administrative meetings and Leadership Academy meetings related to discussions of goals listed in the DIP and SIPs. These discussions also included the extent of goal attainment; suggestions and recommendations about improved student achievement ascertained through PIM team meetings; and additional data reports such as the annual AYP report, the grades 7-12 grade distribution report, and reports related to PSAT, SAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) results. At school and district meetings, administrators, teachers, and grammar school ELA and math coaches also discussed local assessment data such as those from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE).

Examples of how the district modified practices and implemented programs in response to analysis of student achievement data include the purchase of Harcourt Trophies reading series for the four grammar schools; the purchase of two new science curricula, Houghton Mifflin for grades 3-6 and Pearson Prentice Hall for grades 7 and 8; and the formation of a K-6 ELA committee to develop a new scope and sequence implementation guide.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The current superintendent was hired August 1, 2006 and was evaluated in June 2007. The superintendent's job description, included in the district's policy manual, listed the goal of the position, four general responsibilities, and 20 specific duties. Goals and objectives were to be annually set by September 1, and the evaluation was expected to be completed by the last school committee meeting in June.

The superintendent's evaluation from June 2007 listed composite percentage ratings by the school committee members. Ratings of 'excellent,' 'good,' or 'fair' with accompanying narrative were listed for five categories: relationship with the committee, community relations, administrative staff and personnel relationships, educational leadership, and finance and labor relations. Each of these categories further listed four to seven related items. Four additional categories of general management, communications and public relations, personal qualities, and exceptional circumstances were also rated. Progress toward the established goals of the district as defined in the DIP and mutually agreed upon by the superintendent and school committee were rated under the general management category.

The superintendent evaluated all principals and district administrators, and principals evaluated all other school administrative personnel. EQA examiners reviewed 44 personnel files of principals and district administrators during the site visit. The district's evaluation instrument included the components of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act as well as the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and complied with 603 CMR 35.00 regulations. All evaluations were signed, the majority were instructive and timely, and all were informative. Where appropriate based on administrators' job descriptions, the team found that the evaluations included narrative remarks related to the goals in the DIP and SIPs, the attainment of AYP, student achievement, and professional development. Recommendations were listed on the evaluation form. The review of the files also indicated that the majority of administrators had appropriate licensure.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews, the superintendent indicated that principals, central office administrators, and cost center managers had been delegated job responsibilities and duties in accordance with established job descriptions of each administrative position. Principals were delegated the site-based management of their schools, and they were held accountable for student achievement and working to meet AYP targets and student performance and learning goals as defined in the SIPs.

The district had an organizational chart that was current with the exception of the four newly hired grade 7-12 coordinators and the position of special education administrator. A review of the job description booklet indicated that qualifications, performance responsibilities, and job goals were the major components. The job descriptions for district administrators were found to be current and contained dates.

The superintendent's evaluations of principals and central office administrators showed that work toward meeting district and school goals as defined in the DIP and SIPs was taken into account in the assessment of their leadership. The evaluations of central office administrators for 2006-2007 were performance based with salary increases determined by the superintendent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews, the leadership of the teachers' association, school committee members, and the superintendent described their working relationships as collaborative and collegial for many years. Teachers' association and school committee members endorsed the district's priorities of improving student achievement for all students, making AYP in all schools, addressing the

district and school goals as defined in the DIP and the SIPs, and maintaining educationally sound class sizes. The superintendent and the president of the teachers' association met on a monthly basis to discuss items of mutual concern. All bargaining units with the exception of unit C, the program assistants, had negotiated contracts in place. Negotiations with unit C were in mediation. Interviewees said that one to five grievances were filed annually in the district. One arbitration case was pending at the time of the site visit.

The district had not experienced layoffs during the review period, although some staff members had retired. Each school in the district had functioning school councils that contributed to the collaboration between parents and school personnel regarding school programs, resources, facilities, and student achievement. The district's website was updated regularly and included the posting of the DIP and each school's SIP, MCAS data reports, AYP accountability status reports, and minutes of school committee meetings.

Throughout interviews, district stakeholders described parents as extremely supportive of the Methuen Public Schools. They also indicated that the district had a high retention rate of teachers, that teachers were well provisioned with instructional resources, and that the district's programs and services were student centered.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

One of the district goals for 2006-2008 was to support students' learning by providing a physical environment and school culture that ensured safety and wellness. Two projects described by interviewees to meet this goal were the establishment and continuation of the district's safe schools initiatives and the development and implementation of a K-12 wellness curriculum. The district funded five city police officers hired to function as school resource officers in each school building. District administrators said that guidance counselors in the district's schools acted as liaisons to several human services agencies to assist parents whenever necessary and to initiate referrals to provide assistance to at-risk students.

The district established working relationships with several agencies, and the following agencies were mentioned as referral options for families and students: the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Social Services (DSS), Tufts University for psychology interns, the juvenile court systems of surrounding communities, the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR), the Lawrence Youth Court for Child In Need of Services (CHINS) petitions, the Trauma Intervention Program (TIP), Holy Family Hospital for domestic violence, the YMCA and the YWCA for extended day programs, the Head Start Program, Methuen School Resource Officers for truancy, and Family Service, Inc. The district's pupil services office along with school guidance counselors assisted homeless families and their children. The district provided assistance for educational and transportation services as needed. Guidance counselors were aware of numerous referral services to assist parents in need of educational, health, and social services. Parents of bilingual children in the district were able to access courses through the district's adult education program, particularly those related to the teaching of English.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In June 2000, the district, with assistance from the city's police and fire departments, developed an Emergency Procedures Manual to assist the school district in effectively responding to critical situations. The goals listed in the manual were: to ensure safety for students, faculty and staff; to give crisis teams uniform and consistent procedures to follow in a critical situation; to stabilize and manage the incident; to provide support for responding public safety agencies; to protect district property; to restore order and resume normal operations; and to provide ways to document what had been done during a critical situation. Additional sections of the manual were entitled general information, building emergencies, crime-related emergencies, individual student, community, crime related, medical, mental health, public health, and transportation emergencies. The manual had an appendix that included parent letters, student announcements, forms and reports, staff information sheets, emergency procedures for when school is not in session, and telephone numbers.

Flip charts were developed for district schools that aligned with the district's Emergency Procedures Manual. Teachers and program assistants were trained in the safety and emergency procedures listed in the manual. During school year 2006-2007, three lockdown drills with city police swat teams were held in all five district schools, with student assemblies held prior to the lockdown drills. Monthly fire drills were also conducted in all schools. District administrators said that training in emergency procedures should be extended to substitute teachers and parent volunteers. The superintendent said that collaboration and review took place on an annual basis relative to safety and emergency procedures.

Standard II: Curriculum and Instruction												
Ratings▼ Indicators►	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**Total**
Excellent												
Satisfactory		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	**7**
Needs Improvement	✓				✓		✓			✓		**4**
Unsatisfactory												

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- During the period under review, the district devoted considerable time and effort adopting new texts and reviewing and revising ELA, math, and science curricula. Renewed curricula in ELA for grades K-6 and in social studies were incomplete at the time of the EQA visit.
- The district's newly developed curricula aligned with state frameworks and standards and demonstrated both horizontal and vertical alignment.
- The district lacked a formal protocol for the timely review and revision of curricula but intended to develop one in 2007-2008.
- In 2007-2008, the district created the new positions of K-6 literacy and math coaches and grade 7-12 coordinators in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies to monitor delivery of curricula and to work with teachers to improve instruction.
- At the high school, coordinators and directors monitored instruction for evidence of excellence and supervised and evaluated the performance of teachers.
- Although examiners saw evidence of appropriate yet limited use of technology, technology was not fully integrated into instructional programs in the district, especially at the high school which had structural and space impediments.

- For over a decade, the district has implemented a fully integrated inclusion model to meet the needs of special education students.

Summary

Methuen Public Schools aligned its curricula to the state frameworks and standards and ensured that the curricula in all tested content areas were aligned horizontally within a grade and vertically across grades. During the review period, the district devoted considerable time and effort to adopting new texts and reviewing and revising ELA, math, and science curricula. For the most part, newly developed curricula included objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and measurable outcomes or assessments. At the time of the EQA visit, the district was still in the process of updating the ELA curriculum for grades K-6 and the social studies curriculum.

When initiating new curriculum development, the district conducted a screening process for new texts and then shaped the curriculum review and revision to the new texts and to the state frameworks and standards, taking into consideration MCAS test results, research, and best practices. However, the district did not have a fully developed protocol for the timely review and revision of curriculum; administrators expressed their intention to develop one as a priority for the 2007-2008 school year.

Multiple educators shared curriculum leadership roles. Key central office personnel responsible for curriculum, assessment, ELL education, and special education monitored curriculum development and student achievement within their spheres of responsibility. Supervising principals and associate principals at the district's four grammar schools monitored implementation of the curriculum using regular walk-throughs, analyses of MCAS results, and formative and summative assessments. Feedback from walk-throughs was inconsistent and sporadic according to interviewees, but principals shared analyses of achievement data with coaches, coordinators, and classroom teachers. In addition, they convened school-level, grade-level, and content-level meetings to identify curricular gaps and weaknesses and to improve coverage, pacing, and pedagogy, with a focus on improved student achievement.

Late in the review period, the district focused in more depth on the achievement and needs of student subgroups. A full inclusion model has been in place in the district for over a decade.

Inclusion classes used the same curriculum with appropriate adjustments, and inclusion classes were co-taught by content- or grade-level teachers and a trained special educator.

Although instructional leadership was provided primarily by supervising principals in their respective buildings, they shared supervisory and evaluation responsibilities with a number of other school leaders. At the grammar schools, associate principals conducted walk-throughs and evaluated teachers according to the district's four-year evaluation protocol. Supervisory and associate principals worked with teams of teachers in content- and grade-level meetings to implement more effective instructional strategies in order to address gaps in topic coverage, to ensure more effective pacing, and to strengthen instruction. The use of extensive data analysis reports shared by the director of assessment and instructional personnel ensured rigor and insight in developing new and improved programs and instructional strategies. In addition, during the 2007-2008 school year, the district added a literacy coach and a math coach at each grammar school to model lessons and support improved teaching skills. Similarly, new grade 7-12 coordinators monitored instruction in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, and performed supervisory and evaluative duties to improve instruction. Multiple school and district leaders also conducted frequent walk-throughs at all grade levels, but interviewees stated that feedback and walk-through protocols were inconsistent.

The district identified the integration of technology as a priority in the District Improvement Plan. Grammar school teachers cited appropriate uses of technology, websites, and educational software in both regular and special education classes. However, the high school's building limitations related to its open spaces and complicated wiring needs prevented it from meeting high standards of technology use and access.

Observations of 50 randomly selected classrooms by EQA examiners revealed strong classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, and student activity and behavior at all grade levels. Examiners saw evidence of positive classroom climate at the K-5 level.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Evidence from documents and interviews indicated that under the leadership of Methuen's director of curriculum and grantsmanship, professional staff members devoted considerable time adopting new texts and reviewing and revising curricula in mathematics, ELA, and science during the period under review. However, the curricula were incomplete or in need of revision. This curriculum work was ongoing at the time of the EQA review, with specific attention now allocated to curriculum revisions and mapping in social studies and in ELA for grades K-6.

An examination of curriculum documents demonstrated clear alignment with the state standards and frameworks. The district documented curricula in a standardized matrix format that generally included content/topic, guiding questions, intended learning outcomes, benchmarks, and Massachusetts frameworks or standards. Curriculum documents indicated that curricula for some content areas were more complete and more detailed than others.

The mathematics curriculum included a scope and sequence that described the year-at-a-glance by topic and by standard, followed by a matrix that specified state standards, Scott Foresman concepts and topics, technology components, and whether a topic would be introduced, developed, or maintained and applied. On the whole, however, the mathematics curriculum was relatively more cryptic than in other content areas and included few, if any, suggested instructional strategies and sparse assessment suggestions.

In 2005, the district adopted the University of Chicago's Everyday Math for kindergarten pupils, Scott Foresman's Mathematics for grades 1-5, and Prentice Hall's Mathematics Course 1-2-3 for mathematics and algebra for grades 6-8. High school mathematics courses used Prentice Hall's Algebra I and Algebra II texts, as well as McDougal Littell texts for geometry and Larson/Hostetler texts for calculus.

In ELA, the district implemented Harcourt Brace's Trophies program in grades K-6 in what the district described as a three-tiered, balanced literacy program. The 2007-2008 academic year was the second year that the district implemented Trophies in all four grammar schools, after having introduced the program several years ago at the Tenney School and the Timony School, the district's two Title I schools. In addition to Title I support, extensive support was provided for early literacy at the Tenney School through a Reading First grant and at the Timony School through a John Silber Reading Grant. Students in grades 7-8 used a Prentice Hall anthology as well as various appropriate grade-level novels. The high school ELA curriculum was built around the study of literature through reading, researching, and viewing specific novels and genres, and through the study of expression, defined as writing, speaking, and presenting.

The high school's ELA curriculum guide was thorough, complex, and also included sample and required activities and assessments. It was aligned to the state frameworks as well as to Methuen High School's expectations for student learning, as was the science curriculum. High school courses were offered at three skill levels, levels 2, 3, and 4, with an Advanced Placement (AP) course offered as level 4 course.

Curriculum for the recently revised high school biology courses included suggested and required activities, instructional resources, assessments, and a section that described the classroom's learning environment and instructional techniques. The science curriculum for lower grades did not detail assessments and instructional strategies. The science program included Harcourt Brace's Science in grades K-2, and in 2007-2008 the district introduced Houghton-Mifflin science texts in grades 3-6. Science courses for grades 7 and 8 used various Pearson Prentice Hall books in units of study that were linked to state frameworks. Pearson Prentice Hall texts also formed the nucleus of the high school science program.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Evidence from documents and interviews indicated that the district implemented curricula in all tested content areas that were aligned horizontally and vertically. Common texts and curricula ensured alignment. Also, the district strengthened alignment during the review period through a

number of strategies. At each school, grade-level or course-level teams met regularly to discuss curriculum implementation, including pacing and alignment. In addition, supervising and associate principals at the grammar schools and at the high school conducted regular walk-throughs as a method of tracking horizontal alignment and pacing. Grammar school principals also reviewed one lesson plan each month from each teacher, looking for alignment to state standards as well as alignment to one or more priorities in the School and/or District Improvement Plans.

After planning during the 2006-2007 school year, the district in 2007-2008 created new grade 7-12 coordinators in the four major academic subjects—English, mathematics, science, and social studies—to replace traditional grade 9-12 department heads. The district held coordinators responsible for monitoring curricula and supervising and evaluating instruction at the high school. Coordinators also collaborated with the supervising principals at the grammar schools to monitor instruction and ensure curriculum alignment at the school transition from grade 8 to grade 9 as well as within grade levels.

In 2007-2008, the district also appointed full-time math and literacy coaches at each of the four grammar schools after planning and defining those roles during the 2006-2007 academic year. Coaches had no classroom teaching assignments. Rather, the district expected them to offer professional development to teachers, to model lessons, and to coach teachers in developing improved and more effective instructional strategies. The district also expected coaches to lead curriculum initiatives such as the literacy or math teams and to support teacher collaboration in instructional planning, lesson design, curriculum alignment, and the development and use of formative assessments. In addition, the coaches met regularly with grade-level teams as well as representative vertical teams in the content areas that cut across all grade levels at each school, e.g., the literacy team, to discuss student achievement data, to use those data to inform instruction, to participate in discussions of curriculum issues across grade levels, and to guide the collection and analysis of classroom assessment data. Interviewees stated that although coaches had been in place for just a few months, there was evidence that they had already made an impact on the shape and delivery of the curricula.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees indicated that although the principal was the final arbiter of instructional leadership at each school, in reality a number of people shared responsibility in overseeing the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of the curricula. At the district level, the director of curriculum and grantsmanship, the director of assessment and instructional personnel, the supervisor of language acquisition, and the director of pupil services all monitored the effectiveness of the curricula using their specific lenses. Each participated in curriculum discussions at the district level as members of the leadership team of 44 individuals.

At the grammar school level, principals and associate principals at each school shared various supervisory and evaluative functions to monitor the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of delivery of the curricula, with the principal held mainly responsible for oversight. They also joined school-level, grade-level, and subject-level meetings to better understand instructional and curricular needs. They evaluated staff members according to district protocols and also conducted walk-throughs to monitor delivery of the curricula. Although school and district leaders received training to conduct walk-throughs, the district did not yet have a standardized walk-through format or protocol. Interviewees indicated that walk-throughs were inconsistent in process and in substantive feedback across schools.

Also, as noted earlier, math and literacy coaches in the grammar schools and grade 7-12 coordinators in core subject areas now played an important role in monitoring how effectively and faithfully teachers implemented curricula. Coaches and coordinators offered professional development by modeling lessons and coaching. With common planning time in the district's grammar schools, each school frequently held grade-level and content-level meetings to address curriculum issues. Coaches at the grammar schools did not conduct performance evaluations, although much of their role was supervisory in nature. However, at the high school the principal designated considerable responsibility for supervision and evaluation to coordinators and

supervisors, and met weekly with them to discuss gaps in instruction and how instruction and curriculum could be refined. In addition, the director of curriculum and grantsmanship also met with coordinators and coaches as well as with subject-level teams to discuss curriculum revisions and delivery.

The district utilized the Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process to focus on improvement for all students. Administrators used and tracked achievement data to set plans for district improvement, school improvement, and program improvement. During the review period, school and district leaders ensured that at school-, grade-, and subject-level meetings, teachers and leaders examined student achievement data from MCAS exams and/or subject-specific data from summative and formative assessments to better understand learning strengths, weaknesses, and instructional gaps. Interviewees noted that the use and interpretation of data to modify programs was now more prevalent in the district, but also said that there was still much work to do to raise teachers' comfort level and expertise in using data to inform their own teaching.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district focused on several instructional strategies grounded in research and targeted to strengthen student achievement. Administrators sought to ensure a balanced literacy program in all four grammar schools using Harcourt Brace's Trophies as a three-tiered reading model. In Methuen, balanced literacy meant strategic and flexible reading groups, shared reading, guided reading, reading aloud, independent reading, word study, writing as an integral part of literacy, and the use of formative assessments to inform instruction and placement in reading groups. Prior to the review period, the district took advantage of Title I funds, a Reading First Grant at the Tenney School, and a John Silber Reading Grant at the Timony School to introduce Trophies at these two Title I schools. Since the 2006-2007 school year, the district has implemented Trophies in all four grammar schools and provided

professional development from the publisher as well as in-district support for teachers in implementing the Trophies program.

In addition, as part of the balanced literacy program, the district prioritized support for all grammar school teachers to learn to administer and interpret formative reading assessments first piloted in the Reading First school. These assessments were the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

Another important instructional priority in the district was to support teachers in learning to differentiate instruction. Professional development at the school and district levels and course offerings through the Northeast Consortium for Staff Development offered opportunities for teachers to learn to plan and teach differentiated lessons and use cooperative learning strategies to better accommodate students' learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. Methuen teachers taught consortium courses and teachers could earn graduate credit from Salem State College. Random observations of 50 classrooms revealed that teachers used a variety of instructional techniques in 64 percent of observed classrooms, and teachers implemented instructional strategies that reflected school and/or district priorities in 84 percent of observed classrooms. Interviewees, however, stated that there was still much work needed to ensure strong differentiation techniques at all grade levels and in all content areas.

Also, the district was in the process of introducing a combination of writing programs to promote and develop stronger writing skills and interest in writing. New programs included Writer's Companion: Support and Practice for Writing in grades 2-6 as a companion to the Trophies program and the 6 + 1 Trait Writing in grades 7-12. There was also evidence that some grade levels used the Collins Writing Program. Accompanying the writing programs, the district offered workshops and professional development often taught by district teachers to strengthen their colleagues' skills.

Several other research-based initiatives fostered support for effective instruction in the district. Teachers new to the district were strongly encouraged to participate in a district professional development course called "Building Teacher Skills," which the district modeled after the Skillful Teacher program offered previously in the district by Teachers 21. To address the needs

of all students, the district also encouraged teachers to participate in professional development for the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and promoted use of SIOP teaching strategies with all students.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In its goals for 2006-2008, the District Improvement Plan identified the development of a program evaluation protocol and the implementation of a curriculum mapping process as priorities. This would likely replace a five-year plan developed in 2004 to review and revise curricula that was initiated with a review of the mathematics curriculum in 2004-2005. However, the mathematics curriculum review process as documented in the report Mathematics Program Adoption Overview and Recommendations 2005 and described in interviews appeared to be a textbook adoption process rather than a curriculum review process. Nevertheless, the district assembled a mathematics curriculum team comprised of a cross section of teachers from each grammar school and grade level who had been recommended by their supervising principal. The associate principal responsible for mathematics and the director of mathematics and computer technology also participated as team members.

The math curriculum team met weekly with the director of curriculum and grantsmanship to review the current mathematics program, determining strengths and weaknesses, identifying concerns regarding math instruction, reviewing MCAS test results, and identifying specific weaknesses at grades 4, 6, and 8. The team then developed a rubric for evaluating programs and identified programs for review. Once identified, the team tested and evaluated program components by using them in classrooms and also invited publishers to give presentations on site. After the presentations, the team analyzed each program's strengths and weaknesses and recommended that the district adopt the Scott Foresman Addison-Wesley mathematics program at the grammar schools in grades 1-8 in the 2005-2006 school year.

In the 2006-2007 school year, the key curriculum initiative in the district was to adopt the three-tiered balanced literacy initiative at all four grammar schools using Harcourt Brace's Trophies program. In concert with this adoption, the district also identified sequential activities such as identification and adoption of appropriate writing programs, recommendations for professional development, and interventions to use with students who needed intensive support to meet grade-level expectations, especially special education and ELL students. As a final step, the ELA adoption process examined the anticipated staffing and financial implications of instituting a balanced literacy program across all grammar schools in the district. At the time of the site review, curriculum review and revision was ongoing in ELA for grades 1-6 and in social studies.

The district had not yet taken a broader look at academic curricula across all grade-levels K-12, but rather chose to address curricula in grades 1-8 as a first step and mainly linked that review to adopting new texts. In addition, the high school implemented a five-year rotation plan for review of textbooks and curricula which was department centered and was to be managed by grade 7-12 coordinators and supervisors.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided ample opportunities in recent years for supervising principals, associate principals, classroom teachers, and others to analyze and interpret data to improve student achievement. The director of assessment and instructional personnel compiled numerous reports and analyses of aggregated and disaggregated data from the MCAS exams and shared them with the schools. In addition, the district and each school used the DOE's PIM process during the review period to set and monitor improvement objectives delineated in the DIP and SIPs.

Supervising principals shared district, school, and grade-level data with teachers at faculty meetings and discussed achievement data in grade-level and content-level meetings. Also, the principals gave teachers MCAS data on their current and previous year's students to review and analyze in order to modify instruction. In the 2007-2008 school year, the newly created math and literacy coaches and the newly defined grade 7-12 coordinators also used reports of MCAS data

and AYP data in meetings with faculty to identify items and concepts that proved difficult for students and to develop strategies and modify curricula to address learning gaps. Based on these discussions, teachers developed new instructional strategies, revised decisions about content and pacing, and adjusted curricula to better meet students' needs. In addition to MCAS results, grammar school teachers and coaches also used formative and summative assessments to assess student progress and assist in placements in reading groups. ELA teachers administered the DIBELS in grades K-2 and the DRA and GRADE in grades K-4 as formative indicators of student progress in literacy.

The director of assessment and instructional personnel also analyzed PSAT, SAT, and AP scores and shared those analyses, as well as those of the MCAS results, with high school teachers. At department meetings and course meetings, teachers discussed adjustments and revisions to instruction and curriculum. High school teachers also reviewed common quarterly exams in the tested content areas to better understand patterns of student achievement and used those analyses to adjust instruction and pacing.

When allocating instructional time to focus on improved rates of proficiency, the district set ELA instructional time at 120 minutes daily for grades K-2, 90 minutes daily for grades 3-6, and 60 minutes daily for grades 7-8. Grade 10 students at risk of failing the MCAS exams and grade 11 and 12 students who had not yet reached proficiency on the MCAS exams could take advantage of MCAS prep courses in math and ELA.

The district made several meaningful curricular adjustments based on achievement data during the review period and realigned the curriculum to reflect needed changes. An emphasis on mathematics vocabulary and the use of word walls in mathematics was derived from data analysis of MCAS results and the PIM process. Topics such as probability were re-sequenced to ensure coverage in a timely way. Two years ago, the district re-sequenced biology into a two-year sequence with microbiology taught in grade 9 and macrobiology taught in grade 10, followed by chemistry in grade 11 and physics in grade 12. This adjustment would better prepare students for the grade 10 MCAS biology test. Physical science was then taught at grades 7 and 8. Also at the high school, social studies courses were re-sequenced so that US history would be

taught in grades 10 and 11 and world history would be the subject of social studies courses in grades 8 and 9.

In addition, the district offered training for teachers in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and encouraged implementation of the SEI protocol for use with all students who lacked strong language and literacy skills.

Interviewees noted that meetings linking achievement data to instruction and curriculum were more common in the district, but that more support was still needed for teachers to be comfortable engaging in these discussions.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

One goal in the District Improvement Plan targeted "improved technological opportunities and access to prepare students for the technological world." Evidence from interviews, documents, and observations indicated that the district progressed in meeting that goal, but there was still considerable work needed. Technology specialists noted that in 2007-2008 they were working closely with coaches and coordinators to find software that was a good fit with Methuen's academic programs. The goal, according to one specialist, was to use technology to develop thinking skills.

The district's Long Range Technology Plan, 2004-2009 mapped a multi-year effort to transform the district's learning environments through the use of technology. In the last year of the review period, the district planned for and then purchased cutting-edge computers for teachers and the four computer labs at each grammar school and the labs at the high school. Prior to 2007-2008, not all teachers had computers and lab technology was not current. Also, the district implemented a new user-friendly website in September 2007. However, saturation of technology into instruction, especially at the high school, was problematic, mainly due to the school's open space configuration and complications in installing wiring in that environment.

Late in the review period, the district began to infuse technology more systematically into instruction, but interviewees stated that more still needed to be done to meet expectations. In random observations of 50 classrooms, EQA examiners noted that students appropriately used technology in only 15 percent of the classrooms visited.

In 2007-2008, the district funded four instructional technology specialists instead of two. Technology specialists supported teachers and also taught classes in the labs. They helped teachers learn to use SmartBoards in conjunction with ELA instruction and also worked with teachers to infuse various web-based software into lessons. For example, grammar school students could use My Skills Tutor, a software program, to improve literacy through differentiated prompts based on students' individual strengths and weaknesses.

Grammar school teachers also used the Comprehensive Performance System (CPS) in class to verify student comprehension of specific items. With the CPS, students used clickers to instantly record responses to questions, and the tally was made available immediately to the class and to the teacher. High school students whose achievement was not up to standard could use PLATO software to improve reading and mathematics skills.

The district also integrated technology into special education students' learning routines to support their unique learning needs. Special education students and second language learners used the Lexia reading software, alpha smarts, touch screens, the Wilson Reading System, and other adaptive technology when prescribed. Special education teachers received training in how to use technological equipment to support student learning.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

When asked to describe practices that indicated high expectation for students' work and mastery, interviewees highlighted the implementation of a common and challenging curriculum for all students, whether they were regular education students or special education students in the inclusion program. Documents and interviews indicated additional evidence of practices that

reflected high expectations for students. For example, the district supported focused and sustained professional development in differentiated instruction and SIOP. Interviewees also explained that by differentiating instruction they could implement the same learning tasks with groups of students and adjust the activity to "level the playing field" so that all groups could succeed.

The district expected all teachers new to the district to enroll in the Building Teacher Skills professional development program, which could be taken for graduate credit or professional development points. In offering this course modeled after the Skillful Teacher program developed by Teachers 21, the district underscored the importance of continuous improvement in developing strong instructional practice. In addition, both the grammar schools and the high school displayed and promoted clear mission statements and statements of expectations for student learning that encompassed academic as well as civic and social expectations. These expectations were often included in curriculum documents along with department mission statements.

Interviewees and documents indicated that the district's active supervision processes and its four-year evaluation cycle promoted professional improvement within the teaching ranks. The evaluation protocol contained a self-improvement component that was centered on teachers setting professional growth goals for each year. At the end of each year, teachers reported on their accomplishments in meeting the goals. Also, principals had the option to place a teacher on an improvement plan in any year during the four-year cycle.

By the end of the review period, multiple leaders such as principals, associate principals, coaches, and coordinators acted in a supervisory capacity in the district. Each spent time working with teachers individually or in groups to improve instruction and address weaknesses. Nevertheless, despite the district's stated efforts to promote a culture of high expectations in the district, the 50 random classroom observations conducted by the EQA revealed traits related to high expectations in 78 percent of observed classrooms at grades K-5, 73 percent at grades 6-8, and only 67 percent at the high school.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education in 2006 indicated that of its 834 special education students (age 6-21), the district enrolled 444 students, or 53.2 percent, in full inclusion classrooms compared to the state's average rate of 49.1 percent; 164 students or 19.7 percent in partial inclusion classes compared to the state's average rate of 28.5 percent; and 57 students or 6.8 percent in out-of-district placements, which equaled the statewide average.

The district has implemented a full inclusion model for its special education students for at least a decade. Interviewees stated that there had been many changes over the years and that one would be hard pressed to distinguish between regular and special education students in inclusive classrooms. The district used a co-teaching model at both the grammar schools and the high school. Classroom or content area teachers collaborated with trained special education co-teachers to meet the needs of inclusion students as well as regular education students. It was not unusual, according to interviewees, to see co-teachers also working with regular education students to support their learning. Co-teachers planned modifications for classroom assessments, assignments, and skill development, and used the same program materials and curriculum. An EQA examiner who had observed an inclusion class could not distinguish between the regular and special education students.

At the grammar schools, inclusion students participated in a 45-minute "skills periods" twice weekly, in which they worked in small groups with a teacher. Other students had pull-out time included in their IEPs based on specific and individual needs. Interviewees noted that some significantly delayed special education students at the high school reported to homeroom but studied in substantially separate academic programs. In addition to the inclusion model, the district housed approximately nine programs in its schools that were self-contained classrooms.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the district supported and monitored the ongoing use of summative and formative assessments, the district's leadership used data from those assessments to inform decisions related to instruction and curriculum rather than to discern the effectiveness of teachers' instruction. One administrator noted that a clause would have to be negotiated into the contract in order to use student assessment data as an indicator of effective teaching.

The district used the following sources of formative and summative data to inform instruction and identify areas in need of improvement: the MCAS tests; the DIBELS, GRADE, and DRA; running records in reading; grade distributions; and PSAT, SAT, and AP tests. The district used achievement data for research in order to understand trends in student achievement and target interventions, to confirm needed professional development, and to support financial, curricular, and programmatic decision-making. According to interviewees, professional staff members spent much time in multi-formatted meetings analyzing and discussing assessment data. When distributing MCAS results to teachers, the district distributed scores for teachers' current as well as previous year's students.

For several years, the director of assessment and instructional personnel offered a professional development course in the effective design and use of classroom assessment. The course was described as an "after-school workshop on standards-based assessment, diversifying assessment tools and procedures, using classroom assessment formatively, creating valid selected-response and constructed-response instruments for classroom use, and designing performance assessments with accompanying rubrics and task lists."

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 50 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 33 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management; instructional practice; expectations; student activity, work, and behavior; and classroom climate for learning. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted at the district's schools as follows: 18 classrooms at grades K-5; 16 classrooms at grades 6-8; and 16 classrooms at grades 9-12. In total, the EQA examiners observed 16 ELA classrooms, 18 math classrooms, 12 science classrooms, and four classrooms of other subjects. In calculating the presence of observed practices, where appropriate, the practices that would not be applicable were noted and were removed from the total to obtain a proper basis for determining the percentage.

A review of the classroom observation data showed that effective classroom management strategies were in place at all levels. Classroom management practices were particularly successful at grades K-5, where examiners observed effective practices in 97 percent of the classrooms visited. Examiners observed effective classroom management practices in 90 percent of the classrooms visited at grades 6-8 and in 73 percent at grades 9-12.

Furthermore, all levels were successful in providing a classroom climate conducive to learning. Examiners observed effective classroom climate in 97 percent of the classrooms visited at grades K-5, in 87 percent at grades 6-8, and in 79 percent at grades 9-12. The discrepancy between the grammar and high school levels was due to the fact that only 31 percent of the classrooms at the high school were rated as being well provisioned with materials, while this was 94 percent at grades K-5 and 63 percent at grades 6-8.

Of the five categories examined, the high school received the lowest rating in the category of student activity, work, and behavior (63 percent). The grammar schools received the lowest rating in the expectations category at both grades K-5 (82 percent) and grades 6-8 (72 percent).

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 87 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 97 percent at grades K-5, 90 percent at grades 6-8, and 73 percent at grades 9-12.

EQA examiners noted positive classroom management in comments such as "students worked independently on timeline and questions for story in anthology while teacher conferenced with each on journal writing," "seamless transitions, teacher moved from white board to chart stand with KWL chart for next activity," and "although students had just returned from a concert, they quickly transitioned to the ELA lesson with minimal teacher direction." The few negative comments included "teacher did same thing for 25 minutes – no transitions; students read aloud from science text, teacher made comments about topic," and "only one activity during the visit."

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that require the use of higher order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off-task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it should be age-appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged. The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of

instructional practice were evident in 79 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 83 percent at grades K-5, 82 percent at grades 6-8, and 70 percent at grades 9-12.

Among the positive comments, EQA examiners noted “good wait time and guided questioning to help a student unclear of answer; word wall, lesson objective posted in kid friendly language,” “use of whiteboards for double digit multiplication – very effective and engaging activities with the inclusion class,” and “strategies included cooperative learning and writing a 15 to 17 word summary for one paragraph in nonfiction selection.” Other comments included “teacher talked, students listened, then she gave them a test after reading the vocabulary words and test items,” and “students worked independently; teacher supervised, but did not challenge students.”

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 73 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 82 percent at grades K-5, 72 percent at grades 6-8, and 64 percent at grades 9-12.

Positive comments about expectations included “fairly challenging class on cell transport mechanisms,” “assignment demonstrated high expectations. Students were to present a ‘case’ in a simulated legal setting. Told one student, ‘Great job! You have made me proud!’” And, “student math journals showed consistent entries along with written responses to math problems – good journals.” Other comments included “no student work displayed; other than a few instructional posters and books in bins, there was little evidence of student work at all (no journals, writing folders, etc.).” And, “most teacher comments seemed to elicit minimal acceptable work from the students.”

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and

interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 77 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 88 percent at grades K-5, 79 percent at grades 6-8, and 63 percent at grades 9-12.

Positive comments noted "very challenging questioning techniques, one of the best use of HOTS that I encountered," "students participated fully, and teacher maintained attention throughout the class," "entries in notebooks were clear and legible; notebooks were clearly used as reference," and "the teacher restated the learning goals during the lesson." Several comments noted the challenges of teaching in an environment of open classrooms. For example, "Little student interaction, very distracting environment, no doors, next classroom separated by only a curtain."

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 88 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 97 percent at grades K-5, 87 percent at grades 6-8, and 79 percent at grades 9-12.

In their comments, EQA examiners noted "This was an inclusion class and I couldn't tell who the SPED students were," "Lots of resources in this room: TV, SmartBoard, calculators, overhead projector, student texts. Teachers explained what would happen if they saved their birthday money. The power of compound interest." Other comments also focused on the limitations of space, such as "The climate was such a distraction for all during that class that not much positive happened. Teacher believed that he had taken students from 'a point of chaos' to 'something meaningful.' I did not observe the meaningful part." And, "There really did not seem to be any way to use the space more effectively than the teacher was doing it."

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Science/ Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	7	6	5	18	22.3	0.2	44	29	13.9
Middle (6-8)	5	6	5	16	19.4	0.1	33	20	15.6
High	4	6	6	16	20.1	0.1	16	0	0
Total	16	18	16	50	20.7	0.1	93	49	21.1

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity, Work & Behavior	Classroom Climate for Learning
Elementary					
Total observations	77	156	74	101	87
Maximum possible	79	188	90	115	90
Avg. percent of observations	97%	83%	82%	88%	97%
Middle (grades 6-8)					
Total observations	62	140	57	83	69
Maximum possible	69	170	79	105	79
Avg. percent of observations	90%	82%	72%	79%	87%
High					
Total observations	55	124	51	71	63
Maximum possible	75	176	80	112	80
Avg. percent of observations	73%	70%	64%	63%	79%
Total					
Total observations	194	420	182	255	219
Maximum possible	223	534	249	332	249
Avg. percent of observations	87%	79%	73%	77%	88%

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

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Methuen Public Schools did not have an assessment policy but had extensive practices in place for the collection and analysis of assessment data.
- All schools in the district participated in the Performance Improvement Mapping process and maintained PIM teams in order to analyze data and improve student performance.
- School Improvement Plans aligned with the District Improvement Plan and were developed using the results of the PIM process.
- The district reported student achievement results to the school committee and to the community by posting the data on the district's website.
- The district used some formative assessments to measure student progress but acknowledged the need to develop local benchmarks and more informal assessments.
- Methuen Public Schools used MCAS test results to determine the effectiveness of programs and to assign staff members.
- The district did not have a formal program evaluation system but was planning to implement a protocol in the future.

Summary

A review of the district's documents revealed that the district was deeply engaged in the continuous collection, analysis, and use of assessment results during the period under review. The district provided the EQA team with documents that addressed its MCAS test results in a comprehensive manner. The director of assessment and instructional personnel developed these documents and provided them to each school administrator, who in turn shared the results with school staff members. In addition to the analyses of MCAS test results, the district prepared grade distribution reports that compared grades achieved by the district's students at the different levels, and analyses of PSAT, SAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) test performance of the district's high school students.

The District Improvement Plan and each School Improvement Plan contained information about student achievement on the MCAS exams and included specific goal projections for student achievement. All the district's schools used the Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process to identify and analyze weaknesses in their respective schools' programs. The PIM process began several years ago in Methuen, and the district's use of the process in all its schools, regardless of the level of student achievement, was motivated by the need to learn to analyze data in order to promote improved student achievement. During the 2006-2007 school year, the PIM teams analyzed the relatively poor performance of the district's special education students.

The district acknowledged that it had an abundance of data available and that it needed to focus more attention on their use. The district's subgroups, including special education, low-income, and Hispanic students, had not met their adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets in ELA and mathematics during the 2004 through 2007 school years.

The district used a variety of assessment tools other than the MCAS tests to measure student progress. While testing was not consistent at grade levels in all schools, the assessment tools used included the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Students in grades 6-8 were assessed with summative common exams,

although the district used no formative assessments in ELA above grade 6. Interviewees stated that the district needed to do more work to develop local benchmarks.

During the several years prior to the EQA review, the district had used the PIM process and MCAS test results to evaluate its programs. However, interviewees acknowledged the need to develop a formal program evaluation protocol and planned to do so in the future. The DIP contained a goal for program evaluation that included developing a protocol and schedule for evaluation of programs likely to have the most impact on improving student achievement.

Interviewees provided the EQA team with several examples of how the district had used assessment results to evaluate its programs and services. The district had developed a math curriculum team in 2004-2005 to evaluate the effectiveness of its math program, and it adopted two new math series as a result of the team's findings. The district added a writing block for grade 7-8 students after a review of student MCAS test performance on the short and long compositions. During 2005-2006, the high school adjusted its science course sequence in response to analysis of MCAS performance. In the 2007-2008 school year, the district appointed full-time math and literacy coaches at each of its four grammar schools to support teachers in their the development and use of formative assessments and in data analysis, among other activities.

The district engaged in only one voluntary external audit during the review period. The Consulting Partners conducted an audit during the 2006-2007 school year to determine the efficiency of operations in the district. A report of the audit had not yet been published at the time of the EQA review.

Indicators

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

Rating: Excellent

Evidence

The district did not have a formal assessment policy but had practices in place that resulted in the extensive collection and analysis of data. During the four or five years prior to the review period,

all the district's schools used the PIM process, and each school had a PIM team that continued to actively examine data. The Massachusetts Department of Education developed the PIM process, which is generally used to assist low-performing schools. Methuen's use of the process in all its schools, regardless of the level of student achievement, was motivated by the need to learn to analyze data and use the results to improve student achievement. According to interviewees, the focus was on aggregate performance, but the schools began analyzing disaggregated data using the PIM process to determine strengths and weaknesses in the district's special education program. The School Improvement Plans were developed using the PIM results and contained student achievement data as well as measurable projected goals for improvement.

In an interview the superintendent said that the director of assessment and instructional personnel had provided the district leadership team with detailed analyses of MCAS test results. These included the MCAS results for each individual school, which were used by the principals to inform discussions regarding student achievement. These discussions took place at staff meetings as well as at grade-level meetings. Teachers at the district's grammar schools used common planning time to analyze their student achievement data. In many cases, teachers received the MCAS test results of both their present and past students.

In the 2007-2008 school year, the district appointed full-time math and literacy coaches at each of its four grammar schools. These coaches not only modeled lessons but also attended grade-level meetings and provided teachers with assessment data. The grade 7-12 content coordinators also provided teachers with assessment data. Achievement data were used to generate Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) for all students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs Improvement' categories on the MCAS tests.

Prior to the 2006-2007 school year, not all principals had received training in TestWiz, but during 2006-2007 all principals had TestWiz training. Teachers said that the PIM process had helped them in learning how to analyze data. A review of documents revealed that a graduate course entitled Using Assessment to Improve Student Achievement was offered to teachers, and workshops regarding the use of assessment were part of the new teacher orientation in August 2007. Also during the period under review, the district offered five two-hour workshops on

assessment. The district plans to offer a course on how to use MCAS results and TestWiz analysis to improve student achievement.

The district prepared a comprehensive 50-page report entitled Final Grade Distribution Report for Grades 7-12 that compared student achievement of grammar school students with that of high school students. The report concluded that "in general high school grades are significantly lower than those earned by the district's seventh and eighth graders, with the largest disparities being in English and mathematics." Another thorough report entitled The Annual Analyses of SAT and Advanced Placement Results provided further evidence of the continuous collection and analysis of data. This report contained student scores on the AP examinations compared to the grades they earned in the respective AP courses.

The director of assessment and instructional personnel also generated a report focusing on AYP in the district. The district's subgroups, including special education, low-income, and Hispanic students, had not met AYP targets in math and ELA during the 2004 through 2007 school years. Interviewees said that the district had focused more on aggregated rather than disaggregated student achievement data. During the 2006-2007 school year, the district required principals at each school to use the PIM process to determine reasons for the lack of progress of their special education students, which is still a work in progress at all schools.

The district's supervisor of the language acquisition department (LAD) said that English language learner (ELL) teachers as well as regular education teachers discussed data from the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) in an effort to improve achievement of the district's Hispanic students. The MEPA assesses students' ability to read and write English. According to the LAD supervisor, the district's MEPA results were receiving more scrutiny.

Interviewees at both the district and school levels expressed their satisfaction with the amount of data that that were generated, but all agreed that a need existed for all staff members to use them effectively. The district has responded to this need by providing workshops and graduate courses in data analysis and by continuing its use of the PIM process methodology.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees considered student participation in all appropriate assessments as being acceptable in the district, and the MCAS participation rate was almost 100 percent for regular education students and above 95 percent for special education and Hispanic students. The district encouraged ELL students to take the tests, even if they were not eligible, in order to gain familiarity with them.

Schools notified parents early in the school year regarding the testing dates, and sent home notices and made calls to determine reasons for student absence on a testing date. According to interviewees, a major goal of the district was to provide a relaxed environment during testing. Therefore, students at the grammar schools were exposed to the tests by taking previous exams prior to their actual testing days.

The high school, an open space school, allowed only those grade 10 students taking the tests to remain in the south part of the building. All classes were moved to other areas so that the noise generated in an open classroom would not interfere with the testing. Small areas were provided for students who needed more time to finish the tests.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The District Improvement Plan not only focused on future goals but also contained a preliminary section devoted to district student performance goals. This section discussed the achievement goals attained and set specific and measurable goals for the 2007-2008 school year. The district presented this document to the school committee for its approval and posted it on the district's

website, making it available to the community. In EQA interviews, some staff members said they had received copies of the District Improvement Plan and others said they did not.

The district aligned its School Improvement Plans with the DIP. These contained student performance goals for each respective school, and they were also available on the district's website. Interviewees said that principals provided copies of the SIPs to all members of the staffs.

While the city did not publish an annual report with information regarding student achievement, interviewees said that the school committee received regular presentations regarding student achievement. These meetings were televised and available for viewing by the local community. The district provided parents of grammar school students with the option of having their child's MCAS scores mailed home or of picking up the report in person at the school. The high school mailed all reports to the homes of students. Group results from the MEPA were posted on the district's website, and parents received individual student results in either Spanish or English.

In addition to the above reporting methods, the district's schools distributed report cards on a regular basis, and the grammar schools provided time for parent conferencing. The district report card committee was in the process of developing a standards-based report card for grades K-6.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees described the use of local benchmarks as being in the "infancy stage," but said that work in developing benchmarks was ongoing, especially in the area of math where two new series were adopted in the fall of 2005. The two series were Pearson Scott Foresman for grades 1-5 and Pearson Prentice Hall for grades 6-8.

Interviewees at the district level acknowledged the need to improve classroom assessment practices. A review of the District Improvement Plan 2006-2008 repeated the goal to "Improve classroom assessment practices and use assessment data for formative and summative purposes."

In an interview, the superintendent said that the schools do a “decent job” with formal assessments, but need to work on informal assessments. However, she said that teachers were improving in this area.

Classroom interviewees said that while testing was not consistent from building to building, all grammar schools were using the DIBELS not only to diagnose students’ reading needs, but also as a summative assessment to determine achievement at the June testing. The system used DIBELS in all schools at grades K-3, and in some schools at grades 4-6. The district administered it in October, January, and June. In those situations where students did not meet the benchmark level, the district instituted progress monitoring every five weeks. The Tenney and Timony schools used formal assessments since they were recipients of reading grants including Reading First at the Tenney in 2003 and the John Silber Reading Grant at the Timony in 2005. Formative assessments such as the DIBELS and the GRADE were also used at these schools. The successes resulting from the Reading First grant and the John Silber Reading Grant prompted the district to adopt Harcourt Trophies at the district’s other two grammar schools, and teachers said they used the unit tests at the end of each story to assess student learning. The Reading First program involved a three-tiered model of assessment with assessments used to determine placement and allotted instructional time.

The district also used the GRADE for students in the grammar schools as well as the DRA for some students in grades K-3 who had not scored at a certain level by January. Also, the math and ELA coaches administered assessments and shared results with the classroom teachers; in some cases, according to interviews, student scores were also sent to the school principals.

The district also assessed kindergarten students by using the Concepts About Print assessment in January of each school year, and administered a letter identification assessment on a quarterly basis.

Students in grades 6-8 took common examinations; however, there were no formative assessments in ELA above grade 6. Math assessments using the benchmarks from Pearson Prentice Hall were administered at the beginning and end of the year. The grammar schools did not have an assessment for placing students in pre-algebra, and instead relied on MCAS scores,

class grades, and teacher recommendations. Interviewees said that the Arlin Test of Formal Reasoning had been used in the past but that it was "quite challenging."

Teachers at the grammar schools said they used the Test Generator, a component of the math series, to develop student assessments. The program not only produced math assessments but also created customized assessments in other content areas.

The district's high school summative assessments took the form of common exams, but interviewees said that in math, common universal testing throughout the district, including a reporting system, needed to be improved.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the 2004-2005 school year, the district formed a mathematics curriculum team to determine if the math program then in use was effective. This concern resulted from the number of students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs Improvement' categories on the MCAS tests. The team examined the scores as well as the item analyses to determine weaknesses at each grade level. As a result, the team recommended adopting a new math series. This was accomplished in the fall of 2005 with the purchase and use of Pearson Scott Foresman at grades 1-5 and Pearson Prentice Hall at grades 6-8. The district's focus on improving achievement in math has resulted in setting what the superintendent describes as "absolutes" that must be taught. This meant that teachers could no longer select certain math concepts and skills to teach.

A review of the district's MCAS writing scores showed the need for improvement in the short as well as long composition areas. Grammar school teachers in the district were using the Writer's Workshop as the writing component of the balanced literacy model. However, according to district interviews, not all teachers participated in the Writer's Workshop, and as a result student writing was in need of improvement, as evidenced by the MCAS test scores. The district was in the process of adopting a new writing program.

In order to improve writing on the short and long compositions of the MCAS tests, grammar schools instituted a writing block at grades 7 and 8. Content area teachers in math, science, and social studies devoted one period of their instruction each week to work with students on writing in the teacher's particular content area.

The superintendent described the district's technology program as "woefully inadequate," and during 2007-2008 the district purchased a computer for each teacher in the system. SmartBoards were also purchased for each of the schools. In interviews, school staff members expressed their need for more SmartBoards. The Timony School used the PLATO computer program, funded through a grant, in grades 7 and 8. The program has the capability to use examples from MCAS tests, and students can proceed at their own pace with teachers able to assess student progress.

As a result of a review of MCAS test scores, the DIP stated the need for changes in the science program. Interviewees acknowledged that while the science program may meet the expectations of the state's Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework, deficits remained. During the 2005-2006 school year, the high school changed its sequence of science to address this deficit. The district began offering microbiology at grade 9, macrobiology at grade 10, chemistry at grade 11, and physics at grade 12, and new textbooks were purchased for each of these four courses.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district did not engage in any significant number of audits, and most of them were mandated.

The Consulting Partners conducted the one voluntary audit that took place during the 2006-2007 school year. Interviewees said that the purpose of the audit was to determine the efficiency of operations in the district. The audit will include a report on curriculum and assessment, and will also include extensive information related to the business office. There was no other information regarding this audit available to the district at the time of the EQA visit.

A Coordinated Program Review (CPR) by the Department of Education took place in February 2003. The CPR had several findings including one which reported that "the IEP did not always indicate why a student's needs could not be met in a regular education setting." The CPR did not address curriculum and instruction opportunities for these special education students. It mentioned that a number of special education staff members were not certified. The CPR was shared with special education staff. Title I staff members said that the CPR of the Title I program had produced five accolades, all pertaining to the district's parent program.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) visited Methuen High School in October 2003, and its report stated that the committee was impressed with the district's curriculum but that a weakness existed in student assessment. The NEASC committee also noted that the facility's open space design did not facilitate the teaching/learning process.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews, district and school staff members cited several cases of assigning staff members as a result of the review of student assessment results. The superintendent said in an interview that a goal of the district was to improve the achievement of its subgroup populations. As a result, she added additional ELL staff members to the high school. Also, during the 2006-2007 school year she added a Spanish-speaking counselor to the high school staff, an addition that also improved communication with the Hispanic community. The superintendent further indicated that a "big push was made to add staff members to the grammar and high school" during 2007-2008.

The district, in an effort to provide more assistance to classroom teachers, assigned full-time math and literacy coaches to each of the district's grammar schools in the 2007-2008 school year. These coaches were available to model lessons in classrooms as well as to support teachers. In interviews, teachers said the coaches were quick to respond and offered them a great deal of information regarding curriculum and instruction. The coaches also attended team meetings and provided assistance in data analysis.

The district created a new title of "department head" at the high school. These positions became known as "coordinators" and were assigned to grades 7-12 rather than 9-12. Prior to this change, department heads taught three classes, but with the new title they became full-time coordinators. This change was made in an effort to provide for more curriculum articulation between the grammar and high schools. The district also appointed a technical staff person to each building. Prior to 2007-2008, the four grammar schools shared two technical staff members. In interviews, teachers at the grammar schools said that having a full-time technical staff person was instrumental in helping them to improve the use of technology in delivering the curriculum, and they cited the use of SmartBoards as one of the improvements.

In an interview, a school administrator said that in order to improve student achievement in math, it had become necessary to hire only certified math teachers at grades 7 and 8.

In interviews, school administrators said that at grades K-6 the time allotment was 90 minutes for ELA and 45 minutes for math, and that they were working toward 60 minutes of math instruction on a daily basis. During the 2007-2008 school year, all grade 7-8 students received one hour of instructional time in all content areas. The district set a goal, however, of providing at least 120 minutes of English language arts instruction and 90 minutes of math instruction at grades 1-4, and 90 minutes each of ELA and math instruction at grades 5-8.

In an interview, the superintendent said that resources were allocated to schools on a needs basis rather than a per pupil basis, and that principals were required to submit written proposals for additional services for their schools. Interviewees throughout the EQA visit expressed that they had adequate materials and supplies but that they needed more special education staffing.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The DIP for 2006-2008 states that "to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs, particularly the new initiatives, the district will develop a program evaluation protocol." Interviewees stated that

the results of the MCAS tests were used to evaluate programs in the district, but acknowledged the district had no formal process for program evaluation and intended to develop one. Interviewees also said that the district's DIPs and SIPs would provide guidance in determining which programs would be evaluated first. They stressed that it would take time to develop the protocol but that it would be done in the future.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district had policies and practices in place for the identification, recruitment, and selection of an effective teaching staff.
- Six teachers and two administrators did not have appropriate licensure and did not have waivers.
- The district had a formal mentoring program that provided opportunities for professional growth.
- The district had a formal professional development program. The district coordinated professional development, funded it directly or through grants, and ensured that it aligned with DIP and SIP goals.
- Annual evaluations of principals were informative, instructive, and in compliance with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.
- Evaluations of professional status teachers did not comply with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38. The district used a four-year cycle in which the summative evaluation occurred in year four, instead of every two years as required by law.
- The district used a teacher improvement plan to support struggling teachers and took action against low-performing teachers.

Summary

Methuen Public Schools had policies and practices for the identification, recruitment, and selection of an effective teaching staff. The district had a comprehensive website that listed openings in all its schools, and advertised in newspapers such as The *Boston Globe* and the Manchester *Union Leader*. The district also participated in the Merrimack Valley Teacher Recruitment Fair, where district representatives provided information about teaching opportunities in Methuen. The principal and administrators conducted job interviews. After initial interviews and "to assure a good fit," the teachers affected by the final selection had the opportunity to interview the candidates. The hiring process for administrators involved central office administrators, school council members, and parents.

The district's leaders had no financial restrictions when hiring personnel and could select the most qualified candidate. Salary was commensurate with experience and within the guidelines of the collective bargaining agreement. Interviewees stated that the district enjoyed a high teacher retention rate. The district's policy was to hire certified and highly qualified personnel. The human resources director and the director of assessment and instructional personnel monitored licensure to ensure that personnel had the appropriate license for their respective positions. A review of teacher licensure information provided to the EQA team indicated that 98 percent of the teachers (489 of 497) had appropriate licensure. Ninety-five percent of the administrators (42 of 44) had appropriate licensure.

In 2007-2008, the district added 24 staff positions, including ELA and math coaches for the grammar schools, and changed the structure of department heads to grade 7-12 coordinators to improve articulation between the grammar schools and the high school. Many of the new positions added were to reduce class size where needed.

The district had a formal mentoring program for new staff members, with a coordinator for the program. A consultant from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell met four times a year with the mentors and provided them with training. The district had a Mentor Program Handbook that explained the purpose and goals of the mentor program.

The district conducted a four-day orientation program for new staff members. The four days included workshops on topics such as teaching strategies, classroom management, teaching

English language learners, teaching students with special needs, integrating technology into instruction, implementing balanced literacy for grammar school staff members, and teaching in a culturally diverse setting for high school staff members. The new teacher orientation addressed the importance of assessment and included a workshop entitled Using Assessment to Improve Student Achievement.

The district enjoyed stable teacher and administrative staffing, and it provided appropriate levels of funding to support professional development and other programs that would improve the performance of teachers and administrators. The district had a formal professional development program that linked to the DIP and SIPs. Professional development focused on balanced literacy, building teaching skills, differentiated instruction, using assessment to improve student achievement, gaining a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) by current and aspiring administrators, expanding ELL teacher training, and curriculum implementation. The district offered professional development programs for its staff before the school year started and during one professional day during the school year. The district provided in-house professional development and used substitutes to release teachers for offerings. Attendance at after-school and summer workshops and courses was voluntary.

All schools participated in the PIM process, which involved substantial collection and analysis of aggregated and disaggregated data. Each school had a PIM team and used the data to inform its SIP and its goals for improving student achievement. Principals received training in TestWiz. The district conducted weekly leadership meetings and established a Leadership Academy to expand professional development for all administrators.

Professional status teacher evaluations did not comply with state law. Principals conducted summative evaluations every four years instead of the mandated two. They met with teachers each year to discuss goals for their professional growth plans. Growth plans included written goals, and the teachers reported on their progress toward and attainment of the goals to the principal or supervisor.

The district's administrators conducted informal walk-throughs of classrooms. Principals and supervisors could not use the walk-through as part of the teacher evaluation process. Principals stated that they used the walk-through to see that objectives were on the board and that the

teacher implemented what he/she learned in professional development offerings, and they provided informal feedback to the teacher. Principals looked at teacher lesson plans and plan books. Some principals required teachers to submit a form with the learning objective of the lesson or activity and a student work sample. Principals collected the forms monthly and used them to check compliance with SIP objectives and the state frameworks. Principals used a teacher improvement plan to support struggling teachers, and the district took action against low-performing teachers.

Evaluations of principals followed the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, and the superintendent evaluated the principals annually. The superintendent gave raises based on job description and performance. Principals' goals had to match the district's goals regarding student achievement. The superintendent stated that improved achievement was part of the evaluation process.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

District policies and practices were in place for the identification, recruitment, and selection of an effective teaching staff. Interviewees stated that through the district's budget process, they kept track of retirements and resignations and determined the need for new positions, additional staff members, and consolidation of positions for cost savings.

Interviewees told the EQA team that the district posted positions on its website and advertised in local newspapers, *The Boston Globe* and Manchester *Union Leader*, a New Hampshire paper. They also indicated that the district participated in the Merrimack Valley Teacher Recruitment Fair. Representatives of the district provided specific information about teaching opportunities in Methuen at the annual fair.

The district published a Methuen Public Schools Faculty Employment brochure that highlighted facts about Methuen and its schools. Furthermore, the brochure explained the hiring process for open positions, support for new teachers, and professional development opportunities, and provided the district's website address. The website listed all employment opportunities in the following categories: administration, grammar schools, high school, Title I, special education, language acquisition, adult education, math and science, assessment and instructional personnel, curriculum and grantsmanship, substitutes, and Pleasant Valley School Age Child Care Center. Each category listed contact information for letters of interest and resumes.

Interviewees said that the principal, upper or lower administrators, department chairs, or program administrators initially screened resumes. The principals or their designee contacted candidates for initial interviews. Candidates had to provide a full application packet. When the EQA team reviewed the personnel files, the application packets of hired staff members were complete with transcripts, letters of recommendation, certification, and other pertinent information the district required. Interviewees stated that the administrators checked all references and documents submitted by the candidates before recommending them for positions. In addition, the district conducted criminal offender record information (CORI) background checks.

The selection process varied slightly. At the grammar schools, upper or lower administrators reviewed the resumes. The principal and administrators conducted the interviews. After initial interviews and "to ensure a good fit," the teachers affected by the final selection had the opportunity to interview the candidates. At the high school, the department chairs carried out the initial screenings and recommended candidates to the principal. The hiring process for administrators involved central office administrators, school council members, and parents.

Interviewees stated that there were no financial restrictions, so they could hire the most qualified candidate for the position. Salary was commensurate with experience and within the guidelines of the collective bargaining agreement. Interviewees added that the district enjoyed a high retention rate.

2. <u>All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.</u>

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to interviewees, the human resources director and the director of assessment and instructional personnel monitored licensure. A review of teacher licensure information provided to the EQA team indicated that 489 teachers out of 497 had appropriate licensure, and 42 administrators had licenses while two did not. Eight teachers did not have a license, two of whom were on waivers. The district's policy was to hire certified and highly qualified personnel, and interviewees said that in some circumstances candidates in certain certification areas such as special education, math, and science were hard to find. Of the eight teachers who did not have a license, four were special education teachers, two were science teachers, and two were math teachers. Two coordinators did not have supervisor/director certification, although one of the two had principal certification. Interviewees stated that the coordinator position was new for the 2007-2008 year. Three teachers with math certification taught science, which was outside of their teaching field.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to interviewees, the human resources director and the director of assessment and instructional personnel monitored licensure issues. Building principals had the list of all new hires, licensed or non-licensed. Of the eight unlicensed teachers, two had waivers. Interviewees said that they advised non-licensed teachers of the options available to them. Furthermore, interviewees stated that they helped to "run interference" with the Department of Education on certification issues for non-licensed staff members. Central office personnel, administrators, and mentors encouraged them to take the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) and provided them with MTEL prep materials. All new teachers, including those on waivers or lacking licensure, were assigned mentors. They were advised about professional development available to them in the district and how to obtain certification. The district's Professional Development Program Guide contained sections explaining licensure. One page explained

renewing and applying for licensure and a second page explained the requirements for advancing from initial to professional licensure.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to interviewees and a review of documents provided to the EQA team, a formal mentoring program was in place in the district, and a coordinator was assigned. A consultant from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell met four times a year with the mentors and provided them with training. The district had a Mentor Program Handbook that explained the purpose and goals of the mentor program. The handbook defined the roles and responsibilities of the mentor team, mentor, principal, new teacher, and the mentor coordinator. The mentor team included the building principal, building mentors, and new teachers. The mentor coordinator communicated with the building principals, organized and facilitated mentor support meetings, and performed other duties. The handbook included information about the selection and training of mentors.

The district conducted a four-day orientation program for new staff members, and the district provided the EQA team with a copy of the agenda. The four days included workshops on topics such as teaching strategies, classroom management, teaching English language learners, teaching students with special needs, integrating technology into instruction, implementing balanced literacy for grammar school staff members, and teaching in a culturally diverse setting for high school staff members. The new teacher orientation addressed the importance of assessment. The orientation included a workshop entitled Using Assessment to Improve Student Achievement.

According to interviewees, Methuen's mentoring program used a group mentoring model. Each grammar school had two mentors: one for the upper and one for the lower school. The high school had four mentors. The mentors at each building supported new and transitioning teachers. Each school paired new teachers with curriculum, instruction, and assessment coaches (CIAs). Coaches were experienced teachers from the same grade or department and were in close

proximity to the new teacher. They met one-on-one with new teachers and provided them with curriculum support, teaching strategies, MCAS testing information, and other topics as defined in the mentor handbook. Each school provided substitutes and allowed new teachers the opportunity to observe peer teachers and/or visit other schools. Some teachers in focus groups said that they preferred one-on-one mentoring and that they found the pairing with a CIA more valuable.

The administrative team worked collaboratively with new administrators. Administrators went on a retreat to Thompson Island. The district conducted weekly leadership meetings and established a Leadership Academy to expand professional development for all administrators.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided evidence, through interviews and documentation, that it offered a professional development program and opportunities that were oriented toward either learning or improving data analysis skills to improve student achievement. All schools participated in the PIM process, which involved substantial collection and analysis of aggregated and disaggregated data. Each school had a PIM team and used the data to inform its SIP and its goals of improving student achievement. As a spin-off from the PIM process, the district sought to take a closer look at its special education subgroup in order to address its needs and form an action plan to achieve AYP targets. It began by conducting what it called a special education PIM. The district had just initiated this process.

Administrators received training in the use of the TestWiz data analysis program. They used the program to analyze their MCAS test results and they shared the data with their staff members at staff, grade-level, or department meetings.

The district offered a graduate course in Using Assessment to Improve Student Achievement. Designed for teachers in grades 3-12, the course taught teachers how to create classroom

assessments that reflected the curriculum frameworks, and to use TestWiz reports to improve teaching and learning. According to interviewees, the district offered this course once a year, and approximately 20 percent of staff members have taken the course. In addition to this course, the district offered five two-hour workshops on assessment. Administrators acknowledged that the district could improve in providing data analysis skills to teachers, but they told the EQA team that they provided data analyses to any teacher who requested them.

The district had one professional development day during the course of the school year. Even though teachers attended after-school and summer offerings, interviewees said they did not reach the entire staff because teacher attendance at these was voluntary. The district offered incentives such as stipends, professional development points (PDPs), and college credit to enroll in workshops or courses. The district negotiated four early-release days for professional development at the K-8 schools for the 2007-2008 school year. The professional development was building based and varied depending on the needs of each school. Teacher focus groups told the EQA team that the professional development offerings did not always meet the needs of the low-incidence subject teachers.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district encouraged and provided professional growth opportunities for staff members. The district provided funding and used grant money for professional development workshops, seminars, graduate courses, and a CAGS program through Salem Sate College. Through this arrangement, staff members could take graduate courses on site and for free. For a fee of $200, staff members could elect to receive college credit. When teachers met the required number of credits, they received a salary increase. Furthermore, staff members had the opportunity to earn professional development points for re-licensure. Interviewees said that they have a knowledgeable and educated staff. The district used Methuen faculty members to provide quality professional development, and many of them taught the graduate courses offered by Salem State.

The district also offered a CAGS in program administration through Salem State for aspiring administrators. The second cohort began in the summer of 2006. Interviewees said that the district promoted qualified staff members from its ranks and hired those who participated in the CAGS program, mentioning specifically two special education administrators, an English coordinator, and a social studies department chair. The district used the Title II Improving Educator Quality grant to enable teachers and administrators to obtain their CAGS.

The district expected all new teachers to take a key professional development course, Building Teaching Skills, based on *The Skillful Teacher* by Saphier and Gower. Course participants received graduate credit or professional development points. Its purpose was to develop strong instructional practices, and the district based its observation and evaluation system on the teaching skills taught in this course.

In the fall of 2006, the district began a Leadership Academy for all administrators. The district divided the leadership into two groups and provided half-day sessions for each group. The academy met eight times per year and was designed to foster K-12 collegiality and strengthen leadership skills. According to interviewees, a consultant from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell worked with the administrators.

The district offered the staff stipends for participating in curriculum development study groups during the summer, mentoring new staff members, and performing after-school tutoring and other activities. It paid substitutes to release staff members for professional development purposes. Two reading grants funded professional development in literacy and assisted two grammar schools in implementing a balanced literacy program, which the district expanded to all its schools.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

A review of documents and information provided by interviewees revealed that the district had a formal professional development program. The district addressed professional development in its DIP and SIPs, and it published a professional development program guide. The district based its plan on program content; student, teacher, and administrator needs; and student achievement data. It offered a variety of workshops, graduate courses, in-house coaching, and a mentoring program, and it hired consultants to improve the staff's skills.

The district conducted a professional development survey in February 2006. The professional development council designed the survey to learn about preferences regarding design, time, and topics for professional development activities offered by the district. The district administered the survey at one of the monthly faculty meetings held in each building. At least 80 percent of the staff returned the survey. The district then used the results to decide on future offerings and activities for workshops for release days and building-based professional development. The district also solicited feedback from staff members at the end of each Salem State graduate course offered.

The DIP stated that one of the district's priorities was to create additional time for professional development that would be embedded in the contractual work year. The district hired math and ELA coaches for each grammar school for the 2007-2008 school year. Coaches offered professional development through modeling lessons and coaching. In addition, the coaches assisted teachers to implement instructional strategies learned through professional development programs into the classroom. The ELA coaches supported the district's balanced literacy program in the grammar schools and helped teachers use instructional strategies based on research to improve student achievement in reading.

The district replaced the department chair structure with curriculum coordinators to supervise curriculum development and articulation in grades 7-12. Coordinators modeled lessons, coached teachers, and facilitated sharing among teachers.

Each grammar school planned four half-day professional development workshops based on the needs of students and staff members. For example, one school needed to have staff members work on integrating technology into the classroom and provided training in using SmartBoards.

Based on ELL subgroup scores on the MCAS tests, the district required teachers to take category 1, 2, 3, and 4 ELL courses with the Department of Education. Furthermore, it provided professional development to staff members in developing skills in instructing ELL students.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Professional development offerings supported changes in programmatic offerings and provided teachers with the skills needed to use new materials and texts. For example, teachers received training in the new language arts series Harcourt Trophies and in differentiated instruction. Multiple leaders such as principals, supervisors, coaches, and mentors supervised the implementation of new professional development practices in the classroom. Each worked individually or in groups to improve instruction. For example, the ELA and math coaches monitored the balanced literacy and new math programs.

The district also trained staff members in professional development to improve education services for limited English proficient students. Teachers received category 1, 2, 3, and 4 ELL training from the Department of Education. Regular and special education teachers received training in administering the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). The district provided training for staff members in using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

The district's year 1, year 2, and year 3 cycle of evaluation mandated that teachers submit annual goals and an evaluation of those goals in their professional growth plans. A review of the personnel files revealed that teachers submitted growth plans and reported on their progress. One staff member took the MELA-O training course to fulfill the goal of assisting English language learners.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had written policies regarding evaluation of professional staff members and administrators. The Unit B contract for administrators, superintendent's contract, and principals' contract explicitly required annual evaluations.

The EQA team reviewed the evaluations in the personnel files of 44 administrators employed in the district. The principals and Unit B administrators received annual evaluations that complied with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38. The evaluations followed the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership and were informative, instructive, and promoted growth and overall effectiveness.

The school committee annually evaluated the superintendent, and the evaluation was oriented toward meeting mutually agreed upon goals. The superintendent evaluated principals based on her observations. According to the principals' contract, their evaluations were based on the their job descriptions.

The superintendent gave raises based on job description and performance. Principals' goals had to match the district's goals for student achievement. Each school had a SIP that contained goals and objectives related to student achievement. The superintendent said that improved achievement was part of the evaluation process.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In agreements between the Methuen School Committee and the Methuen Education Association Unit A, the evaluation process for professional status teachers consisted of a four-year cycle during the period under review. However, MGL Chapter 71, Section 38 requires that professional status teachers be evaluated every two years.

A review of the evaluations in the personnel files of a random sample of 43 professional and non-professional status teachers indicated that 17 were timely because they were completed within the period under review, but 22 were not aligned with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38. Most evaluations were informative and some were instructive, and all were signed. Evaluators observed new staff members three times a year and performed a summative evaluation each year until the teacher obtained professional status.

According to the teacher contract and interviewees, observations and evaluations of non-professional staff members began with a pre-conference. In year one, two, and three, the principal or designated evaluator observed each new teacher three times and wrote one summative evaluation at the end of each year by April 15, and teachers signed and dated all observations and summative evaluations.

When a teacher had achieved professional status, years one, two, and three were non-evaluation years. Teachers set individual, collective, or systemic annual goals. In the evaluation year four, evaluators made three announced observations and wrote the summative evaluation. According to the Teacher Evaluation Handbook 2005-2008, teachers submitted their goals by September 30 and annually submitted an evaluation of those goals between June 1 and June 15. According to principals interviewed, they "spend hours" writing evaluations and make "strong use" of them. Principals can place a teacher on an improvement plan anytime in the evaluation cycle.

The teacher contract included a formal remediation process for teachers who were struggling, and interviewees indicated that when necessary they implemented an improvement plan for at-risk teachers. The district provided at-risk teachers with support, professional development, and supervision that were established to assist the teacher in meeting improvement objectives. Interviewees stated that they used the plan as a tool to improve teacher performance or dismiss teachers who did not meet the standards. Administrators stated that they did not rehire non-professional status teachers who did not meet their standards. They told the EQA team that of the four professional status teachers on improvement plans, two left the district and sought employment elsewhere. One teacher met the objectives, and another one was on an improvement plan.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district's administrators used a variety of ways to supervise staff members and to implement the district's and schools' improvement goals for student achievement.

The district's mentor program provided support for newly assigned teachers. Principals, mentors and CIAs supervised and supported new staff members in daily classroom management, teaching strategies, integrating technology into lessons, and instruction of special needs and ELL students.

The district's administrators conducted walk-throughs that were informal, but the district had no standard procedure in place. The Leadership Academy has just started to organize practice walk-throughs with a consultant in order to conduct walk-throughs that would be consistent. Principals and supervisors could not use the walk-throughs as part of teachers' evaluations. Principals stated that they used the walk-through to see that objectives were on the board, and that teachers implemented what they learned in professional development offerings. They provided informal feedback to the teacher.

Principals looked at teacher lesson plans and plan books. Some principals required that teachers submit a form with the learning objective of the lesson or activity and a student work sample. Principals collected the forms monthly and used them to check compliance with SIP objectives and the state frameworks.

The district hired ELA and math coaches for each grammar school in 2007-2008. The coaches modeled lessons and coached teachers in improving the delivery of instruction in literacy and mathematics, and the coaches met regularly with grade-level and vertical-level teams to discuss student achievement data and their use in planning lessons.

In addition, the district replaced the department chair structure with full-time curriculum coordinators who supervised curriculum development and articulation in grades 7-12. They also evaluated teachers and facilitated sharing among teachers. The high school principal met with the coordinators weekly to discuss gaps in instruction.

As cited previously, the district's evaluation cycle spanned four years, and in years one, two, and three of the cycle teachers developed goals and annually evaluated the goals with the principal. The district had an at-risk teacher improvement plan that it used to help struggling teachers.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district linked its employment, supervision, and professional development processes and supported them with appropriate levels of funding. The district had policies and procedures in place relative to staff hiring, evaluation, improvement, dismissal, compensation, and fringe benefits. Evaluation procedures were in place for administrators and teachers. Principals followed up on the classroom teachers' use of instructional strategies learned through professional development by monitoring them in the classroom. Mentors were in place to assist new teachers.

The district adequately funded professional development accounts. It budgeted money and used grants to fund its professional development program. According to budget documents and the

End of Year Pupil and Financial Report, the district spent $329,184 on professional development leadership, staff professional days, and professional day substitutes for instructional staff members in FY 2006. In FY 2005, it spent $292,860 for professional development leadership and staff professional days.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district developed and used an Emergency Procedures Manual dated June 2000. The manual contained procedures for 13 building and other emergencies. The appendix contained appropriate forms and parent letters. The district distributed its emergency management plan, and all staff members had training in the proper operation of the plan. Procedures were in place for substitutes, student teachers, and volunteers to the extent possible. Each school had a full-time school resource officer who was a Methuen police officer, supervised by a police sergeant.

The Methuen police and fire departments conducted practice drills in each of the schools including unannounced drills and practice lockdowns. Principals had a script to follow that stated the information to tell the dispatcher, and the announcements to make in the school about the lockdown. Teachers had red and green cards to place at their doors. Police and administrative teams checked each room. Furthermore, each outside door had a number that was used to direct emergency personnel to the exact location of the emergency.

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

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district disaggregated MCAS data, but focused primarily on aggregated data to adjust instruction and provide additional programs and support.
- In fall 2007, subgroup data analysis led the PIM leadership team to identify specific strategies to assist the special needs population. Strategies focused on test-taking skills, vocabulary development, and interpretation of test questions.
- From 2005 to 2007, the district's balanced literacy program resulted in an increase in the percentage of grade 4 students who attained proficiency on the MCAS test in ELA.
- The district had a protocol that enabled students who moved half way through the school year to remain in their old school if the parents provided transportation.
- The district engaged in several outreach programs in order to improve communication and provide assistance to parents.
- To reduce the numbers of students dropping out of school, the district offered day, afternoon, and evening alternatives to enable students to retrieve credits, take additional courses, and pursue coursework leading to a GED.

- During the review period, the district's in-school and out-of-school suspension rates exceeded state averages, with the exception of the out-of-school suspension rate in 2006. The high school had exceptionally high suspension rates.
- The district had a high staff absenteeism rate, which was especially high at one grammar school, where teachers' absenteeism averaged 15.5 days per year.

Summary

The use of aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data led the Methuen Public Schools to provide a variety of programs and services to assist all students, including its subgroup populations. By 2007, all grammar schools used the Reading First three-tiered model of balanced literacy instruction. The district provided Title I services in ELA and math at two of the four grammar schools. Science offerings changed at the high school to include microbiology in grade 9 and macrobiology in grade 10, with more emphasis on physical science at grades 7 and 8. At the elementary levels, after-school and summer school programs provided targeted support in ELA and math for at-risk populations and included transportation. In fall 2007, the PIM leadership team recognized specific weaknesses reflected in the special needs students' MCAS results and identified strategies to assist their progress.

Subgroup participation in the MCAS tests ranged from 98 to 100 percent. However, subgroup participation in the district's accelerated programs, particularly the Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the high school, did not reflect proportionate representation. However, the district had begun to track AP scores, course grades, and subgroup participation, and planned to use the data to make decisions to enable more students to participate.

During the period under review, the district monitored student attendance and used procedures to reduce excessive absenteeism and promote attendance. The district's attendance rate corresponded closely to the state average. At the high school level, the absenteeism rate was slightly lower than the state average. A report prepared by the director of assessment and instructional personnel cited higher absence rates among subgroups and listed recommendations to improve their attendance.

Teachers received 15 sick days and three essential days each year. Some administrators said that teachers used their essential days which, when taken at the end of the year, created issues

regarding continuity of programs for students and availability of substitute teachers. The staff absenteeism rate for short-term illnesses and other absences, which included essential days (but not jury or military service), averaged 10.5 days per year. For the same categories of absence, teachers at the Marsh Grammar School averaged 15.5 days per year. The district's rate for absences that included short- and long-term illnesses, professional development, and other absences averaged 12.2 days per year. For the same categories, absences at the Marsh Grammar School averaged 17.3 days per year.

The district's out-of-school and in-school suspension rates fluctuated over the review period, and the high school had high rates of both types of suspension. The in-school suspension rate at the high school increased from 22.9 percent in 2005 to 27.9 percent in 2006 before dropping to 20.3 percent in 2007. The high school's out-of-school suspension rate increased from 18.3 percent in 2005 to 20.2 percent in 2006 to 25.4 percent in 2007. Interviewees mentioned that the district preferred to keep students in school as opposed to sending them home for misbehavior. However, some disciplinary infractions resulting in in-school suspension were minor and included missing a teacher detention, using inappropriate language, and tardiness. In addition, the district policy on "student decorum," dated July 1985, related only to the high school. The school committee expected to begin policy manual revisions in January 2008.

The district implemented programs to reduce the number of students dropping out of school. In addition to providing guidance services, the high school offered alternative programs during and after school and in the evening for students to make up courses, take additional coursework, and complete classes leading to attainment of a GED. The Alpha program, held after school for three hours daily, provided 21 students with additional support in order to continue their education.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district administration and staff reviewed aggregated and disaggregated MCAS student achievement data and implemented support services and programs to assist all students, including those at risk. The district had specific procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting MCAS scores through reports disseminated by the director of assessment and instructional personnel. Administrators using the PIM process met in teams to look at the student achievement data. Principals used TestWiz to further analyze their respective schools' data and met with classroom teachers who participated in the review of test questions. Interviewees told examiners that prior to 2007, they focused primarily on the aggregate population and that many of their subgroups overlapped, making it difficult to examine one subgroup in isolation. However, in fall 2007 administrators, using the PIM process, focused their attention on the special education subgroup as a whole and particularly those students scoring near the 'Proficient' level on the MCAS tests. They identified the need to incorporate test-taking strategies, vocabulary development, and ways to think about test questions. Interviewees told examiners that the principals were responsible for developing a plan for their own buildings, using MCAS data analysis and incorporating relevant goals into their SIPs.

As a result, the analysis of MCAS data led the district to incorporate support services and programs in order to assist all students as well as those at risk. For example, in 2005 the high school adjusted its science sequence to offer microbiology at grade 9 followed by macrobiology at grade 10. Science courses at grades 7 and 8 placed more emphasis on physical science. MCAS prep classes provided additional support for at-risk grade 10 students, and MCAS summer programs were offered for high school students and those transitioning from grade 8. Alternative day, afternoon, and evening programs provided students with the opportunity to take credit courses for graduation, to pursue a GED, or for course retrieval. In particular, the Alpha program offered students in danger of dropping out of school the opportunity to continue course work after school from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. In 2007, 21 students participated in the program, which was taught by four certified teachers. At the elementary level, after-school programs at the Comprehensive and Marsh grammar schools provided targeted support in ELA and math for at-risk populations and included transportation. Two ESL staff members were hired to assist students at the Marsh and Tenney grammar schools. Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) were developed for students in danger of failing the MCAS tests, although interviewees told

examiners that the district had only begun to focus on ways to target assistance needed for students on ISSPs.

The district's student participation rate on the 2007 MCAS tests for the aggregate and all subgroup populations ranged from 98 to 100 percent, which exceeded the state's participation target of 95 percent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used formative and summative assessment data to identify all students who did not meet expectations. Interviewees said that in addition to the MCAS tests, the district also used the DIBELS, DRA, GRADE, MEPA, PSAT, SAT, and ACT assessments, and quarterly common exams at the high school in all ELA, math, and science courses. At the elementary level, students in grades K-2 were tested with the DIBELS, and those in grades K-4 with the GRADE and DRA. In order to assist students at the elementary level, assessment data from the DIBELS provided information to determine the level of interventions the students needed based on the Reading First three-tiered model. The Tenney and Timony grammar schools had used the three-tiered model since 2005, and the other two grammar schools began using the model in 2007. Administrators said that at the elementary level, the teachers also used the unit and holistic assessments from the Harcourt Trophies reading program.

In addition to MCAS prep, after-school, and summer programs provided at the high school and after-school programs at the grammar schools, students at the Tenney and Timony schools also received Title I services in both ELA and math. Although the Comprehensive and Marsh grammar schools did not qualify for Title I assistance, two tutors were assigned to those schools to provide remedial instruction in ELA and math. Through the Parent Partnership for Achieving Literacy (PAL) program, limited English proficient (LEP) students were provided more assistance during the school day. At the elementary level, each school was assigned a PAL tutor

who assisted teachers in classrooms and acted as interpreters. At the high school level, a full-time tutor acted as a parent liaison and assisted with translating. In addition, at the high school level, a certified ELL teacher co-taught science classes with LEP students in 2006 and began the same model for math in 2007. In 2007, the high school also hired a Hispanic social worker to assist with challenges facing students with limited English speaking skills. During the review period, the ELA proficiency index for LEP students increased from 44.3 proficiency index (PI) points in 2005 to 45.4 points in 2006 to 48.6 points in 2007. The math proficiency index (MPI) for LEP students was 41.0 PI points in 2005, 36.1 points in 2006, and 43.7 points in 2007.

As a result of analysis of the data derived from various assessments, the district provided students with supplementary and remedial services that resulted in improved academic achievement and MCAS test proficiency. For example, the district's retention rates of 2.2 percent in 2005 and 1.8 percent in 2006 were lower than the state averages for the same years. Documents indicated that during 2004 through 2006, the percentage of Methuen students scoring '3' or higher on AP exams exceeded both the state and national averages for public schools. On the MCAS tests in both ELA and math, the percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories increased each year from 2005 to 2007. However, the MCAS science test scores over the same time period declined.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided early intervention literacy programs in order to raise the number of students scoring at the 'Proficient' level on the grade 4 MCAS ELA test. The DIP for 2006-2008 identified a balanced literacy approach as a major goal for reading. Interviews with administrators and teachers and a review of documents verified that the district prioritized balanced literacy and supported the initiative by providing classroom libraries, leveled book rooms, and Scott Foresman Early Reading Intervention materials; implementing the Harcourt Brace Trophies reading program in grades K-6; incorporating specific writing strategies from the

Writers Workshop and 6 + 1 Traits writing programs; providing training in the use of DIBELS, reading and writing programs; and implementing the Reading First three-tiered model in all elementary schools. The three-tiered reading model began at the Tenney Grammar School in 2003, followed by the Timony Grammar School in 2005. In 2007, the Comprehensive and Marsh grammar schools started using the model. The model required frequent monitoring of student progress using a variety of assessments including the DIBELS, specified amounts of instructional reading time for grades K-8, and prescribed intervention strategies depending on which tier corresponded to the students' test scores.

Interviewees told EQA examiners that the components of the balanced literacy program included guided, shared, interactive, and independent reading, in addition to word study and emphasis on vocabulary development. Classroom observations by EQA examiners confirmed the use of ELA and math word walls in most elementary classes. Principals, associate principals, and ELA facilitators, replaced by full-time reading coaches in 2007, provided program oversight for 2005 and 2006. From 2005 to 2007, the number of grade 4 students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories on the MCAS ELA test increased from 40 percent in 2005 to 41 percent in 2006 to 48 percent in 2007.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had procedures in place to immediately assess the skills and needs of entering and mobile students when records were not available and to make educationally appropriate and effective placements. At all levels, guidance counselors were responsible for the placement of entering students. In the high school, the registration process involved a detailed information gathering session with guidance personnel, contact with the student's previous school whenever possible, and placement tests given by department heads in all academic areas including ELA, math, science, social studies, and foreign language. After testing, the department heads made recommendations for the student's academic level and appropriate course placement.

Interviewees said that often those entering without records were LEP students. At all levels K-12, the district administered an English language proficiency assessment that included assessment of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and it used the data to determine the level and types of support needed by the students. Further information for LEP students in the form of documentation from previous schools assisted with the proper grade placements.

Although mobility within the district was not high, according to interviewees, the implementation of standard reading and math programs at the elementary level helped with academic consistency for the four grammar schools. Further, the district had established protocols to assist students and families who moved from one part of the city to another or from Methuen to another nearby district during the school year. If the student moved during the second half of the year, the student could remain enrolled in his/her old school if the parent was willing to provide transportation.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided programs and services to help alleviate the adverse effects of poverty through full-day kindergarten, after-school and summer programs at the grammar schools, Title I services at the Tenney and Timony grammar schools, a breakfast program at all schools, and guidance services at all schools. In 2006, the district provided after-school assistance including transportation for grade 4 students at the Tenney and grade 5-6 students at the Timony. The program was funded through a 21st Century grant. The PAL program funded a similar program for homework and MCAS support at the Comprehensive and Marsh grammar schools that also included transportation. The PAL program also provided reading assistance to parents with limited English proficiency so they were more equipped to help their child with homework.

In addition to after-school programs, the district offered several different summer programs at the elementary level. The Extended School Year (ESY) program assisted over 100 special needs

students, and another program offered enrichment activities on a tuition basis. Both programs included lunch and transportation.

Interviewees told EQA examiners that the district's breakfast program had been in effect prior to the review period and was open to all students. It was well attended and in some cases fed up to 200 students. Many of the students participating in the breakfast program at the Timony Grammar School also received free or reduced-cost lunch. Guidance counselors in each school provided services to assist low-income and other students in acquiring pro-social skills. In addition, they acted as liaisons between the school and human services agencies within the community, which included the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Trauma Intervention Program (TIP), the Head Start Program, and the Lawrence Youth Court for Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district directly involved parents and community organizations in the education of their children through regular communication and outreach. The district also encouraged participation by providing translators for meetings and events and child care for some activities. In addition to college nights, open house, and parent-teacher conferences at the high school level, high school personnel presented a parent night at the grammar schools to assist with the transition of students from grade 8 to grade 9. At the elementary level, each grammar school had an active parent-teacher organization (PTO) that held monthly meetings and provided a parent liaison to the school to facilitate communication and help with processes such as registration. Each school also developed a monthly newsletter distributed to students on Fridays with information on upcoming activities including open houses, MCAS nights at the grammar schools, book and author nights, and special family activities. The district's new website included a calendar of upcoming events in addition to curriculum, contact, and other support information.

The Arlington neighborhood of Methuen included many poverty-stricken families. The school district reached out to that community through a contact and through the Adult Center. Outreach activities for parents provided computer assistance and instruction on ways to help their children with homework. Interviewees said that parent outreach activities were facilitated more easily through a program director. In the 2006-2008 DIP, one of the district goals to be presented to the school committee in January 2008 emphasized increased collaboration with Methuen's Arlington neighborhood after-school program in an effort to improve achievement of that neighborhood's poor and minority students.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

District administration and staff members had procedures in place in order to assist students to make a smooth transition from one school, grade level, or program to another. The district had four K-8 grammar schools and one high school. Each grammar school contained a lower school for students in grades K-4 and an upper school for grades 5-8. When students moved from grade to grade in the grammar schools, the last day of school was set aside for "move up" day, during which students went to their next year's class, met their new teacher, received locker assignments, and learned about their teacher's expectations for the coming year. In order to help special needs students transition smoothly, each student had a case manager who was a special needs teacher. The case manager was responsible for coordinating the transfer of the student's IEP and communicating with all teachers the student would have the following year.

The transition process for grade 8 students moving to the high school began in January when high school administrators went to the grammar schools to talk to students about course selections and academic expectations. Guidance staff members communicated about the transfer of student records and other pertinent data. In late August, incoming grade 9 students and their parents attended an open house at the high school and toured the building. Interviewees told examiners that the grade 7-12 coordinators, hired in 2007, would help improve communication

between the high school and grammar schools to facilitate a smoother transition for students. They said that the new coordinators' role provided the linkage between the grammar schools and the high school to improve curriculum articulation, help teachers assess work through criteria based on learning standards, ensure that teachers used valid and reliable assessment tools/techniques and varied instructional strategies, and ensure consistency in grading practices and teacher expectations.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the district had fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices for discipline referrals, suspension, and exclusion, the district's in-school and out-of-school suspension rates exceeded state averages during the review period, with the exception of the out-of-school suspension rate in 2006. For example, in 2007 the district had an in-school suspension rate of 5.5 percent, compared to 3.2 percent for the state, and it had an out-of-school suspension rate of 6.8 percent, compared to the state rate of 5.8 percent. In addition, the high school had particularly high suspension rates. The in-school suspension rate at the high school increased from 22.9 percent in 2005 to 27.9 percent in 2006 before dropping to 20.3 percent in 2007. The high school's out-of-school suspension rated increased from 18.3 percent in 2005 to 20.2 percent in 2006 to 25.4 percent in 2007.

When asked about the increase in suspension rates, interviewees told examiners that the district prioritized keeping students in school as opposed to sending them home, and that out-of-school suspension was imposed for very serious misbehavior such as drug or weapon-related incidents. At the high school level, an in-school suspension room, supervised by a paraprofessional, was used from third period until 3:00 p.m. for students serving in-school suspension. According to interviews, infractions resulting in the student being assigned to in-school suspension were minor. Examples included missing a teacher detention, inappropriate language use, and tardiness.

A review of the high school handbook and the district's discipline policy indicated that the two aligned, although the "student decorum" policy referred only to the high school and was dated

July 15, 1985. Both listed four categories of infractions with a list of corresponding consequences. School committee members stated that a revision of the policy manual was scheduled to begin in January 2008. At the elementary level, the grammar school handbook provided the code of discipline and referenced the use of an assertive discipline model that identified a progressive form of consequences for in-school, recess, and bus misbehavior. New teachers received instruction on Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline Model during the four-day new teacher induction.

In order to reduce discipline referrals, each school's SIP included at least one goal to enhance school climate. For example, both the Tenney and Comprehensive grammar schools had goals with measurable outcomes related to student behavior and a safe/non-threatening school environment. Additionally, the high school SIP included three goals related to a positive school environment and referred to the use of attendance, discipline, and suspension data to determine goal attainment. One high school goal indicated a pilot program would begin in 2008 to help with students' conflict resolution skills. Further, administrators told examiners that the district had a peer mediation program in all schools since before the period under review. The district had also provided assemblies for students on various topics including diversity, tolerance, anti-smoking, peer leadership, and anti-bullying. Programs varied depending on the level of student. Although the 2006 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) annual accreditation report referenced the use of the Second Step Anti-Bullying Program at the kindergarten level, EQA examiners were unable to determine if the program had been fully implemented in all grammar schools and what effects the program had on reducing incidents of bullying at the kindergarten or subsequent elementary levels. Although the district had policies, procedures, and school goals in the SIPs to address discipline, their effect had not yet been reflected in a reduction of the district's suspension rates, particularly at the high school.

The district's retention rates of 2.2 percent in 2005 and 1.8 percent in 2006 (most recent data available) were lower than the state averages of 2.6 and 2.5 percent, respectively. In 2004 through 2006, the district retained more students in grade 1 than in grades 2-8. In addition, in 2004, more students in grade 10 (a total of 37) were retained than in grades 9, 11, or 12. Furthermore, in both 2005 and 2006, more grade 9 students (51 in 2005 and 45 in 2006) were retained than students in grades 10-12.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district had policies, procedures, and practices to prevent and minimize students from dropping out of school. The high school provided students with several options in order to continue their schooling. These included the Alpha and PASS programs as well as alternative programs held during the day and evening. Four teachers hired by the district provided academic support through the Alpha program to approximately 21 students who were at risk of dropping out of school. The program was held after school from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Interviewees said the program was "well received" and had prevented at-risk students from dropping out of school. In addition to the Alpha program, the high school also offered an evening program for students to retrieve course credit, take additional courses for graduation, or pursue a GED. The PASS program provided intensive assistance for special education students with significant behavioral needs. It was housed at the Tenney, Timony, and high schools and included all-day and evening components. Interviewees told examiners that the program deterred students at the high school from dropping out of school. During the period under review, the dropout rate decreased from 4.3 percent in 2005 to 3.6 percent in 2006 (most recent data available).

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district implemented policies and programs that addressed the needs of homeless students and provided them with support including transportation, free lunch, and equitable access to programs within the schools. Although the district enrolled only seven homeless students in 2006 and 18 in 2007, interviewees said the district was sensitive to their needs. The director of pupil services served as the liaison for homeless students, and principals at each building provided contact between the office of the director of pupil services and homeless students in order to coordinate transportation, free lunch, and other services.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Although some variations existed within the district regarding monitoring and reporting procedures for student attendance, the district emphasized the importance of attendance by communicating with students and their parents, recognizing students with exemplary attendance records, and analyzing attendance data to determine which processes needed to be examined and improved. According to interviewees, student attendance was tracked at each building. Each school sent quarterly absenteeism reports to the assistant superintendent. In cases of excessive absence, parents received letters from the school and meetings with parents occurred if the problem persisted.

Grammar schools expected parents to call their child's school to report an absence, and if a parent did not leave a message on the system, the school called the parent to verify the student's absence. The grammar school handbook indicated that students who accumulated more than 30 days of absence, or the equivalent of one-sixth of the school year, would not be promoted to the next grade, although the principal had the authority to waive the policy for medical or other extenuating circumstances.

At the high school level, the student handbook indicated that the maximum allowable limit of absences per course was eight for a semester course and 16 for a full-year course. Further, high school students with excessive absences would lose course credit, but could request credit reinstatement through a specific appeal process. The district also had an attendance policy dated August 27, 1984 that included academic penalties for school absences, presumably at the high school level. For example, "students who exceed 5 undocumented absences from any and all classes during a given marking term will automatically fail that class or those classes for the term," and "each class cut will result in the lowering of the student's academic average by one letter grade."

The district's student attendance rates of 94.7 percent in 2005 and 94.5 percent in 2006 exceeded the state averages for those years, but its rate of 94.4 percent in 2007 was slightly below the state

average of 94.6 percent. However, the high school's student attendance rates of 92.0 percent in 2006 and 91.3 percent in 2007 were below the state averages. In an attendance report for 2005-2006 prepared by the director of assessment and instructional personnel, concerns were cited regarding the large number of high school students who had been absent more than 20 days, a rate higher than at the grammar schools. Additionally, absenteeism of some subgroups, particularly Hispanic, low-income, and special education students, was higher than that of the high school's regular education population. Most notably, 66 percent of Hispanic students had missed more than 10 days of school per year. Recommendations resulting from the report included the need to track absenteeism, develop strategies for early and targeted intervention, and devise a means to engage students and their families to improve student attendance.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

District and school procedures enabled the tracking of staff attendance and promoted the importance of staff attendance. The director of assessment and instructional personnel tracked staff attendance for the district, and at each building principals used their own record keeping systems to monitor staff attendance. In late 2007, the district planned to implement a system called ISTAFF that would enable principals to replace their current systems for recording information on staff absences as well as other data.

Each teacher had 15 sick days per year and three essential or personal days. Some administrators said that teachers took their three essential days each year, and near the end of the school year staff absences became problematic due to their impact on continuity of instruction and ability to acquire substitute teachers. The district's staff absenteeism rate for short-term illnesses and absences for other reasons including essential and bereavement days averaged 10.5 days per teacher. Absences for long- and short-term illnesses, professional development, and those for other reasons averaged 12.16 days per teacher. Absenteeism rates at each school in the district were similar to the district rate except at the Marsh Grammar School. Absenteeism rates for

short-term illnesses and other reasons at the Marsh averaged 15.54 days per teacher, and absenteeism rates for short- and long-term illnesses, professional development, and other absences averaged 17.3 days per teacher.

Administrators told EQA examiners that school principals handled excessive absence issues, and that provisions in the collective bargaining agreement addressed the need for a doctor's note for 10 consecutive absences. Further, sick-leave buyback language in the contract rewarded teachers monetarily who had accumulated unused sick days at the time of retirement.

In order to maintain continuity of the instructional program, the district had begun to address changes that included increasing the substitute pay rate to $65.00 per day and plans to "expand the pool of substitute teachers and to explore the possibility of permanently assigning some substitutes to individual schools," as stated in the 2006-2008 DIP.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the district offered advanced and accelerated programs at the high school and grammar school levels, it did not have formal procedures to increase subgroup representation in these programs.

In 2007, the high school offered eight AP courses including biology, calculus, chemistry, English literature and composition, European history, physics, studio art-drawing, and United States history. Most students enrolled in AP courses took the corresponding exam. In 2006 and 2007, the director of assessment and instructional personnel prepared reports that tracked AP scores, course grades, and subgroup participation in challenging coursework. AP class enrollment data indicated that "girls outnumbered boys by about three to one," and that although 21 percent of the student population was Hispanic, only 4.1 percent took AP courses. Additionally, less than 10 percent of low-income students took AP courses although 25 percent of Methuen high school students came from low-income families. Interviewees stated that although they didn't have

formal procedures to increase the participation of subgroup students in AP courses, the reports prompted the district to begin looking at ways to enable more students to participate.

In addition to AP courses, the district also had a gifted and talented program at all four grammar schools during the review period. The criteria for participation included achievement data and teacher recommendation. In 2005, curriculum coordinators at each building provided special projects and offered opportunities for students to expand their intellectual interests in addition to modeling math and writing lessons in classrooms. Interviewees told examiners that in 2006, due to the consolidation of the curriculum coordinator positions, the four schools shared two coordinators. In the 2007-2008 school year, the program ended when one coordinator retired and the other took another position within the district. Another program at the grammar schools provided the opportunity for high-achieving grade 8 math students to be transported to the high school to take an advanced math course. In 2007-2008, grammar schools offered accelerated math on site, eliminating the need to transport students to the high school. Although accelerated programs existed at the elementary level, the district did not have formal procedures, policies, or practices to increase subgroup representation in them.

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

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- As a result of increases in net school spending and Chapter 70 aid, the district's budget and supplementary funding had been adequate to provide necessary resources.
- All stakeholders participated in the development of the district budget, which incorporated the PIM process.
- The district and the city did not have a five-year capital plan, and there had not been a capital budget for several years. The mayor planned to develop a capital budget for the ensuing year.
- The district and the city did not have an agreed-upon and signed written agreement for calculating indirect charges levied on the school district budget by the city.
- The four grammar school buildings were well maintained and conducive to the learning process. A statement of interest had been submitted to the state for a renovated and expanded high school.
- The school district employed a director of curriculum and grantsmanship who successfully pursued entitlement, private, and competitive grants.

- The district had systems in place to ensure students' safety in the schools.

Summary

School committee policy defined the budget process, which the superintendent adhered to. The budget was developed based on the district's and schools' short- and long-term goals as delineated in the DIP and SIPs. The district improvement planning process followed a protocol that had been developed to emphasize data-driven decision-making, and the development of the budget reflected this by making use of the Performance Improvement Mapping process. Improving student MCAS test performance and making AYP at all district schools were the driving forces in the development of the budget. The school committee, superintendent, teachers, and members of the school councils and parent-teacher organizations participated in the budget's development to ensure that students' educational needs would be met. The school committee and the superintendent had been committed to preserving small class sizes, a goal which the district prioritized in the budget development process.

The district developed the budget, and the city funded it, based on the anticipated required local contribution and Chapter 70 aid. The budget document did not include information from state and federal grants, revolving accounts, and from other financial sources. The budget process commenced in September when principals, supervisors, and department heads assessed their budget needs, after which they met with the superintendent, business manager, and the administrative team. The superintendent convened a leadership team to determine staffing needs. The superintendent then reviewed and finalized the budget and presented it to the school committee, which was followed by approximately four budget workshops by the full school committee. The school committee held a public hearing for the FY 2007 budget on June 29, 2006, followed by the adoption of the budget. The approved district budget was sent to the mayor for incorporation into the city budget. The school district budget had been finalized upon receipt of state aid, which occurred sometime in April or May.

The superintendent, administrators, and faculty members stated in interviews that the city provided adequate support to meet the educational needs of Methuen's students. The teaching staff members stated that they were well provisioned with instructional supplies and materials, and allocations were made based on student and school needs rather than a per pupil basis. The 2007-2008 budget added 24 teaching positions including ELA and math coaches for each of the

four K-8 schools and additional teachers to maintain low class sizes. The district lacked a capital plan for several years, and the budgets for the period under review did not include capital items. The district exceeded it's net school spending (NSS) requirement in FY 2006 but was below it in FY 2005. In FY 2007, according to the Department of Education, the district's NSS fell below its required amount, although the district is disputing this. The district's FY 2007 per pupil cost from all funds was $9,635, compared to the state average of $11,789.

The district did not have a signed written agreement or memoranda with the City of Methuen that detailed the manner by which indirect costs would be allocated. The two most recent audit reports cited a need for the city and the school district to reach an agreement on the indirect charges. The mayor and superintendent had been aware of the need for an agreement, and planned to meet to resolve the issue. The current auditing firm had been employed by the district for several years, and the district did not plan to competitively bid the procurement of an independent financial auditing firm.

City and school officials had concurred about the need to renovate and expand the high school, as the current high school, built in 1975 with an open-space concept, was not conducive to the learning process, although it was well maintained. City and school officials jointly submitted a statement of interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which placed this project on a state-approved shortlist of approximately 45 school building projects approved for a feasibility study. The mayor appointed a school building committee made up of city council members, school committee members, and other interested parties.

The district had safety and security systems in place to ensure student safety. Its emergency procedures manual addressed multiple types of emergencies to allow the district to respond effectively to critical situations. Each school had a crisis management team, and the district had a safety and facilities education task force. EQA examiners found adequate security to be evident in all district schools, which conducted fire, bus, and lockdown safety drills and had police resource officers paid by the district budget.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The budget development process conformed to school committee policy DCC under the direction of the superintendent, and the budget was developed using the district's eight goals. The district had adopted the national standards for budget planning and development established by the Association of School Business Officials International. The school committee, superintendent, teachers, parents, and members of the school councils and parent-teacher organizations participated in the development of the budget to ensure that the educational needs of the students would be met. The budget document was clear, comprehensive, complete, current, and understandable, and it included the actual expenditures for the three prior years followed by the current budget and the requested budget. The budget document did not include information from state and federal grants, revolving accounts, and other financial sources. For the past several years the budget did not include capital items.

The PIM process was used to develop the budget in each of the district's schools. The budget process commenced with the distribution of budget forms and information in September to the principals, supervisors, and department heads. The forms were disseminated to the teaching and classified staff members. Next, immediate supervisors and principals reviewed the completed forms. In October and November, budget workshops were conducted with the superintendent of schools, business manager, director of assessment and instructional personnel, director of pupil support services, and director of curriculum and grantsmanship. The superintendent convened a leadership team meeting to determine staffing needs.

The superintendent reviewed and finalized the budget prior to submittal to the school committee. The superintendent presented the budget to the school committee in January followed by school committee workshops. The school committee held a public hearing for the FY 2007 budget on June 29, 2006 followed by the official adoption of the recommended budget. The approved

budget was sent to the mayor for incorporation into the city's overall budget. The budget was not finalized until state aid and the minimum contribution were received. Upon receipt of the information, the budget could be adjusted or finalized and submitted to the mayor. The city auditor stated that this occurred sometime in April or May (or later). The budget was then submitted to the city council for final approval.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The business manager stated the district used site-based management and that resources had been allocated based on principals' requests and student needs using aggregated and disaggregated data. According to the business manager, the school district used the ongoing analysis of the aggregated and disaggregated MCAS achievement data and AYP information to develop the budget. The achievement data of special education, ELL, low-income, and minority students were analyzed and monies allocated to meet their needs. The DIP stated that the district had a "uniform protocol that had been developed to emphasize data-driven decision-making. Data had been analyzed through the PIM process that developed accountability targets in English language arts and mathematics. Schools and programs that did not meet AYP were provided the financial resources in the budget to improve their scores."

New classroom positions were created and budgeted at the Tenney and Timony grammar schools in order to reduce class size and to facilitate effective instruction. The district purchased the Harcourt Trophies reading literacy series for the four grammar schools and two new science curricula, Houghton Mifflin for grades 3-6 and Pearson Prentice Hall for grades 7 and 8. In FY 2005, the district had purchased Everyday Math for kindergarten students, Scott Foresman's Mathematics for grades 1-5, and Prentice Hall's Mathematics Course 1-2-3 for mathematics and algebra for grades 6-8. Purchases for the high school included Prentice Hall's Algebra I and Algebra II texts, as well as McDougal Littell texts for geometry and Larson/Hostetler texts for

calculus. The Title I funds had been allocated to the Tenney and Timony grammar schools dedicated to the literacy program for the improvement of student achievement.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews, the superintendent and the business manager stated that the budget and supplementary funding has been adequate to meet the educational needs of Methuen students. The city provided the required NSS budget for each of the years under review. Data from the DOE indicated that the district did not meet NSS requirements for the fiscal years 2005 and 2007. The business manager and mayor stated that there were errors in the FY 2007 End of Year Pupil and Financial Report and revisions to the report would be submitted to the DOE. The mayor stated that he had yet to review the End of Year Pupil and Financial Reports for fiscal years 2006 and 2007 and planned to review the indirect charges submitted by the city, which apparently were the cause of the disputed NSS amount.

The required NSS had increased in fiscal years 2005, 2006, and 2007 by 7.9 percent, 4.9 percent, and 6.9 percent, respectively. The budget increased by 3.75 percent in FY 2007 (from $52,661,562 to $54,637,715). The district received substantial increases in Chapter 70 aid in fiscal years 2005, 2006, and 2007. In FY 2005, Chapter 70 aid increased by 12.2 percent (from $25,782,225 to $28,932,255); in FY 2006, it increased by 5.3 percent (from $28,932,255 to $30,471,886); and in FY 2007, it increased by 9.1 percent (from $30,471,885 to $33,253,977). Foundation enrollment increased from 7,280 students in FY 2005 to 7,477 students in FY 2007. The superintendent and business manager stated that the most recent budget included an increase of 24 staff members.

Total school committee expenditures were $49,997,264 in FY 2005 and $52,661,223 in FY 2006, for a 5.33 percent increase. Instructional expenditures were $36,127,978 in FY 2005 and

$37,182,854 in FY 2006, for a 2.86 percent increase. The district's FY 2007 per pupil cost from all funds, according to preliminary data from the DOE, was $9,635, compared to the state average of $11,789.

The FY 2006 city audit report of Melanson, Heath & Co. stated that the city was certified with free cash of $2,458,531 for FY 2007, an increase of $703,202 over FY 2006. For FY 2008, the total for state aid and spending requirements for the Methuen Public Schools was $64,516,256, for an increase of $3,972,630 from the previous year, according to the audit. The actual FY 2006 tax levy reflected an excess capacity of approximately $4,299,375. The city spent $72,038,000 in FY 2005 for all education expenditures, compared to $77,036,000 in FY 2006. The city's contribution as a percentage of NSS for the FY 2007 school district budget was 44.76 percent.

In an interview, the mayor and the city auditor stated that the city had approximately $154,000 in free cash, $54,000 in the stabilization account, and $500,000 in the overlay reserve. They said that the excess levy capacity was $911,000 for FY 2008.

Interviews with several of the administrators and instructional staff members indicated that supplies and materials had been adequate for the past several years.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school system had a review process to determine cost effectiveness of all programs and initiatives based on student performance data. According to the DIP, the district evaluated all programs and initiatives using MCAS and AYP data. This resulted in the recognition of a need to restructure programs. Because of limited resources, curriculum changes had required implementation over several years. The district reviewed its programs to ensure financial resources had been used to best meet the needs of the students and to promote improved student achievement. Evaluation of student performance data had been used to maintain low class sizes. According to the business manager, the superintendent added 24 positions in FY 2008, which

included ELA and math coaches and grade 7-12 coordinators of ELA, math, science, social studies, and guidance.

The business manager noted that after the city's human resources coordinator retired, the city and school district combined the function, resulting in cost savings, according to the city auditor. The business manager reviewed non-educational programs to ensure maximum cost effectiveness of the available financial resources.

The district is a member of the Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational-Technical School District, which provides approved vocational-technical programs. The Methuen Public Schools hosted two Chapter 74 vocational education programs located at the high school, Marketing Education and Computer Programming Web Page Design.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school district did not have a signed written agreement or memoranda with the City of Methuen that detailed the manner by which indirect costs were calculated. The FY 2005 End of Year Pupil and Financial Report stated that city expenditures were based on a series of letters between the auditor and various department heads. In the two years preceding the site visit, the auditors from Melanson, Heath & Co. cited the city and school system for not having an agreement for indirect charges. The audit report stated that expenditures did not appear to be in compliance with DOE guidelines.

A memorandum by the superintendent, dated September 20, 2005, outlined the process in approving municipal charges. This memorandum was discussed and approved by the school committee at its meeting of September 26, 2005. The FY 2006 end of year audit reports cited the school district and the city for not having a written agreement. The FY 2006 End of Year Pupil and Financial Report showed estimated indirect expenditures by the city of $16,377,405. The city auditor had submitted a document that outlined all indirect charges for the school system as

provided by the city's departments. The document included an approval form to be signed by the appropriate city and school officials. The business manager stated that the district had not verified all of the information provided by the city financial office. The business manager also stated that the district had not reached an agreement on cost allocation with the mayor. The mayor stated that the city would work with the superintendent of the school system to arrive at a resolution for indirect charges levied by the city.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews with city officials and the district's business manager, it was stated that Methuen appropriated only the required NSS amount for each of the years under review. According to DOE reports, the Methuen school district was funded under the minimum local contribution and did not meet the NSS requirement for FY 2005, when the district was $204,127, or 0.4 percent, below the requirement. The required NSS was $54,010,796 while the actual NSS was $53,806,669. The required NSS for FY 2006 was $56,652,695 while the actual NSS was $56,864,677; the district was funded $211,982, or 0.4 percent, over the requirement. According to DOE data, the actual NSS of $60,386,723 for FY 2007 was $156,893, or 0.3 percent, under the NSS requirement of $60,543,616. The End of Year Pupil and Financial Report for FY 2007 listed an NSS deficiency of $556,135. Methuen city officials and the business manager will be reviewing the data for accuracy and possibly submitting an amendment to the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report that accurately reflected that the district met the required NSS.

Chapter 70 aid increased by 12.2 percent in FY 2005 (from $25,782,225 to $28,932,255), 5.3 percent in FY 2006 (from $28,932,255 to $30,471,886), and 9.1 percent in FY 2007 (from $30,471,886 to $33,253,977). The foundation enrollment increased by 2.4 percent in FY 2005 (from 7,111 to 7,280), by 1.0 percent in FY 2006 (from 7,280 to 7,352), and by 1.7 percent in FY 2007 (from 7,352 to 7,477).

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school committee received monthly financial reports, which included approved council appropriation, transfers, amended budget, projected/encumbered expenses, and available funds. The business manager provided a monthly expenditure report to the superintendent indicating any variances. The school committee received quarterly reports of all revolving accounts. Monthly food service reports had been provided to the school committee. The food service program was self-sustaining. The school committee did not receive financial expenditure reports on federal, state, and private grants. The FY 2006 audit report found that the district did not comply with OMB Circular A-87, which required that certification be provided that he/she had been engaged solely in activities in accordance with the circular and time sheets be maintained for the Title I, special education 94-142, and 21st Century Learning Centers, in addition to Title II.

The appropriate administrators had access to their budgets and expenditures for their areas of responsibility by using the computerized accounting system. The business manager stated that the required local, state, and federal financial reports had been submitted and were accurate and filed on time. The district returned $11,517 (0.57 percent) in unexpended state and federal funds for FY 2007 out of a total of $2,020,752, based on closed grants. The public had been kept informed of the financial activities and other district information using the Methuen school district website, newspaper articles, and weekly newsletters from each of the schools.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district used the Budget Sense financial software package from Unifund for its accounting system. The city and school district used Harper's Millennium III for its payroll. The software packages provided the necessary financial information for the administrators to make informed decisions and forecasting. The city used USL Financial for its financial accounting system. The city auditor stated that the financial system met the needs of the city. It had been necessary to manually input the school committee warrants into the city's financial accounting system. A crosswalk had been required to integrate the payroll by Harper's into the USL Financial accounting system.

The business office maintained control of spending by using an encumbrance and forecasting system and to ensure that expenditures had been within fiscal budget limits. An Excel spreadsheet had been used to monitor and control payroll expenditures in conformity with the budget. The budget had been maintained on an Excel spreadsheet and was converted to the Budget Sense accounting system.

District administrators and principals had been able to regularly and accurately track spending and other transactions for their areas of responsibility by using the computerized accounting system.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district had a system in place to pursue and acquire entitlement grants in addition to competitive and private grants. According to the superintendent and business manager, all grant funds received by the Methuen Public Schools had been administered through the office of the director of curriculum and grantsmanship to ensure funds had been allocated to best meet the needs of the students. The director, in conjunction with the affected departments, prepared and submitted grants. In FY 2007, the school district received $4,692,402, in state, federal, and

private grants, which included $296,860 in competitive grants and $26,850 in private grants. A bookkeeper from the business office had responsibility for maintaining grant records and submitted reports to the DOE in order to ensure that they were managed efficiently and used for the purpose intended. The federal, state, and private grants had been monitored using the Budget Sense accounting system. The bookkeeper used the encumbrance system for purchase orders to control expenditures. The city auditor ensured that the grants were in compliance with the state and federal reporting requirements. The school district did not require any user fees for its students, and the cafeteria revolving account used the financial accounting system to monitor expenditures.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The business manager had been employed since 2002 and was certified as a school business official. The business manager provided evidence of having credentials as a Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCCPO). The financial office manager had taken all the required courses and was waiting to be credentialed. School committee policy DJED, bidding requirements, required that the district conform to the state bidding law, MGL Chapter 30B. The business manager had oversight responsibility for all bid documents. According to the school committee policy, all purchases of equipment and materials and all contracts in the amount of $25,000 would be based on competitive bidding. The superintendent reviewed and approved all purchase orders and bids. School committee policy required that the superintendent recommend transfers to the school committee for their consideration and approval.

The business manager reported that the school district had been in compliance with GASB-34, and that Maximus Company had conducted an annual asset inventory every year. The district identified all assets over $500 and bar-coded them.

The financial accounting system had been used to monitor all purchases and expenditures to ensure efficiency and maximum effective utilization. According to the business manager, the current auditor of Melanson, Heath and Co. had been employed for many years to perform audits for the city and school system. The business manager indicated that the city and school system had been satisfied with the audit firm and did not competitively procure an independent financial audit firm every five years.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district did not have a formal preventative maintenance program. In-house personnel that included an electrician, HVAC specialist, plumber, and two general maintenance staff members had responsibility for maintenance activities. In addition, the district had two ground maintenance personnel. The goal of the Methuen school district was to provide optimum maintenance to the buildings and grounds. The custodians and maintenance supervisor stated that preventative maintenance had been done on a continuous basis. The custodians and maintenance supervisor and business manager stated that the district had a School Dude computerized maintenance program, but the program had not been used to its fullest potential by the staff.

The facilities report provided by the business manager indicated that the educational and program facilities were in good to excellent condition. A walk-through of the Methuen schools by the EQA examiners revealed that the grammar schools were of adequate size, clean, safe, well lit, well maintained, and conducive to promoting student learning. Although well maintained, the high school had an open-space design that did not provide an acceptable environment for student learning and was in need of additional academic rooms. It had been stated that a need existed for

storage space and the replacement of aging equipment. The business manager stated that the high school had been in need of renovation and enlargement. The DIP noted the need to replace carpeting and improve the intercom system at the high school.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

In interviews with the business manager and the mayor, it was stated that a city capital plan had not existed that clearly and accurately reflected the future capital development and improvement needs, including educational and program facilities. The business manager stated that there had not been a capital plan for many years, and that the funds from the operating budget had been used to purchase capital equipment. The mayor stated that after being elected, he found that a city capital plan did not exist even though the city charter required having a plan. The mayor stated that in the past, capital needs had been met by using lease/purchase arrangements. The mayor stated he planned to develop a citywide five-year capital plan that included the school system.

Several years ago, the city and school district embarked on a multi-million dollar building project for the construction of three new grammar schools (Marsh, Tenney, Timony), for which it received 90 percent reimbursement from the state, and this was completed in 1998. The Comprehensive Grammar School was constructed in 1989. School and city officials agreed there has been a need for a new high school. The mayor and business manager jointly submitted a statement of interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which put Methuen on a shortlist of 43 to 46 projects approved for a feasibility study. The mayor appointed a building committee consisting of school committee members, city council members, and other interested parties.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

An emergency procedures manual, dated June 2000, had been designed for the district to respond effectively to critical situations. The manual included information regarding building emergencies, community emergencies, crime-related emergencies, individual student emergencies, medical emergencies, mental health emergencies, public health emergencies, and transportation emergencies. Each school had a crisis management team consisting of the principal, vice principal, school safety officer, counselor, psychologist, teacher, custodian, secretary, and nurse. The district had a safety and facilities education task force consisting of the business manager and five other members.

Security was evident in the four elementary schools and the high school. The NEASC report had recommended that class size in the high school be reduced in courses for which student safety might be an issue, such as in science labs and technology labs. At all five schools visited by EQA examiners, each main entrance had been locked and visitors had to ring the bell and identify themselves to gain entrance, the doors were opened remotely, and a camera monitored the main entrance. Each school except the Timony had a sign-in/out procedure. Only the Tenney and Marsh schools required visitors' passes. All schools had fire, bus, and lockdown safety drills. Resources officers (police) paid by the school district had been assigned to each school.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

The proficiency index is a metric used to measure and compare all schools and school districts regarding their performance on the MCAS tests. The proficiency index is a measure of the level of achievement a district, school, grade, or subgroup has made in relation to the 'Proficient' achievement level on the MCAS tests. There are three indices: the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI), the Math Proficiency Index (MPI), and the Science and Technology/Engineering Index (SPI).

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

Example: The Anywhere High School had the following results on the 2007 MCAS tests in a given content area:

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

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

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

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

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

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY98	6,255	3.9	36,869,023	6.6	18,348,559	16,548,107	15.5	34,896,666	9.1	34,933,872	8.5	37,206	0.1
FY99	6,311	0.9	38,246,816	3.7	19,106,243	18,335,886	10.8	37,442,129	7.3	37,444,868	7.2	2,739	0.0
FY00	6,542	3.7	40,165,452	5.0	20,271,449	20,439,896	11.5	40,711,345	8.7	41,025,260	9.6	313,915	0.8
FY01	6,826	4.3	43,209,065	7.6	21,205,883	22,003,182	7.6	43,209,065	6.1	43,247,315	5.4	38,250	0.1
FY02	7,093	3.9	47,692,730	10.4	22,718,420	24,974,310	13.5	47,692,730	10.4	48,072,767	11.2	380,037	0.8
FY03	7,187	1.3	48,749,899	2.2	23,730,961	25,018,938	0.2	48,749,899	2.2	49,259,531	2.5	509,632	1.0
FY04	7,111	-1.1	50,066,385	2.7	24,284,160	25,782,225	3.1	50,066,385	2.7	50,107,822	1.7	41,437	0.1
FY05	7,280	2.4	54,010,796	7.9	25,078,541	28,932,255	12.2	54,010,796	7.9	53,806,669	7.4	-204,127	-0.4
FY06	7,352	1.0	56,448,568	4.5	26,180,809	30,471,886	5.3	56,652,695	4.9	56,864,677	5.7	211,982	0.4
FY07	7,477	1.7	60,543,616	7.3	27,289,639	33,253,977	9.1	60,543,616	6.9	60,386,723	6.2	-156,893	-0.3

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
FY98	5,894	2,646	5,585	44.9	94.7	94.8	47.4
FY99	6,060	2,905	5,933	47.9	97.9	97.9	49.0
FY00	6,140	3,124	6,271	50.9	101.4	102.1	49.8
FY01	6,330	3,223	6,336	50.9	100.0	100.1	50.9
FY02	6,724	3,521	6,777	52.4	100.0	100.8	52.0
FY03	6,783	3,481	6,854	51.3	100.0	101.0	50.8
FY04	7,041	3,626	7,047	51.5	100.0	100.1	51.5
FY05	7,419	3,974	7,391	53.6	100.0	99.6	53.8
FY06	7,678	4,145	7,735	54.0	100.4	100.7	53.6
FY07	8,097	4,448	8,076	54.9	100.0	99.7	55.1

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g., FY07 enrollment = Oct 1, 2005 headcount).
Foundation budget is the state's estimate of the minimum amount needed in each district to provide an adequate educational program.
Required Net School Spending is the annual minimum that must be spent on schools, including carryovers from prior years.
Net School Spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures and transportation.