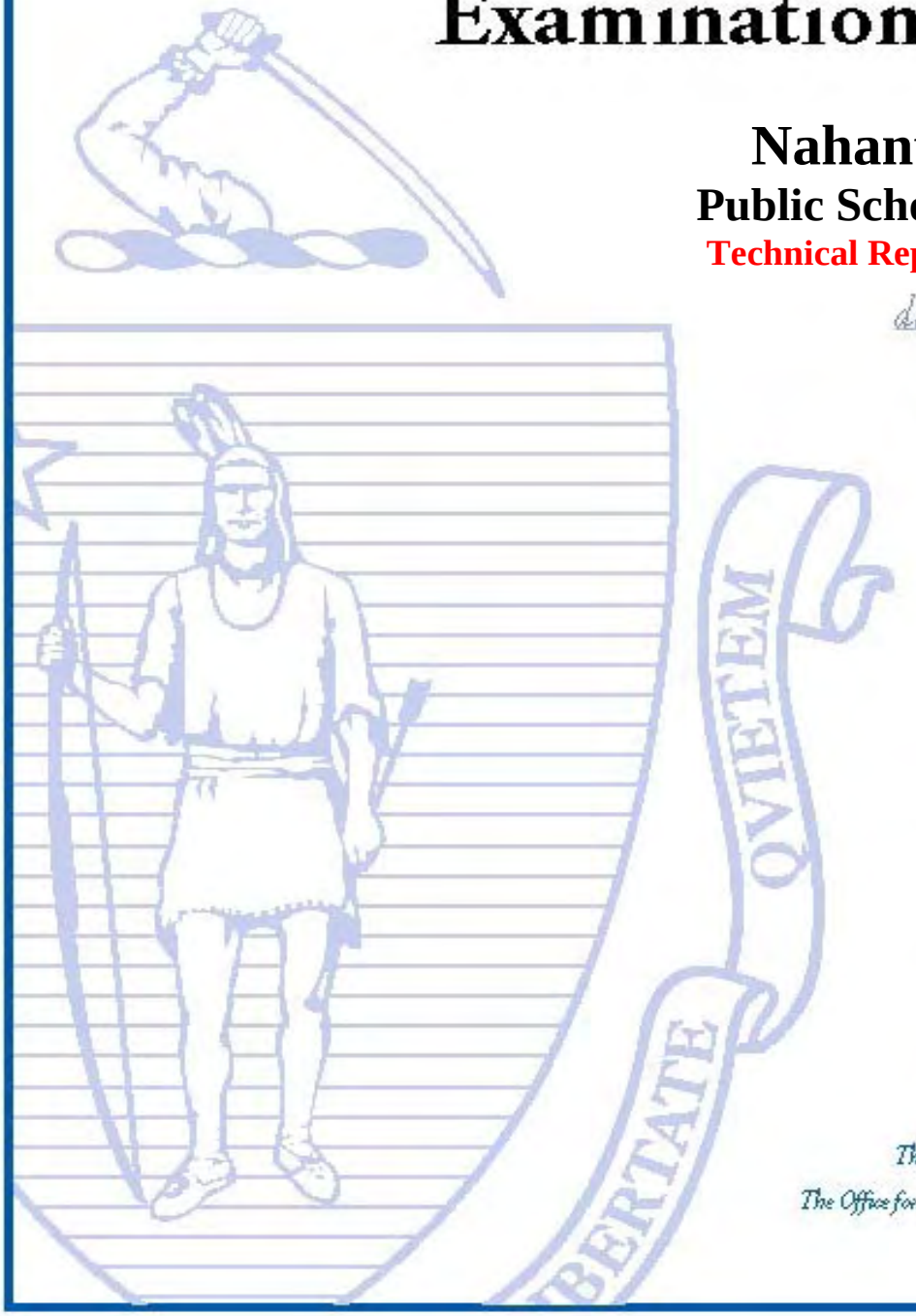
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Nahant
Public Schools
Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered



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

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Visiting Examination Team

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The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability provided this report to the Nahant Public Schools and the Nahant School Committee, but the report did not receive action by the Educational Management Audit Council based on the small size of the district.

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 Nahant Public Schools, Denise Littlefield; the school department staff of the Nahant Public Schools; and the town officials in Nahant.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Nahant Public Schools in February 2007. With an average proficiency index of 82 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (88 PI points in English language arts and 76 PI points in math), the district is considered a 'High' performing school system based on the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement above the state average. More than half of Nahant's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

Covering only 1.5 square miles, Nahant is the smallest town in Massachusetts, and is located in the southern part of Essex County on a peninsula jutting off the coast of Lynn. Nahant has been a center of recreational, fishing, and artistic activity, although the town's lone elementary school has been forced to curtail instructional services in art, music, and physical education. The largest sources of employment are educational, health, and social services. Nahant's population is relatively wealthy and well educated. The town has a Board of Selectmen/Administrative Assistant/Open Town Meeting form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Nahant had a median family income of $76,926 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 83 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the town had a total population of 3,632, with a population of 544 school-age children, or 15 percent of the total. Of the total households in Nahant, 24 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 29 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Forty-eight 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 2005-2006 the Nahant Public Schools had a total enrollment of 201. The demographic composition in the district was: 90.0 percent White, 3.0 percent Hispanic, 2.5 percent Asian, 0.5 percent African-American, 0.0 percent Native American, 4.0 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 3.0 percent low income, and 13.7 percent special education. Approximately 88

percent of school-age children in Nahant attended public schools. The district does not offer school choice. Students in grades 7 through 12 attend school in Swampscott through a tuition agreement.

The district has one school, the Johnson Elementary School, serving grades pre-kindergarten through 6. Nahant school district's administrative team consisted of a superintendent-principal and a part-time director of special education. The district has a five-member school committee.

In FY 2005, Nahant's per pupil expenditure, based on appropriations from all funds, was $8,842, compared to $10,626 statewide, ranking it 261 out of the 328 school districts reporting data (charter schools not included). The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. Between FY 2004 and FY 2006, net school spending increased from $3,254,407 to $3,365,521; Chapter 70 aid increased from $364,640 to $384,990; the required local contribution increased from $2,689,830 to $2,890,705; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 415 to 407. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending increased from 11.2 to 11.4 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total Schedule 1 net school spending reported in the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report increased from 38 percent to 41 percent.

Context

The Nahant Public Schools is comprised of one building, a grades K-6 elementary school named after one of Nahant's first families. The Johnson Elementary School serves approximately 200 students. An approximately equal number of older children attend school in grades 7-12 in neighboring Swampscott, through a tuition arrangement codified in a seven-year contract signed in 2003.

The Nahant school district enjoys strong community support, as evidenced by the 2006 passage of a $6.3 million debt override to support renovation of the Johnson Elementary School; nevertheless, the district continues to struggle financially. In recent years, it has been forced to eliminate programs and staff and make do with outdated and failing technology. The district proposed a budget for FY 2008 that is lower than the FY 2002 budget. Despite the new construction at the Johnson Elementary School, its roof leaks, it has no school library or

librarian, nor a kitchen for the cafeteria facility. The district's budget continues to be based more on affordability than on need.

The district has been challenged by administrative turnover for some time. Although teachers who work in Nahant tend to remain, the period since 1990 has seen many superintendents and principals, and in 2005 the district combined the two positions. With the only other administrator in the district a part-time special education director, the lack of administrative support has meant that the district cannot not accomplish many duties in the time available. The district makes an effort to provide an adequate education for its students, but lacks sufficient staff to implement necessary modifications. The district provides little attention to middle or high school students, except for those in special education programs. The district had to rely on funds from a $70,000 special education grant to hire a special education teacher, a special education aide, and a half-time speech and language specialist to assist special education students in improving their performance and to meet the requirements of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The school eliminated its part-time guidance counselor position due to budget reductions. The minimal staff in place means that practices are instituted without the benefit of sufficient pre-planning or follow up, and the same small group of teachers is required to serve on all the necessary committees. Documentation of practices and procedures is not always possible due to lack of time and resources. Student achievement results, while approaching national norms, lag behind those of students in similar communities.

Despite the financial issues, Nahant's administrators and teachers have found innovative ways to improve instructional services. The district began working more closely with its partner district, Swampscott, to deliver professional development activities, to provide vertical articulation of the curriculum, and to assist with the transitioning of students. The district implemented a writing process used in the Swampscott Public Schools, increased math instructional time, and implemented the Scott Foresman Math program at all grade levels. It also offered after-school MCAS test support four days per week for 60 minutes per day for students scoring below standard. The district used assessments such as the MCAS tests, the California Achievement Test (CAT), and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10), although it did not use midyear or interim benchmarks, nor some of the assessments used in other districts.

Clearly, with its substantial investment in the school building renovation, the community has shown its interest in supporting its small school district. Nahant is faced with the challenge of addressing how to continue supporting the district on a day-to-day basis. The school staff must address the challenge of increasing efficiency and improving students' academic performance regardless of the resources that the school has at its disposal.

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 February 26-28, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Nahant Public Schools for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. 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 onsite visit.

The EQA examiners gave the Nahant Public Schools a rating of 'Needs Improvement' on standard one, 'Needs Improvement' on standard two, 'Needs Improvement' on standard three, 'Needs Improvement' on standard four, 'Satisfactory' on standard five, and 'Needs Improvement' on standard six.

The following provides a summary of the district's performance on the 2006 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Nahant participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement. In interpreting the following data, it is important to recognize the disproportionate effect that may be caused by the results of one or two individual students on the results of a small total population.

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

On average, more than half of all students in Nahant attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that statewide for grades K-6. Roughly two-thirds of Nahant students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), less than half of Nahant students attained proficiency in math, and nearly three-fifths of Nahant students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Nahant's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 82 proficiency index (PI) points, four PI points greater than that statewide for grades K-6. Nahant's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 18 PI points.
- In 2006, Nahant's proficiency gap in ELA was 12 PI points, five PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of one and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Nahant's proficiency gap in math was 24 PI points in 2006, three PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement of three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Nahant's proficiency gap in STE was 14 PI points, eight PI points narrower than that statewide for grades K-6.

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

Between 2003 and 2006, Nahant's MCAS performance declined overall and in ELA, and improved in math and in STE. The reader should note, however, that because of the small number of students in the grades tested in all four years, trend data should be viewed with caution as they are susceptible to variation due to a cohort effect.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by six percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Nahant widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 19 PI points in 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Nahant experienced a decline, at an average of nearly five PI points annually.
- Math performance in Nahant showed improvement, at an average of slightly more than one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Nahant had improved performance in STE, at an average of more than two and one-half PI points annually over the two-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate of 28 percent.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Nahant students. Of the four measurable subgroups in Nahant in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 29 PI points in ELA (female students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 36 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Nahant in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and male students. Less than one-fifth of students with disabilities and less than half of male students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and female students. For each of these subgroups, more than three-fifths of the students attained proficiency.

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

- In Nahant, both subgroups, regular education students and students with disabilities, had decreased performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006.

- In math, only regular education students in Nahant showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006, while students with disabilities had a decline in performance.
- The performance gap between the two subgroups in ELA widened from 12 PI points in 2003 to 40 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the subgroups in math widened from 42 to 50 PI points over this period.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

The EQA's analysis of student achievement data focuses on the MCAS test results for 2003-2006, with primary attention paid to the 2006 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 2006 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Nahant 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 Nahant; 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 entities. When the performance gap narrows over time, equity increases; when it widens over time, equity decreases.

Achievement

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

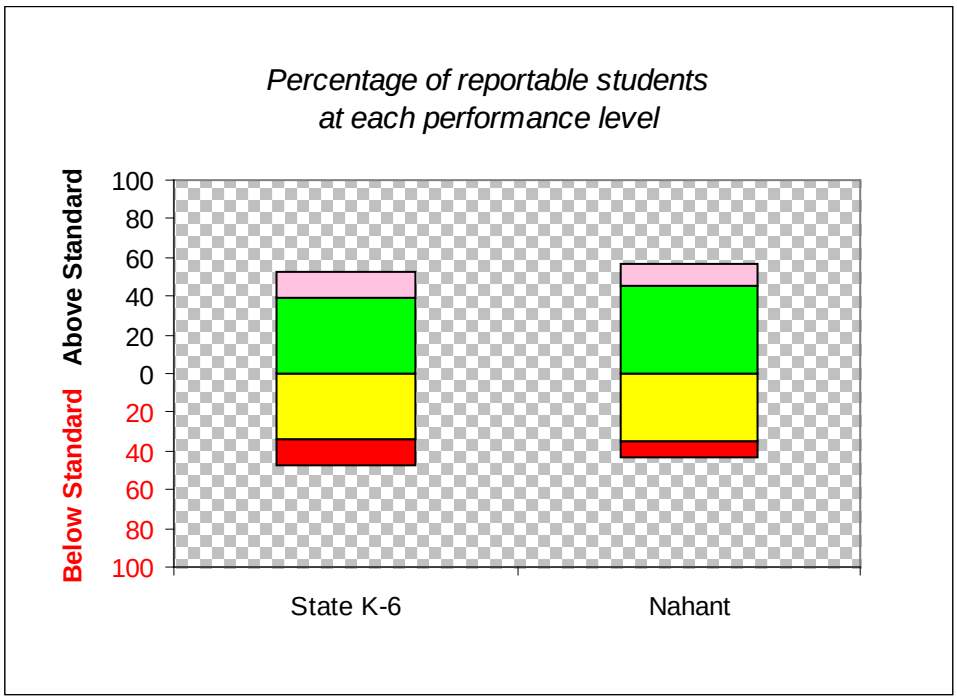
Findings:

- On average, more than half of all students in Nahant attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that statewide for grades K-6. Roughly two-thirds of Nahant students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), less than half of Nahant students attained proficiency in math, and nearly three-fifths of Nahant students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Nahant's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 82 proficiency index (PI) points, four PI points greater than that statewide for grades K-6. Nahant's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 18 PI points.

- In 2006, Nahant's proficiency gap in ELA was 12 PI points, five PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of one and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Nahant's proficiency gap in math was 24 PI points in 2006, three PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math for grades K-6. This gap would require an average improvement of three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Nahant's proficiency gap in STE was 14 PI points, eight PI points narrower than that statewide for grades K-6.

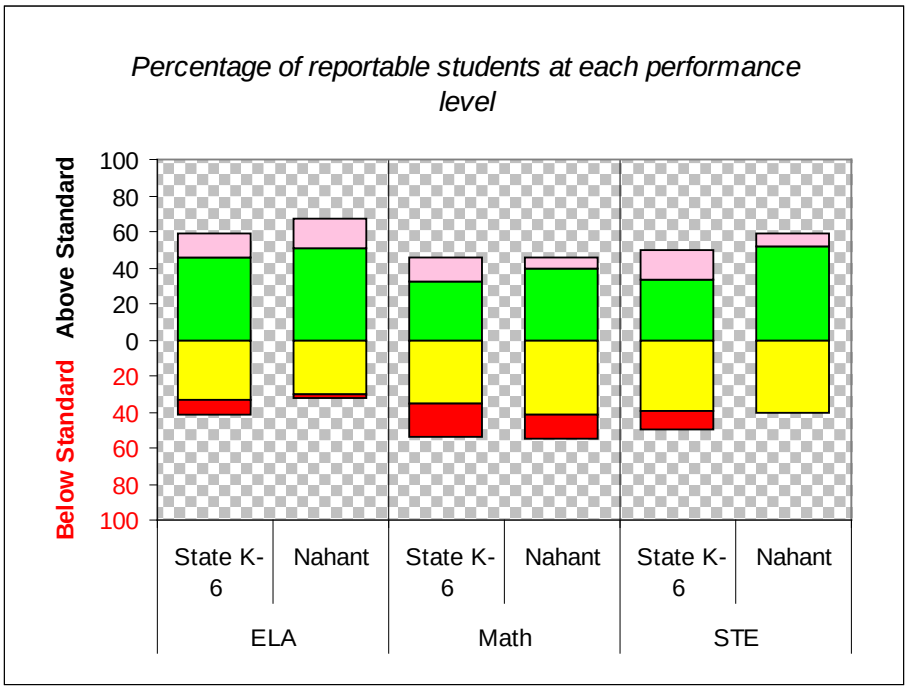
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State K-6	Nahant
Advanced	13	11
Proficient	39	45
Needs Improvement	34	36
Warning/Failing	13	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	56
Average Proficiency Index (API)	77.6	82.1

In 2006, 56 percent of Nahant students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, four percentage points more than that statewide for grades K-6. Eight percent of Nahant students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, five percentage points less than that statewide. Nahant's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 82 proficiency index (PI) points, four PI points greater than that statewide. Nahant's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 18 PI points.

Figure/Table 2: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2006



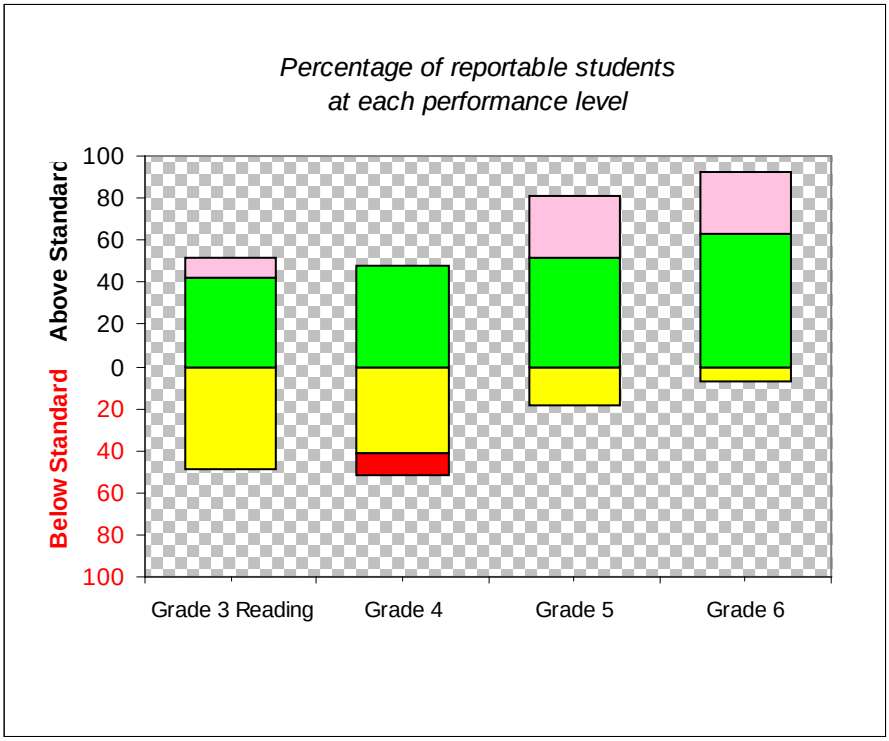
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State K-6	Nahant	State K-6	Nahant	State K-6	Nahant
Advanced	13	17	13	6	17	7
Proficient	46	51	32	39	33	52
Needs Improvement	33	30	36	41	40	41
Warning/Failing	8	3	19	13	10	0
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	68	45	45	50	59
Proficiency Index (PI)	82.6	88.2	72.7	75.9	77.8	86.1

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA) and science and technology/engineering (STE) was higher in Nahant than in grades K-6 statewide; in math, it was the same in Nahant as statewide. In Nahant, 68 percent of K-6 students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 59 percent statewide; 45 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 45 percent statewide; and 59 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 50 percent statewide.

Nahant students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Nahant students in ELA was 88 PI points; in math, it was 76 PI points; and in STE, it was 86 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 83, 73, and 78 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Nahant students was 12 PI points in ELA, 24 PI points in math, and 14 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 17, 27, and 22 PI points, respectively. Nahant's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of one and one-half PI points in ELA and three PI points in math to meet AYP.

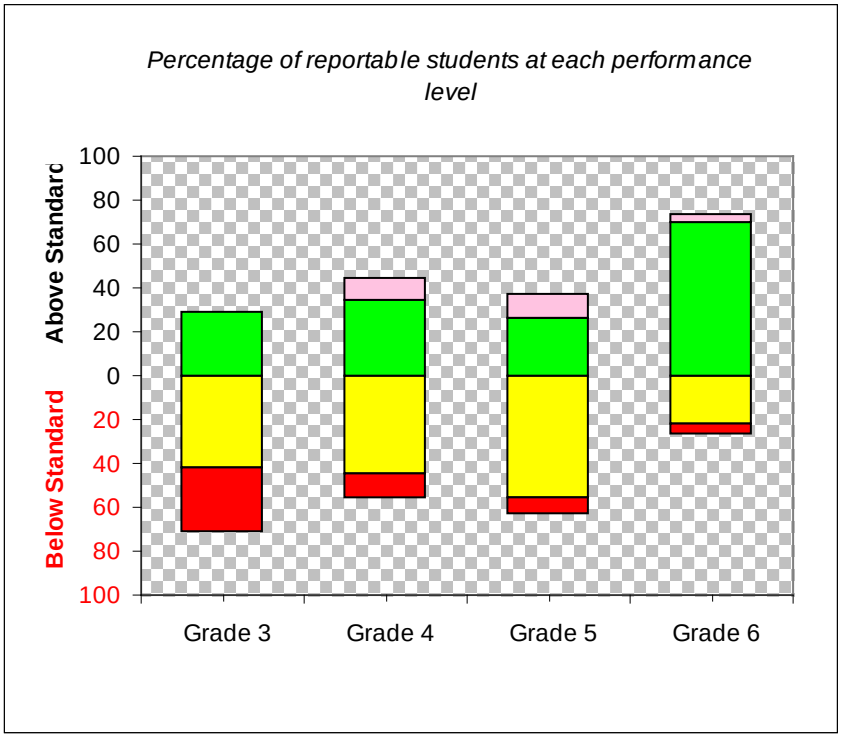
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Advanced	10	0	30	30
Proficient	42	48	52	63
Needs Improvement	48	41	19	7
Warning/Failing	0	10	0	0
Percent Attaining Proficiency	52	48	82	93

The percentage of Nahant students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 48 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 93 percent of grade 6 students.

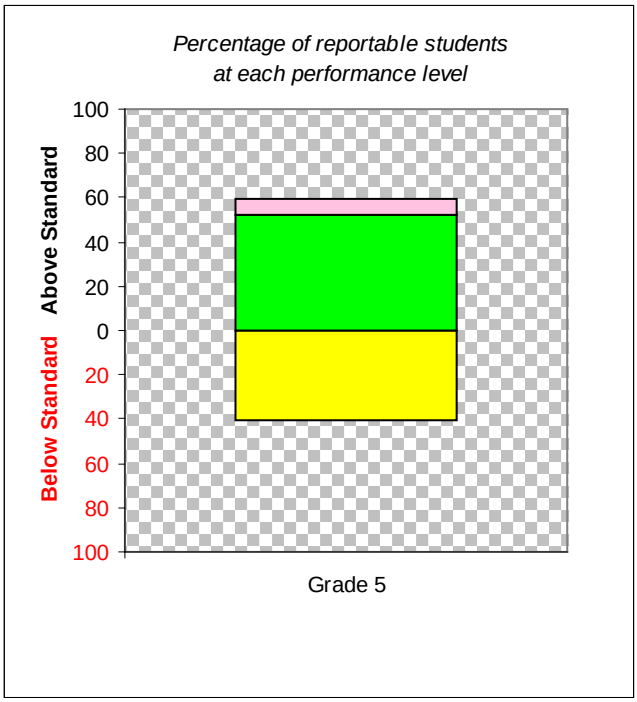
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Advanced	0	10	11	4
Proficient	29	34	26	70
Needs Improvement	42	45	56	22
Warning/Failing	29	10	7	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency	29	44	37	74

The percentage of Nahant students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math varied considerably by grade level, ranging from a low of 29 percent of grade 3 students to a high of 74 percent of grade 6 students.

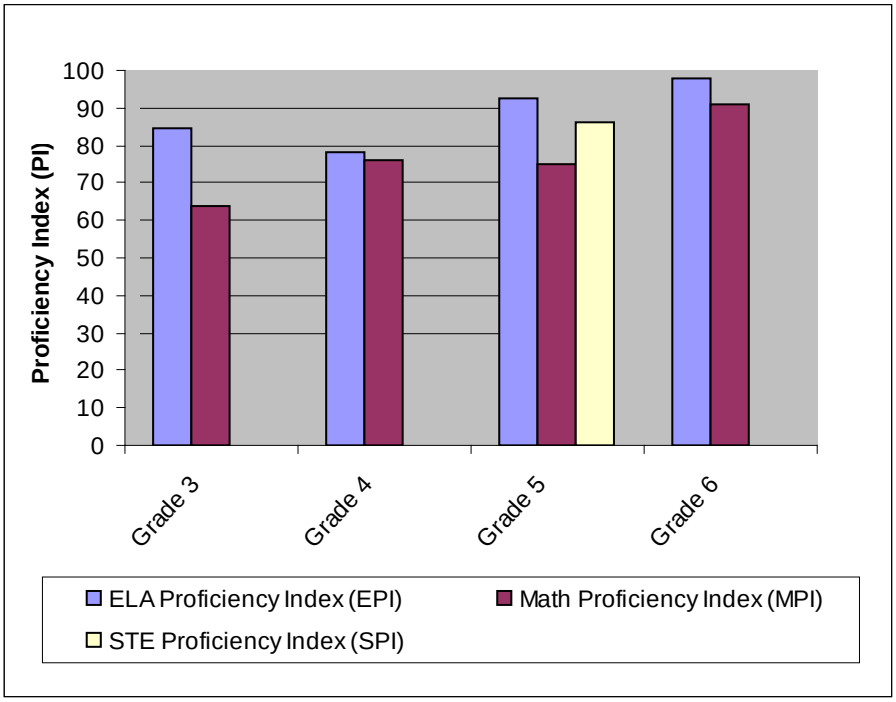
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5
Advanced	7
Proficient	52
Needs Improvement	41
Warning/Failing	0
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59

In Nahant in 2006, 59 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE.

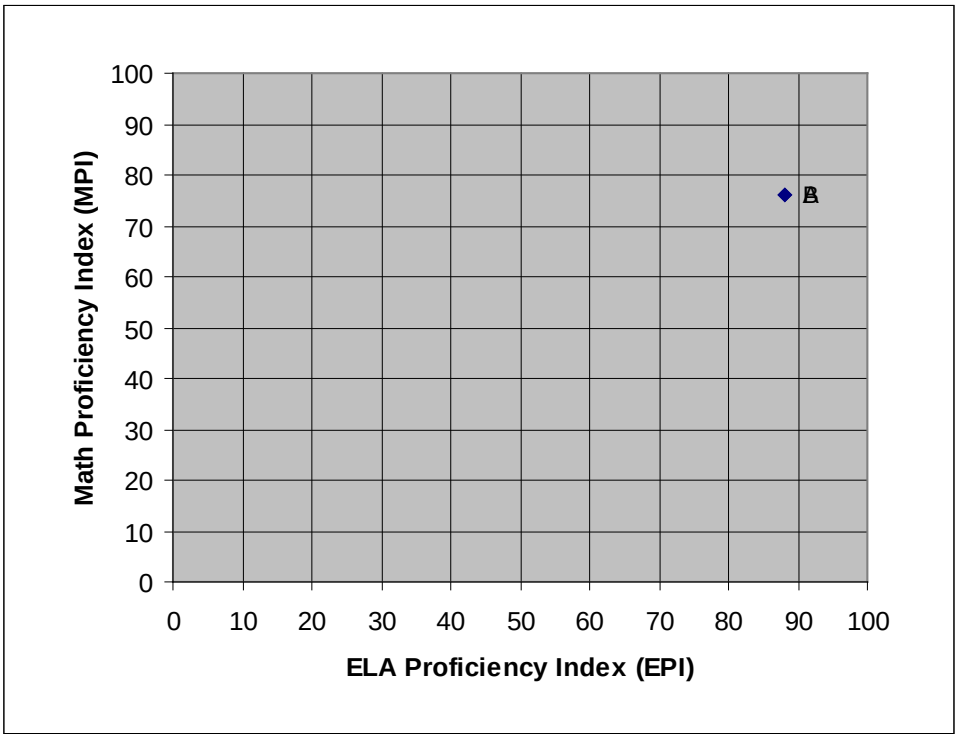
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	84.7	78.4	92.6	98.1
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	63.7	75.9	75.0	90.7
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			86.1	

By grade, Nahant's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of two PI points at grade 6 to a high of 22 PI points at grade 4. Nahant's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of nine PI points at grade 6 to a high of 36 PI points at grade 3. Nahant's STE proficiency gap was 14 PI points at grade 5.

Figure/Table 7: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by School, 2006



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Nahant	88.2	75.9	228
B	Johnson Elementary School	88.2	75.9	228

At the Johnson Elementary School, the ELA proficiency gap in 2006 was 12 PI points and in math it was 24 PI points.

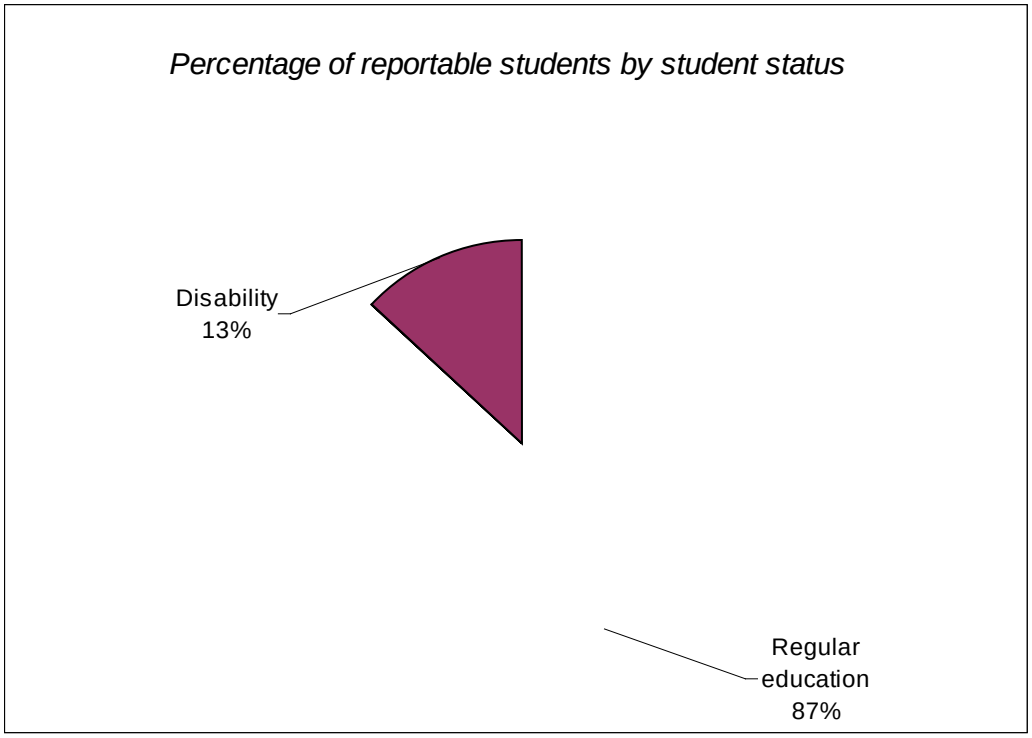
Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Nahant students. Of the four measurable subgroups in Nahant in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 29 PI points in ELA (female students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 36 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Nahant in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and male students. Less than one-fifth of students with disabilities and less than half of male students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and female students. For each of these subgroups, more than three-fifths of the students attained proficiency.

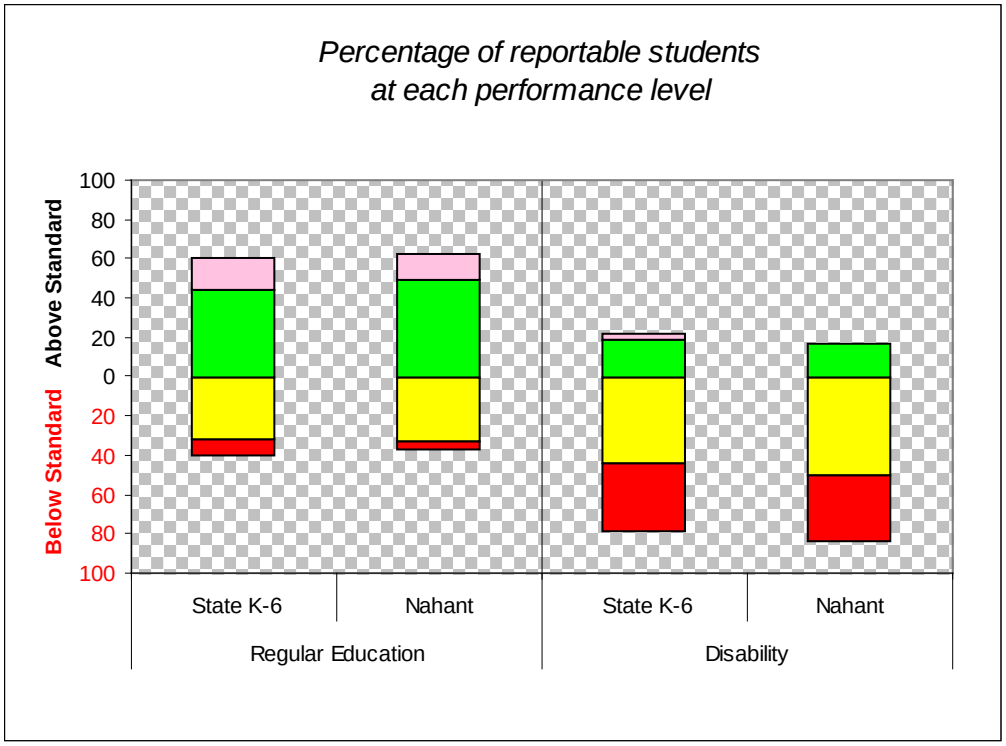
Figure/Table 8: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2006



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	99
	Disability	15

In Nahant in 2006, 13 percent of the students were students with disabilities.

Figure/Table 9: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Student Status Subgroup, 2006

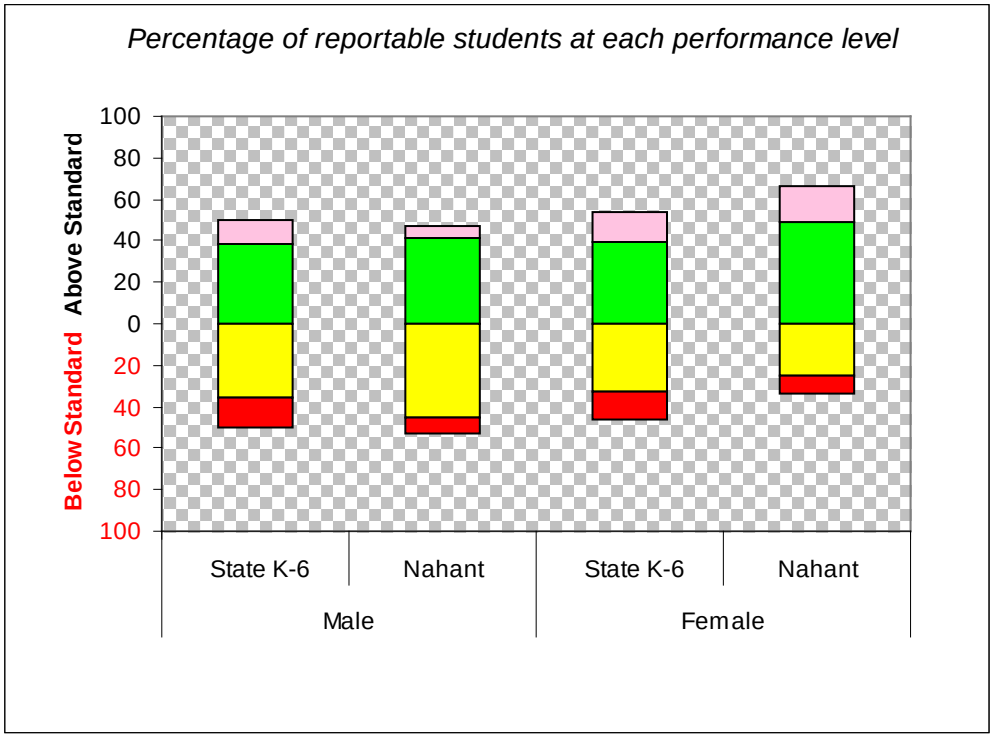


	Regular Education		Disability	
	State K-6	Nahant	State K-6	Nahant
Advanced	16	13	2	0
Proficient	44	49	19	17
Needs Improvement	32	33	44	50
Warning/Failing	8	4	34	33
Percent Attaining Proficiency	60	62	21	17
Average Proficiency Index (API)	83.2	86.2	56.6	55.0

In Nahant in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than three times greater than that of students with disabilities. Sixty-two percent of regular education students and 17 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Nahant's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 14 PI points for regular education students and 45 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 31 PI points.

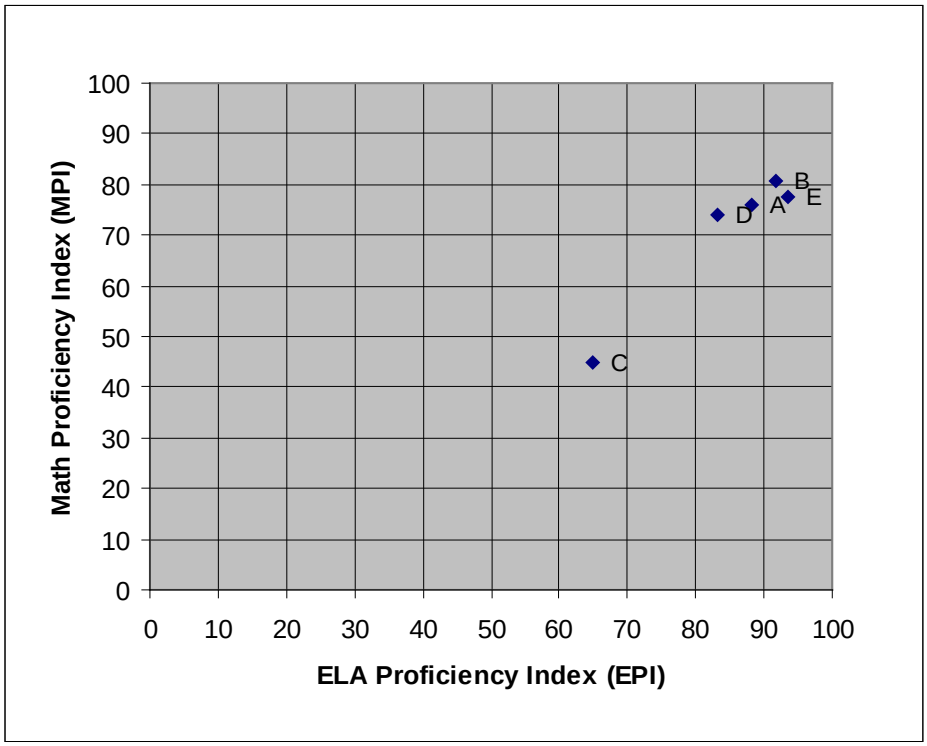
Figure/Table 10: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Gender Subgroup, 2006



	Male		Female	
	State K-6	Nahant	State K-6	Nahant
Advanced	12	6	15	17
Proficient	39	42	40	49
Needs Improvement	36	45	33	25
Warning/Failing	14	8	13	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	51	48	55	66
Average Proficiency Index (API)	76.8	78.7	78.6	85.7

Performance on the 2006 MCAS tests was stronger for female students than for male students in Nahant, with 66 percent of female students and 48 percent of male students attaining overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 21 PI points for male students and 14 PI points for female students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was seven PI points.

Figure/Table 11: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by Subgroup, 2006

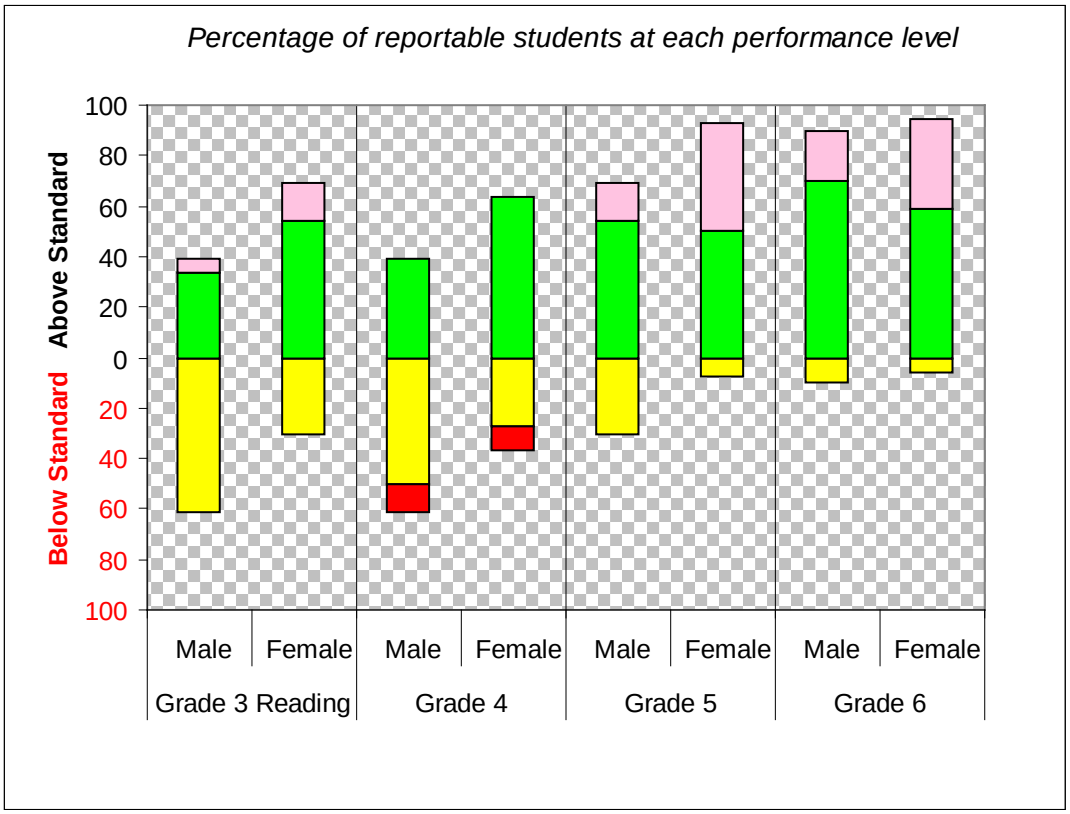


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Nahant	88.2	75.9	228
B	Regular Education	91.7	80.6	198
C	Disability	65.0	45.0	30
D	Male	83.1	74.2	118
E	Female	93.6	77.7	110

Of the four measurable subgroups in Nahant in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 29 PI points in ELA (female students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 36 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

The proficiency gaps in Nahant in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and male students. The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and female students.

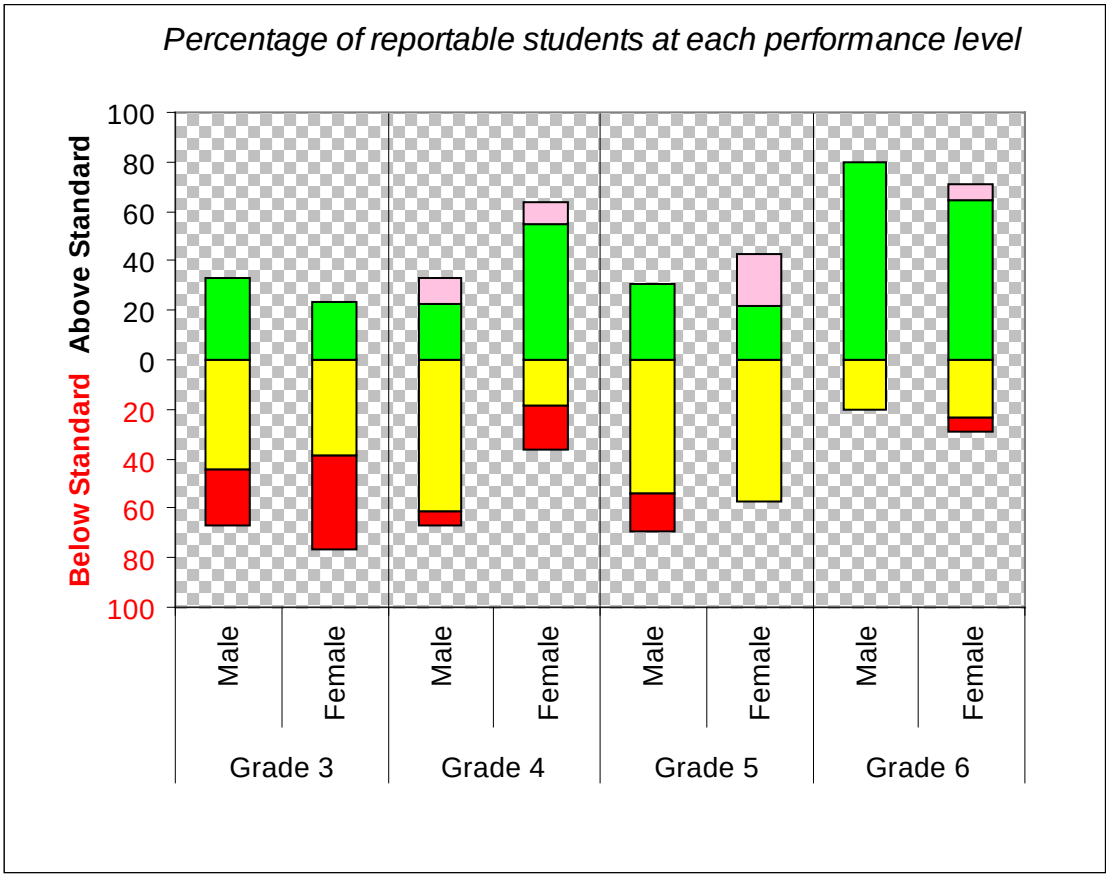
Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	6	15	0	0	15	43	20	35
Proficient	33	54	39	64	54	50	70	59
Needs Improvement	61	31	50	27	31	7	10	6
Warning/ Failing	0	0	11	9	0	0	0	0
Percent Attaining Proficiency	39	69	39	64	69	93	90	94

In Nahant in 2006, female students outperformed male students on all grade-level ELA tests.

Figure/Table 13: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	0	0	11	9	0	21	0	6
Proficient	33	23	22	55	31	21	80	65
Needs Improvement	44	38	61	18	54	57	20	24
Warning/ Failing	22	38	6	18	15	0	0	6
Percent Attaining Proficiency	33	23	33	64	31	42	80	71

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, male students outperformed female students at grades 3 and 6. Female students outperformed male students at grades 4 and 5.

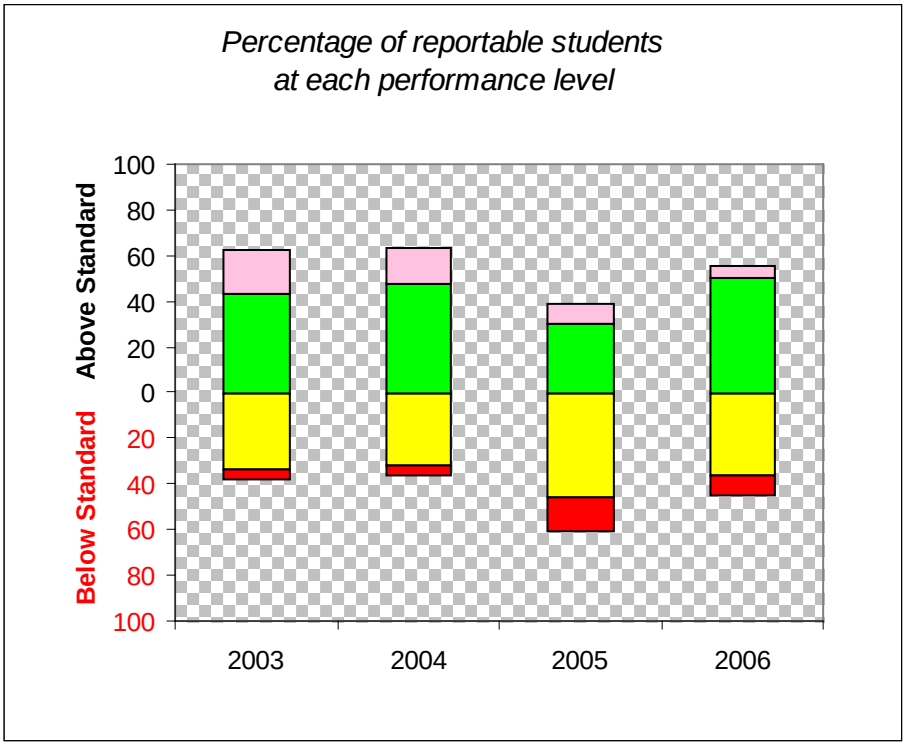
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Nahant's MCAS performance declined overall and in ELA, and improved in math and in STE. The reader should note, however, that because of the small number of students in the grades tested in all four years, trend data should be viewed with caution as they are susceptible to variation due to a cohort effect.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by six percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Nahant widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 19 PI points in 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Nahant experienced a decline, at an average of nearly five PI points annually.
- Math performance in Nahant showed improvement, at an average of slightly more than one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Nahant had improved performance in STE, at an average of more than two and one-half PI points annually over the two-year period. This resulted in an improvement rate of 28 percent.

Figure 14/Tables 14 A-B: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2003-2006



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	19	16	9	5
Proficient	43	48	30	51
Needs Improvement	33	32	46	36
Warning/Failing	4	5	15	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	64	39	56
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.4	85.3	70.4	81.4

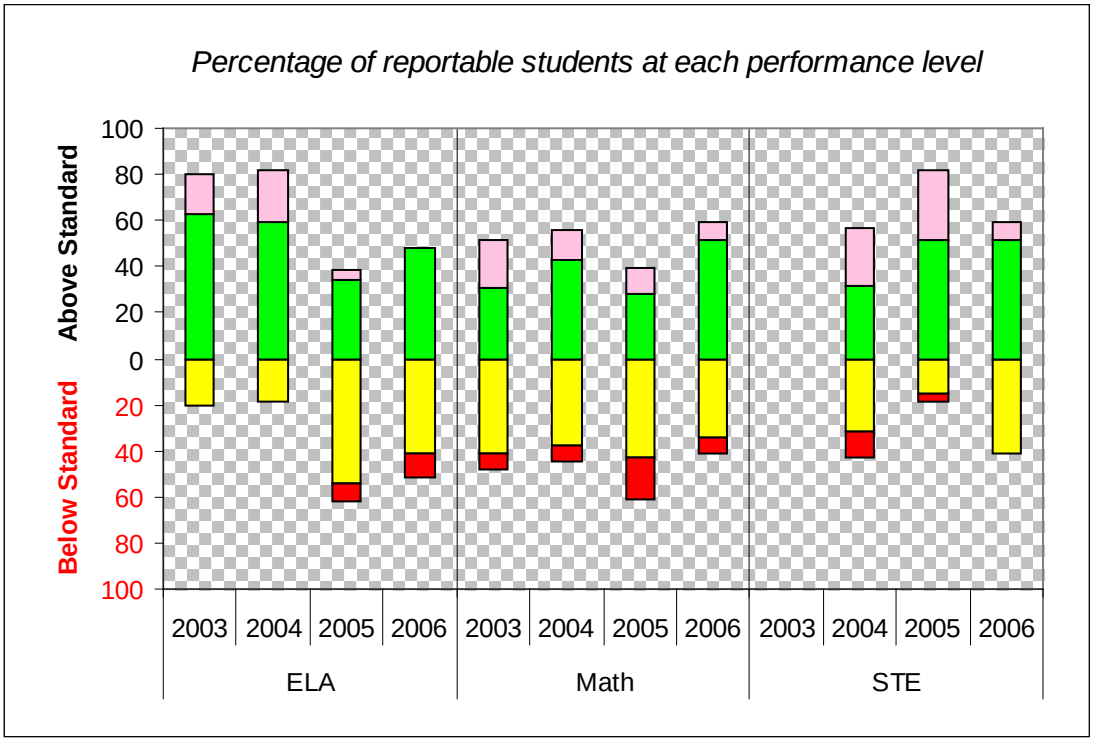
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	18	14	8	4
Proficient	40	42	26	43
Needs Improvement	31	28	40	31
Warning/Failing	4	4	13	7
Total	93	88	87	85

Note: Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years; therefore, the 2006 data may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 1.

The percentage of Nahant students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests decreased from 62 percent in 2003 to 56 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased from four percent in 2003 to eight percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Nahant widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 19 PI points in 2006.

Figure/Table 15: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2003-2006



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	17	22	4	0	21	13	11	7		26	30	7
Proficient	63	59	35	48	31	43	28	52		31	52	52
Needs Improvement	20	19	54	41	41	38	43	34		31	15	41
Warning/ Failing	0	0	8	10	7	7	18	7		11	4	0
Percent Attaining Proficiency	80	81	39	48	52	56	39	59		57	82	59
Proficiency Index (PI)	92.9	93.5	75.0	78.4	79.3	81.6	68.4	83.0		80.7	92.6	86.1

Note: Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years; therefore, the 2006 data for ELA and math may differ from those reported in Figure/Table 2. STE data for 2003 are not available.

The percentage of Nahant students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 80 percent in 2003 to 48 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA widened from seven PI points in 2003 to 22 PI points in 2006.

The percentage of Nahant students attaining proficiency in math increased from 52 percent in 2003 to 59 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 21 PI points in 2003 to 17 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 18 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Nahant students attaining proficiency in STE increased from 57 percent in 2004 to 59 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in STE narrowed from 19 PI points in 2004 to 14 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 28 percent.

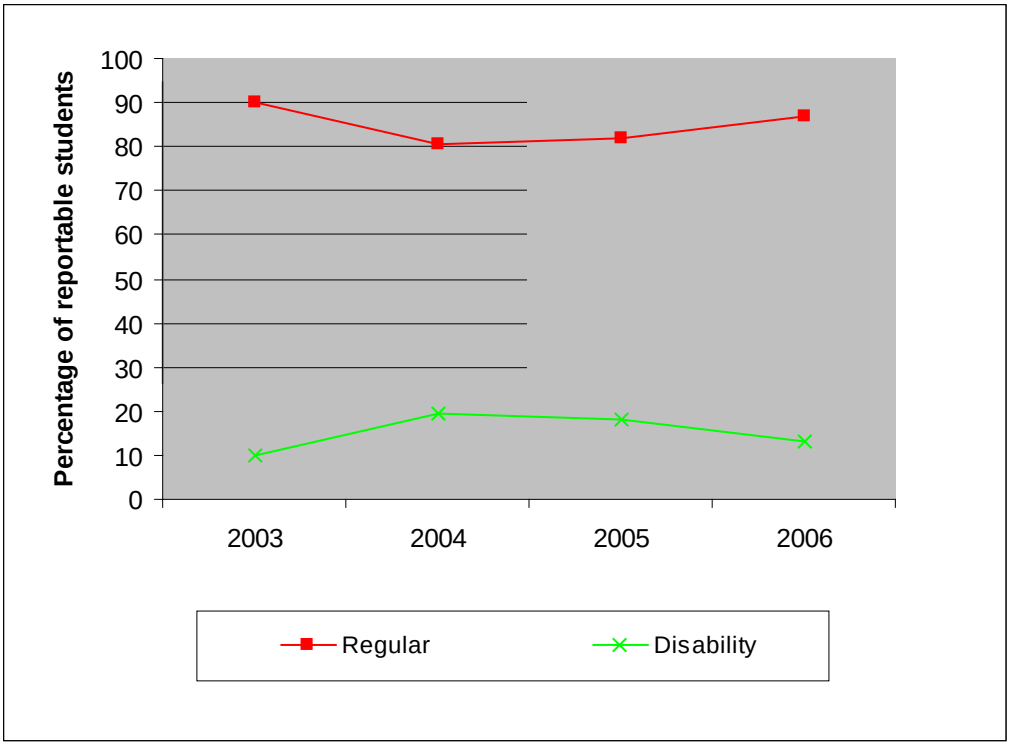
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Nahant, both subgroups, regular education students and students with disabilities, had decreased performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006.
- In math, only regular education students in Nahant showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006, while students with disabilities had a decline in performance.
- The performance gap between the two subgroups in ELA widened from 12 PI points in 2003 to 40 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the subgroups in math widened from 42 to 50 PI points over this period.

Figure/Table 16: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2003-2006



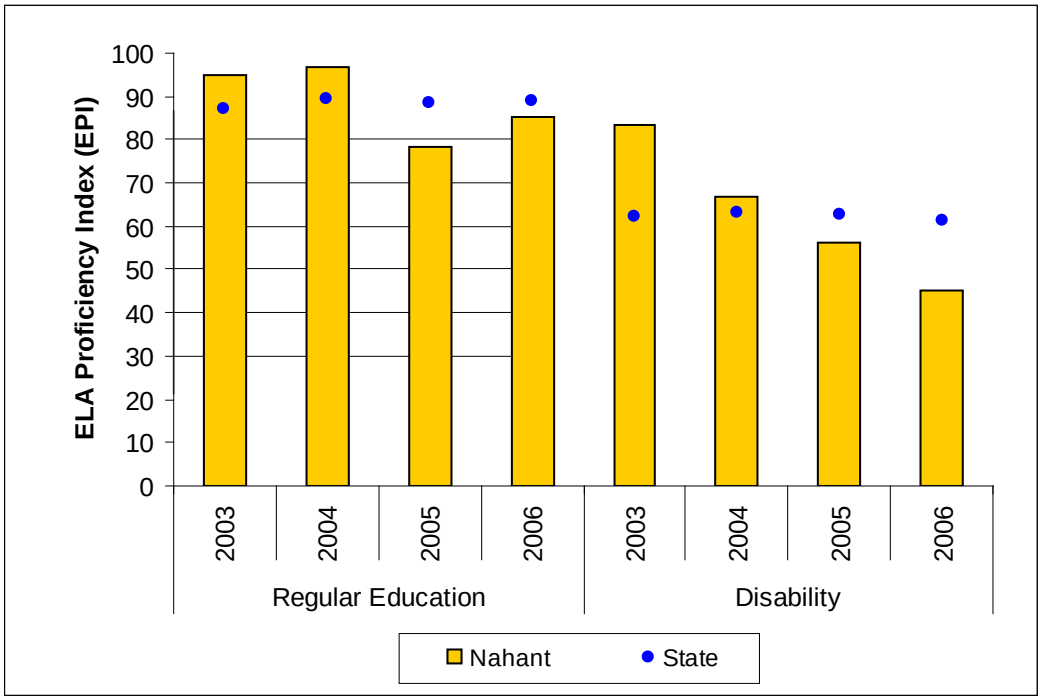
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Nahant	82	123	115	114	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	74	99	94	99	90.2	80.5	81.7	86.8
Disability	8	24	21	15	9.8	19.5	18.3	13.2

Note: The 2006 percentages of students reported here may differ from those reported in Figure 8; the percentages shown here are based on the total number of students in the district, whereas the percentages shown in Figure 8 are based on the number of students in reportable subgroups.

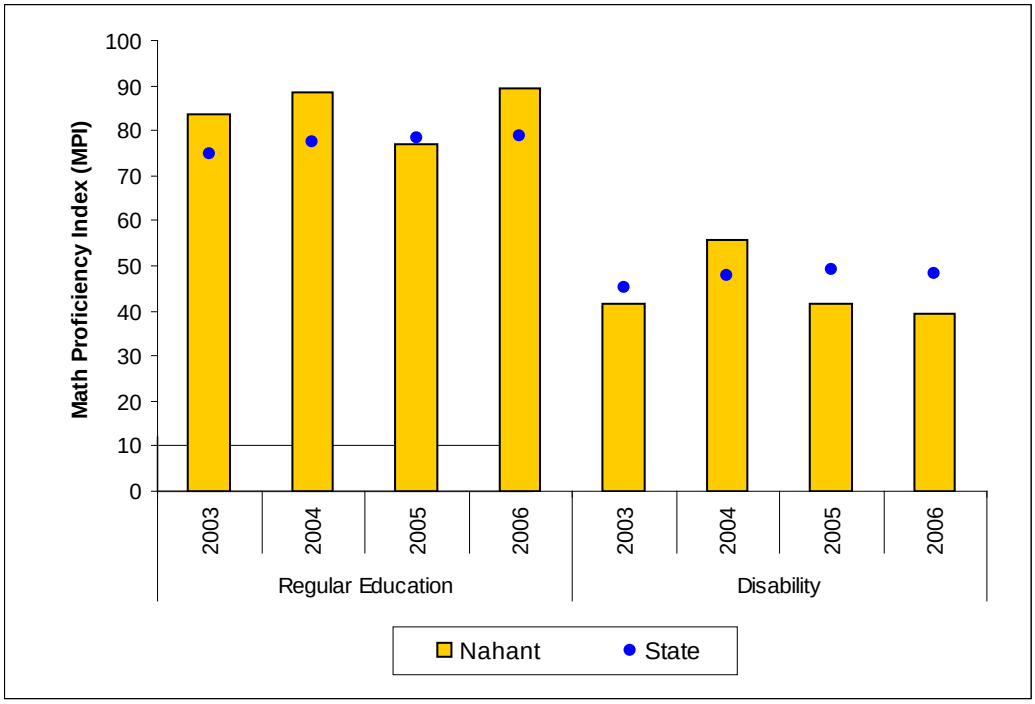
Between 2003 and 2006, Nahant's proportion of students with disabilities increased by more than three percentage points.

Figures 17 A-B/Table 17: MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Subgroup, 2003-2006

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



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

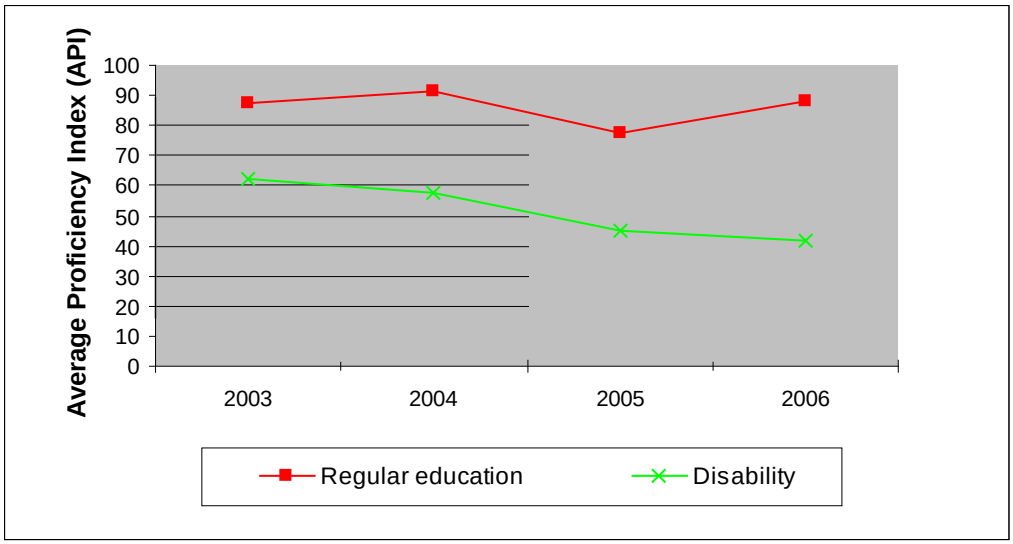


State				Nahant			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	94.8	83.7
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	96.9	88.5
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	78.4	77.2
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	85.4	89.3
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	83.3	41.7
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	66.7	55.8
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	56.3	41.7
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	45.0	39.3

In Nahant, both subgroups had decreased performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. In math, only regular education students in Nahant showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006, while students with disabilities showed declined performance.

The performance gap between the two subgroups in ELA widened from 12 PI points in 2003 to 40 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the subgroups in math widened from 42 to 50 PI points over this period.

Figure/Table 18: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Student Status Subgroup, 2003-2006

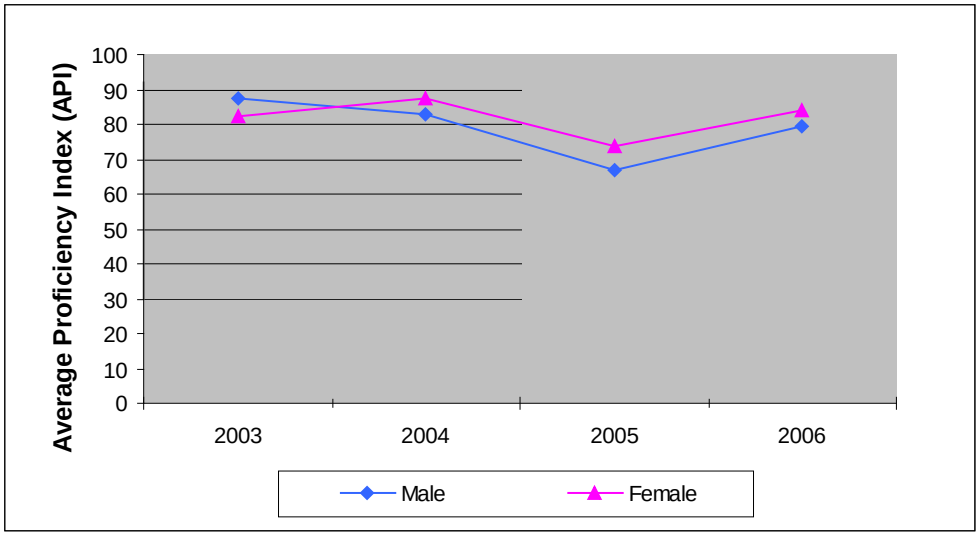


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	87.7	94.8	83.7	83	58
	2004	91.3	96.9	88.5	92	67
	2005	77.6	78.4	77.2	41	50
	2006	88.0	85.4	89.3	58	67
Disability	2003	62.5	83.3	41.7	67	0
	2004	57.8	66.7	55.8	0	15
	2005	44.8	56.3	41.7	25	7
	2006	41.7	45.0	39.3	0	0

Students with disabilities in Nahant had a decline in overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while the performance of regular education students was relatively flat during this period. The average proficiency gap for Nahant's regular education students remained at 12 PI points; for students with disabilities, it widened from 37 to 58 PI points.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by 21 PI points.

Figure/Table 19: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Gender Subgroup, 2003- 2006



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	87.5	94.6	83.0	86	59
	2004	82.8	90.0	80.5	70	50
	2005	66.7	66.7	66.7	25	37
	2006	79.4	76.4	81.3	39	50
Female	2003	82.5	91.7	77.1	76	47
	2004	87.5	95.6	82.8	88	62
	2005	73.5	82.1	69.9	50	41
	2006	84.0	81.8	84.8	64	68

Male students in Nahant had a decline in overall performance between 2003 and 2006, while the performance of female students improved during this period. The average proficiency gap for male students widened from 12 to 21 PI points. The average proficiency gap for female students narrowed from 17 to 16 PI points, resulting in an improvement rate of nine percent.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between male and female students remained at five PI points.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

- On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Nahant participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Nahant	ALL LEVELS	**114**	**114**	**27**
	Advanced	19	7	2
	Proficient	58	45	14
	Needs Improvement	34	47	11
	Warning/Failing	3	15	0
Regular Education	Advanced	19	7	2
	Proficient	55	43	13
	Needs Improvement	24	42	9
	Warning/Failing	1	7	0
Disability	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	3	2	1
	Needs Improvement	10	5	2
	Warning/Failing	2	8	0
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	0	0	0
	Needs Improvement	0	0	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
White	Advanced	18	7	2
	Proficient	54	42	13
	Needs Improvement	31	43	10
	Warning/Failing	3	14	0
Hispanic	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	1	0	0
	Needs Improvement	0	1	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
African-American	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	2	1	1
	Needs Improvement	0	1	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
Asian	Advanced	1	0	0
	Proficient	1	2	0
	Needs Improvement	2	2	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	19	7	2
	Proficient	57	44	14
	Needs Improvement	29	44	10
	Warning/Failing	3	13	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	1	1	0
	Needs Improvement	5	3	1
	Warning/Failing	0	2	0
Male	Advanced	5	2	1
	Proficient	27	22	8
	Needs Improvement	25	28	4
	Warning/Failing	2	7	0
Female	Advanced	14	5	1
	Proficient	31	23	6
	Needs Improvement	9	19	7
	Warning/Failing	1	8	0

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	24	0	0
	2004	27	0	0
	2005	27	0	0
	2006	31	31	0
Grade 4	2003	35	35	0
	2004	27	27	0
	2005	26	26	0
	2006	29	29	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	35
	2005	0	0	27
	2006	27	27	27
Grade 6	2003	0	23	0
	2004	0	34	0
	2005	0	35	0
	2006	27	27	0
All Grades	2003	59	58	0
	2004	54	61	35
	2005	53	61	27
	2006	114	114	27

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 2003-2006 reported in Figures/Tables 16-19 and in the table of n-values by year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4
Math: 4, 6
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5

Data for science and technology/engineering (STE) are not included in computing overall proficiency and the average proficiency index (API); they will be included beginning in 2007 when STE becomes a graduation requirement.

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

The participation rates of limited English proficient (LEP) students reported here differ from those reported by the Department of Education in its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports, as the latter includes students who formerly had LEP status but no longer did at the time of testing.

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 2006 data.

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

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: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Although the district had a School Improvement Plan (SIP), the plan lacked standards-based components and a focus on improving student achievement.
- Since 1995, the district experienced high turnover rates in the positions of superintendent and principal.
- Two years prior to the EQA site review, the Nahant School Committee reorganized the district's administration by combining the positions of superintendent and principal.
- The district modified its writing curriculum and math program based upon an analysis of student assessment data.
- Most interviewees reported school budgets as less than adequate, especially in areas such as specialty subject staffing, library services, and technology.
- The district recently updated its policy manual.
- None of the administrators' personnel files contained evaluations for each of the years under review.
- The school committee members and the superintendent-principal commented that student achievement results had little impact on decisions made during the development and review of the school department's proposed budget.

- A crisis planning committee developed and disseminated to all teachers an emergency crisis plan and emergency evacuation and lockdown procedures.

Summary

The Nahant Public Schools consisted of one school, the Johnson Elementary School, that served approximately 200 students in grades K-6. After completing grade 6, the vast majority of Nahant students enrolled in Swampscott Middle School and subsequently in Swampscott High School. A superintendent-principal served as the chief administrative officer of the Nahant Public Schools.

With only one school in the district, Nahant had no District Improvement Plan (DIP) but did have a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Interviewees stated that a school council, which included the principal, two teachers, three parents, and a community representative, developed the Johnson Elementary School Improvement Plan for 2005-2006. The mission statement stated, "The Johnson School teachers and staff are going to work hard to help you become the best possible thinker. We are also going to make sure that you are always safe and well cared for while you are at school. In turn, you are expected to always try your best and we will help you do that!"

The SIP contained the following three goals: 1) "To expect students to engage in appropriate social behavior, enhance personal skills, and effectively resolve conflict resulting in an optimum learning environment"; 2) "To articulate clear curriculum expectations for students at each grade level"; and 3) "To disseminate information effectively to the school community and to the community at large." The goal format included a range of six to eight strategies, person(s) responsible, resources and funding, and evaluation. However, the SIP did not incorporate an analysis of student achievement data.

The school committee members and the superintendent-principal stated that each May or June the superintendent-principal made a presentation on the SIP to the school committee. The presentation included both an update on the status of each of the goals from the previous year and the proposed goals for the next year. The superintendent-principal stated that she provided the school council members with a status report on the SIP goals at their meetings held on the third Tuesday of each month. Also, leadership personnel remarked that several times during the year the faculty discussed matters pertaining to the goals in the SIP.

The superintendent-principal and teachers commented on the various types of assessments used in the district during the review period. The standardized assessments consisted of the MCAS tests, the California Achievement Test (CAT), and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10). Other assessments referred to included portfolios, curriculum tests, checklists, teacher observations, individual teacher-generated tests, and report cards. The superintendent-principal stated that in fall 2005 the district implemented the SAT 10 in grades K-6 "for purposes of base-line understanding" and discontinued use of the CAT.

According to leadership personnel, the superintendent-principal, the technology specialist, and one teacher analyzed the MCAS test results upon their arrival in the district. Also, leadership personnel mentioned that the superintendent-principal and the technology specialist had received training in TestWiz. Interviewees reported that a faculty meeting featured a presentation of the analysis of MCAS test results. In addition, interviewees remarked that the technology specialist assisted individual teachers with the analysis of the MCAS test results.

The superintendent-principal reported that as a result of the analysis of the MCAS test results, the district implemented new programs and services and modified existing ones to improve student achievement. Three teachers serving on a writing curriculum team examined the writing instruction process used in Swampscott's Machon Elementary School, which was a member of the Massachusetts Department of Education's Commonwealth Compass School program to recognize exemplary practices. These teachers recommended implementing this writing instruction process at the Johnson Elementary School, and the district did so in 2005-2006. Also, according to the superintendent-principal, in 2005-2006 the district increased math instructional time in grades 5 and 6 from 50 to 60 minutes per day. Furthermore, in 2006-2007 the district adopted the Scott Foresman Math program at grades K-6. In addition, the district instituted an after-school MCAS support program, held Monday through Thursday, for 60 minutes per day for students who scored in the 'Warning/Failing' and the lower end of the 'Needs Improvement' categories on the MCAS tests.

Interviewees stated that teachers devoted more time to open-ended questions as a result of the analysis of the MCAS test results. Also, interviewees mentioned that in 2005-2006 the district provided two half-day workshops on the new writing process along with a 10-credit professional

development course for staff. In addition, leadership personnel and teachers indicated that in September 2006, the district devoted a full day of professional development to the new Scott Foresman Math program.

Leadership personnel stated that the district took steps to address the issue of equity. However, the superintendent-principal acknowledged that the district staff "pay more attention to the individual as opposed to subgroups," and noted that the district enrolls few subgroup students. She said, "We have only three free and reduced lunch students," and, "Sped is our only subgroup." Leadership personnel mentioned that the district continued to meet the requirements of students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Interviewees reported that 80 to 90 percent of the special education students received instruction in inclusion classes and approximately three to four students received additional English language arts (ELA) and math assistance outside the regular classroom. The superintendent-principal stated that the district used the $70,000 that it received from a special education grant to fund the salaries of a special education teacher, a special education aide, and a half-time speech and language specialist.

The superintendent-principal discussed the turnover in district leadership since 1995. Between 1995 and 2005, the district employed five superintendents. From 1995 to 2002, the Johnson Elementary School employed six principals. In May 2005, the school committee combined the roles and established the position of superintendent-principal. Some of the reasons cited by interviewees for the turnover in the leadership positions included "the size of the district," "the salary for the position," "the lack of administrative support positions," "micromanaging by residents," "inadequate resources," and the perception of the position as a "a stepping stone to another administrative position." Interviewees expressed concern about the lack of stability in the governance and leadership of the district in the decade prior to the EQA review.

During the review period, interviewees characterized the district's budget as inadequate. According to the superintendent-principal, in 2006 she received a guideline from the budget subcommittee of the school committee that asked what the district could "live with" as opposed to what it needed. Some "back and forth" discussions about proposed budget requests ensued. The superintendent-principal stated that the school budget figure resulted from adding $104,000 to the net school spending (NSS) figure, then subtracting both the cost of the tuitions of the

Nahant students to the Swampscott middle and high schools and the cost of transportation. School committee members stated that they "do very little with student achievement results" when deliberating about the budget. School committee members emphasized the importance of limiting class size as an objective in their deliberations.

Referring to the school budget as less than adequate, the superintendent-principal stated, "We cannot offer a full service, comprehensive elementary education program." The superintendent-principal cited examples of faculty positions eliminated during the review period, such as a reading specialist, a part-time Spanish teacher, and a part-time guidance counselor. Also, the status of some positions was changed as a result of budget reductions; these changes include the reduction of speech and language positions from 1.6 to 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE), music and art positions from 0.6 to 0.2, and a physical education position from 0.8 to 0.4.

Interviewees mentioned that following the presentation of the school department's budget, the school committee conducted budget review sessions and held an annual hearing on the budget. The school committee members and the superintendent-principal indicated that school committee meetings and budget sessions received coverage via cable television and in the local newspapers, such as *The Daily Item* in Lynn and *The Nahant Harbor Review*. Also, interviewees reported that the superintendent wrote an article each month for *The Nahant Harbor Review.*

The school committee members and the superintendent-principal commented favorably on the $6.3 million debt exclusion override passed by Nahant citizens in February 2006 for both a new addition to and a renovation of the Johnson Elementary School. However, interviewees indicated that the approved construction and renovation project no longer included the library or the technology funds that were in the original $9 million proposal.

School committee members informed the EQA team that the size of the Nahant School Committee had changed in recent years. They reported that the school committee consisted of seven members in 2003-2004, six members in 2004-2005, and five members since 2005-2006. The school committee members stated that the board had four relatively new members who attended the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) orientation session "On Charting a New Course." The members indicated that, at times, they visited the MASC and Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) websites.

In addition, the school committee members remarked that the superintendent-principal provided them with information pertaining to their roles and responsibilities under the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. Also, they said that a representative from MASC gave a presentation on a governance model, which was confirmed by the superintendent-principal.

A review of the personnel file of the former superintendent, who held the position for the first two years of the review period, indicated that the school committee had prepared no evaluations. In addition, the current superintendent-principal served as principal of the Johnson Elementary School in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The evaluations which she received as principal did not fully include the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, and they did not address the SIP goals or student achievement.

In 2005-2006, the school committee evaluated the superintendent-principal three times, in October 2005, January 2006, and June 2006. The instrument which the school committee used to evaluate the superintendent-principal included six areas: 1) relationship with the school committee; 2) educational leadership; 3) personnel management; 4) community and public relations; 5) personal qualities and characteristics; and 6) financial, facilities, and operations management. Each of the areas included goals, objectives, indicators of accomplishment, and ratings. The evaluation instrument had the following five-point rating scale: 5 = far exceeds goal expectation; 4 = exceeds goal; 3 = meets goal; 2 = somewhat meets goal; and 1 = does not meet goal. Each of the school committee members evaluated the superintendent-principal and submitted his or her input to the school committee chair, who compiled the information, wrote the formal evaluation of the superintendent-principal, and shared it with her. A review of the evaluations of the superintendent-principal indicated that they included both informative and instructive statements. The evaluation did not include the signatures of the school committee chair or the superintendent-principal.

According to the superintendent-principal, the district had a crisis planning committee which prepared and presented to the school committee an emergency crisis plan. Besides a general information section, this plan included sections on the following emergencies: building, community, crime related, individual student, medical, mental health, public health, and transportation. The superintendent-principal mentioned that each teacher had received a copy of

the emergency crisis plan. Also, the superintendent-principal reported that each teacher kept an emergency evacuation and lockdown procedures folder in his or her classroom. During classroom observations, EQA team members noticed the emergency crisis plan and the evacuation and lockdown procedures folder. Interviewees indicated that a review and update of the emergency procedures occurred at the last January faculty meeting.

The superintendent-principal mentioned that the crisis planning committee consisted of the fire chief, the police chief, and three teachers. Normally, this committee met once or twice per year. However, with the school construction and renovation project, the superintendent-principal reported that the crisis planning committee met more frequently.

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: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- While the district had exit criteria that were aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks for all grade levels, the district did not have a complete, written curriculum in place.
- The district did not use benchmarks to measure student progress toward the completion of annual learning goals. As a result, few midyear corrections in either curriculum or instruction were possible.
- The district used analysis of student assessment results, particularly aggregate MCAS and Stanford Achievement test data, to make annual determinations of student progress and placement, as well as program adjustments.
- The district used informal, undocumented practices to deliver necessary services to students. Lack of documentation stemmed at least in part to staffing reductions.
- Administrators and teachers began the process of cooperating with Nahant's partner district, Swampscott, to deliver professional development activities, provide vertical articulation of the curriculum, and assist with the transitioning of students.
- The district understood the value of educational technology and provided classroom computers and a school computer lab. However, the equipment was dated, limited in terms of the software it could run, and difficult to maintain.
- A congenial, welcoming atmosphere was evident in all classrooms.

Summary

Aligned Curricula

During the review period, the district did not have a written curriculum that met state standards. The district had a list of knowledge and skill topics that were to be taught, and the list was aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Much effort had been expended over the years on curriculum development in Nahant. The small size of the district allowed informal programs to be effectively implemented, although formal documentation was often conducted during slow periods. As a result, the norm in the district was the implementation of practices without procedures, and of procedures without policies.

Prior to August 2006, the district made use of grade-level specific documents entitled Calendar of Objectives. Different calendars were available for each grade and for each subject within each grade. Each calendar consisted of a monthly listing of topics to be covered. There were no resources, instructional strategies, measurable outcomes or assessments provided. Since only one or two classes were offered at each grade level, the district's lack of written curriculum documents did not impede student learning, although it did not help improve student performance.

In school year 2005-2006, the district undertook a project to improve the writing curriculum for students. Under the leadership of the superintendent, a committee of teachers developed the outline for a schoolwide writing program. The document consisted of several sections: writing (comprised of specific common class rubrics from Ten Sigma, 1996); citation of sources (crediting the Nauset Public Schools); and recommended authors and illustrators. A final section consisted of resources and glossary entries. The resources quoted were general sources, such as professional organizations and commercial media outlets, including websites. The writing section was attributed to the "Johnson School Writing Committee, May 2006."

The positive reception the faculty gave this effort led the administration to continue the curriculum work. Funds were used to support teachers in improving the written curriculum of the district, beginning in the summer of 2006.

During those months, curriculum maps were produced for kindergarten, grades 1-2, grades 3-4, and grades 5-6. The math/science volume contained three separators labeled "science (or math),

map, and goals." However, the section labeled "math" was empty. Teachers explained that math was the final map completed. The "map" section consisted of a list of topics, the grade at which each topic was to be taught, and the framework standard to be addressed. The "goal" section consisted of a collection of topics entitled "at the end of (kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, etc.) students will:". There were no timelines, articulation maps, assessment strategies or instruments, resources, or instructional strategies. Teachers reported that they provided their own supervision of curriculum internally, citing frequent teacher transfers between grades as a contributing factor. This informal internal monitoring helped to maintain both vertical and horizontal alignment at grades 1-6.

District students in grades 7-12 were sent on a tuition basis to the Swampscott Public Schools by virtue of a contract signed on December 9, 2003. When questioned on the vertical alignment of the curriculum with the Swampscott Public Schools, teachers and parents stated that students who graduated from the Johnson School performed "well, by comparison" to students who had attended the Swampscott elementary schools upon matriculation to the Swampscott Middle School. However, interviewees detailed various efforts that they made in order to ensure that Nahant's curriculum aligned vertically with that of the Swampscott Middle School. Teachers reported that they had attended several professional development meetings in Swampscott and had taken a number of professional days to observe classes and review curriculum.

Teachers referred to the curriculum maps as "the curriculum," and reported that the curriculum was aligned horizontally and vertically. Topics addressed in the curriculum maps provided a clear outline of the skills to be taught during each year. There was little evidence that formative or summative assessments other than report cards were used to determine to the extent to which each student attained those skills. The district had no interim benchmarks designed to provide real-time progress reports. The district reported that it also used teacher observations, checklists, portfolio assessments, and assessments designed by individual teachers to identify student progress toward the goals. The superintendent-principal was universally identified as the curriculum leader for the school. Teachers reported that the superintendent-principal worked mostly as a facilitator, setting curriculum goals and building consensus among staff members. Teachers provided the active leadership of the curriculum initiatives, serving on the committees,

preparing drafts, and presenting samples to the administration and full staff for acceptance and approval.

Interviews with teachers described the curriculum review process used in the district. In a document entitled *The Johnson School Four Stage Curriculum Cycle*, covering fiscal years 2004-2008, the district identified the stages for the development, review, and modification of the writing, ELA, social studies, science, and math curricula. The stages included analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation. The analysis and design functions were included during the same year in all cases, and two years were allocated to implementation. The process was reportedly begun by the superintendent-principal, who described the need at a faculty meeting and solicited committee memberships to carry out the processes necessary.

Teachers described the curriculum revision process as being data driven, and cited the use of the MCAS test results as well as other assessment results during the period under review. The California Achievement Test was administered to some students in school year 2004-2005, and the Stanford Achievement Test was administered to all students in school year 2005-2006. Teachers received detailed reports from these assessments and used the results individually to better understand student learning needs.

Few formalized ongoing assessments were in place other than those provided recently by newly adopted curricula. In ELA, for example, the new textbook series required a unit test every six weeks. Five weeks of reading were followed by a week of review and the unit test. Based on an analysis of incorrect answers, students were assigned to particular reading groups. The new Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley Math series had spiral review tests, benchmark tests, diagnostic reviews, and a unit review. Teachers reported that all of these had been used by individual teachers. There was no evidence, however, that any formal longitudinal monitoring was planned or provided. The district also reported several the use of other forms of assessment, including report cards, teacher observations, checklists, portfolio assessments, diagnostic tests, and assessments designed by individual teachers. These were individualized, and with the exception of report cards and quarterly progress reports, were not institutionalized.

Effective Instruction

The allocation of instructional time was handled individually by teachers at grades K-4. In general, teachers at these grade levels reported that they were able to individually assign time to subject area instruction, and one teacher reported that during school year 2005-2006 she assigned math instruction once per day, and for school year 2006-2007 she allocated math instruction two blocks per day. She attributed the change to student performance on a comprehensive end-of-year examination as well as analysis of assessment results.

Interviewees reported that teachers at grades 5-6 had less flexibility in allocating time and resources, but said that in school year 2005-2006 the district increased math instructional time from 50 to 60 minutes a day. Grade 1 teachers reported a slightly different schedule, and attributed this change to requirements of special education support staffing.

The building had the capacity for educational technology. As a result of recent renovations, all classrooms were wired for Internet access, and wiring was present as well for ceiling-mounted computer projectors and SmartBoards. One interactive white board had been installed in a classroom, and two others were available as portable units. Each classroom had at least two computers, and the school had a computer laboratory with 15 machines. When asked, some teachers stated that sufficient technology was available. Others disagreed, citing the age of the machines and their relative state of disrepair. Many of the computers in the computer lab were equipped with built-in dual floppy disk drives, suggesting advanced age and technological limitation. During classroom visits, EQA examiners did not observe student use of any of the computers; only one computer was turned on. One teacher quoted the superintendent-principal as stating, “Some of the computers in this school are older than the students.” Despite the aging technology, teachers reported that all grade 3 students learned to type, and that computers were used to teach PowerPoint as a presentational skill, as well as for math, language, and proofreading.

The superintendent-principal actively monitored learning for evidence of practices that reflected high expectations for students’ work. All teachers interviewed agreed that she was very visible in classrooms throughout the building, and that they “sometimes” received feedback, both positive and negative, from her classroom visits but that such feedback was “pretty informal.” Teachers

described occasions on which the superintendent-principal visited classes and conducted "principal's challenges" with students to assess understanding of concepts or skills. Despite this activity, no in-school time was available to assist students who were experiencing difficulty in learning. Teachers all had 30-minute after-school contractual requirements, and had structured a support program for students needing additional assistance. The superintendent-principal reported that there was an after-school program for 60 minutes each day, Monday through Thursday, to help students who performed poorly. The arrangements were undocumented and informal, and there was a mechanism to ensure that students requiring the additional assistance made use of the extra time. No attendance records from the after-school program were provided to EQA examiners.

EQA examiners visited all grade 1-6 classrooms. The average class size was 17.7 students, and 10 teachers and two paraprofessionals were observed working with them. Classroom management was excellent, with examiners reporting that they saw effective practices in all classrooms observed. Similarly, students were all engaged in their work in clean, orderly, and inviting classrooms with positive interactions between students and teachers in evidence.

Examiners also saw effective instructional practices in place as well, with perfect scores for teachers' ability to maintain student attention, effective use of time, appropriate pace, clarity of objectives, and alignment with the state curriculum frameworks. Examiners observed use of multiple tasks to engage all levels of learners in three of nine classrooms, and they found evidence of varied instructional techniques in only two classrooms, although the limited period of time for each observation could have affected those findings.

EQA examiners observed evidence of positive student activity and behavior least often. Students in all the observed classrooms showed an understanding of the objectives of the lesson. Almost all students were both actively engaged in the learning process and made observations and comments that teachers valued and followed up, but none of the classrooms were using technology during the EQA site visit.

All classrooms visited were characterized by active listening, courtesy, fairness, and responsiveness. Seven of nine classrooms were filled with multiple resources for student learning that addressed diversity and multiple learning styles.

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:

- Despite formal analysis of MCAS test and Stanford Achievement Test results, for most of the period under review assessment was largely an informal and undocumented process within the district.
- The district provided an outline of the program evaluation process and timeline for implementation, but was unable to provide documentation of the type of analyses it carried out or the results emanating from them.
- The district recognized the value of student achievement data in addition to those from the MCAS tests, and continued using commercial assessment tools with national norms despite the scarcity of resources.
- The district carefully evaluated a new writing program used at its partner school district before committing resources to implement it.
- All students in the district participated in all required assessments during the period under review.
- The district used both formal and informal means to communicate with parents regarding student achievement. Parents felt that they were well informed about the school and their children's welfare.

Summary

Student Assessment

Student assessment was a largely informal process in the Nahant Public Schools, despite the district's comprehensive analysis of both the MCAS test and Stanford Achievement Test results. The tools of student assessment included the MCAS tests, the California Achievement Test for

school year 2004-2005, the Stanford Achievement Test for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years, as well as assessment tools provided by textbook publishers. Other forms of assessment reported by the district included portfolio assessment, checklists, teacher observations, individual teacher-made tests, and report cards and progress reports. The district had no quarterly benchmarks or other assessment tools to enable teachers to judge student progress toward the annual exit objectives aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

The district made substantial efforts to collect and analyze student achievement results from these assessments. However, it made minimal use of test results to inform curriculum or to adjust instruction for individual students, instead relying upon the individual teacher's skill and experience.

MCAS results arrived at the district office and were immediately reviewed and analyzed by the superintendent-principal, the technology specialist, and one teacher. The technology specialist and the superintendent-principal analyzed the results using TestWiz, then distributed the analyses to teachers at a faculty meeting. Teachers who expressed an interest were provided with more comprehensive TestWiz analyses. Teachers also reported that they discussed the results in smaller, grade-specific meetings. During 2005-2006, the most frequently detected pattern observed in the analysis of aggregate MCAS data was that students returned to the text to gather additional information. As a result, additional emphasis was placed on this area in regular classroom instruction.

The district used the Stanford Achievement Test to conduct analysis of skills of individual students. The California Achievement Test, 5th Edition (CAT5) was in use during the first year of the review period. The district's assessment committee reviewed this and other tests, and selected the Stanford Achievement Test for improved diagnostic and predictive value. The assessment committee reviewed and interpreted the Stanford results. Teachers reported that during the 2005-2006 school year, individual teachers used "the most relevant information." Special education students received individual evaluation services and were included in all classes, except those students identified by the IEP team as needing outside services. This was confirmed by the DOE's Coordinated Program Review report, dated July 8, 2005.

All students participated in the assessment programs within the district. Since 2003, the district has reported a 100 percent participation rate on the MCAS tests to the DOE. The sizes of the school population and the town contributed to this. School newsletters and a website, as well as notices sent home with students, informed parents of school news. The district website featured a link to the commercial website SchoolNotes, allowing teachers to post notes about spelling words, project assignments, field trips, etc. There was no link on the website to any of the DOE pages providing information about the district's MCAS test results or its performance in attaining adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act. The school calendar provided two dates for parent-teacher conferences beginning at 11:30 a.m., and the administration reported that every effort was made to accommodate requests for personal appointments between parents and teachers.

The school used a series of exit objectives and what teachers referred to as a "comprehensive end-of-the-year assessment" to measure students' progress. It was unclear whether this assessment was individual or district-wide. The district did not use midyear or interim benchmarks, nor any assessment such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), or Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE). Student assessments called for in the ELA, math, and science curricula were administered, however. The Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley Math series had spiral review tests, benchmark tests, a diagnostic review, and a unit review, and, according to interviewees, many teachers used them.

Program Evaluation

EQA examiners found little evidence that the district used student assessment results or other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional and support programs. Such decisions were made but were based on a large-scale subjective and qualitative assessment of student learning and on the interpretation of aggregate student achievement data from the MCAS tests and the Stanford Achievement Test. There was little evidence that individual programs were analyzed on a formal, regular, or consistent basis other than a calendar of the curriculum renewal cycle that mentioned the years during which analysis was to take place. No documentation that

such analysis was conducted was provided to the EQA examiners, nor was there any information provided regarding the type of analyses conducted or the results from them.

Before adopting the writing instruction process used at Swampscott's Machon Elementary School, the three teachers who served on the district writing committee in Nahant visited that school to study its use of the process. They chose Machon because of its status as a Compass School. Following their visit, they incorporated the Swampscott writing model into the Nahant curriculum.

The Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the Department of Education in January 2005 cited Nahant's special education program for lacking a "formal special education evaluation program in place for the current school year." The evaluation was conducted by an outside contractor during the previous two years. EQA examiners found no evidence of a formal special education evaluation for the 2005-2006 or 2006-2007 school years, although teachers described informal practices that they said took place every year.

The Title I program received only $12,000 for school year 2006-2007. These funds allowed the district to focus on only one grade level, and the district chose grade 1 to "saturate the room with literacy." The size of the Johnson Elementary School made the assignment of staff an ongoing problem. For example, during the 2006-2007 school year, there was one grade 1 class, two grade 2 classes, one grade 3 class, two grade 4 groups, two grade 5 classes, and one grade 6 class. These cohorts will advance next year, requiring a realignment of teaching assignments. The superintendent-principal discussed how she had used student assessment data previously to reassign teachers, and how she planned to do so for the 2007-2008 school year. She said that she will continue to use student achievement results as a factor in her decision to reassign teachers.

The discontinuation of programs, specifically the reduction of physical education, art, and music classes to one or two meetings per week, was a decision based primarily on finances rather than on interpretation of student assessment data or a need to dedicate additional instructional time to ELA, math, social studies, or science and technology/engineering. Few programs have been added to the curriculum for the same reason.

In summary, the district has recognized the need to use data to make decisions, but the mechanisms needed for that transformation were not yet in place during the site visit. There were many informal practices in use, as well as some formal ones, and the district would benefit from more structured planning and implementation.

IV. Human Resources 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: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- During the period under review, the district had a low turnover rate for teaching staff**.**
- The district has experienced high turnover in the positions of superintendent and principal.
- The district had an informal process for mentoring new teachers, and few opportunities for advancement existed due to the size of the district.
- Professional development budgets and offerings were limited, but some programs were provided in cooperation with the Swampscott Public Schools.
- Despite few opportunities for promotion, teachers expressed satisfaction with the district's receptivity to their contributions, and their morale was high.

Summary

The district's policies and practices for the recruitment and selection of professional staff were informal due to the small number of teachers and low turnover rate among them. Two vacancies existed in 2006. The superintendent-principal said that the practice when a vacancy occurred was to post the position internally for 10 days, and then to announce it in the Lynn-based newspaper, *The Daily Item*. It was also posted on the websites of the Massachusetts DOE and Salem State College. The superintendent-principal also maintained files of unsolicited resumes and student teachers who had trained in the school district.

The superintendent-principal organized an interview committee that consisted of teachers and parents. She held an initial meeting of the committee to instruct them on the method of questioning interviewees. All members were to ask interviewees the same questions. In an interview with EQA examiners, representatives from the teachers' association confirmed that teachers were on the interview committees. After the successful candidates were selected, the

superintendent-principal conducted the requisite background checks and Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) review.

There had been frequent turnover in the positions of superintendent and principal of the Johnson Elementary School. From 1995 to 2005, the district employed five superintendents. From 1995 to 2002, the Johnson Elementary School employed six principals. In May 2005, the positions were combined. Various models had been implemented with the superintendent and the principal employed either part time or full time. When EQA examiners asked interviewees for thoughts on the high turnover in these positions, the most common response was that the jobs were viewed as entry-level, as means for superintendents and principals to gain experience so that they could gain employment in other districts.

The district had an informal process for mentoring new teachers. The superintendent-principal stated that the staff was highly experienced and was always willing to help new teachers. Teachers' association representatives stated in an interview that teachers at the same grade level as new teachers were responsible for mentoring them. When the superintendent-principal assigned an experienced teacher to mentor a new teacher, that mentor would receive a small stipend. The superintendent-principal also stated that materials for new teachers consisted of curriculum guides, student handbooks, and the sharing of materials with experienced teachers at the same grade level. She said that there was no formal plan for creating promotion opportunities for effective teachers.

Personnel stated that some of the district's professional development programs addressed student achievement. The superintendent-principal said that a writing program was implemented in 2006. Two and one-half days of workshops were held in which rubrics and program assessments were discussed. An in-service writing course was held, and an after-school program was also developed in these workshops. Interviewees mentioned that in 2005-2006, the district provided workshops on the new writing process along with a 10-credit professional development course for staff. In addition, leadership personnel and the teachers indicated that in September 2006 the district devoted a full day of professional development to the new Scott Foresman Math program.

The administration had sent inquiries to the staff to solicit their input on professional development programs. The district's End of Year Pupil and Financial Report for fiscal 2005 was reviewed to determine expenditures for professional development. The district spent $9,645 on professional development stipends and $59,360 on the curriculum director's salary, although this salary may have been funded through a grant. Examiners were unclear about the appropriate funding source for this position, and brought it to the attention of the superintendent-principal.

Nahant teachers have shared professional development programs with Swampscott teachers. During the period under review, they reviewed grades K-5 programs together for a full day.

Interviewees stated that the current instrument for staff evaluation is based on the Principles of Effective Teaching. Examiners reviewed the evaluation of all of the school's professional staff. All educators held appropriate Massachusetts' licensure with the exception of one part-time music teacher, on whose behalf the superintendent-principal was preparing an inquiry to the Department of Education as to whether it was appropriate for that teacher to obtain a license. The evaluations of the current superintendent-principal and the former superintendent were included in their personnel folders. The only evaluation considered instructive was that of the current superintendent-principal, and she was evaluated three times in 2005-2006. Of the evaluations reviewed, 10 were considered informative and 15 included the components of education reform.

Examiners asked the superintendent-principal what procedure the district used in addressing low-performing teachers; and she responded that there were no low-performing teachers in the district during the review period.

The district provided ongoing and regular training to staff in managing crises and emergencies. The district had a crisis planning committee that met with the fire chief and police chief. The plan was presented to the school committee during the period under review. All teachers had copies of the emergency plan.

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 implemented a transition and orientation program for students advancing from grade 6 to 7, detailed in the agreement between the towns of Nahant and Swampscott.
- The school committee members and the superintendent-principal indicated that every student had the opportunity to access all programs and services available in the school.
- The superintendent-principal and teachers in focus groups stated that the district staff had engaged in several initiatives with the Swampscott staff, such as professional development offerings and aligning the writing instruction process.
- The district used the funds from both its special education and Title I grants to hire staff to provide additional support and services to improve student performance.
- The superintendent-principal and her administrative assistant periodically monitored student and staff attendance along with student disciplinary matters.
- During the period under review, the district developed and implemented a new code of conduct.
- A student assistance team focused on the issues of needy or chronically absent students.

Summary

During the period under review, the Johnson Elementary School enrolled approximately 200 students each year. The superintendent-principal stated that each grade had either one or two classes, due to the small size of the school. Interviewees commented that upon completion of grade 6, almost all Nahant students went to the Swampscott Middle School and then to

Swampscott High School. The district paid Swampscott the tuition for approximately 200 secondary school students for each of the years under review.

Leadership personnel and teachers indicated that the district provided additional assistance to at-risk students. The district received a Title I grant in the amount of $13,000, which resulted in the hiring of two instructional aides. These two aides assisted grade 1 and 2 students with reading instruction and support. In addition, two primary grade teachers received training in the Wilson Reading program in 2003-2004.

Using funds from a $70,000 special education grant, the district hired a special education teacher, a special education aide, and a half-time speech and language specialist to assist special education students in improving their performance and to meet the requirements of their IEPs. Interviewees mentioned that the district had an after-school program which met for one hour each day, Mondays through Thursdays, to help students who performed poorly on the MCAS tests. According to the superintendent-principal, teachers who taught in the after-school program concentrated on ELA and math.

Interviewees reported that during the review period, in addition to the MCAS tests the school had administered the California Achievement Test, but in September 2005 switched to the Stanford Achievement Test for diagnostic purposes. In addition, interviewees mentioned that teachers used a variety of other student assessments such as teacher-generated tests, curriculum tests, portfolios, observations, and checklists. Teachers commented that based upon the assessment results, students received additional assistance from the classroom teachers and support staff.

When questioned about transitions from grade to grade, the superintendent-principal commented that on the last day of the academic year, the school held a “Move-up Day.” This allowed grade 6 students to advance to grade 7 in Swampscott Middle School more smoothly, and to meet their new teacher. Also, when questioned about transitions from program to program, the superintendent-principal stated, “It’s not applicable here.”

Interviewees commented about the various aspects of the transition process for students leaving grade 6 at the Johnson Elementary School and enrolling in grade 7 at the Swampscott Middle School. During the spring, the principal of the Swampscott Middle School visited the Johnson

Elementary School to conduct a student orientation. Also, the parents of Nahant's grade 6 students attended an evening orientation session at the Swampscott Middle School. In addition, leadership personnel from the Swampscott Middle School met with grade 6 teachers at the Johnson Elementary School to discuss such matters as course selections and placements. Furthermore, Nahant's grade 6 students visited the Swampscott Middle School, received an introduction to the library, and then attended a few classes. Staff from Swampscott's pupil personnel services office also met with the part-time Nahant special education administrator, the team chairperson, and appropriate staff to discuss the transitioning of students with IEPs. A review of the Agreement for Educational Services between the Town of Nahant and the Town of Swampscott, dated December 9, 2003, showed that it included a section on orientation and transition.

Of the five commended areas noted in the Nahant Public Schools Coordinated Program Review Report of Findings, dated August 25, 2005, one praised the district for "providing a smooth transition to the 6th graders who are moving to the Swampscott Middle School." The other four areas included communication with parents, child-centered teaching and professional staff, efforts to ensure inclusion and the least restrictive environment, and a clean and orderly school building.

The superintendent-principal stated that the district implemented a new discipline code in 2005-2006. The code of conduct stated, "As we strive for excellence at the Johnson School we will: Respect Ourselves and Others, Respect Our School, Be Responsible, Be Kind, Be Honest, Be Polite, Cooperate, Do Our Best." Interviewees reported that both the student and the parent handbooks included the code of conduct, and this was confirmed by a review of the handbooks. EQA examiners noticed the code of conduct posted in classrooms.

According to the superintendent-principal, Nahant teachers generally handled discipline issues at the classroom level. The superintendent-principal mentioned that during the period under review, the school had no retentions, no exclusions, and only one suspension for one day.

When questioned about transient and homeless students, the superintendent-principal mentioned that she interacted with the Department of Education for the few Nahant students in this

category. She indicated that transient and homeless students had “full access to all of our programs and services.”

The superintendent-principal stated that the administrative assistant monitored student attendance and apprised her of students who were chronically absent. When issues arose regarding student attendance, the superintendent-principal indicated that she sent letters to and met with parents to reinforce the importance of attendance. The district had a student assistance team comprised of the superintendent-principal, the team chairperson, and appropriate teachers to address students in need of support, and to recommend modifications to programs and services up to and including special education referrals.

Furthermore, the superintendent-principal reported that the administrative assistant kept a daily log of teacher attendance. The administrative assistant prepared monthly reports on teacher attendance for the superintendent-principal. The superintendent-principal mentioned that during the period under review, “There was no need to address attendance with any staff member.” In addition to a teacher’s daily attendance during a school year, the administrative assistant maintained a record of each teacher’s sick day total, sick days used, sick day balance, and personal days used and unused.

A review of documentation that the district submitted indicated that the 21 teachers employed by the Johnson Elementary School reported the following attendance for 2005-2006: 21 days absent for long-term illness, 81 days absent for short-term illness, 13 days absent for professional development, one day absent for jury duty or military service, and 57 days absent for other reasons. The district reported for 2005-2006 a total of 173 days absent for 21 teachers, or an average of 8.2 days absent per teacher for the school year.

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: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district's operating budget for FY 2002 was higher than the operating budget for FY 2006.
- The district's budget was not developed based on needs. The budget for the school was "backed into," and was the result of a calculation that included factors such as required net school spending (NSS) and increased tuition payments to the Swampscott Public Schools.
- Because of the development process for the total district budget, the district's agreement with the Swampscott Public Schools had an adverse effect on the Johnson Elementary School.
- Although the district exceeded its net school spending requirements each year during the period under review, the Johnson Elementary School budget and educational staff were reduced.
- The district and municipality did not have an appropriate written agreement in place in accordance with 603 CMR 10.0 that detailed the manner for calculating indirect charges levied on the school district by the municipality.
- The district had to revise and reduce the cost of the original plan for the rehabilitation and addition to the Johnson Elementary School.
- As a result of the new construction at the Johnson Elementary School, the entire school became handicapped accessible. However, examiners observed that the roof over the rehabilitated section of the school had not been replaced and could ruin the new interior work.

- The Johnson Elementary School did not have a library or food preparation area for a school lunch program and lacked funds for the completion of the site development.
- A positive relationship existed between the school and town financial operations.

Summary

The district's budget was developed through an open, participatory process. The school committee designated two of its members as a budget subcommittee. The superintendent began the process in early December when preliminary receipts from Chapter 70 aid and net school spending were calculated. However, during the review period the budget for the operation of the Johnson Elementary School was not developed based on the district's needs, but was "backed into." It resulted from a calculation by town officials using the preliminary net school spending (NSS) calculation received from the Department of Education. From that figure, the municipality's estimated share of NSS was subtracted, and that result was the total for the school district's portion of the estimated required net school spending for grades K-12. Added to this amount was $104,109, which was funded through an operational override in FY 2002. The purpose of this override was indicated as "school department wages."

Subsequently, district costs for grades 7-12, including the agreement with the Swampscott School Committee for the education of Nahant's grade 6-12 students who attended the Swampscott Public Schools, was subtracted, and the remaining total was the Johnson Elementary School's budget. The agreement between the Nahant and Swampscott communities was based on the expenditure per regular education pupil as determined by the Department of Education for a student attending the Swampscott Public Schools. Grade 6-12 students requiring out-of-district special education services were funded through the Nahant Public Schools.

The selectmen and finance committees reviewed the requested budget, and EQA examiners were told that when the budget arrived for a vote at the annual town meeting, all parties agreed to the requested amount.

A review of the completed budget document indicated that it contained five years of budget history as well as the current budget and the following year's budget request. The budget also contained a history of per pupil expenditures. The budget categories were in accordance with the Department of Education account codes. The budget also contained a list of salaries by grade,

degree level, and amount. The document also contained details of revolving accounts, tables of Chapter 70 calculations, net school spending calculations, local aid estimates, and out-of-district transportation costs.

There was little evidence that the budget was developed and resources were allocated based on an analysis of student assessment data. The superintendent described the process that led to the purchase of new textbooks; however, budget cuts during the period under review left minimal funds for new resources and program implementations.

The district's budget and supplemental funding were not adequate to provide for effective instructional practices and adequate operational resources. Although in some interviews district personnel stated there were adequate resources, an investigation of the budget trend through the years indicates otherwise. A review of the *Report and Recommendations of the Advisory and Finance Committee* book prepared for the annual town meeting of April 2006 displayed a table showing the expenditures of the district, including the Johnson Elementary School's operating budget, as $3,106,387 in FY 2003, a figure greater than both FY 2006 expenditures of $3,063,477 and the requested budget for FY 2007 of $3,098,591. Each year from FY 2004 to FY 2007 the budget was lower than in FY 2003. This report also indicated that Swampscott's tuition increased by $165,352 from FY 2005 to FY 2006, while in the same period the Johnson Elementary School budget decreased by $52,236. In addition, the report stated that the recommended budget for Swampscott tuition for FY 2007 was $182,092 higher than in FY 2006. By contrast, the recommended budget for FY 2007 for the Johnson Elementary School was $128,979 less than the FY 2006 budget.

The superintendent prepared a document for examiners that indicated the district employed 24.7 staff in FY 2002 and 16.8 staff in FY 2007. During the period under review, FY 2004 to FY 2006, staff were reduced by 4.9 positions. The Johnson Elementary School had reduced music staff from 1.0 in FY 2002 to 0.2 in FY 2006. During the period under review, art staff decreased from 0.6 to 0.2. The district reduced the physical education staff from 1.0 in FY 2002 to 0.4 staff in FY 2007. Classroom teaching staff were reduced from 14.0 in FY 2002 to 11.0 in FY 2007. During the period under review, two classroom teaching positions were eliminated. The school lost its guidance counselor and a 0.4 Spanish teacher in FY 2006.

Examiners reviewed the technology in the classrooms and observed that the computers were outdated. There were three interactive white boards in the school.

The district and municipality did not have an appropriate written agreement in place in accordance with 603 CMR 10.0 that detailed the manner for calculating indirect charges levied on the school district by the municipality. Examiners reviewed a number of documents presented to them by the town accountant that showed town costs assessed on behalf of the school department and the percentage used as basis for the allocations. However, these documents were prepared between 1993 and 1995, and methods of calculating assessment were not updated since that period. In addition, they were not prepared in a format that allowed the document to be executed by municipal and school district authorities. Since the district was relying on the use of net school spending calculations as a factor in determining the total amount of its voted budget, these assessments needed to be equitable and should have been reviewed on an annual basis. The municipality's independent audit firm reported this finding as well for FY 2005.

The district exceeded its net school spending (NSS) requirements by $199,937 in FY 2004, by $44,845 in FY 2005, and by $89,826 in FY 2006. Chapter 70 aid received in FY 2004 was $364,640; the same amount was also received in FY 2005. In FY 2006, Chapter 70 aid increased to $384,990. Chapter 70 aid represented 11.4 percent of actual NSS.

Finance personnel prepared a budget status report that was comprehensive and that also detailed budget expenditures and the percentage of budget funds remaining in all line items. The town accountant told examiners that town and school expenditures were reconciled on a monthly basis. The district used QuickBooks as its accounting software, supplemented by Excel. The municipality used the Data National software.

The school district annually received approximately $105,000 in federal grants and $30,000 in state grants. Most of the grant funds were in special education 94-142. Administrators stated that there was little opportunity to obtain competitive or private grants. District and municipal administrators indicated that the student activity account was in full compliance and audited as required.

Municipal administrators were familiar with state bidding laws. The town administrator had MCPPO training and was the designated purchasing officer. The town had just completed a major bid solicitation and construction project of approximately $6.3 million to renovate the Johnson Elementary School. The independent auditor for the municipality and school district had been engaged by the district for the past four years. A review of the independent audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 indicated findings relative to the district's lack of a formal agreement with the town for Schedule 19 assessments, and two findings relative to pupil and expenditure amounts on the district's End of Year Pupil and Financial Report.

The Johnson Elementary School was built in 1954 and renovated in 2006-2007. This 43,600-square foot building housed approximately 200 grade K-6 students, in addition to a separate preschool program. The new addition provided for two classrooms per grade. A 2005 Coordinated Program Review report cited the school for not being fully accessible to handicapped students, but the recent renovation corrected that deficiency. A renovation committee was established by town meeting vote to develop the project. The initial proposed project failed to receive approval and the committee had to reduce the scope and cost. Some work still needs to be completed, especially a new roof over the original school building; examiners observed a number of roof leaks. The school had no food service preparation area; lunches were purchased from the Swampscott Public Schools. The school had no library. The site work required as a result of the demolition and addition was deleted from the construction budget. However, the building was clean and well maintained.

The Johnson School was evaluated by EQA examiners to ensure it had systems in place for student safety. All exterior doors were locked, and an employee who also viewed a monitor that simultaneously displayed four active areas of the building staffed the main entrance. The building had a buzzer system for entry and a keypad locking method. All classroom doors could be locked from the inside.

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 four indices: the Average Proficiency Index (API), the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI), the Math Proficiency Index (MPI), and the Science and Technology/Engineering Index (SPI). The API currently is a weighted average of the EPI and MPI; the SPI will be included beginning in 2007, when passing the STE test becomes a graduation requirement.

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 2006 MCAS tests:

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 average proficiency index is calculated by adding: 0 + 3.75 + 10.5 + 25.5 + 18 = 57.75

The average proficiency index (API) for the Anywhere High School would be 57.75.

The EPI would use the same calculation using the ELA results for all students taking the ELA exam. The MPI would use the same calculation using the math results for all students taking the math exam. The SPI would use the same calculation using the STE results for all students taking the STE exam.

The 100 point proficiency index is divided into six proficiency categories as follows: 90-100 is 'Very High' (VH), 80-89.9 is 'High' (H), 70-79.9 is 'Moderate' (M), 60-69.9 is 'Low' (L), 40-59.9 is 'Very Low' (VL), and 0-39.9 is 'Critically Low' (CL).

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY 1997 – FY2006

	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
FY97	455	0.4	2,488,686	16.3	2,091,623	213,054	19.1	2,304,677	11.6	2,342,511	11.4	37,834	1.6
FY98	441	-3.1	2,455,692	-1.3	2,223,441	246,129	15.5	2,469,570	7.2	2,474,910	5.7	5,340	0.2
FY99	434	-1.6	2,510,173	2.2	2,331,488	289,529	17.6	2,621,017	6.1	2,622,460	6.0	1,443	0.1
FY00	438	0.9	2,530,585	0.8	2,424,660	355,229	22.7	2,779,889	6.1	2,773,402	5.8	-6,487	-0.2
FY01	434	-0.9	2,646,835	4.6	2,542,544	431,179	21.4	2,973,723	7.0	2,991,256	7.9	17,533	0.6
FY02	425	-2.1	2,686,294	1.5	2,600,041	455,800	5.7	3,055,841	2.8	3,253,813	8.8	197,972	6.5
FY03	431	1.4	2,748,547	2.3	2,667,794	455,800	0.0	3,123,594	2.2	3,201,334	-1.6	77,740	2.5
FY04	415	-3.7	2,709,440	-1.4	2,689,830	364,640	-20.0	3,054,470	-2.2	3,254,407	1.7	199,937	6.5
FY05	401	-3.4	2,696,309	-0.5	2,782,651	364,640	0.0	3,147,291	3.0	3,192,136	-1.9	44,845	1.4
FY06	407	1.5	2,818,535	4.5	2,890,705	384,990	5.6	3,275,695	4.1	3,365,521	5.4	89,826	2.7

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY97	5,470	468	5,148	8.6	92.6	94.1	9.1
FY98	5,568	558	5,612	10.0	100.6	100.8	9.9
FY99	5,784	667	6,043	11.5	104.4	104.5	11.0
FY00	5,778	811	6,332	14.0	109.9	109.6	12.8
FY01	6,099	994	6,892	16.3	112.4	113.0	14.4
FY02	6,321	1,072	7,656	17.0	113.8	121.1	14.0
FY03	6,377	1,058	7,428	16.6	113.6	116.5	14.2
FY04	6,529	879	7,842	13.5	112.7	120.1	11.2
FY05	6,724	909	7,960	13.5	116.7	118.4	11.4
FY06	6,925	946	8,269	13.7	116.2	119.4	11.4

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g. FY06 enrollment = Oct 1, 2004 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.