The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Newburyport
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

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The Educational Management Audit Council accepted this report and its findings at their meeting of October 1, 2007.

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 Newburyport Public Schools, Kevin Lyons; the school department staff of the Newburyport Public Schools; and the town officials in Newburyport.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Newburyport Public Schools in February 2007. With an average proficiency index of 82 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (91 PI points in English language arts and 73 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 three-fifths of Newburyport's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

The coastal city of Newburyport is located in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts. A historical seaport, the town has now developed a strong tourism industry. Its population is relatively wealthy and well educated. The largest sources of employment within the community are educational, health, and social services, and manufacturing. The city has a Mayor-Council form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Newburyport had a median family income of $73,306 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 102 out of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the town had a total population of 17,189 with a population of 2,728 school-age children, or 16 percent of the total. Of the total households in Newburyport, 27 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 22 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Forty-two 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 Newburyport school district had a total enrollment of 2,374. The demographic composition in the district was: 96.2 percent White, 1.3 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent Asian, 0.8 percent African-American, 0.1 percent Native American, 0.0 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.3 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 7.5 percent low income, and 15.1 percent special education. Ninety percent of school-age children in Newburyport attended public schools. The district offers school choice,

and 219 students from other communities attended school in Newburyport. A total of 222 Newburyport students attended other public schools, including charter schools.

The district has five schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including three elementary schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 4, one middle school serving grades 5 through 8, and one high school serving grades 9 through 12. Newburyport school district's administrative team consisted of a superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of special education. Three schools each had a principal, and two schools shared a principal. The high school also had a dean of students and a dean of student support, the middle school had one house coordinator for grades 5 and 6 and one for grades 7 and 8, and the Bresnahan Elementary School had an assistant principal. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2005, Newburyport's per pupil expenditure, based on appropriations from all funds, was $11,008, compared to $10,626 statewide, ranking it 105 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. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from $21,925,398 to $23,061,046; Chapter 70 aid increased from $2,793,820to $2,908,020; the required local contribution increased from $16,953,486 to $18,514,828; and the foundation enrollment increased from 2,207 to 2,284. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending remained flat at 13 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 decreased from 59 to 58 percent.

Context

Newburyport is among the smallest cities in the state and is considered to be among the most beautiful by its residents, retaining a large number of spacious federalist homes built with whaling and clipper ship fortunes from the city's history as a seaport in the 19th century. In the early 1960s Newburyport began to use state and federal funds to reclaim its historic neighborhoods of granite, brick, and cobblestone and provide up-to-date infrastructure for water and sewer. Situated at the mouth of the Merrimack River, the city has a large tourist industry

connected to pleasure boating and fishing, and was actually the first community in the state to complete a master plan and a harbor plan.

One of the schools visited during the EQA site visit to Newburyport was the Kelley Elementary School, which city residents claim is the oldest, consistently utilized school building in the state, retaining its original charm with minimal renovation. It was dedicated in 1873, and Mayor Kelley, for whom the school is named, spoke at the dedication. His remarks showed that building the school was just as controversial as new school construction is today. His speech also revealed much about the state of education in 1873. Compulsory attendance was still a new concept, and there were controversies over which subjects should be taught and how they should be taught, but education was recognized as the best means of eliminating prejudice, superstition, and ignorance.

In 2006-2007, the district has new leadership, including many new principals. In December 2006, the new superintendent published a report to the Newburyport School Committee entitled, Superintendent's Entry Plan Report. The stated purpose of the plan was to "find problems" so that they could be identified and addressed because, according to the new superintendent, "there is always room for improvement." The EQA audit was able to objectively verify for the superintendent that his report, or "administrative scan," was very much on target in isolating areas where improvement was needed in the district. In 2006-2007, 2,367 students were enrolled in grades preK-12 and a large number attended Newburyport Public Schools through school choice.

The district had a stable population of students who rarely qualified for extra instructional services, as determined by participation in the free or reduced-cost lunch program. Students' need for tutoring in English as a second language was minimal and the district rarely had homeless students, although it did have a contingency plan just in case. Even the percentage of students receiving special instruction was lower than the state average. Despite these facts, the percentage of Newburyport students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests decreased from 2003 to 2006, which was an area of concern to members of the school committee and to other stakeholders in the community.

Although the district's strategic plan, School Improvement Plans, and professional development plans were aligned in the previous five years, they were very heavily focused on school environment, rather than the rigor of academic instruction. The former superintendent was hard to reach, due to extended family caretaking, but did explain that murder, suicide, and student behavior in Newburyport schools had influenced the focus of district goals during the period under review, which was confirmed by veteran administrators. The new superintendent and current administrators were in the process of reevaluating where they were and where they wanted to be in the next five years, based on measurable academic goals.

A huge challenge in the community is overcrowding in the elementary schools and the impact of maintaining class size and staffing with a level funded budget. For each year of the review period, the district had a level funded budget. As fixed costs such as contracts and employee benefits continued to rise, cuts were made to staffing, instructional programs, and instructional materials, including the upkeep of computer technology. The elementary and middle grades have born the brunt of most of these cuts as of FY 2007.

Equally challenging is raising the rigor in all core academic areas at a time when employers need more highly skilled and better educated employees. Yet funding for instructional costs in Newburyport is on the decline. Additionally, the school district is very dependent on school choice money from nearby communities and needs to stay highly respected and competitive, in order to keep choice students and the funding they bring to the district. What remains to be seen is how the next wave of cuts, likely impacting the high school, impacts the district's reputation and the number of students coming to Newburyport through school choice.

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 5-8, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Newburyport 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.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Newburyport to be a 'High' performing school district with an average proficiency index of 82 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006, marked by student achievement that was 'Very High' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Moderate' in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance declined by more than one PI point both in ELA and in math, which widened the district's average proficiency gap by seven percent.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, approximately three-fifths of all students in Newburyport attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that statewide. More than three-quarters of Newburyport students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), more than two-fifths of Newburyport

students attained proficiency in math, and one-third of Newburyport students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Newburyport's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 82 proficiency index (PI) points, four PI points greater than that statewide. Newburyport's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 18 PI points.
- In 2006, Newburyport's proficiency gap in ELA was nine PI points, seven PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of slightly more than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Newburyport's proficiency gap in math was 27 PI points in 2006, one PI point narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Newburyport's proficiency gap in STE was 28 PI points, one PI point narrower than that statewide.

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

Between 2003 and 2006, Newburyport's MCAS performance showed a decline overall, in math, and in STE, and very slight improvement in ELA.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by four percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased by two percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Newburyport widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 18 PI points in 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Newburyport showed slight improvement, at an average of approximately one-third PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 10 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Math performance in Newburyport declined during this period by five PI points. Between 2004 and 2006, Newburyport had a decline in STE performance of six PI points.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Newburyport students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Newburyport in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 34 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Newburyport in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). For these subgroups, less than one-third of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, roughly two-thirds of the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. For both subgroups, more than half of the students attained proficiency.

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

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 27 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 37 to 38 PI points over this period.

- In Newburyport, regular education students and low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, while that of students with disabilities declined during this period. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students.
- In math, all subgroups in Newburyport had a decline in performance between 2003 and 2006. Students with disabilities had the greatest decline in math achievement.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

The Newburyport school district followed a strategic plan that included a vision, mission statement, and goals. Its District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were aligned with the strategic plan throughout the period under review. Policies, budgets, and other decisions were based on these plans. The district presented annual progress reports to the school committee and the public on the attainment of DIP and SIP goals as well as goals in the strategic plan. The district was in the fourth year of a five-year strategic plan at the time of the review.

The SIPs for the period under review did not include student achievement goals that were specific, measurable, and based on assessment data. The district was only beginning in 2005-2006 to develop specific benchmarks in student achievement based on assessments. Other than summative reports of the MCAS test results, the district made little use of student achievement data for instructional, curricular, or budgetary decisions. As a result, the curriculum was not closely aligned with the state frameworks, program and instructional changes were rarely implemented to improve student achievement, and MCAS math scores and certain subgroup scores were on the decline and were falling below the state average.

School committee members had all been trained and were kept informed by attending Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) conferences on a rotating basis. They understood their roles of concentrating on policy, budget, and the appointment and evaluation of the superintendent. The superintendent delegated the leadership of the schools to principals and gave them appropriate authority in hiring and supervising staff. Annual evaluations of the superintendent and principals were done in accordance with Department of Education (DOE) requirements and were based on the goals of the district and/or schools, but they were not based on student achievement data. Evaluations of other building administrators

did not contain all of the categories of the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership; they were narratives based on self-imposed goals from the beginning of the year and were less informative and instructive.

During the period under review, communication and collaboration with stakeholders were priorities in the district's strategic plan, the DIP, and the SIPs. The district took several steps to improve communication with parents, making use of e-mail listservs and telephone messaging as well as newsletters and parent meetings. Administrators created a Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) and Professional Development Committee (PDC) of teachers to elicit faculty input on curriculum and professional development. Union officials reported that the superintendent's door was always open to them, and they were able to work out most issues and grievances at the administrative level. The school committee renewed its commitment to the joint education committee consisting of some of its members and members of the city council, which met frequently during the budget season to review the district budget in detail; this committee had not been meeting with any frequency or purpose. The administration revised the budget document to make it more transparent and to help answer questions raised by city council officials and members of the public.

Although the school committee advocated for educationally sound budgets, the approved budgets were not adequate to maintain existing programs such as elementary foreign language, theater arts, wellness, libraries, stringed music, and technology. A total of 33 FTE staff positions were cut during the review period, and fees were instituted for transportation, athletics, and extracurricular activities. The budget did not support new programs to improve student achievement, including consistent, standards-based curricula in middle school mathematics and elementary literacy, and support services for students needing remediation and for special education. The district relied increasingly on school choice funds to supplement funding from the city. There were some inequities among buildings, especially in special education spaces and in infrastructure.

The district developed a comprehensive crisis management plan containing policies and procedures for school emergencies, and reviewed the plan annually with local police and fire officials. The policies and procedures were disseminated in staff and student handbooks, and

drills were held. Administrators knew what to do in case of emergencies and reported the plan had worked well.

Curriculum and Instruction

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

During the period under review, the district did not implement curricula for all grade levels in the tested core content areas that clearly addressed all components of the state curriculum frameworks. A major component of the total curriculum that was missing was a districtwide assessment system so that teachers could determine if students were effectively making academic progress. Student scores on the MCAS tests indicated that the curriculum, particularly at the middle school, was not fully aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. The district had three directors of curriculum in five years. This turnover in leadership impeded the district's efforts to produce a complete K-12 curriculum document in a timely way. During the period under review, the district was in the process of having teachers complete diary mapping, or the mapping of what was taught by individual teachers, to be followed by consensus mapping, or the agreement of teachers as to what should be taught in a particular subject and at a particular grade level.

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with administrators, building principals, department heads, the current director of curriculum, and members of the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) indicated to the examiners little evidence of horizontal and vertical alignment in grades K-8 in the areas of ELA, math, and science. Administrators and teachers reported that responsibility for the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of the district's curricula rested with the director of curriculum, department heads, the CAB, and building principals.

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with district personnel indicated that the regular review and revision of curricula was an informal process. The criteria used to review and revise curricula included looking at the results of the MCAS tests. To

facilitate this process, the software program TechPaths was introduced during the 2006-2007 school year and aided curriculum development and the review and revision of the K-12 curriculum in the district. Documents provided to the EQA team indicated that no comprehensive assessment of 'learning' took place during the period under review. Despite declining MCAS math scores, no program evaluation had been initiated for the K-8 math program. Individual teachers, individual grade levels, or individual schools used student achievement data to allocate instructional time, which often varied, in the tested core content areas.

During the interview process with the leadership team, participants told the EQA examiners that the district had and used appropriate technology as an integral part of the education process. A review of the district technology plan for school years 2004-2005 through 2006-2007 and the Elementary Instructional Technology Competency Assessment, 2005-2006, confirmed this. Because the district strived to incorporate instructional technology into all curriculum areas, the goal of instructional technology reflected an integrated model rather than separate computer classes. According to data provided by the DOE, the average number of students per computer in the district was 3.6 compared to the state average of 4.9. Although 100 percent of the computers in the district had access to the Internet, the computers at the elementary schools were very outdated and too slow to be used for instruction. Although the district had a technology plan and a curriculum with benchmarks, progress made in integrating computer instruction into the classroom was not evident in classroom observations. In addition, two out of three curriculum/technology integration positions, those at the elementary and middle schools, had been eliminated by the end of 2005-2006.

Interviews with administrators and department heads indicated that the district used formative and summative student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction. A review of documents by the EQA team and conversations with the leadership team and teachers indicated that there was a lack of evidence to support this statement. At the middle and secondary levels, interviewees lacked a full and accurate understanding of the difference between formative and summative assessment strategies. Overall, the district lacked a necessary K-12 assessment system that included benchmarks and exit criteria in each grade and subject area.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

The district primarily relied on the MCAS tests at respective grade levels for summative test data. At the elementary schools, no written exit criteria were in place for each grade level indicating what each student should know and be able to do in each subject area in order to be promoted. The number of retentions was low at the elementary and middle schools. Although the middle school had some teacher-generated unit final tests, they were not consistently used across teams for all students. In 2003, the high school, in preparation for a NEASC visit, developed and/or revised common midterms and final exams. High school teachers in departmental meetings reviewed and analyzed these exams through the leadership of department heads.

The district was just beginning to use formative testing to inform teacher practice. Expanding the model used in the Title I program, teachers were beginning to use the DIBELS in grades K-1 and the DRA in grades 2-3 to test students three times a year and to measure individual student achievement against a standard or benchmark. The district was just beginning to establish benchmarks in each core subject and at each grade level.

Interviewees at the middle and upper grades were unable to articulate and demonstrate an understanding of the difference between formative and summative testing. At the middle school, teachers did not collect or analyze formative student assessment data during the school year to assess the ongoing progress of students.

Teachers collected summative test data and analyzed them in the aggregate in order to find trends and patterns for each test. Teachers and administrators worked together to perform an item analysis to determine which items most students did poorly on, in the aggregate, in order to consider changes to the curriculum. In 2006-2007, the district was just beginning to disaggregate subgroup data in order to inform needed changes to specific programs or to come up with ways

to recognize and begin to close the achievement gap between regular education students and those in special education programs.

The district did engage in a number of external program evaluations. Some were mandatory, such as the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) done by the Department of Education in 2005. The district completed a NEASC evaluation in 2003 for reaccreditation of the high school. The preschool had a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) visit in 2005 to achieve reaccreditation in early childhood learning.

The district analyzed the results of the MCAS tests. This was done during district in-service time, but the information was not used consistently to evaluate the ELA, math, or science programs or to make changes in the special needs program during the period under review. Internal program evaluation began to become better organized when the turnover of almost every administrative position, including the position of superintendent, made it feasible and necessary to examine the present state of the district in order to be successful under new leadership. District staff was aware of the need to increase the rigor of the academic program, especially in mathematics and in the special education program, as evidenced by the MCAS test results.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

The EQA examiners gave the Newburyport Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on five and 'Needs Improvement' on eight of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

The Newburyport Public Schools advertised for and sought highly qualified candidates to fill the positions of those who departed the district. The school system was in the process of eliminating many positions due to budget cuts. Although there were limits to hiring salaries, the district did not deter from hiring those who were highly qualified and commanded a higher rate of pay. The district's hiring practices were consistent, involving administrators, teachers, parents, and the superintendent. All administrators were currently licensed for the positions they held. The district had 21 teachers who were working on waiver at the time of the EQA review. Due to a new requirement that all middle school teachers be certified in a specific content area, 15 of those teachers were working toward such certification. Progress toward certification of teachers on waiver was monitored by district staff.

During the period under review, curriculum mapping was the districtwide focus of professional development at all grade levels. Administrators and teachers had consultant training and ongoing professional development within the district to map and come to consensus on what should be taught at each grade and in each subject. The goal was alignment with the state curriculum frameworks and development of more explicit benchmarks and exit criteria. TestWiz training was not widespread in the district, and during the period under review, in most schools analysis of data was limited to trends, patterns, and item analyses. Analysis of programs and of subgroup data was in the beginning stages, as was more training across the district on using data to make better decisions.

The district made efforts to encourage professional growth, recognition, and retention of effective staff members. All new teachers were required to take the Effective Teacher training, and they were required to take differentiated instruction training in their second year unless they could provide evidence of prior completion of this training. The mentoring program for new teachers encouraged regular communication, support, and encouragement. Teachers were recognized through their receipt of the Edward Molin award, through acknowledgement of their accomplishments such as attainment of additional degrees, and through requests to present their best practices at faculty meetings. Stipended extra-curricular positions and course reimbursements were also available to teaching staff.

Teachers and administrators stated in interviews that non-professional status teachers were evaluated on an annual basis in Newburyport and that teachers on professional status were evaluated in alternate years. They also told the EQA examiners that teachers on waivers were evaluated on an annual basis, although EQA examiners found this was not always the case. In a review of a sample of 40 teacher evaluations, the EQA examiners found that 13 out of 40 written evaluations of teachers were not always completed in a timely way in accordance with district policy during the period under review. Furthermore, EQA examiners found that there was one teacher on professional status and one teacher on non-professional status who had no completed evaluations.

Administrators reported that they annually met with the superintendent to prepare goals and met at least once a month to discuss progress toward the attainment of goals. A self-evaluation and a

meeting with the superintendent preceded the superintendent's final evaluation. The EQA examiners found that evaluations of district administrators by the former superintendent were timely, informative, and instructive, and they promoted professional growth. Student performance was not a factor in these evaluations.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

During the period under review, the district did not utilize assessment data effectively. It relied primarily on the MCAS test results to monitor student achievement. A curriculum mapping process had been underway for several years. The ultimate goal, that the curriculum be aligned horizontally and vertically, had not been achieved at the time of the review especially since benchmarks and exit criteria had not been created and implemented. The limited number of staff members trained in using TestWiz further hampered utilization of assessment data as an effective tool to adjust instruction.

When teachers identified students needing support, the district offered few remedial services with more time for learning. A literacy program for support was in place at the elementary grades, but not all students had equal access to it. For example, not all staff had received training in using Project Read at the elementary grades, and the Brown Elementary School no longer qualified for Title I services. No comparable services for math support were available at this level.

At the middle school, district staff had serious concern about the performance of special education students on the MCAS tests, especially in math. Students who were performing at the lowest levels attended a math lab that included additional support, instead of attending classes offered to regular education students. Further, the district offered little additional support for at-risk students who were not on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan.

At the high school, programs were not proactive in providing support before a student failed a course or the grade 10 MCAS exam. Additionally, students taking Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, or Pre-Algebra in grade 9 or 10 were not taking courses that were aligned with the grade 10 MCAS test, and they needed a means to accelerate their learning.

Statements in interviews, as well as reports reviewed, indicated a lack of effective inclusion teaching at the elementary and middle school levels during the period under review. Some co-teaching took place at the high school in the lower-level courses. The removal of children from the regular classroom in grades K-12 raised concern about the need for exposure to the same grade-level curriculum, as well as the need to provide appropriate instruction in the least restrictive environment.

According to interviewees, administrators, teachers, and parents commonly viewed the district as providing a safe learning environment. It was, as one teacher described it, a good place to be. This perception was supported by favorable attendance rates for both students and teachers. According to interviewees, most teachers who departed the district did so to retire. The rate of student suspensions in the district was below the state average.

Interviewees expressed concern regarding transitions from level to level and school to school in the district. Programs were put into place that attempted to alleviate some of the stress felt by students and their parents. Those individuals charged with overseeing the transitions did not have the benefit of exit criteria or a vertically aligned curriculum. Teachers at the sending and receiving schools did schedule transition meetings so staff members could share information about students and programs. Students and parents were invited to their new schools to meet teachers and see the new facility.

The high school had a program for preventing dropouts. During an interview, interviewees described the strategy for keeping students in school, consisting of meetings held, alternatives presented, and data shared in an effort to keep a student in school. However, once a student dropped out of school, the district did not follow up and attempt to have the student return.

With respect to accelerating learning, the high school lacked a strategy for increasing subgroup participation in advanced or accelerated courses. Although parents could sign a waiver and

change a student's placement, no extra support was provided to encourage students to take the challenge.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Newburyport Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on six, 'Needs Improvement' on four, and 'Unsatisfactory' on three of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

Budget restrictions and cutbacks over the three years of the period under review have led to a decrease in instructional services for students. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that there had been cutbacks in music and foreign language in the district over time. For example, the district eliminated foreign language at the elementary schools. Foreign language at the middle school was cut back so that it became an exploratory program rather than a regular subject. The theater arts program was eliminated at the middle school. Across the district, 33 positions were eliminated during the period under review. The cutbacks primarily impacted the elementary and middle schools during the period under review.

At the time of the review, the elementary schools, built in 1871, 1923, and 1957, were not suitable for modern educational programs because of infrastructure and electrical deficiencies. The district's custodial and maintenance staff kept these buildings clean and maintained to the extent possible, given the age of the buildings and the limits of the district budget. The assistant superintendent had business manager responsibilities, along with human resources responsibilities and other administrative duties. She was responsible for the budget's development and presentation to the school committee and city council with the superintendent.

The budget process was open and the resulting document was clear and understandable with all necessary information complete and current. City administrators informed the examiners that the community was satisfied with the way the budget had been documented and presented to it during the last two years of the period under review. All budget sessions were held during open school committee meetings and were televised on the local cable channel.

No formal practice or procedure was in place for the use of aggregated or disaggregated student achievement data to develop a more effective budget. The school committee received a general overview of the MCAS test results which highlighted weaknesses, but not a formal analysis with aggregated and disaggregated data. The district's budget was driven instead by a cap on the budget increase, which was determined by city officials and by the amount of state aid that the district was to receive.

The district used MUNIS software, as did the city, to track expenditures from school accounts and to forecast line items when necessary. However, the two systems, while the same, were not electronically connected to one another. According to the business office staff, this required the information for purchase orders, invoices, and balance statements to be entered and printed out at the school department and then sent to city hall to be re-entered by city personnel into MUNIS on the municipal side. This process was inefficient and created additional work hours and the opportunity for data entry errors. This incongruence had been cited by the district's auditors in each of the last two years of the review period.

The district had performed evaluations of the cost effectiveness of some of its programs. These evaluations were undertaken with the goal of finding ways the district could save money. When asked, the assistant superintendent was unable to name any evaluations that were undertaken to assess the effectiveness of programs based on student performance or need.

The main office doors of most schools were found unlocked when visited. Although examiners were told that the doorways were locked and main entrances monitored, the EQA examiners found that they were open and they then had to go into the school offices and gain the attention of the office personnel in order to sign in. At one school, students opened a side entrance, and only when asked directed the EQA examiner to the main office. Based on these experiences, the EQA examiners concluded that there was a lack of school safety with respect to unauthorized entrance to the schools.

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 Newburyport 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 Newburyport; 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?

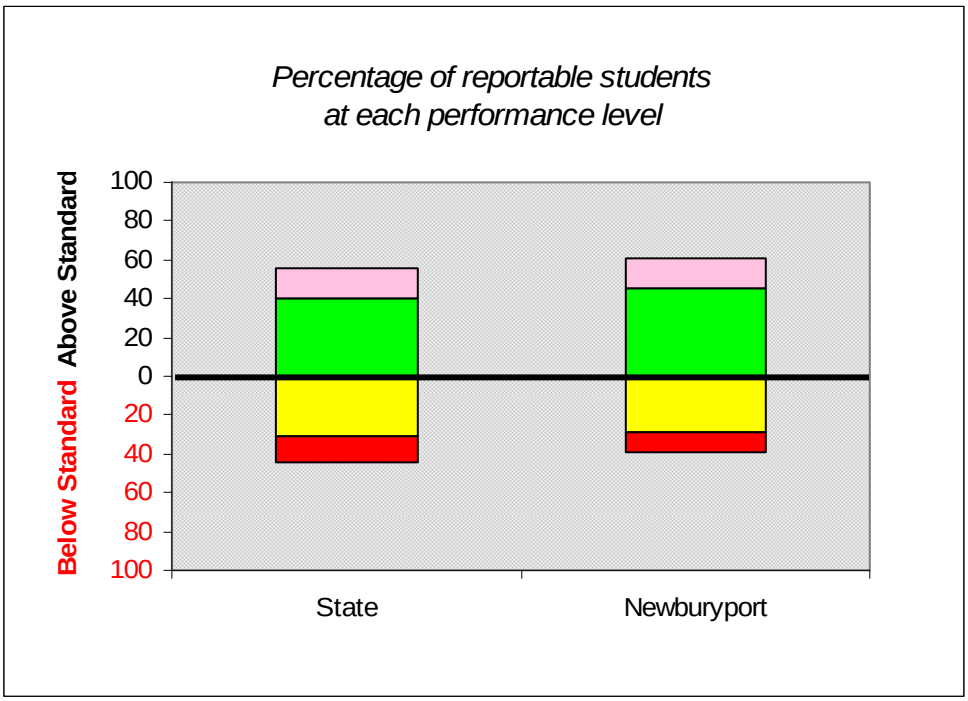
Findings:

- On average, approximately three-fifths of all students in Newburyport attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, more than that statewide. More than three-quarters of Newburyport students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), more than two-fifths of Newburyport students attained proficiency in math, and one-third of Newburyport students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

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

- In 2006, Newburyport's proficiency gap in ELA was nine PI points, seven PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of slightly more than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Newburyport's proficiency gap in math was 27 PI points in 2006, one PI point narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than three PI points per year to achieve AYP. Newburyport's proficiency gap in STE was 28 PI points, one PI point narrower than that statewide.

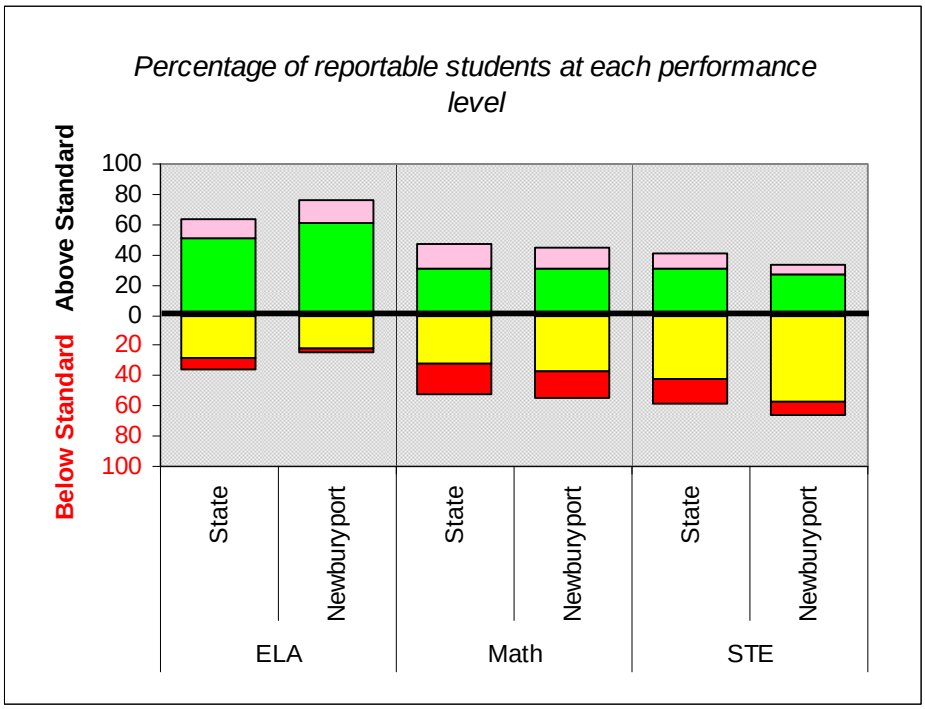
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State	Newburyport
Advanced	15	15
Proficient	41	46
Needs Improvement	31	29
Warning/Failing	14	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	61
Average Proficiency Index (API)	78.3	81.7

In 2006, 61 percent of Newburyport students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, five percentage points more than that statewide. Ten percent of Newburyport students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, four percentage points less than that statewide. Newburyport's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 82 proficiency index (PI) points, four PI points greater than that statewide. Newburyport's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 18 PI points.

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



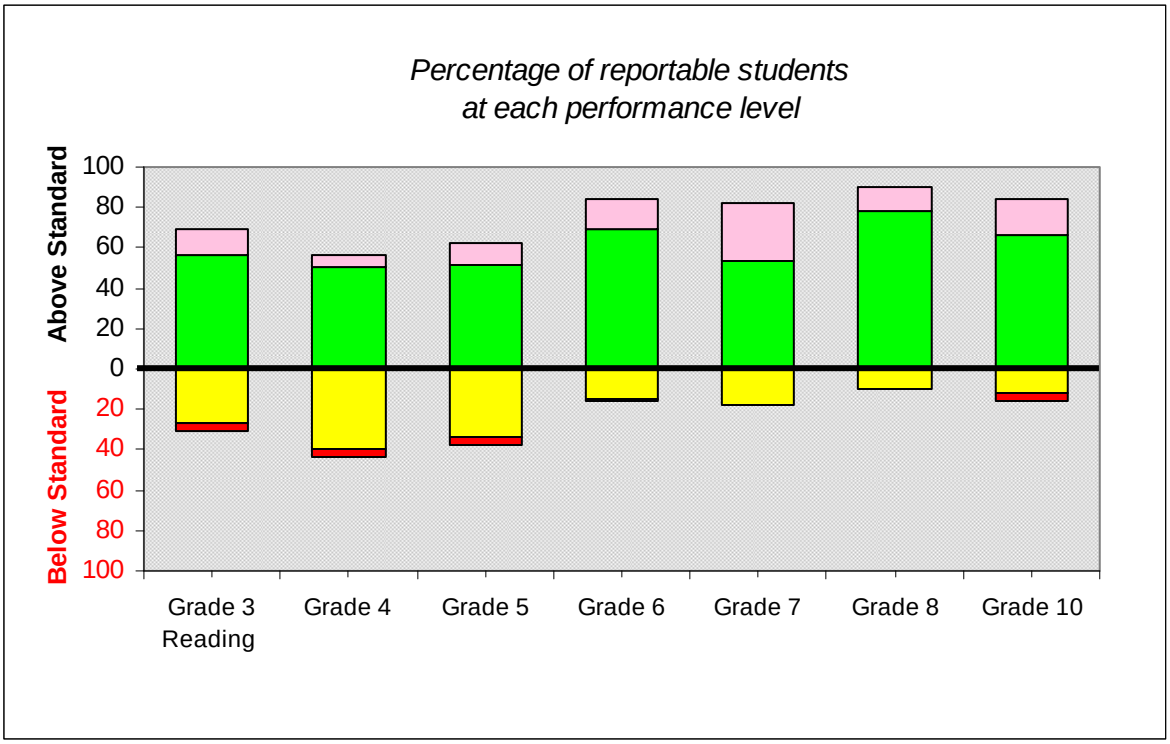
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport
Advanced	13	15	17	14	10	6
Proficient	51	61	30	31	31	27
Needs Improvement	29	21	33	37	42	57
Warning/Failing	7	3	20	18	17	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	76	47	45	41	33
Proficiency Index (PI)	84.3	90.7	72.3	72.7	71.4	71.8

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA) was higher in Newburyport than statewide, while achievement in math and science and technology/engineering (STE) was lower in Newburyport than statewide. In Newburyport, 76 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 64 percent statewide; 45 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 47 percent statewide; and 33 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 41 percent statewide.

Newburyport students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Newburyport students in ELA was 91 PI points; in math it was 73 PI points; and in STE it was 72 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 84, 72, and 71 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Newburyport students was nine PI points in ELA, 27 PI points in math, and 28 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 16, 28, and 29 PI points, respectively. Newburyport's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of more than one PI point in ELA and more than three PI points in math to meet AYP.

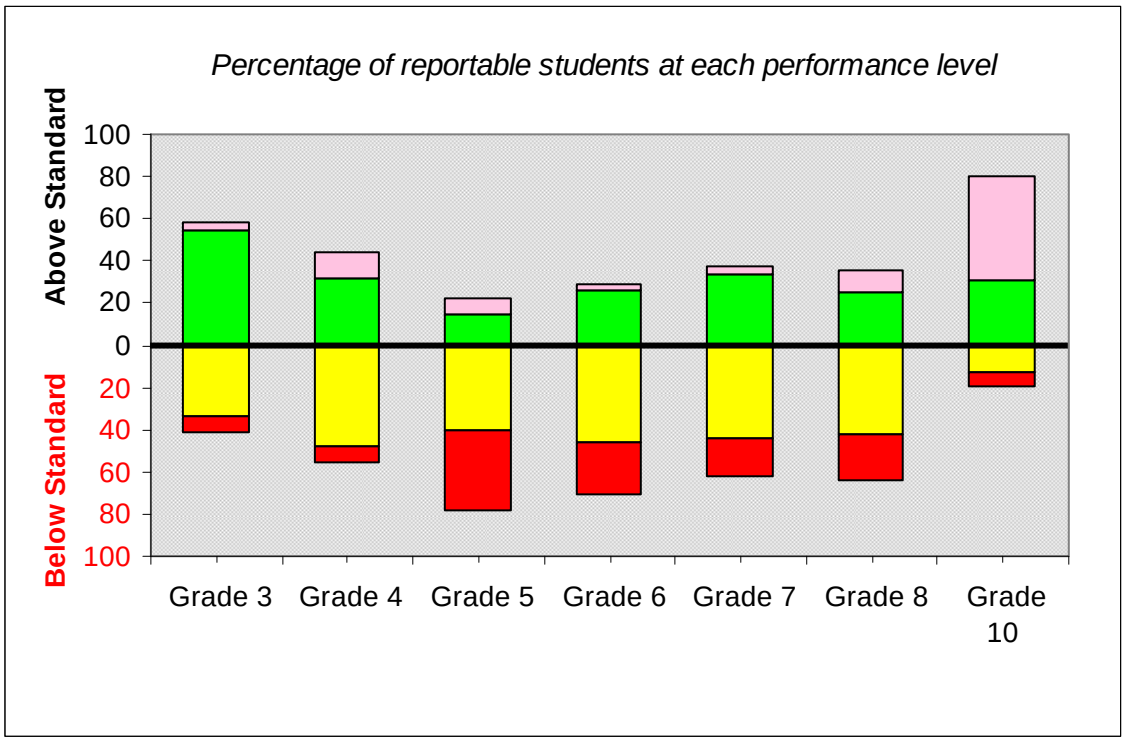
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	12	5	11	15	28	12	18
Proficient	57	51	51	69	54	78	66
Needs Improvement	27	40	34	14	18	10	12
Warning/Failing	4	4	4	1	1	1	4
Percent Attaining Proficiency	69	56	62	84	82	90	84

The percentage of Newburyport students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 56 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 90 percent of grade 8 students.

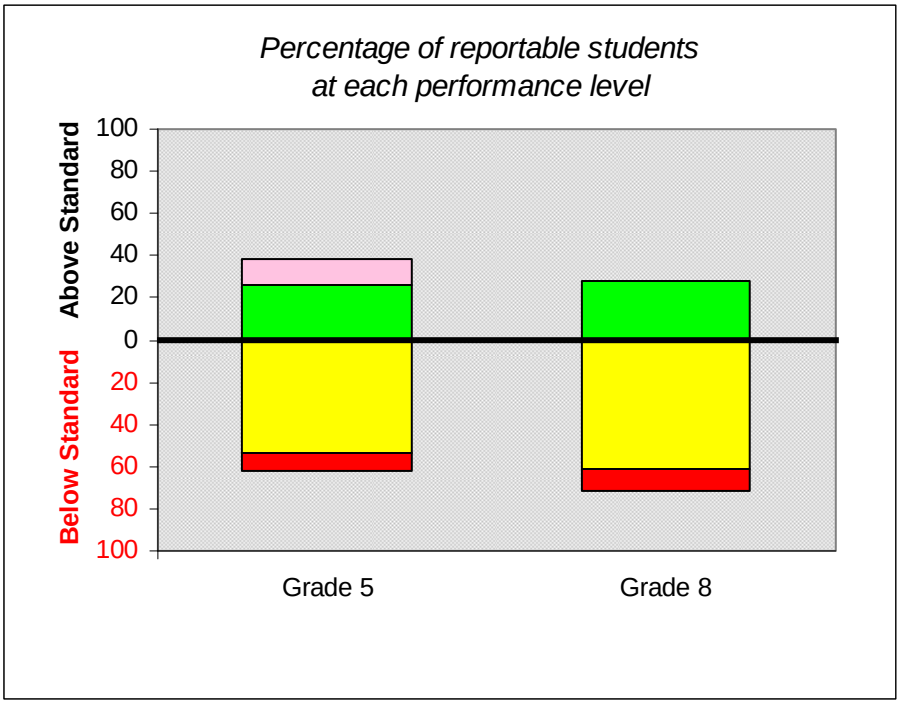
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	4	13	8	3	4	10	50
Proficient	54	32	14	26	34	26	31
Needs Improvement	34	48	41	46	44	43	13
Warning/Failing	8	8	37	25	18	22	7
Percent Attaining Proficiency	58	45	22	29	38	36	81

The percentage of Newburyport students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math varied greatly by grade level, ranging from a low of 22 percent of grade 5 students to a high of 81 percent of grade 10 students.

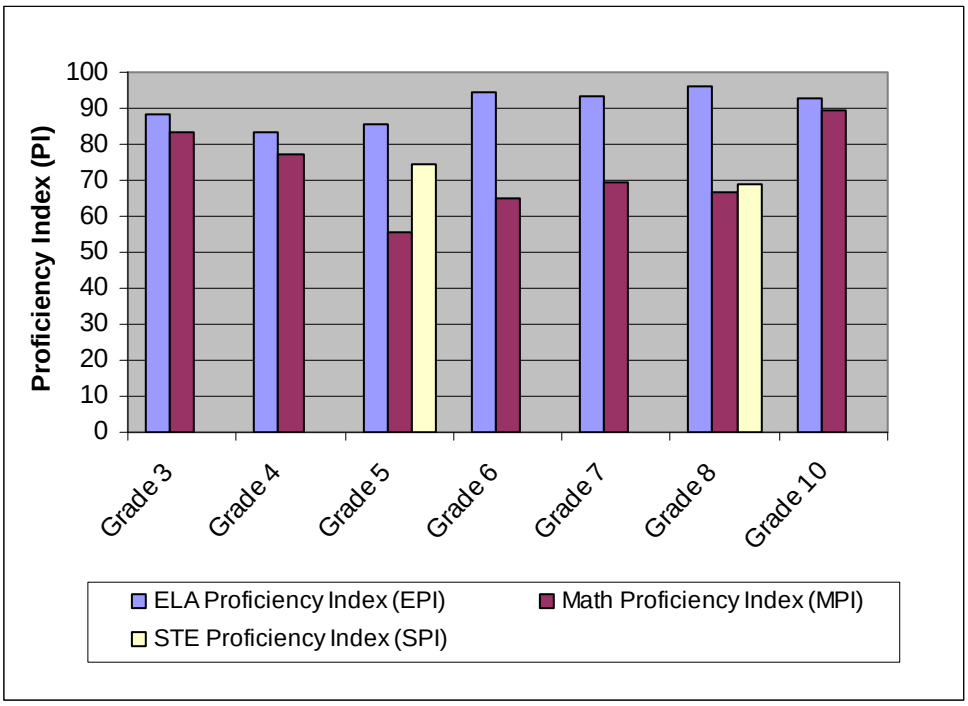
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5	Grade 8
Advanced	12	1
Proficient	27	28
Needs Improvement	54	61
Warning/Failing	8	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency	39	29

In Newburyport in 2006, 39 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 29 percent of grade 8 students did so.

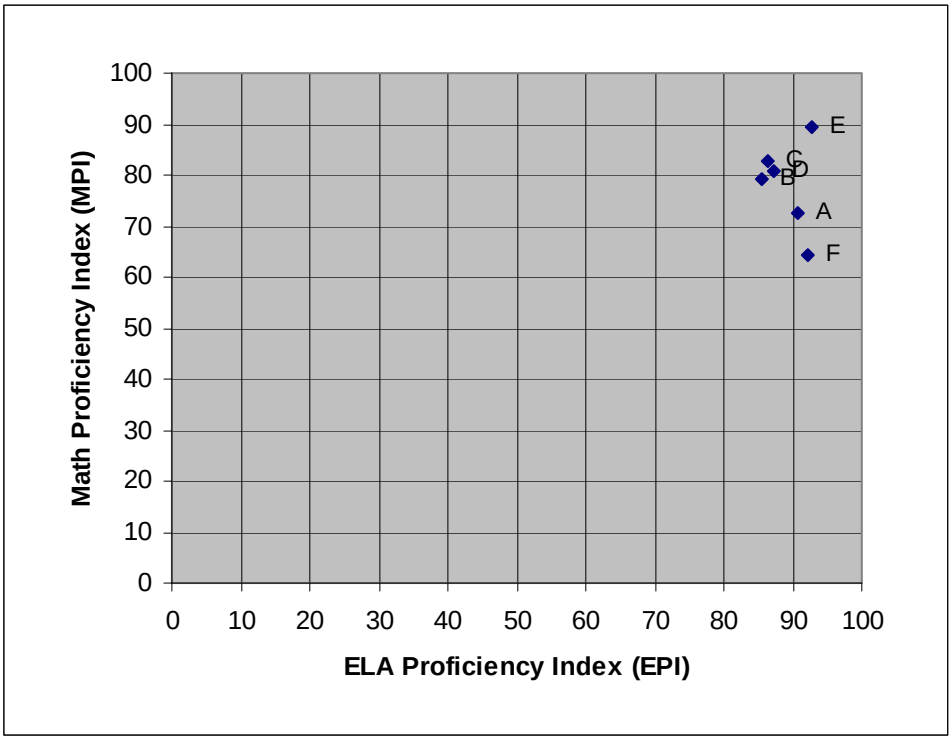
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	88.6	83.3	85.7	94.2	93.4	96.2	92.7
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	83.4	77.5	55.6	65.1	69.5	66.8	89.4
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			74.6			69.0	

By grade, Newburyport's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of four PI points at grade 8 to a high of 17 PI points at grade 4. Newburyport's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 11 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 44 PI points at grade 5. Newburyport's STE proficiency gap was 25 PI points at grade 5 and 31 PI points at grade 8.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Newburyport	90.7	72.7	2,437
B	Francis T. Bresnahan Elem	85.6	79.4	357
C	George W. Brown Elem	86.4	82.7	181
D	Kelley Elementary	87.2	80.8	86
E	Newburyport High	92.7	89.4	416
F	Rupert A. Nock Middle	92.3	64.2	1,397

Newburyport's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of seven PI points at Newburyport High School to a high of 14 PI points at Francis T. Bresnahan Elementary School and George W. Brown Elementary School. Newburyport's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 11 PI points at Newburyport High School to a high of 36 PI points at Rupert A. Nock Middle School.

Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Newburyport students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Newburyport in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 34 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

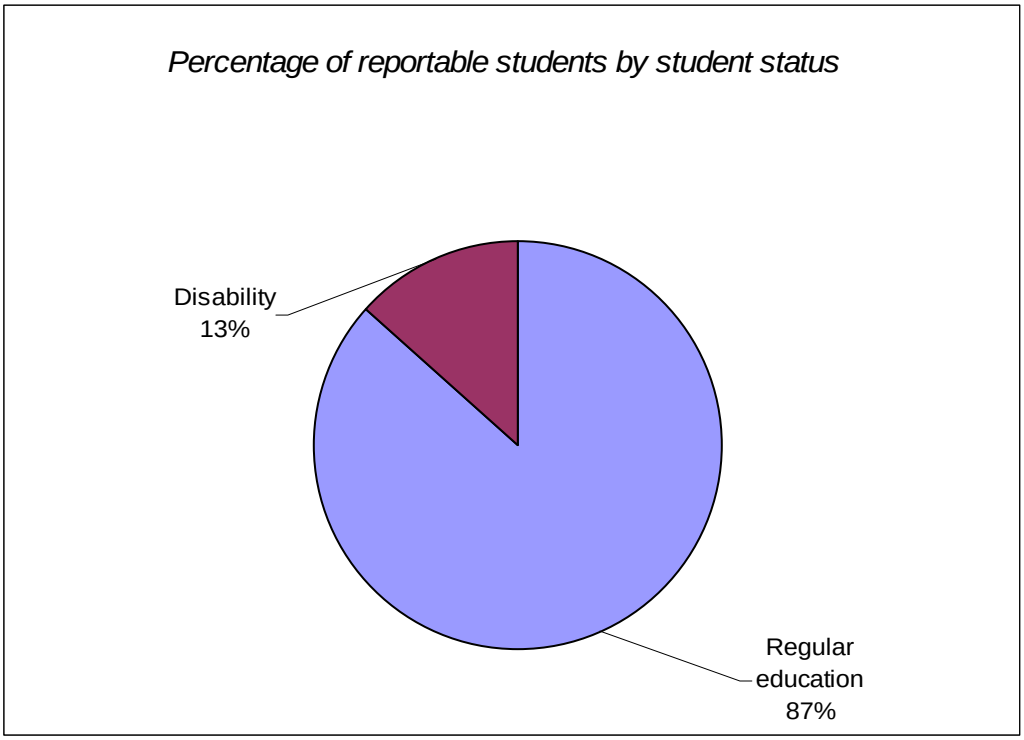
- The proficiency gaps in Newburyport in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). For these subgroups, less than one-third of the students attained proficiency.

- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, roughly two-thirds of the students attained proficiency.

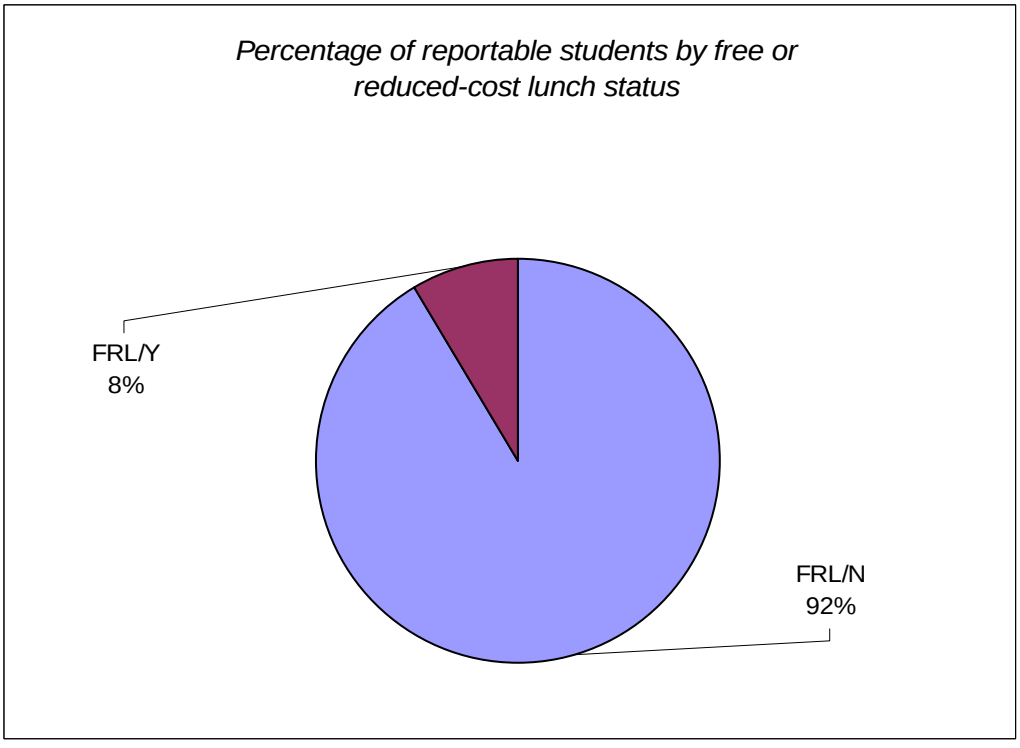
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. For both subgroups, more than half of the students attained proficiency.

Figures 8 A-B/Table 8: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2006

A.



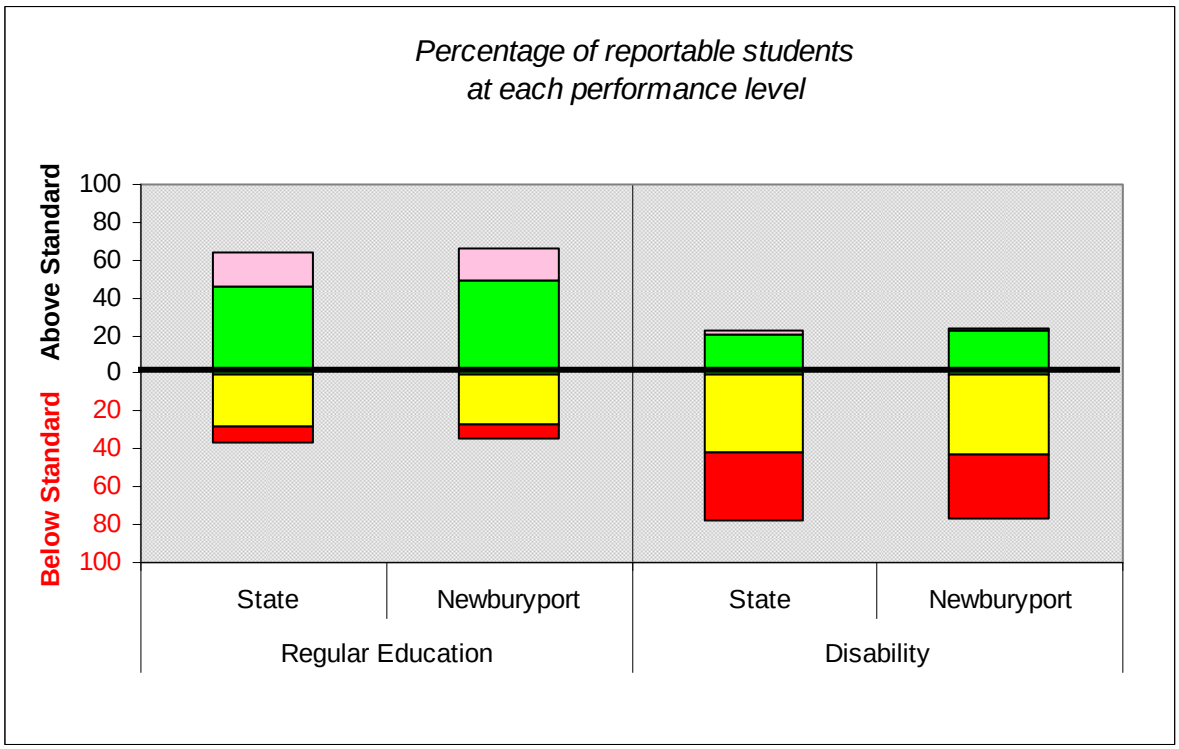
B.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	1,060
	Disability	163
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,121
	FRL/Y	104

In 2006, Newburyport's percentage of students with disabilities was 13 percent and of students participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program was eight percent.

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

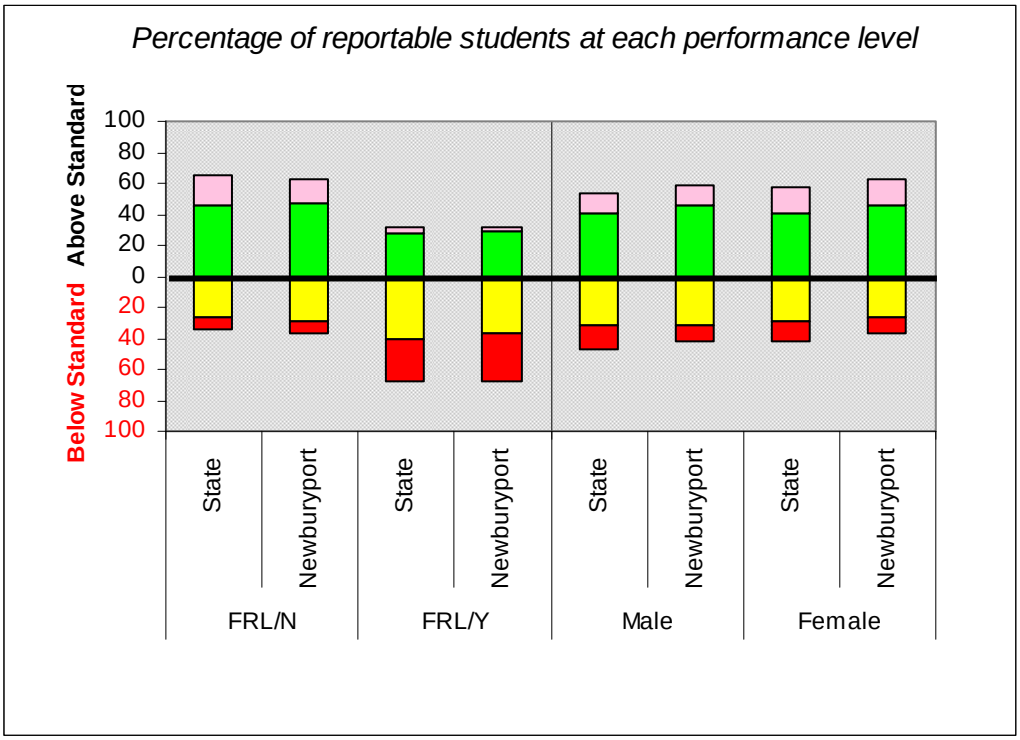


	Regular Education		Disability	
	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport
Advanced	18	17	2	1
Proficient	46	49	20	22
Needs Improvement	28	27	41	43
Warning/Failing	8	7	36	33
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	66	22	23
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.0	85.5	55.9	56.4

In Newburyport in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was nearly three times greater than that of students with disabilities. Sixty-six percent of regular education students and 23 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Newburyport's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 14 PI points for regular education students and 44 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 30 PI points.

Figure/Table 10: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status and Gender Subgroups, 2006

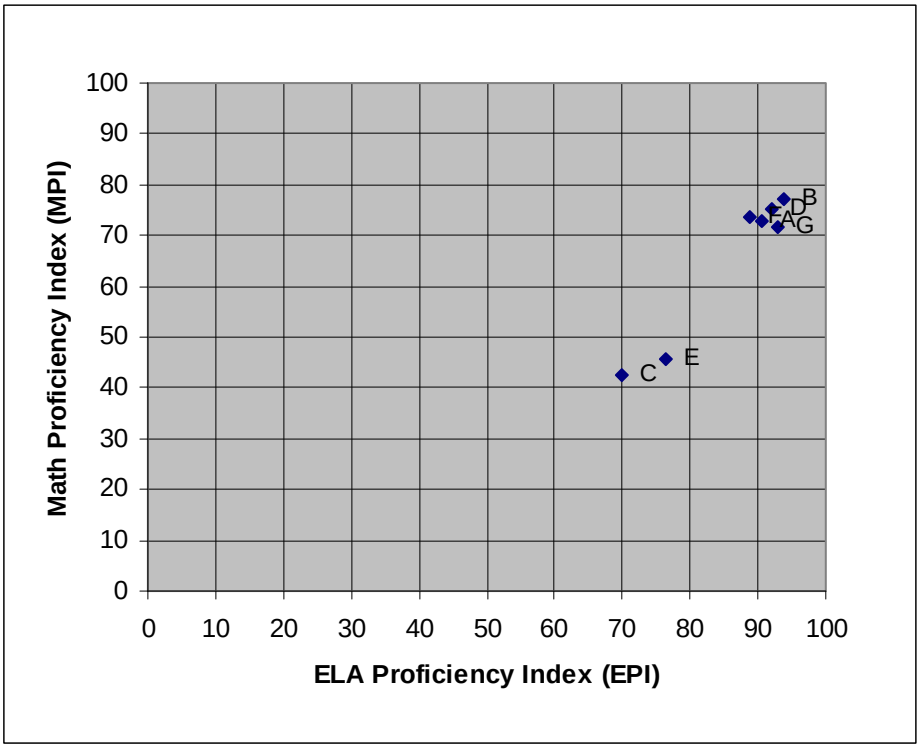


	FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport	State	Newburyport
Advanced	19	16	5	2	13	13	17	16
Proficient	46	47	27	29	40	45	41	46
Needs Improvement	27	29	40	37	32	32	29	27
Warning/Failing	8	8	27	31	15	10	13	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	63	32	31	53	58	58	62
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.5	83.7	63.5	61.1	77.1	81.1	79.6	82.3

In Newburyport in 2006, 31 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 63 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 39 PI points for low-income students and 16 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was 23 PI points.

Performance on the 2006 MCAS tests was comparable for male and female students in Newburyport, with 62 percent of female students and 58 percent of male students attaining overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 18 PI points for female students and was 19 PI points for male students.

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

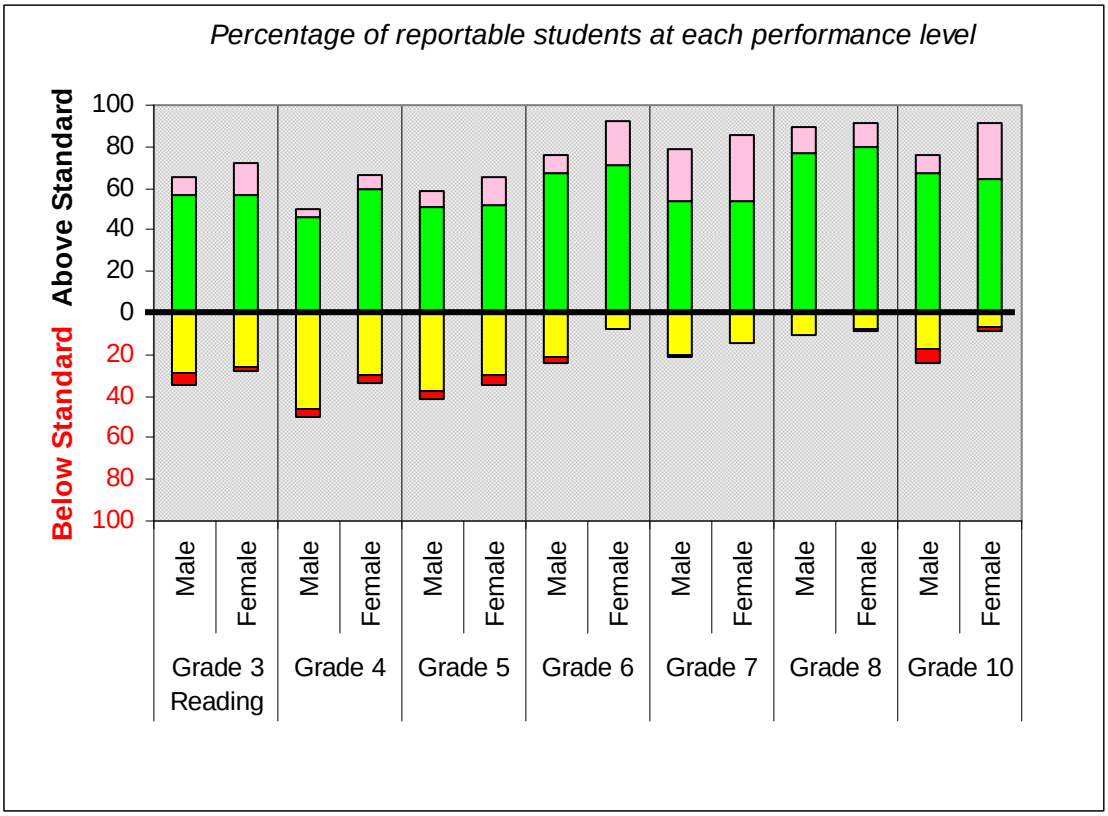


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Newburyport	90.7	72.7	2,437
B	Regular Education	93.9	77.1	2,122
C	Disability	69.9	42.7	312
D	FRL/N	92.1	75.2	2,223
E	FRL/Y	76.4	45.6	208
F	Male	88.7	73.5	1,262
G	Female	92.9	71.8	1,169

Of the six measurable subgroups in Newburyport in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 34 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

The proficiency gaps in Newburyport in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income (FRL/Y) students. The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA.

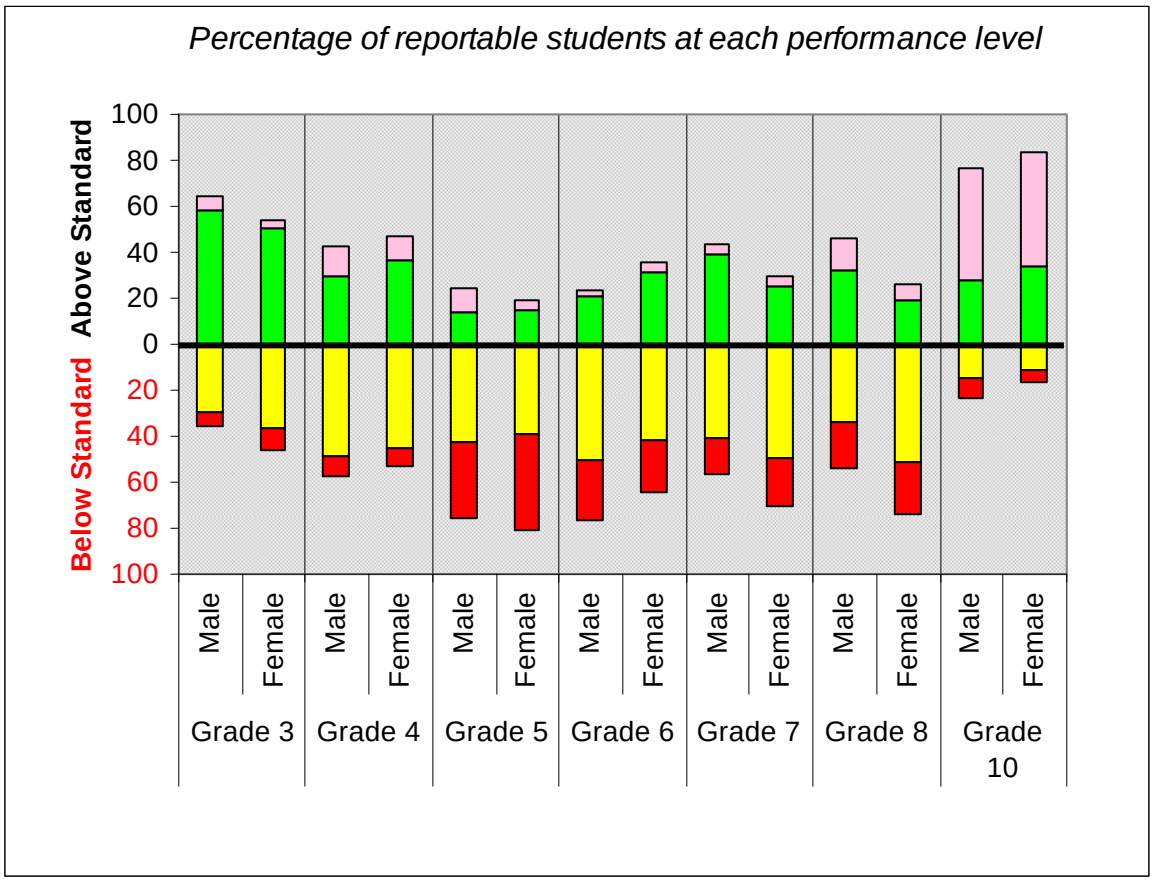
Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	9	15	4	7	8	14	9	22	25	32	13	11	9	27
Proficient	57	56	46	59	51	52	68	71	54	54	77	80	67	65
Needs Improvement	29	26	46	30	38	30	21	8	20	14	10	8	17	7
Warning/ Failing	5	2	4	4	3	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	7	2
Percent Attaining Proficiency	66	71	50	66	59	66	77	93	79	86	90	91	76	92

In Newburyport 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		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	5	4	14	11	11	4	3	4	5	4	14	7	49	50
Proficient	59	51	29	36	13	15	21	32	39	25	33	19	28	34
Needs Improvement	29	36	49	45	43	39	50	42	41	49	34	52	15	12
Warning/ Failing	7	9	8	7	33	42	27	23	16	21	20	22	9	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	55	43	47	24	19	24	36	44	29	47	26	77	84

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, male students outperformed female students at all grade levels, except grades 4, 6, and 10.

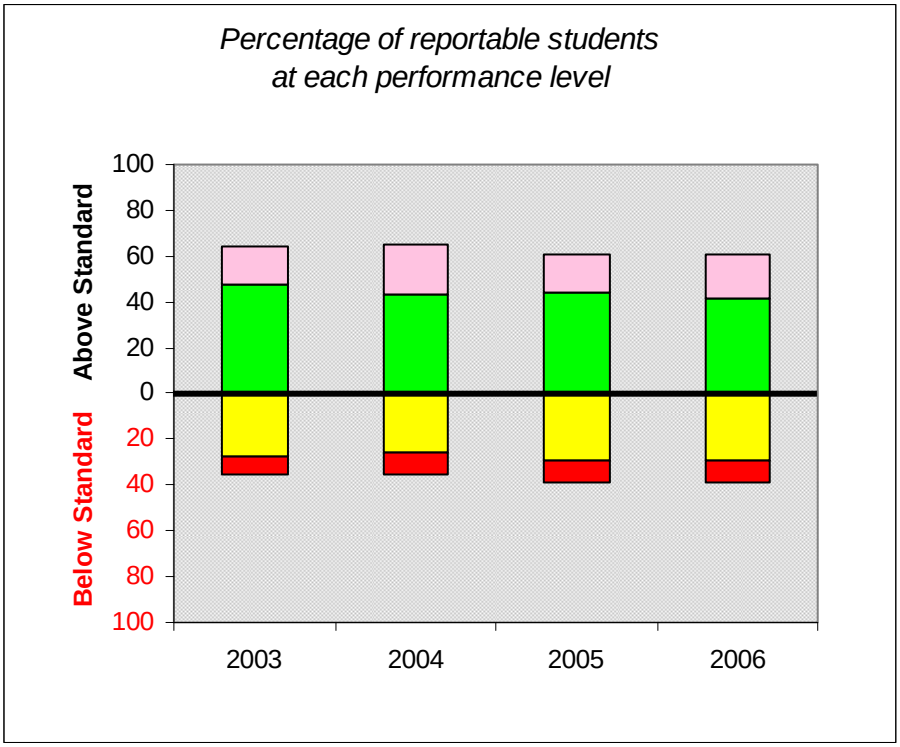
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Newburyport's MCAS performance showed a decline overall, in math, and in STE, and very slight improvement in ELA.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories fell by four percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased by two percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Newburyport widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 18 PI points in 2006.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Newburyport showed slight improvement, at an average of approximately one-third PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 10 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Math performance in Newburyport declined during this period by five PI points. Between 2004 and 2006, Newburyport had a decline in STE performance of six PI points.

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



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	17	21	17	20
Proficient	48	43	44	41
Needs Improvement	28	25	29	29
Warning/Failing	8	10	10	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	64	61	61
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.2	83.2	82.4	82.0

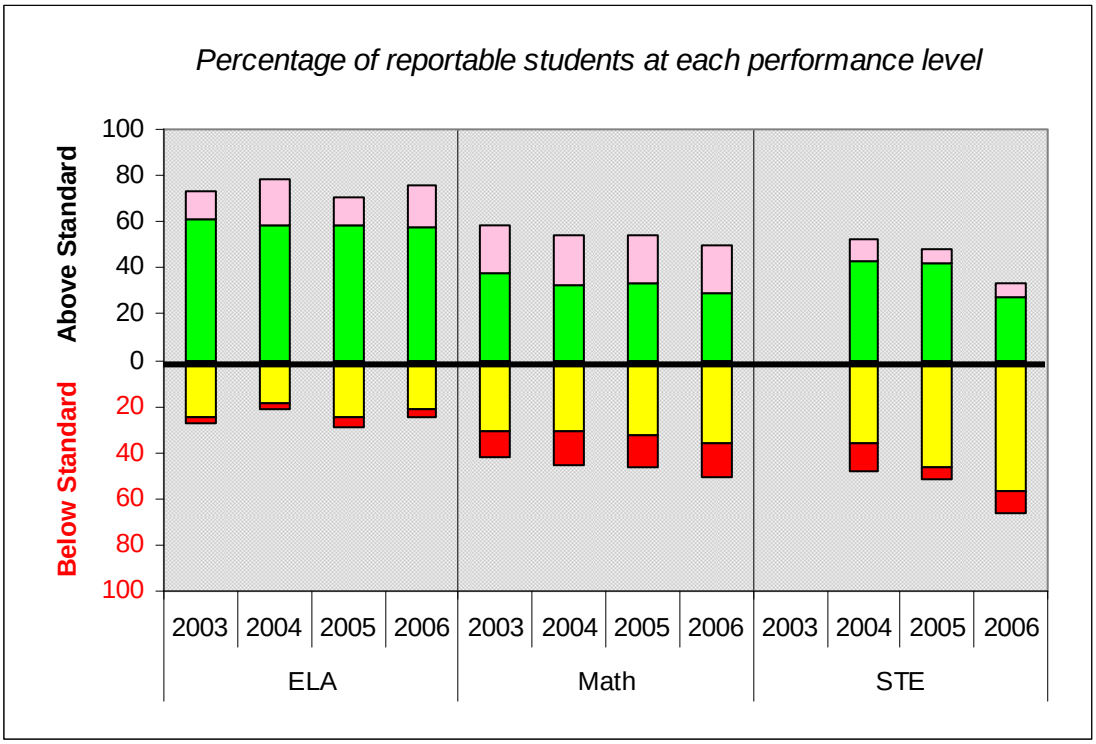
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	204	272	213	242
Proficient	590	555	552	509
Needs Improvement	344	325	367	362
Warning/Failing	93	124	121	119
Total	1,231	1,276	1,253	1,232

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 Newburyport students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests decreased from 65 percent in 2003 to 61 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category increased from eight percent in 2003 to 10 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Newburyport widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 18 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	12	20	13	18	20	22	20	21		10	6	6
Proficient	61	59	58	58	38	32	34	29		43	42	27
Needs Improvement	24	18	25	21	31	31	32	36		36	46	57
Warning/ Failing	3	3	4	3	11	15	14	15		11	5	10
Percent Attaining Proficiency	73	79	71	76	58	54	54	50		53	48	33
Proficiency Index (PI)	89.2	91.7	88.6	90.3	80.4	77.0	77.8	75.5		77.7	80.4	71.8

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 Newburyport students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 73 percent in 2003 to 76 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from 11 PI points in 2003 to 10 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 10 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Newburyport students attaining proficiency in math decreased from 58 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math widened from 20 PI points in 2003 to 24 PI points in 2006.

The percentage of Newburyport students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 53 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in STE widened from 22 PI points in 2004 to 28 PI points in 2006.

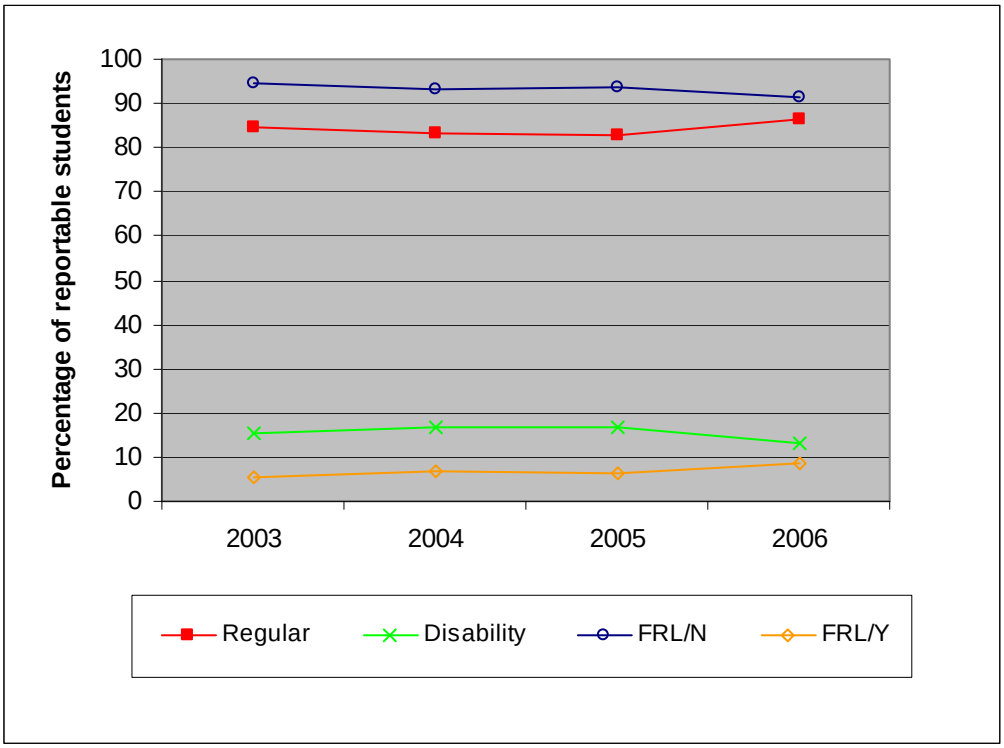
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Newburyport, regular education students and low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, while that of students with disabilities declined during this period. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students.
- In math, all subgroups in Newburyport had a decline in performance between 2003 and 2006. Students with disabilities had the greatest decline in math achievement.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 27 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 37 to 38 PI points over this period.

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



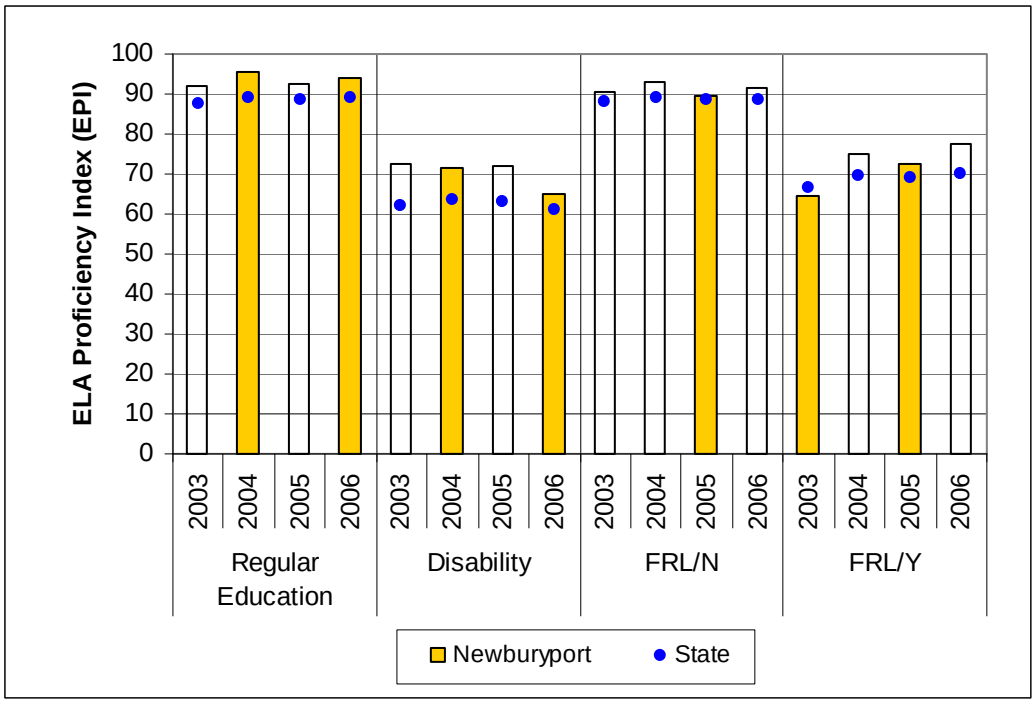
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Newburyport	861	1,073	1,029	1,225	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	727	892	851	1,060	84.4	83.1	82.7	86.5
Disability	134	181	174	163	15.6	16.9	16.9	13.3
FRL/N	815	1,001	966	1,121	94.7	93.3	93.9	91.5
FRL/Y	46	72	63	104	5.3	6.7	6.1	8.5

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.

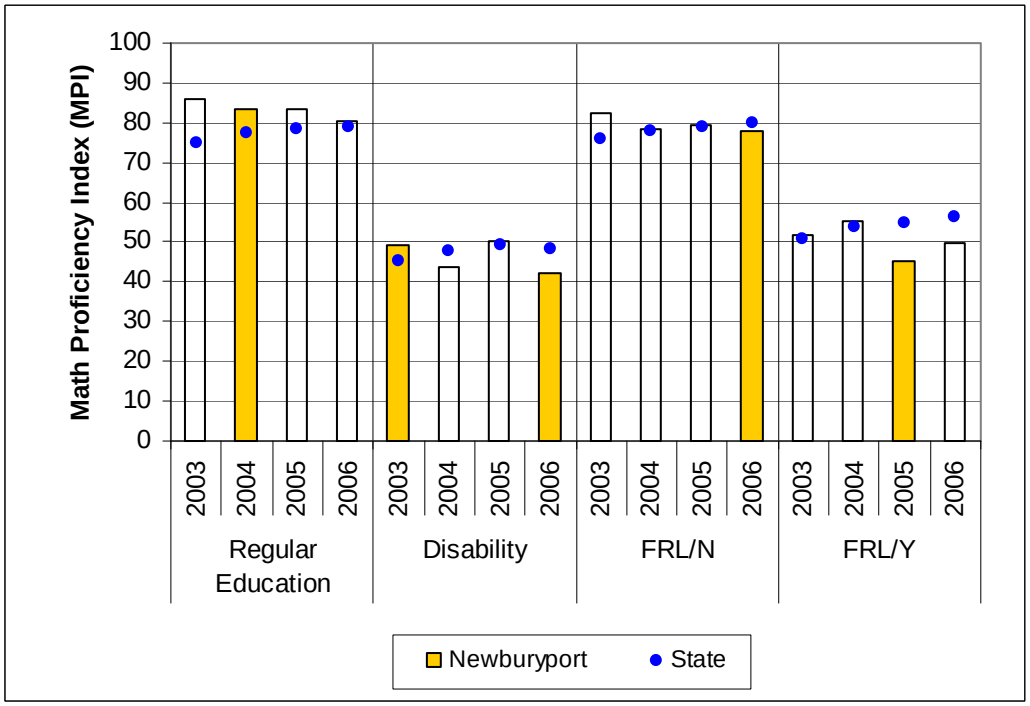
The makeup of the Newburyport student population did not change much between 2003 and 2006. The proportion of students with disabilities decreased by more than two percentage points, and the proportion of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by more than three percentage points during this period.

Figures 17 A-B/Table 18: 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

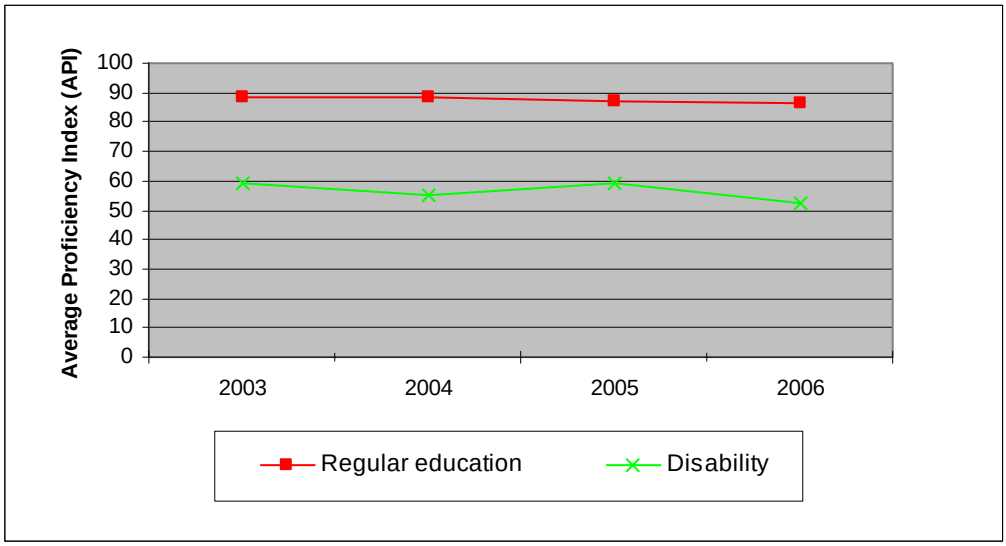


State				Newburyport			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	91.9	85.7
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	95.3	83.3
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	92.4	83.6
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	94.1	80.2
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	72.7	49.0
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	71.7	43.6
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	72.2	50.2
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	65.0	42.4
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	90.6	82.3
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	92.8	78.6
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	89.5	79.6
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	91.3	77.7
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	64.7	51.8
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	75.0	55.5
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	72.3	45.4
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	77.6	49.5

In Newburyport, regular education students and low-income (FRL/Y) students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, while that of students with disabilities declined during this period. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students. In math, all subgroups in Newburyport had a decline in performance between 2003 and 2006. The greatest decline in math was for students with disabilities.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 27 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 37 to 38 PI points over this period.

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

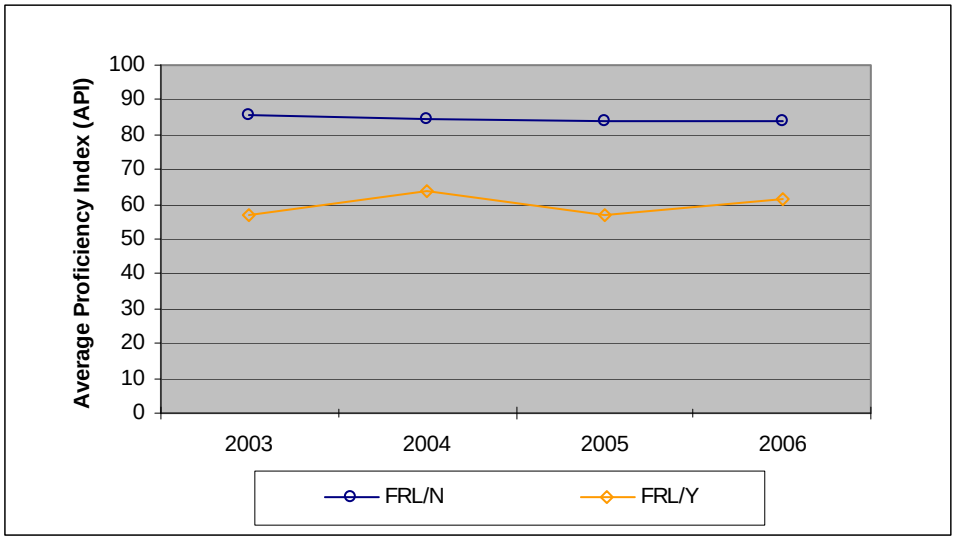


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	88.4	91.9	85.7	79	65
	2004	88.4	95.3	83.3	86	62
	2005	87.3	92.4	83.6	78	62
	2006	86.3	94.1	80.2	83	56
Disability	2003	59.2	72.7	49.0	37	16
	2004	55.3	71.7	43.6	41	15
	2005	59.3	72.2	50.2	35	16
	2006	52.6	65.0	42.4	26	6

Both regular education students and students with disabilities in Newburyport had decreased overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for Newburyport's regular education students widened from 12 to 14 PI points; for students with disabilities, it widened from 41 to 47 PI points.

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

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

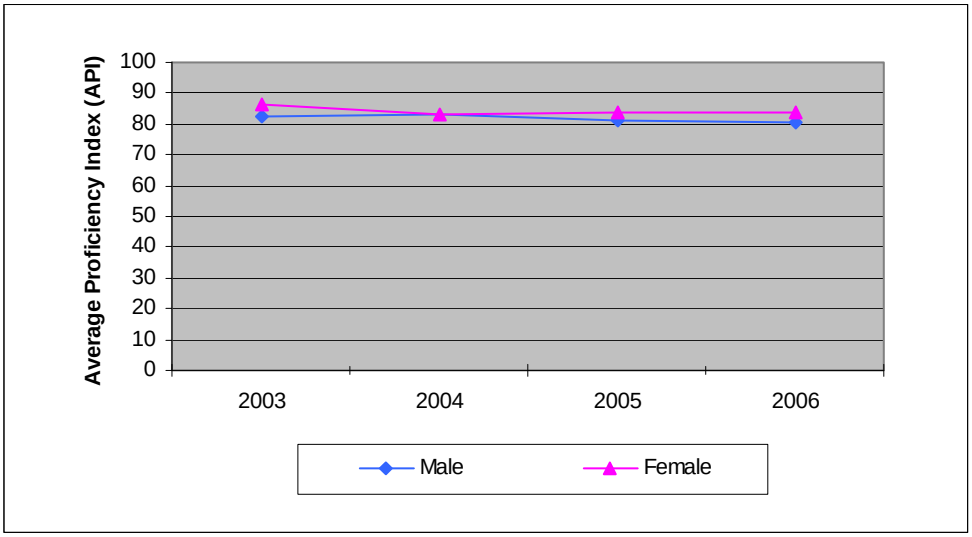


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	85.9	90.6	82.3	76	61
	2004	84.6	92.8	78.6	81	57
	2005	83.8	89.5	79.6	72	56
	2006	83.7	91.3	77.7	78	52
FRL/Y	2003	57.1	64.7	51.8	21	17
	2004	63.5	75.0	55.5	49	26
	2005	56.8	72.3	45.4	46	16
	2006	61.2	77.6	49.5	47	17

Low-income (FRL/Y) students in Newburyport had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006, while that of non low-income (FRL/N) students decreased during this period. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 43 to 39 PI points, and for non low-income students it widened from 14 to 16 PI points.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between low-income students and non low-income students narrowed by six PI points.

Figure/Table 20: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Gender Subgroup, 2003- 2006



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	82.4	86.9	79.2	65	57
	2004	83.0	89.2	78.2	73	56
	2005	81.4	87.1	77.5	67	54
	2006	80.8	87.2	75.3	69	48
Female	2003	86.4	91.6	82.1	81	59
	2004	83.4	94.3	75.8	85	53
	2005	83.5	90.3	78.1	75	54
	2006	83.5	94.2	75.9	84	51

Both male and female students in Newburyport had a decrease in performance between 2003 and 2006 on the MCAS tests. The average proficiency gap for male students widened from 18 to 19 PI points, and for female students it widened from 14 to 16 PI points.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between male and female students narrowed by one PI point.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Newburyport	ALL LEVELS	**1,220**	**1,217**	**357**
	Advanced	182	174	22
	Proficient	744	372	97
	Needs Improvement	262	454	204
	Warning/Failing	32	217	34
Regular Education	Advanced	180	173	22
	Proficient	688	358	94
	Needs Improvement	183	397	172
	Warning/Failing	10	133	20
Disability	Advanced	2	1	0
	Proficient	56	14	3
	Needs Improvement	78	57	31
	Warning/Failing	21	83	14
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	0	0
	Proficient	0	0	0
	Needs Improvement	1	0	1
	Warning/Failing	1	1	0
White	Advanced	177	171	22
	Proficient	726	361	97
	Needs Improvement	251	443	200
	Warning/Failing	30	206	32
Hispanic	Advanced	2	0	0
	Proficient	0	2	0
	Needs Improvement	2	1	0
	Warning/Failing	1	3	0
African-American	Advanced	2	0	0
	Proficient	3	3	0
	Needs Improvement	5	2	2
	Warning/Failing	1	6	2
Asian	Advanced	1	2	0
	Proficient	12	6	0
	Needs Improvement	3	6	1
	Warning/Failing	0	1	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	180	170	21
	Proficient	692	361	94
	Needs Improvement	221	416	180
	Warning/Failing	19	164	27
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	2	3	1
	Proficient	50	11	3
	Needs Improvement	40	37	23
	Warning/Failing	13	52	7
Male	Advanced	72	92	12
	Proficient	376	197	58
	Needs Improvement	164	234	92
	Warning/Failing	21	106	13
Female	Advanced	110	81	10
	Proficient	366	175	39
	Needs Improvement	97	219	111
	Warning/Failing	11	110	21

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	160	0	0
	2004	176	0	0
	2005	154	0	0
	2006	162	161	0
Grade 4	2003	177	177	0
	2004	160	159	0
	2005	179	179	0
	2006	150	151	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	186
	2005	0	0	162
	2006	183	182	181
Grade 6	2003	0	170	0
	2004	0	169	0
	2005	0	183	0
	2006	159	157	0
Grade 7	2003	182	0	0
	2004	172	0	0
	2005	167	0	0
	2006	182	182	0
Grade 8	2003	0	189	0
	2004	0	197	197
	2005	0	177	178
	2006	176	176	176
Grade 10	2003	169	167	0
	2004	210	209	0
	2005	184	184	0
	2006	208	208	0
All Grades	2003	688	703	0
	2004	718	734	383
	2005	684	723	340
	2006	1,220	1,217	357

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 15-22 and in the table of n-values by year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4, 7, 10
Math: 4, 6, 8, 10
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5, 8

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

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

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:

- The district did not complete effective analyses of disaggregated student achievement data, and did not systematically use achievement data to make curricular, instructional, policy, or budgetary decisions.
- The district prepared a strategic plan, and its District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were aligned with it. Its vision and goals were widely disseminated.
- School administrators regularly reported to the school committee and the public on the achievement of DIP and SIP goals, finances, and student achievement.
- The district placed a priority on communication and collaboration with stakeholders, and took several steps to improve both with parents, community, and staff.

- The school district budget was inadequate to maintain or improve programs to increase student achievement despite advocacy by the school committee.
- School committee members, administrators, and staff members noted the need for updated technology and building improvements.
- School committee members were trained and knowledgeable about their responsibilities, but rarely based decisions on achievement data.
- Administrators were given appropriate autonomy to lead their buildings.

Summary

The Newburyport school district followed a strategic plan that included a vision, mission statement, and goals. Its District Improvement Plan (DIP) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were aligned with the strategic plan throughout the period under review. Policies, budgets, and other decisions were based on these plans. The district presented annual progress reports to the school committee and the public on the attainment of DIP and SIP goals as well as goals in the strategic plan. The district was in the fourth year of a five-year strategic plan at the time of the review.

The SIPs for the period under review did not include student achievement goals that were specific, measurable, and based on assessment data. The district was only beginning in 2005-2006 to develop specific benchmarks in student achievement based on assessments. Other than summative reports of the MCAS test results, the district made little use of student achievement data for instructional, curricular, or budgetary decisions. As a result, the curriculum was not closely aligned with the state frameworks, program and instructional changes were rarely implemented to improve student achievement, and MCAS math scores and certain subgroup scores were on the decline and were falling below the state average.

School committee members had all been trained and were kept informed by attending Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) conferences on a rotating basis. They understood their roles of concentrating on policy, budget, and the appointment and evaluation of the superintendent. The superintendent delegated the leadership of the schools to principals and gave them appropriate authority in hiring and supervising staff. Annual evaluations of the superintendent and principals were done in accordance with Department of

Education (DOE) requirements and were based on the goals of the district and/or schools, but they were not based on student achievement data. Evaluations of other building administrators did not contain all of the categories of the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership; they were narratives based on self-imposed goals from the beginning of the year and were less informative and instructive.

During the period under review, communication and collaboration with stakeholders were priorities in the district's strategic plan, the DIP, and the SIPs. The district took several steps to improve communication with parents, making use of e-mail listservs and telephone messaging as well as newsletters and parent meetings. Administrators created a Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) and Professional Development Committee (PDC) of teachers to elicit faculty input on curriculum and professional development. Union officials reported that the superintendent's door was always open to them, and they were able to work out most issues and grievances at the administrative level. The school committee renewed its commitment to the joint education committee consisting of some of its members and members of the city council, which met frequently during the budget season to review the district budget in detail; this committee had not been meeting with any frequency or purpose. The administration revised the budget document to make it more transparent and to help answer questions raised by city council officials and members of the public.

Although the school committee advocated for educationally sound budgets, the approved budgets were not adequate to maintain existing programs such as elementary foreign language, theater arts, wellness, libraries, stringed music, and technology. A total of 33 FTE staff positions were cut during the review period, and fees were instituted for transportation, athletics, and extracurricular activities. The budget did not support new programs to improve student achievement, including consistent, standards-based curricula in middle school mathematics and elementary literacy, and support services for students needing remediation and for special education. The district relied increasingly on school choice funds to supplement funding from the city. There were some inequities among buildings, especially in special education spaces and in infrastructure.

The district developed a comprehensive crisis management plan containing policies and procedures for school emergencies, and reviewed the plan annually with local police and fire officials. The policies and procedures were disseminated in staff and student handbooks, and drills were held. Administrators knew what to do in case of emergencies and reported the plan had worked well.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In 2003, the district implemented a five-year strategic plan including a vision, a mission statement, and goals built around the themes of "communications, management and leadership, facilities, climate, curriculum, human resources and professional development, student support, and technology."

The annual District Improvement Plans (DIPs), during the period under review, were based on the strategic plan, and contained actions and measurable outcomes intended to implement the goals of the strategic plan. While outcomes were specified and measurable, none of the DIPs, for the period under review, included student achievement goals based on test data or other statistics. Progress reports and interviews with administrators showed that not all goals in the DIPs were achieved, most notably benchmarks for student achievement based on measurable assessment data, up-to-date technology and its integration into the curriculum, and the implementation of elementary building plans, but goals involving communications with parents and community, improving budget documents, maintaining class size, and others without budgetary implications were being met.

The strategic plan and the annual DIPs were used to establish budget priorities such as class size and proposals for the renovation and maintenance of facilities. They also established a priority for the system to improve communications with parents and city officials, resulting in many

outreach efforts: parent meetings, e-mail listservs for parents, telephone messages, newsletters, handbooks, and a joint education committee of school committee and city council members to study budget priorities of the district. Other activities initiated under the strategic plan and DIPs included the dissemination of the vision, mission, and core value statements in handbooks, the creation of a business office procedures manual, the updating of the maintenance plan, the revision of the middle school report card, the development of a plan to implement Coordinated Program Review (CPR) recommendations, and the implementation of updated technology plans. Administrators reported that in the fall of 2006, the district began looking at goals to improve student achievement by setting benchmarks for improved MCAS and other assessment scores. The first appearance of specific benchmarks for the MCAS tests appeared in SIPs under preparation for 2007-2008.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the school committee received reports on MCAS and other student achievement data, the EQA examiners found little evidence that the district used data as a basis for policy and budgetary decisions.

School committee members reported and administrators confirmed that new members participated in Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) meetings and that members attended MASC conferences on a rotating basis. New members also had an orientation meeting with the superintendent and other committee members. Committee members also reported that the committee followed the John Carver Model of board governance and its protocol for committee roles and responsibilities, concentrating on policy, budget, and the appointment and evaluation of the superintendent, and leaving the management of the district to administrators. Members referred administrative matters and complaints to the superintendent for action and "popped up" at schools only in the role of parents.

Administrators reported that they had autonomy in the appointment of personnel for their schools, subject to approval by the superintendent, and did not complain of excessive micromanagement by committee members. The superintendent and administrators kept the committee informed through e-mails, reports, and meetings between individual members and the superintendent. The superintendent reported that during the period under review, principals and other administrators attended school committee meetings regularly and were available for questions and consultation.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Administrators gave summary reports on the MCAS test results to the school committee and parent groups annually during the period under review. The district gave the EQA examiners documents produced by administrators and teachers, who analyzed the MCAS results in greater depth, particularly making use of item analyses to determine whether certain areas of the frameworks had been covered in class. Administrators reported that in most cases, the MCAS item analyses revealed that the curriculum was not aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and needed revision. Such revisions were being studied in 2006-2007. School personnel did not make use of subgroup data, including the special education subgroup, to revise programs, and the district did not allocate funding for support programs to address subgroups, despite the MCAS data revealing the needs of these students.

Examiners found only isolated examples of curricular decisions based on the MCAS data but no systematic activity to adjust curriculum and instruction based on assessment data. According to administrators and teachers, the MCAS results led to the creation of an after-school MCAS program at the middle school funded by a grant, revisions in grade 9 and 10 classes to improve the preparedness of students in those grades for the MCAS tests, and the rewriting of exam questions to be aligned with the MCAS exams. The principal reported that grade 10 MCAS scores helped identify students for MCAS preparation programs to be held after the students failed the grade 10 test.

Both school committee members and administrators indicated that in the fall of 2006, administrators and faculty members began exploring the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to inform instruction and to set benchmarks, but during the period under review the MCAS was the only testing program used consistently in the district. The need to identify assessments and set benchmarks led to additional release time for teachers and professional development programs in 2006-2007.

Financial data were reported to administrators and the school committee on a monthly basis and often led to decisions about purchasing, freezing budgets, and the development of budget proposals. According to members of the school committee and administrators, class size was a priority and data regarding class size informed decisions about budgeted staffing levels and open seats for school choice students. According to school committee members, they made use of financial data in advocating for school budgets with the joint education committee, the city council, and the public.

In the fall of 2006, the superintendent did a survey of the faculty and planned a similar survey of parents. He planned to use the resulting data to begin setting new priorities and goals for the district in the areas of achievement and curriculum, advanced placement, communications, and facilities.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district's strategic plan and DIPs called for the alignment of the SIPs to the DIP and strategic plan. The SIPs developed during the period under review were aligned. They repeated the same vision, mission statement, core values, and themes, and included those goals relevant to the school. The progress report on the FY 2005 DIP explicitly stated, "the DIP, SIP, and related progress reports are tied to the strategic plan." Administrators and school committee members noted that SIPs often included additional goals, including some to improve the transitions between schools and some with budgetary implications and facility needs. During the period

under review, the SIPs did not include benchmarks based on student achievement data. Administrators reported that the SIPs under development in 2006-2007 were reflecting a new priority to set goals for performance on the MCAS tests and other assessments.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Examiners found minor differences in resources among the schools in the district, often due to differences in the facilities themselves. Only two schools received Title I assistance, but efforts have been made to offer comparable reading and other supports at all elementary schools. Class sizes were often not comparable across elementary schools due to differences in the facilities and enrollments. The Coordinated Program Review (CPR) noted that special education spaces at the Kelley Elementary School were not equitable to those used for regular education, but budget documents showed higher expenditures and additional services for special education in the district. Administrators and SIPs noted overcrowding and modular classrooms at the Bresnahan School, and capital plans showed renovations and improvements were planned there, contingent upon state funding.

Despite declining and below average MCAS scores at the middle school, the district did not allocate funding, programs, and staff there to improve resources for those students. Most budget cuts during recent years were made at the middle and elementary levels. School committee members stated that there was a perception among parents that equity in funding as well as facilities was a problem. The budget document was revised to include per pupil expenses by school, grade, and program as one way to bring clarity to this issue.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Administrators and school committee members voiced concern that funding of district budgets had not been adequate to maintain services and programs. The budget document stated that 33 FTE positions had been cut since 2003, including teachers, principals, curriculum leaders, and custodial and clerical staff. They stated that programs in elementary foreign language, stringed music, theater, library support, and wellness have been lost; fees have been instituted for athletics, extracurricular activities, and transportation; and the district has relied upon local foundations, endowments, and fundraising to pay for teaching supplies, equipment, uniforms, and renovated middle school science labs. The district has increasingly relied upon school choice funds to supplement funding from the city. Administrators reported that Newburyport has the highest school choice population in the state. Maintaining class sizes has been the school committee's priority, and it has avoided cuts that would increase class size.

School committee members and administrators were particularly concerned about aging technology equipment and the expiration of warranties on the five-year-old high school equipment. Technology integrators, who helped teachers embed technology into the curriculum, were cut in past budgets. The district made little use of achievement data and allocated few resources to improve achievement. Administrators cited the need for new consistent, standards-based curricula in both elementary literacy and middle school math.

Staff members reported that school buildings needed improvements. For example, ongoing problems included the shortage of electrical outlets in older buildings, some roofs that leaked, some light fixtures that were inadequate, and overcrowding and modular classrooms at Bresnahan Elementary School.

Because of concerns over lost programs and unmet needs, the school committee has advocated assiduously during the last two years for adequate budgets. In both years it voted and submitted unbalanced budgets above the mayor's recommended budget to the city council, and in a memo to the council dated May 2006, it requested consideration of a general override to properly fund the schools. While the council approved some additional funding, the district still lost programs and staffing as described above.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school committee received annual progress reports on the DIP, and updated it to include goals not yet completed and new goals. Principals and school councils annually presented their SIPs to the school committee and to parent groups and described progress made on the goals to date. The school committee reported that they annually approved both the DIP and SIPs. Student achievement goals during the period under review included setting benchmarks for report cards, developing a set of expected student assessment protocols, and linking high school learning expectations with rubrics. Measurable goals based on the assessment of student achievement were missing. Assessment standards were not included in the SIPs until the new SIPs being developed for the 2007-2008 school year.

Central office administrators also presented an annual report on the MCAS scores to the school committee, faculty, and parent groups. School committee members reported they have not been happy with the trends, and the superintendent reported that in the fall of 2006 he charged each school to prepare an intervention plan to improve the scores. Item analyses were done during the period under review. The middle school staff, for example, completed a report stressing strengths and weaknesses and suggestions to teachers for improving scores and another one comparing their math program, Connected Math Program (CMP), to the state framework. In 2006, the middle school, under new leadership, eliminated pull-out instruction in a "math lab" course taught by special education teachers, to substitute for instruction in the CMP program in the regular education classroom with additional teacher support.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Examiners found little evidence in the district regarding the use of assessment data for the purpose of improving instruction during the period under review. Faculty handbooks contained no references to the MCAS tests or other assessments, and the only analyses of the MCAS results were the item analyses noted above. Subgroup data, with a few exceptions for special education, were not used. The only other common assessments described by staff were high school mid-year and final exams.

In the fall of 2006, additional teacher release time was proposed for teachers to prepare a standards-based consensus curriculum, aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. As a result, new assessments (such as the DRA and DIBELS) were being piloted at elementary schools to collect achievement data on reading groups and to select students for Reading Recovery. In 2006-2007, new SIPs began to include goals to improve MCAS performance. The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) for 2006-2007 mentioned the beginning of MCAS review teams.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district collected little student achievement data and the data were rarely used to modify programs. The DIPs and SIPs had no measurable goals based on assessments of student achievement. Administrators reported that in 2006-2007 elementary schools had begun exploring the use of the DRA and DIBELS assessments to create children's reading groups and to identify students in need of additional reading instruction. The high school had common mid-year and final exams, and some teachers reported additional teacher-generated or textbook-based common core tests and projects.

The DIP and SIPs were used to set priorities for schools and the district. Administrators reported annually to the school committee and parent groups on progress in achieving the goals in the DIP and SIPs. For example, class sizes were maintained, parent communication tools such as

listservs and brochures were prepared, the budget format was made more transparent, Leadership Seminars were held, and the SIPs were made consistent with the DIP.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school committee evaluated the superintendent annually during the period under review against the goals and outcomes described in the strategic plan and the DIP. School committee members' ratings and comments for each goal were summarized on a matrix. As previously noted, these goals and evaluations were not specific in terms of the MCAS results or other student achievement data.

The superintendent's evaluations of principals and the assistant superintendent were based on a common form also reflecting the goals of the strategic plan. These administrators also met with the superintendent to establish additional goals for themselves that reflected the SIP goals such as professional growth, completing a building project, creating an alternative program for high school students, and creating stronger school-community ties. Principals reported that they met at least monthly with the superintendent to review progress on their goals. The MCAS tests and other student assessments were not typically among the goals discussed or mentioned in evaluations.

Evaluations of other administrators, including house masters and deans, were narrative in format. Examiners found them to be informative but not instructive or comprehensive in terms of school goals.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators reported that the leadership of their schools was delegated to the principals. Newburyport Public Schools' policy and procedures manuals described a hiring process in line with the principles of education reform. Principals reported following site-based protocols. New staff members were usually screened by a committee of staff members, whose recommendations went to the principal who passed his/her recommendations on to the superintendent. Examiners heard no complaints about the hiring process or administrators' autonomy in other areas. Evaluations, however, revealed that where appropriate, the former superintendent was directive about how each building should be run.

At the high school, department heads were given the responsibility to oversee curriculum development, course expectations, and common tests. Teachers reported that they felt supported by their leadership, and that teachers had reached consensus about the curriculum. As noted above, examiners did not find student achievement data to be a common factor in the assessment of administrators' leadership.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district's strategic plan and DIPs placed a priority on collaboration and communication with stakeholders. The first goal of the strategic plan and subsequent DIPs was to "…enhance communication and interaction with all stakeholders…." This goal was repeated and given prominence in the SIPs as well. School committee members reported that they met with the city council to discuss mutual concerns, especially the budget, and had formed a joint education committee to study the school budget in depth. Administrators reported that they met quarterly with the city auditor and frequently with the Newburyport education and business coalition, the Newburyport education foundation, and business leaders in the city regarding support for school programs.

Administrators also reported that school Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and the school improvement councils, which included parents, met regularly to review reports on assessments and policies, to approve the SIPs and student handbooks, and to raise funds for school programs. Schools have improved their communications with parents through e-mail listservs and telephone messages as well as newsletters. Parents reported feeling welcome in the schools and frequently volunteered in the buildings.

According to administrators, curriculum planning and professional development involved the teaching faculty through the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) and the Professional Development Committee (PDC). Teachers also reported that they helped plan professional development and curriculum programs. They also collaborated as teams of teachers working with a cohort of students at the high and middle schools, and with special education staff on students receiving service in an inclusion program. Union representatives reported that the superintendent's door was always open to them, and they were able to work out most issues and grievances collaboratively at the administrative level.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a crisis management plan summarizing policies and procedures for bomb threats, weapons, disease, death threats, fire, missing students, abuse, suicide, shooters, and visitors. They indicated that after a student suicide and the murder of a teacher, the plan worked well. Procedures in the event of a nuclear disaster at Seabrook Nuclear Power, including evacuation plans and iodine pills, were included. Staff handbooks contained these detailed crisis and emergency procedures as well as the "memo of understanding with police" regarding policies and laws on emergency and student behavioral issues. Administrators reported that they held annual "table top drills" with police, fire, and high school personnel in the summer in which they used the manual to walk through responses to possible crisis situations, and revised the procedures as needed afterwards. Schools have had emergency drills, including the first

lockdown drill in 2006-2007, during which staff practiced “safe and secure” protocols. Each classroom contained a “grab and go” bag for use in emergencies.

In the fall of 2006, the superintendent gave a presentation to the school committee on proposals for improving crisis responses and responsibilities of staff. The proposal included the formation of a new district/city council to study and revise the crisis manual. The role of this council will be to assist in the coordination of the multi-agency planning needed to develop strong working relationships with the schools that will ensure coordinated efforts when emergencies arise. The council will review and approve school district emergency guidelines, participate in school drills designed to test crisis response readiness, and advise the superintendent on all matters related to the health and safety of students and school staff.

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

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:

- The district did not have a complete K-12 curriculum document for each of the tested core subjects of ELA, math, and science that was aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.
- During the period under review, the K-12 curriculum did not contain important aspects of either horizontal or vertical alignment within schools or across schools.
- A lack of consistent curriculum leadership (three curriculum directors in five years) hindered the development of a complete and aligned K-12 curriculum.
- Analysis of student achievement data did not determine allocation of instructional time in the district.
- Failure to implement the use of formative and summative assessments, and the inability to provide adequate data analysis based on ongoing assessments, hindered the effectiveness of overall teacher instruction.
- The district had a technology plan that addressed the appropriate use of educational technology, but little use of technology integration was seen in classroom observations.

Summary

During the period under review, the district did not implement curricula for all grade levels in the tested core content areas that clearly addressed all components of the state curriculum frameworks. A major component of the total curriculum that was missing was a districtwide assessment system so that teachers could determine if students were effectively making academic progress. Student scores on the MCAS tests indicated that the curriculum, particularly at the middle school, was not fully aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. The district had three directors of curriculum in five years. This turnover in leadership impeded the district's efforts to produce a complete K-12 curriculum document in a timely way. During the period under review, the district was in the process of having teachers complete diary mapping, or the mapping of what was taught by individual teachers, to be followed by consensus mapping, or the agreement of teachers as to what should be taught in a particular subject and at a particular grade level.

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with administrators, building principals, department heads, the current director of curriculum, and members of the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) indicated to the examiners little evidence of horizontal and vertical alignment in grades K-8 in the areas of ELA, math, and science. Administrators and teachers reported that responsibility for the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of the district's curricula rested with the director of curriculum, department heads, the CAB, and building principals.

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with district personnel indicated that the regular review and revision of curricula was an informal process. The criteria used to review and revise curricula included looking at the results of the MCAS tests. To facilitate this process, the software program TechPaths was introduced during the 2006-2007 school year and aided curriculum development and the review and revision of the K-12 curriculum in the district. Documents provided to the EQA team indicated that no comprehensive assessment of 'learning' took place during the period under review. Despite declining MCAS math scores, no program evaluation had been initiated for the K-8 math program. Individual teachers, individual grade levels, or individual schools used student

achievement data to allocate instructional time, which often varied, in the tested core content areas.

During the interview process with the leadership team, participants told the EQA examiners that the district had and used appropriate technology as an integral part of the education process. A review of the district technology plan for school years 2004-2005 through 2006-2007 and the Elementary Instructional Technology Competency Assessment, 2005-2006, confirmed this. Because the district strived to incorporate instructional technology into all curriculum areas, the goal of instructional technology reflected an integrated model rather than separate computer classes. According to data provided by the DOE, the average number of students per computer in the district was 3.6 compared to the state average of 4.9. Although 100 percent of the computers in the district had access to the Internet, the computers at the elementary schools were very outdated and too slow to be used for instruction. Although the district had a technology plan and a curriculum with benchmarks, progress made in integrating computer instruction into the classroom was not evident in classroom observations. In addition, two out of three curriculum/technology integration positions, those at the elementary and middle schools, had been eliminated by the end of 2005-2006.

Interviews with administrators and department heads indicated that the district used formative and summative student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction. A review of documents by the EQA team and conversations with the leadership team and teachers indicated that there was a lack of evidence to support this statement. At the middle and secondary levels, interviewees lacked a full and accurate understanding of the difference between formative and summative assessment strategies. Overall, the district lacked a necessary K-12 assessment system that included benchmarks and exit criteria in each grade and subject area.

Indicators

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district did not implement core curricula for all grade levels in the tested core content areas that clearly addressed all parts of a complete curriculum. The district's documents did not contain essential pieces of a curriculum, such as objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, articulation maps, and measurable outcomes or assessments. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that the K-8 curricula still contained gaps and overlaps which they hoped would be found through the curriculum mapping process. With regard to the pace of progress, it is important to note that the district had three directors of curriculum within five years. The district also eliminated two school-based curricular positions at the elementary and middle levels in 2005-2006. This turnover impeded efforts to produce K-12 curriculum documents in the tested core subject areas. This was evidenced by the fact that the district continued to map the curriculum looking for gaps, overlaps, and inconsistencies across grade levels in 2006-2007 and started mapping at the high school. Interviewees stated that the district still lacked an assessment system based on benchmarks and exit criteria for each grade in each content area. In 2006-2007, the district introduced TechPaths software to write the curriculum across the district using a similar format.

At the elementary level, the internal English Language Arts Program Evaluation dated 2005-2006 indicated that partial implementation of the following curricular programs occurred in varying degrees throughout the district by 2006: Open Court Reading, Project Read, Guided Reading, John Collins Writing Program, Process Writing, the use of Daily Oral Language, and teacher-generated materials. In interviews, there was some disagreement with regard to the effective implementation and articulation of the K-4 ELA curriculum. Some interviewees told the EQA that "teachers are doing their own thing" in teaching reading. In some classrooms, teachers were implementing guided reading strategies, while others used components of an

outdated Open Court Reading series. District leadership noted little evidence of consistency in curriculum or instruction between schools or across grades in the same school. As a result, diary mapping was taking place as a first step in curriculum mapping, followed by consensus mapping, where teachers would come to agreement about what to teach at each grade and in each subject which would also be aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

At the middle school level, implementation of the following curricular programs occurred in varying degrees: Daily Oral Language, Write Source, Language of Literature, use of leveled trade books, and teacher-generated materials. Teacher leaders at this level exhibited more agreement regarding resources and instructional strategies. Interviewees stated that the middle school staff had achieved partial alignment to the state framework document and that they were trying to come to complete consensus. Grades 7 and 8 had some common assessments, based on the use of the CMP as the math series. All schools in the district received training in diary mapping and consensus mapping during the period under review. Interviewees stated that schools were in various stages of the mapping process.

At the high school level, interviewees stated that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) process helped to drive the curriculum development. Department chairs were the curriculum leaders at this level. In ELA, the curriculum was more successfully aligned with the state framework document, and common assessments were used in most courses.

Curriculum materials implemented in math at the elementary level included Bridges K-2, and Investigations 3-4. Mapping of units took place and study groups were formed, but a K-4 curriculum document addressing components of the state curriculum frameworks had not been written. For almost all of the period under review, special education students at the elementary level had been pulled out of regular math classrooms to receive small group instruction with a regular education teacher.

At the middle school level, grade 5 used Investigations for half the year and selected grade 6 units from CMP the second half of the year. Grades 6-8 used the CMP. MCAS performance in math at the middle school indicated the non-alignment of instruction to the state frameworks. During the period under review, a grade 5-8 curriculum document was in the consensus mapping stage. No program evaluation of the K-8 math program took place even though the MCAS math

scores had declined. Interviewees agreed that the CMP had not fully been implemented since teachers at grade 6, 7, and 8 used only six to eight units per year, compared to the 10 units per year that were recommended by the program developer. Replacement or addition of modules did not take place during the period under review. Students scoring below grade level received instruction in math labs, rather than in the regular education classrooms at this level. According to interviewees, new administrators questioned the lack of access to the grade-level curriculum and, based on analysis of extremely low MCAS test scores, this separate math class was eliminated in 2006-2007.

Alignment of the math curriculum with the state frameworks occurred at the high school. Curriculum guides were in place. Interviewees stated that students taking Integrated Math 1 and Integrated Math 2 were not taking an aligned course and almost all of these students had not passed the grade 10 MCAS math test. Despite these problems, the high school had the most complete curriculum in place. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that the high school had just started to map the curriculum during the period under review.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

A review of documents provided to the EQA team, and interviews with administrators, building principals, department heads, the director of curriculum, and members of the CAB, indicated little evidence that the district's curricula in K-8 ELA, math, and science were aligned either horizontally or vertically.

Administrators and members of the district leadership team told the examiners that horizontal alignment occurred through an informal process at the elementary level. The district had three K-4 buildings and during district professional development release days (which were very few in number), teachers met and did diary mapping, committing to paper what each individual teacher did in his or her classroom for one year. The goal was to meet again in the following year and do consensus mapping whereby teachers would agree on curriculum and scope and sequence, and develop pacing guides that aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. The lack of common planning time and common instructional materials limited the potential for success, according to

interviews with district personnel. Math and science curricula at this level were in a little better shape than ELA. Interviewees stated that principals recognized that teachers had been allowed to "do their own thing" in math and ELA for a long time. As a result, the examiners found little evidence of horizontal alignment among the three elementary buildings. With such variation allowed from grade to grade, little vertical alignment existed either.

At the middle school level, a "looping schedule" between grades 5 and 6 and between grades 7 and 8 helped to create some consistency. Students stayed with the same teachers in each subject for two years. This alignment ensured horizontal articulation within each team, but not necessarily across teams, in the middle school. Teachers told the EQA that horizontal alignment among teams occurred through an informal sharing of information during common planning time and common lunch periods. A lack of written curriculum documents evidenced that that there was no completed curriculum to guide practice at each grade level. The middle school special education coordinator scheduled meetings between grade 6 and 7 special education teachers to review the program and student IEPs.

At the high school, horizontal alignment in tested core subjects occurred through monthly departmental meetings, common assessments, and shared electronic folders accessible to staff, as well as curriculum guides available online. Department heads used grade 10 MCAS test results to vertically align the high school curriculum. Across the entire district, study groups and the CAB, made up of teachers, the director of curriculum, and building administrators, met during the period under review to work on horizontal alignment.

According to interviewees, grade 4 and 5 teachers met to aid the transition of students from elementary to middle school. They used the grade 4 report card as a guide for sharing curriculum experiences and student expectations. House coordinators spoke with grade 4 students and gave them a tour of the middle school in the spring. Documents submitted by the district and teacher interviews provided little evidence that these meetings improved vertical alignment of the curriculum. Teachers interviewed told the EQA examiners that students arrived in grade 5 from three different elementary schools with very different knowledge bases in all tested core subject areas.

Special education teachers at the elementary and middle school levels also met to transition students and paid particular attention to transition issues expressed in writing in IEPs. Examples of this would be the service delivery model and modifications for the next grade level. Interviewees stated that principals now recognized that teachers had been allowed to teach math and ELA with little consistency. As a result, little information was presented that there was vertical alignment between the three elementary schools and the middle school.

High school counselors and department chairs met with grade 8 students in January to discuss curriculum and course offerings, and a grade 8 parents night was scheduled. Tours of the high school took place in spring and summer. The dean of student support services worked with teachers, students, and parents on course assignments. Interviewees indicated that the ELA program at the high school level divided students into two levels, one of which used a co-teaching model. The math program divided students into three levels, one of which used a co-teaching model. A grade 8 after-school algebra course prepared students for the high school advanced Algebra 1 program. This accommodated 18 students in 2005-2006. The high school special education coordinator attended teacher transition meetings held with middle school and high school special education teachers. Particular attention was focused on transition issues noted in IEP plans. Interviewees indicated that more vertical alignment occurred at the high school level because of the departmental nature of the high school.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators and teachers reported that responsibility for the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of the district's curricula rested with the director of curriculum, department heads, the CAB, and building principals. At the elementary level, members of the CAB met monthly with staff to discuss curriculum articulation. The primary model for special education at the elementary level was a pull-out model. The examiners found little evidence that the curriculum taught in these classrooms paralleled the regular education curriculum. Meetings held during

early-release days and subsequent monthly meetings focused on diary mapping with the expectation that this would lead to a more effective delivery of the district's curricula.

At the middle school level, the staff still considered the director of curriculum for the district as the curriculum leader at the middle school (a position she held up until 2006-2007). The staff also perceived that teacher members of the CAB in each curriculum area were curriculum leaders. Teachers met monthly by subject area with CAB members to develop a consensus map with the expectation that this would lead to a more effective delivery of the district's curricula. Although pull-out programs were used during the period under review for special education students, the model was changed in 2006-2007 with a special education teacher on each team to do more co-teaching. This teacher also participated in the planning process. Interviews indicated that for the 2006-2007 school year, the new principal was responsible for the ELA and social studies curricula, and one of the house coordinators was responsible for the math and science curricula.

According to interviewees, curriculum leadership at the high school rested with the department heads. They taught 80 percent of the day and were responsible for conducting 50 percent of the evaluations for non-professional staff in their departments. Although separate courses for special education students did exist at this level, the model used was co-teaching in about a third of the regular education courses. Alignment to the state frameworks, analysis of the MCAS test scores, and evaluation and refinement of common assessments also occurred during the monthly departmental meetings.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with district personnel indicated that the regular review and revision of curricula was an informal process. The criteria used to review and revise curricula were the MCAS test scores. To facilitate this process the district purchased and introduced the software program TechPaths during the 2006-2007 school

year to aid curriculum development and the review and revision of the K-12 curriculum in the district.

With respect to effective instructional strategies, the EQA examiners asked what they might see used in classrooms at each level. At the elementary level, examples cited included jigsaws with small groups, 3-2-1 activities, using learning buddies, readers' theater, and reading partners. For special education students, collaborating with regular education students in story reading was a strategy cited. In contrast, the 2005 external special education evaluation report stated that "special education services developed to meet staff preferences rather than genuine student need is clearly inappropriate." The report also indicated that more inclusion classes be instituted at this level. According to the MCAS test scores, in grade 3, 68 percent of all students attained proficiency compared to 36 percent of special education students. The report also stated that there were concerns with the lack of programs and procedures to identify students "at risk for literacy development."

Active leadership and supervision occurred during informal and formal classroom observations, using criteria outlined in the Observation and Analyzing Teaching course in which all administrators had been trained. Evaluators expected to find evidence of a positive learning environment, appropriate standards of behavior, and clear learning goals for student achievement in their informal and formal observations. The district did not use a walk-through protocol for informal observations.

At the middle school level, examples of strategies cited as being frequently used were activators used to start the class; think, pair, share activities; essential and guiding questions; and "ticket to leave" summarizations at the conclusion of class. For most of the period under review, special education students were taught in an ELA or math lab setting with other remedial students. The elimination of the math lab occurred in 2006-2007 by new leadership in the district when special education teachers were placed on all grade-level teams. According to MCAS ELA subgroup scores in 2006, 74 percent of grade 7 special education students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' or 'Warning/Failing' category. In the math lab instituted for students one to two years below grade level,100 percent of grade 8 special education students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' or 'Warning/Failing' category. The special education subgroup scores in

Newburyport were low at many grade levels compared to the scores of special education students across the state. Special education students were now part of co-teaching classes in most curricular activities.

At the high school level, interviewees told the EQA examiners that they should expect to see partner activities in various regular education activities, and in science a projective science activity might consist of a demonstration and hands-on activity where the group has to set conditions, solve the problem, and then fire the cannon to check its assumptions. According to interviewees, a science fair was held annually. In ELA, effective strategies might include a web-quest rubric for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, a movie review for *Hamlet*, creating your own myth, and a sophomore exposition, which included a written, oral, and media component. According to interviewees, the use of rubrics was prevalent within courses in each department at the high school. They stated that rubrics for individual course assignments within each department were used to assess student achievement and produced, as a sample, a rubric from a wellness class.

According to interviewees, special education students, as part of co-teaching classes, participated in all activities. In math, co-teaching occurred in some courses at grades 9 and 10. If a student failed the MCAS tests in grade 10, his/her assignment to an MCAS math class occurred in grade 11. In ELA, co-teaching classes occurred in grades 9, 10, and 11. Students who failed the MCAS test in grade 10 also received instruction in a co-taught grade 11 ELA class.

According to documents provided to the EQA examiners and interviews conducted with the leadership team and the director of curriculum, the leadership team organized the analysis of the MCAS test data. Using TestWiz, the team shared the extracted trends and patterns data with building administrators, department heads, and the CAB. The district employed very few people trained in the use of TestWiz. They included a couple of people from the central office, one principal, and several lead teachers (not all trained within the district) who could call up reports. Interviewees stated that the installation of TestWiz had not yet occurred at the high school.

During the period under review, leveled focus groups analyzed the data. According to interviewees, the sharing of these data did not occur with all staff to the same degree, depending on the organizational structure at each level of schooling. During the 2006-2007 school year,

full-day and half-day in-services resulted from recommendations based on the MCAS test scores. At the elementary level, teachers acknowledged the need for a common vocabulary in grades K-4. Teachers incorporated MCAS-like questions into existing assessments, with more emphasis on multiple-choice questions. Teachers also told the EQA that that alignment of existing ELA/ reading and math programs to the state curriculum frameworks had not yet occurred, and some individual teachers had developed teacher-generated materials to fill the gaps. At the middle school level, teachers stated that the math program was not consistent in grades 5-8, resulting in gaps and redundancies. Subgroup analysis of the MCAS scores indicated that special education students were not receiving adequate instruction to meet their needs. At the high school level, department chairs indicated that departmental meetings focused on analyzing data and adjusting curriculum to meet the criteria of the frameworks.

According to documents provided to the EQA team, active leadership in the form of mentoring was one example of a professional development program developed during the period under review. This program improved and maintained teachers' attitudes, skills, and knowledge base. Support for instruction provided a vehicle for high quality teaching and learning. Efforts by building principals to match first-year teachers with a trained mentor eased the transition for new hires to the district. Mentors and mentees met weekly to discuss curriculum and "nuts and bolts" issues. The new teacher was observed by the mentor and given feedback. Mentees also met monthly with other new teachers in the system, and were required by contract to take the Effective Teaching course, using *The Skillful Teacher* book. New hires were encouraged to take a course in differentiated instruction. Teachers indicated that they had an opportunity to suggest professional development topics, but during the period under review, most professional development originated from the central office. Other examples of professional development included mapping curriculum, and using technology. Interviewees stated that embedded technology professional development occurred on a regular basis in each of the schools in the district. During the 2006-2007 school year, budget cuts eliminated two of the technology integrator positions, at the elementary and middle levels.

The former director of curriculum, technology integrators, and principals led the effort to map the curriculum in the district at all levels, but with different degrees of success. Interviewees indicated that a system had been needed to create consistency in the delivery of instruction and

develop a consensus in curriculum. The process started with diary mapping, writing down what each individual teacher was teaching every day for one year. In year two of the mapping process, teachers would compare and combine their maps and "come to consensus" on the curriculum taught at each grade level and in each subject, aligning their maps with the state frameworks.

During the period under review, this was a work in progress for grades K-8. Due to its course structure, the high school, during the period under review, had partial curricula in place and curriculum mapping continued to achieve complete alignment to the state curriculum frameworks.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of documents provided to the EQA team and interviews with district personnel indicated that the regular review and revision of curricula was an informal process. The criteria used to review and revise curricula were the MCAS test scores. The software program TechPaths was introduced during the 2006-2007 school year to aid in curriculum development and a review and revision of the K-12 curriculum in the district.

At the elementary level, according to interviewees, revision of curriculum was a "work in progress." In science, topics in the texts were not part of the science frameworks. The looping structure delayed the curriculum process at the middle school because it has taken two years for a teacher to complete a diary map. Inconsistencies in curriculum taught between different teams existed. Consensus building was in the beginning stages with gaps and redundancy identification taking place. The grade 6 MCAS math scores indicated that 71 percent of all students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' or 'Warning/Failing' category. At grade 8, 65 percent of the students scored below 'Proficient.' Interviewees indicated that a lack of a defined curriculum and appropriate instructional textbooks and materials contributed to the decline in the MCAS test scores.

According to interviews with the leadership team, the NEASC visit of 2003 drove much of the curriculum revision at the high school. Changes in the state frameworks, especially in science, have driven curriculum revision. Department chairs oversaw this revision.

A review of documents and interviews with school personnel indicated that little evidence existed that curricular revisions addressed the particular needs of subgroup populations. For example, special education MCAS scores at the elementary and middle school levels declined during the period under review. MCAS analysis had been focused on item analysis of aggregated scores and seldom involved the examination of disaggregated scores of special education students.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

According to information provided by the district and interviews with school personnel, no comprehensive assessment of K-12 issues on time on learning took place during the period under review. Individual teachers, individual grades, or individual schools decided how they would allocate instructional time in the tested core content areas.

An increased focus on time on learning based on student achievement data occurred during the 2005-2006 school year. At the elementary level, individual teachers and/or schools increased ELA and/or reading instruction from 75 minutes to 90 minutes in 2006-2007. Math instruction had increased from 60 to 90 minutes in 2005-2006.

At the middle school level, the four-person teaching team made increasing time for specific subjects difficult. Teachers reported that although the schedule was flexible, the allotted time for each subject should be of equal time in length. The middle school principal told the EQA examiners about the possibility of changing some traditions to increase time on learning, such as doing daily attendance during first period class, eliminating homeroom at the end of the day, and restructuring the advisor/advisee program to increase time on learning. The CMP required a minimum of 70 minutes of instructional time daily, according to recommendations. At present,

50 minutes were being allotted for math, which was not adequate. The principal stated that the increase in ELA instruction would occur in 2007-2008.

Interviewees told the EQA team that no change in the high school schedule, a four-by-four block of 84 minutes, happened during the period under review. Students had the option of "doubling up" on math courses. Daily or twice daily, students still had 84-minute study halls scheduled. Seven students enrolled in an after-school MCAS support class on a voluntary basis.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Based on interviews with the leadership team and a review of the District Technology Plan for school years 2004-2005 through 2006-2007, as well as the Elementary Instructional Technology Competency Assessment for 2005-2006, the EQA examiners acknowledged that in most schools the district used appropriate technology as an integral part of the education process.

For example, the district strived to incorporate instructional technology into all curriculum areas. The goal of instructional technology reflected an integrated model rather than separate computer classes. According to data provided by the DOE, the average number of students per computer in the district was 3.6. The state average was 4.9.

In Newburyport, 100 percent of the computers in the district had access to the Internet. According to interviewees, the Brown and Kelley Elementary Schools, the oldest in the system, had the oldest computers and the slowest network access of all the schools in the district. Due to overcrowding, the Kelley School converted its computer lab to classroom space, but the level of computer use found at the Kelley School was the exception.

The DIP included goals to fully implement the school system's model of technical integration for curriculum and instruction in all schools. These goals related to integration of technology had also been incorporated in the SIPs in the district.

At the elementary level, the Brown and Bresnahan Schools had computer labs, while the Kelley School did not. Embedded instructional technology occurred in grades K-2. Grades 3 and 4 received one period a week of computer instruction for 45 minutes. Examples of activities at this level included a spreadsheet and database assessment showing data collected about climate in different regions of the country, a travel brochure students created about a state they had researched, and a five-slide PowerPoint presentation and KidPix activity on the state they were assigned to research.

At the middle school level, there were two labs with 24 computer stations, a technology/engineering lab, 16 computers located in the library, and several computers in all classrooms. The district eliminated one technology integrator position which resulted in a K-8 shared position between three schools. According to documents provided to the EQA team, recent budget cuts and the lack of a viable technology component replacement program may result in falling behind the standards developed by the DOE. In classroom observations by the EQA team, examiners noted very few students using computers as embedded technology in any of the classrooms visited.

At the high school level, new construction five years ago resulted in acquiring new technology. Professional development to use this new technology was held on an ongoing basis. Embedded technology was evident in many classrooms at this level. All classrooms had a teacher podium with overhead projection capabilities. In addition, the science labs had probes. Each classroom had a teacher workstation and most had student computers. Most communication at the high school was electronic, including e-mail, grades, and daily notices. Elective offerings included television production, robotics, and the Museum of Science Energy of the Future. The school had 10 computer labs with machines that were five to six years old. According to interviewees, the district replaced one lab each year. The special education resource rooms had voice recognition software. The district network support office located in the high school had a full-time technology integrator. However, computers available for teacher use did not have TestWiz software loaded onto them and were not accessible to professional staff.

Despite available technology at most levels, the external special education program review noted that technology support for the delivery of special education instruction was below standard. It

also indicated that special education staff had problems doing reports on available computers, especially at the elementary grades.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to administrators and department chairs, they actively monitored teachers' instruction for evidence of practices that reflected high expectations for students' work and mastery. The purpose of evaluation in Newburyport was described as follows: "the specific purpose of the evaluation process is to provide information for the continuous improvement of performance through the exchange of information between the person being evaluated and the evaluator and to provide a record of facts and assessments for personnel decisions."

Administrators and department chairs told the EQA examiners that they monitored teacher instruction through frequent classroom visits and informal observations, and they expected that students were engaged and teachers on task. Evaluators stated that they looked for evidence of good classroom management skills as well as instructional strategies. Noted strategies included: articulation of what high quality work looked like, classroom layout, and displayed student work. Evaluators noted whether a teacher used good strategies at the beginning, middle, and end of the class period, whether good closure procedures were used at the culmination of the lesson, and whether students of mixed ability were grouped together. Administrators also looked for examples of differentiated instruction. One example noted was students had many options available to show their work when completing a project. PowerPoint presentations, computer-generated brochures, climographs, written reports, and posters were all options available to students. Teachers provided graphing calculators for grade 7 and 8 students. At the high school, students usually had their own calculator.

The EQA team visited 46 classrooms in the district. In the classroom management category, positive indicators of classroom management included students taking responsibility for their work and students engaged in good learning routines. The EQA examiners observed effective classroom management in 97 percent of classrooms observed.

District evaluators indicated that they looked for high expectations of student learning when visiting classrooms. As examples of these expectations, they cited multiple tasks that engaged all levels of learners, questioning techniques in use that encouraged elaboration, thought, and broad involvement, and indications that a variety of instructional techniques such as differentiated instruction was being used. The EQA examiners observed high expectations in 79 percent of the classrooms visited.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews with administrators and department chairs indicated that the district lacked a comprehensive K-12 assessment system that included benchmarks and exit criteria in each grade level and in each subject area. Little formative and summative student assessment data were used to monitor the effectiveness of teacher instruction.

Interviews with administrators, department chairs, and members of the CAB revealed conflicting information with respect to understanding the difference between and the use of formative and summative assessments. Assessments administered daily, weekly, or monthly helped teachers adjust instruction for all students, especially those falling behind and needing additional or alternative instruction. They used summative assignments, defined as unit tests, midterms, and finals, as a snapshot of student performance at a given point in time.

The MCAS tests were an example of summative assessments used to assess student achievement. Study groups had analyzed the MCAS data during the period under review, but lacked a method of widely disseminating the data to teachers. Interviewees stated that this changed and now the CAB used TestWiz data to find trends and patterns and classroom teachers used them during monthly staff/departmental meetings and professional development release days. Department chairs at the high school used midterm and final exams as summative tools to determine if students had mastered specific competencies and as formative assessments to identify

instructional areas that needed additional attention. According to interviewees, teachers at the high school took the midterm and final exams themselves to help measure their effectiveness. Students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses were required to take the AP exam to pass the course, at their own expense. Economically disadvantaged students could apply for financial aid.

At the elementary and middle school levels, little evidence was provided that school professionals used summative assessments during the period under review to make a judgment about student competency with respect to exit criteria. Interviewees reported to the EQA examiners that some teachers also used informal formative assessments and student feedback forms to improve instructional methods throughout the teaching and learning process.

Although interviewees indicated that formative testing did take place, examples provided to the EQA examiners were vague and contradictory. The examiners also found a lack of evidence provided about the tests and whether they were used on a system-wide basis to improve instructional strategies in the classroom. Some examples cited of formative assessments used by teachers included quizzes, chapter tests, textbook unit tests, oral and written reports, lab reports, audio, visual, and kinetic inclusion strategies, and anecdotal records.

The district provided professional development opportunities for staff during the period under review. Goal B under Human Resources and Professional Development of the strategic plan stated that the district "supports the concept of continuous improvement in professional development and practice." Although there were many opportunities for professional development, the only systemic initiative during the period under review was curriculum mapping. Other examples cited included professional development for new texts, provided by the textbook companies, and grants that provided funding for teacher attendance at professional conferences, workshops, and seminars. Interviewees stated that additional release time during the school year was necessary for continued progress in consensus mapping and analyzing student achievement data. At the high school level, individual courses included writing rubrics for projects and assignments, but common rubrics used to assess academic work across all areas were limited. Administrators and department chairs indicated that progress occurred in developing subject area rubrics at the high school.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 46 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes, reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories which were: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. The EQA examiners made 15 observations at the elementary level, 14 observations at the middle school, and 17 observations at the high school. In total, the EQA examiners made observations in 20 ELA classrooms, 14 math classrooms, and 12 science classrooms.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 97 percent of the classrooms observed across the district, with 100 percent at the elementary level, 100 percent at the middle school level, and 93 percent at the high school level.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the EQA examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that required the use of higher-order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off-task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it should be age appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged.

The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners.

In Newburyport, positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 82 percent of the classrooms observed across the district, with 83 percent at the elementary level, 86 percent at the middle school level, and 76 percent at the high school level. Although examiners observed evidence of positive instructional practice in 82 percent of the classrooms, aspects of several of the nine criteria noted as "not observed" indicated a lack of sufficient use of instruction that engaged students in their own learning and was differentiated according to the needs of students. Examples noted by examiners included no posted objectives, all students working on the same packet, transition time at the end of the period not utilized effectively, and curriculum not aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 79 percent of the classrooms observed across the district, with 76 percent at the elementary level, 89 percent at the middle school level, and 71 percent at the high school level. Although examiners observed evidence of high expectations in 79 percent of the classrooms, aspects of one or more of four criteria were noted as "not observed" and indicated the need for additional professional development on adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Examples noted by examiners included a lack of displayed high quality student work, a lack of high quality student work evident in the lesson being presented, and a lack of students being asked to do challenging academic tasks.

Positive *student activity and behavior* are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 80 percent of the classrooms across the district, with 76 percent at the elementary level, 86 percent at the middle school level, and 80 percent at the high school level. Although examiners observed evidence of positive student activity and behavior in 80 percent of the classrooms, one or more of the six criteria were noted as "not observed" and indicated that students were not always engaged in a learning process suited to individual learning styles. Examples noted by examiners included very few classroom lessons in which technology was embedded into instruction or used to support, enrich, or differentiate learning. Examiners observed students working on packets of worksheets and other examiners observed lessons for which the students appeared to be unaware of the objectives of the lesson being presented.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 88 percent of the classrooms observed across the district, with 96 percent at the elementary school level, 95 percent at the middle school level, and 75 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms						Computers		
	ELA	Math	Science	Total	Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	10	5	0	15	23.7	.4	70	56	6.4
Middle	6	5	3	14	19.0	.3	31	17	5.6
High	4	4	9	17	16.4	.1	41	24	11.6
Total	20	14	12	46	19.6	.3	142	97	9.3

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Elementary					
Total checks	60	112	48	68	43
Maximum possible	60	135	60	90	45
Avg. percent of checks	100	83	76	76	96
Middle					
Total checks	56	112	50	72	40
Maximum possible	56	126	56	84	42
Avg. percent of checks	100	86	89	86	95
High					
Total checks	63	116	48	82	38
Maximum possible	68	153	68	102	51
Avg. percent of checks	93	76	71	80	75
Total					
Total checks	179	340	146	222	121
Maximum possible	184	414	184	276	138
Avg. percent of checks	97	82	79	80	88

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

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:

- Increasing the rigor of academics based on an analysis of the MCAS test results was not a top priority during the period under review, as evidenced by a review of the strategic plan, the DIP, and the respective SIPs.
- The district had not developed measurable grade-level benchmarks and exit criteria in each core content area in K-8 nor implemented a systemic assessment system that would inform instruction and allow administrators to make better decisions and recommendations.
- The district relied primarily on the MCAS tests for assessment results and had not yet developed an assessment system to provide formative assessment information to guide better instruction..
- The analysis of student achievement data focused on trends, patterns, and item analyses of the MCAS scores in the aggregate.
- Although the district engaged in internal and external evaluations during the period under review, nearly complete turnover of central office administrators and principals delayed using the recommendations of these evaluations to make program improvements.

- Although the district had hardware, software, and ongoing professional development in using technology, the district did not offer the use of TestWiz for administrators or teachers for data analysis.
- The district failed to provide professional development opportunities in data collection, analysis, and interpretation to help professional staff focus on using student achievement data.
- Based on an analysis of the MCAS test scores, the district increased small amounts of time on learning for small numbers of students in voluntary, after-school programs. For the most part, the district did not add more instructional time in ELA and mathematics during the school day.

Summary

The district primarily relied on the MCAS tests at respective grade levels for summative test data. At the elementary schools, no written exit criteria were in place for each grade level indicating what each student should know and be able to do in each subject area in order to be promoted. The number of retentions was low at the elementary and middle schools. Although the middle school had some teacher-generated unit final tests, they were not consistently used across teams for all students. In 2003, the high school, in preparation for a NEASC visit, developed and/or revised common midterms and final exams. High school teachers in departmental meetings reviewed and analyzed these exams through the leadership of department heads.

The district was just beginning to use formative testing to inform teacher practice. Expanding the model used in the Title I program, teachers were beginning to use the DIBELS in grades K-1 and the DRA in grades 2-3 to test students three times a year and to measure individual student achievement against a standard or benchmark. The district was just beginning to establish benchmarks in each core subject and at each grade level.

Interviewees at the middle and upper grades were unable to articulate and demonstrate an understanding of the difference between formative and summative testing. At the middle school, teachers did not collect or analyze formative student assessment data during the school year to assess the ongoing progress of students.

Teachers collected summative test data and analyzed them in the aggregate in order to find trends and patterns for each test. Teachers and administrators worked together to perform an item analysis to determine which items most students did poorly on, in the aggregate, in order to consider changes to the curriculum. In 2006-2007, the district was just beginning to disaggregate subgroup data in order to inform needed changes to specific programs or to come up with ways to recognize and begin to close the achievement gap between regular education students and those in special education programs.

The district did engage in a number of external program evaluations. Some were mandatory, such as the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) done by the Department of Education in 2005. The district completed a NEASC evaluation in 2003 for reaccreditation of the high school. The preschool had a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) visit in 2005 to achieve reaccreditation in early childhood learning.

The district analyzed the results of the MCAS tests. This was done during district in-service time, but the information was not used consistently to evaluate the ELA, math, or science programs or to make changes in the special needs program during the period under review. Internal program evaluation began to become better organized when the turnover of almost every administrative position, including the position of superintendent, made it feasible and necessary to examine the present state of the district in order to be successful under new leadership. District staff was aware of the need to increase the rigor of the academic program, especially in mathematics and in the special education program, as evidenced by the MCAS test results.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Teachers and administrators primarily relied on the MCAS tests for assessment of student achievement and looked for trends and patterns. They did a number of aggregate item analyses of ELA and math scores at all grade levels in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Study groups of teachers at each level, with principals and/or the director of curriculum, routinely looked at the MCAS

results. At the high school, department heads did item analyses of the MCAS results for grade 10.

For most of the period under review, the director of curriculum was responsible for disseminating the MCAS results to school principals. They could request different types of MCAS reports which would be run at the central office. Although three different people served in the position of curriculum director in the last five years, the function of that office remained consistent. One of the current principals, who formerly served in a curriculum position, was more proficient in using TestWiz. She told the EQA that she ran reports at the school level but this was atypical. Other administrators had introductory TestWiz training years ago when the DOE first disseminated the program. The other principals were new to the district since that initial training. Administrators and teachers had little training in using TestWiz, although they had ongoing opportunities to take other courses in using technology. At the high school, department heads did not have access to TestWiz software and generally performed data analysis for the teachers in their respective department by using pencil and paper.

The district presented evidence that many staff had participated in the continuous collection, analysis, and use of student assessment results. Examples given to the EQA examiners included analyses from test results in 2004, 2005, and 2006. These analyses focused on trends and patterns in ELA and math achievement. Study group participants also included an item analysis of each test in the aggregate. A report on the 2004 MCAS results, completed by the former curriculum director, outlined how and why the MCAS results were analyzed in the district. This was presented to the school committee in 2004-2005 and explained these essential questions: Why do we engage in MCAS analysis?; How did we engage in MCAS analysis?; and What did we learn to help us improve students' performance? It described the process as done by the ELA and math departments at the high school, a team of ELA and math teachers at the middle school, and every teacher at an in-service day on November 2, 2004 at the elementary level. According to the document, "administrators, teacher leaders and teachers contributed to a district-wide discussion of the process and results at each level." The stated purpose was to "uncover district-wide curriculum and related professional development needs that will address the identified problem areas in ELA and mathematics." The director of curriculum compiled recommendations from this analysis that focused on reading more nonfiction, writing across the

curriculum, special education students accessing the general curriculum, and eliminating discrepancies in the implementation of the ELA curriculum at the elementary and middle levels. Recommendations in mathematics included creating systemic benchmarks in math, incorporating math literacy documents in curriculum documents, setting a priority for administrative supervision to ensure continuity and consistency, providing administrative support so that all students have the same exposure to the math curriculum, and developing districtwide common assessments. Interviewees told the EQA that over time, analysis of the MCAS results, which began with the involvement of small groups of teacher leaders, became more participatory by trying to involve more teachers.

In 2005, according to documentation provided to the EQA, the MCAS analysis consisted of the following in-service activities: November 8, middle school MCAS analysis; November 15, elementary MCAS analysis; and December 15, district MCAS sharing day. The high school MCAS analysis was completed at the departmental level in math and ELA and organized by department heads. Analyses primarily consisted of an item analysis of all students in the aggregate and contained some general recommendations for curriculum mapping efforts and for future professional development.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In Newburyport, MCAS participation for all students ranged from 99 percent to 100 percent. The rate of participation of special education students was slightly lower but non-participation existed in very small numbers. Teachers and administrators told the EQA that at one time, some teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders had been somewhat resistant to mandatory participation in the MCAS tests and the use of them as a measure of the school district's performance. However, that prevailing point of view had changed in recent years. This perception was also referenced in the Superintendent's Entry Plan Report.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Parents received a letter from each school principal informing them that the school report card was available on the district's website for each respective school. Printed copies of the same were also available in all school libraries. The letter explained that the school and district report cards contained information about teacher qualifications, student achievement on the MCAS tests, and progress made toward helping all students become proficient in ELA and math. It also explained the concept of school accountability in terms of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements and stated whether schools were making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward reaching NCLB goals. All schools, at all grades, used progress reports and report cards to apprise parents of student and school-based progress.

As cited, the development of an assessment system and the development of academic goals were not the highest priorities across the district, as evidenced by the five-year strategic plan (2006-2007 is year 4 of the plan). Likewise the DIP and SIPs had few measurable or academic goals. Despite the fact that student achievement was only one goal among many in the DIP, the director of curriculum continued to lead efforts to organize the district staff in analyzing the MCAS results on the first whole in-service day in November. When analysis worksheets were passed in from working groups, she pulled the results together and was responsible for keeping the school committee informed of progress.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district primarily relied on the analysis of student achievement data from the MCAS tests. The district had yet to develop a district assessment system, which was also cited as a need in the Superintendent's Entry Plan Report, dated December 18, 2006. During the period under review, the district was beginning to use the DIBELS in grades K-1. It was originally used to assess progress in the Title I program in two of the three elementary schools. In 2005-2006, the district eliminated Title I services at the Brown Elementary School because the poverty rate had declined in that school to 3.6 percent. At the Kelley and Bresnahan Elementary Schools, Title I-targeted students also received Title I Reading Recovery services in grade 1. Using the model of assessment from Title I at the primary grades, the district began in 2006-2007 to implement the use of the DIBELS in grades K-2 and the DRA in grades 3-4 for all students. According to interviewees, the PTO helped schools to purchase enough assessment materials so that assessment would be consistent at all three elementary schools.

According to the 2005-2006 Title I program evaluation at Bresnahan Elementary, of 95 kindergarten students, 51 percent received Title I services, 53 percent met the DIBELS benchmark, and six percent were referred for a special education evaluation. Of 114 grade 1 students, 30 percent received Title I services, 91 percent met the Clay's Observation Survey benchmark, and nine percent were referred for special education services. Of 118 grade 2 students, eight percent received these services, 56 percent met the DRA Level 28 benchmark, and 22 percent were referred for special education services. Of 101 grade 3 students, eight percent received these services, 87 percent met the DRA Level 38 benchmark, and no students were referred for special education services.

At Kelley Elementary, of 18 grade 1 students, 22 percent received Title I services and 100 percent met the Clay's Observation Survey benchmark. Of 24 grade 2 students, 25 percent received these services, 83 percent met the DRA Level 28 benchmark, and 17 percent were referred for special education services. Of 26 grade 3 students, 23 percent received Title I services, 87 percent met the DRA Level 38 benchmark, and 16 percent were referred for special education services.

At the middle and secondary levels, teachers and administrators primarily relied on the MCAS results to assess student achievement. In 2006, the district administered the SAT Reasoning Test to graduating grade 8 students for the first time. According to interviewees, middle school teachers used this test in part to inform placement in courses at grade 9. They also told the EQA that it was generally not analyzed by teachers in grades 8 or 9 to assess anything pertaining to curriculum or instruction.

The high school used common midterm and final exams within each department in ELA, math, and, in some cases, science. Staff discussed the results within each respective department in order to find out in which areas students were doing well and in which areas students needed to improve. The district did not ordinarily do further analysis of student performance, such as using forms of assessment other than teacher-generated tests or doing a comparative study of report card grades and MCAS performance in grade 8 or grade 10.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

With the exception of assessments previously cited, the district systematically used very few assessment results other than the MCAS test results to measure the effectiveness of instructional programs. For example, common exams to be used as benchmarks had not been developed at the middle or elementary level.

An analysis of grade 10 MCAS results in mathematics from the 2004 district report ascertained that "of the 19 failures, most were in a course that was not considered a 10th grade math course." This analysis suggested that a problem in math achievement seemed to be developing in regular education and special education instruction long before students reached high school. At the high school, the majority of students scoring in the 'Needs Improvement' and 'Warning/Failing' categories had taken Integrated Math I and II in regular education or Pre-Algebra I and II in the special education department. In contrast, of the students taking Geometry as sophomores in regular education at grade 10, which was considered to be the grade 10 math course, only six

students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' category and no students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category.

In 2006-2007, the math lab course was eliminated at the middle school for special education students. The new principal stated that he was focusing his efforts on raising the academic rigor in all subjects at the middle school level. The superintendent also developed a proposal (unfunded at the time of the review) to replace the current math program at the middle school, which, according to administrators, lacked fidelity of implementation.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In January 2006, the NEASC reviewed the two-year progress report of Newburyport High School and continued its accreditation. In August 2005, the district's early childhood program was awarded accreditation.

The district also provided some examples of internal and external audits to inform the effectiveness of its program implementation and service delivery systems. For example, an internal ELA program evaluation was completed in 2005-2006 by a committee comprised of one elementary teacher, two middle school teachers, the high school principal, the interim director of curriculum, and the middle school curriculum coordinator (who was not the district director of curriculum). The report, which included no formal analysis of student achievement data, confirmed through surveys and analysis of district records that there was little consistency of curriculum and instruction at the elementary and middle levels, both across grades and vertically in grades K-8. It also confirmed that the district needed to develop a local assessment system with benchmarks and exit criteria at each grade. It stated that the middle school needed to develop a standards-based report card and the high school needed to work on using common rubrics for academic work across departments (p. 21).

The most recent internal program analysis done was a report "to assist me the (new) superintendent in developing a comprehensive picture of the Newburyport Public Schools that included the students, staff and community stakeholders." According to the report, the superintendent "utilized a standard reference model in order to learn about the operations and systems within the district." The end product of this process was the Superintendent's Entry Plan Report, presented on December 18, 2006 to the school committee and then disseminated throughout the school district.

An example of an external evaluation done in Newburyport was a 2004-2005 special education evaluation of elementary school programs, dated July 18, 2005 and completed by an outside consultant. This evaluation stated that all special needs students were not doing as well as those with intensive special needs, which was confirmed by Comparable Value Analysis (CVA) data provided by the EQA. It stressed the need to service students in the least restrictive environment and recommended that the district "move toward a joint ownership of all students of both general and special educators." It also stated that "decisions related to programming may be unduly influenced by attitudes and preferences related to job satisfaction, rather than the student's need for separate programming." It reported that teachers voiced the "need for more training in differentiated instruction" and the need to implement a consistent, balanced literacy approach with the use of a consistent system of formative assessment.

In 2003-2004, according to the program evaluation for academic support services funded by the DOE, students who had failed the MCAS tests in grade 10 could attend this after-school program on a voluntary basis, which prepared them for taking the MCAS retest. It was held on Monday through Thursday after school and on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. "Juniors and seniors, whose schedules allowed, were also placed in the academic support program in place of study hall during the last period of the day." It served a total of seven students and five passed the test; one student was granted a cohort appeal and one senior did not pass. According to the program evaluation, "as in previous years, students did not like to attend the program after school."

The final example of an external program evaluation done in Newburyport was of the autistic program at the Brown Elementary School, dated October 2004. It included staff interviews, the

analysis of data, and a series of direct classroom observations. It was highly complimentary of the overall program and recommended that the district analyze the use of speech and language assessments, the use of consistent data collection systems, and the "temporal relationship between the identification of the need for a programmatic change and the execution of such a change and ways to implement the tracking of students with ASD [as they] enter into a fully included setting and how they perform."

The EQA examiners had no way to determine whether these internal and external program results were provided to all appropriate staff, with the exception of the Superintendent's Entry Plan Report. With respect to the sharing of the analysis of the MCAS data, interviewees told the EQA examiners that at some schools the analysis of student achievement data had been shared with staff at some levels more than others.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviewees, by the latter part of the period under review the elementary principals recommended to their teachers that time on learning be increased by 15 minutes in ELA and by 30 minutes in math. According to interviews with middle school administrators and staff, during the period under review teachers were not mandated to increase time spent in ELA and math. Teachers told the EQA team that four-person teams had the ability to flex the schedule as agreed upon by the teachers of four content area subjects on the same team. According to interviewees and curriculum documentation, little fidelity of implementation of the CMP was evident in Newburyport; math teachers had implemented six to eight out of the 10 recommended units to be taught at grades 6, 7, and 8.

The high school had consistently used a four-by-four block schedule throughout the period under review. Interviewees stated that students could take the regular math course and an Integrated Math I or II course at the same time, if the student needed the extra credits or to accelerate learning. More often than not, however, students doubled up in math only if they had failed

math in the previous year. An MCAS support program in math was offered during the school day only for students who had failed the MCAS math test in grade 10. In addition, an after-school MCAS preparation tutorial was available for two weeks prior to the grade 10 MCAS test. According to interviewees, each semester students ordinarily had at least one directed study per semester and some students had a study period as well. In a four-by-four schedule, one directed study was 25 percent of the instructional day and two of them could be 50 percent of the day in the alternating A/B block schedule. The EQA examiners noted that since a directed study did not have a specific curriculum, it was the same as a study hall and should not be calculated as time spent receiving direct instruction.

In 2007, the district was facing the possibility in the FY 2008 budget that the district might lose more teaching positions than the number of retirements or resignations. During the period under review, due to a series of level funded budgets, the district had lost positions but did not have to lay off teaching personnel. Previous cuts in the budget had impacted positions at the elementary and middle levels. In preparing for FY 2008, the superintendent expressed disappointment that the district might lose some excellent new teachers who lacked seniority in the school system. Administrators told the EQA that the influx of new teachers, especially at the high school, had reinvigorated the learning environment, and was felt throughout the school.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

The district provided very little evidence to the EQA examiners that it used the information from program reviews to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services, in order to continuously improve the delivery of instruction and student achievement during the period under review.

The district presented much more evidence of its intention to make changes, based on the new superintendent's analysis of the state of the district and new leadership at the central office and in all schools. Together, as a leadership team, administrators expressed that they were positioned,

with new leadership at the top, to take action on some of the recommendations in the internal and external program reviews completed during the period under review.

When an EQA examiner asked interviewees to name the curriculum leader in each respective building, none of the respondents named the principal as the current curriculum leader. According to interviewees, one clear expectation communicated by the new superintendent to all principals was that each would establish him/herself as the curriculum leader of his/her respective school. In the past, this responsibility had been designated to a number of school-based positions for curriculum, but these were eliminated in the FY 2007 budget cuts.

According to the superintendent, there were also too many goals in previous DIPs. In the future, he told the EQA examiners that the goals would be prioritized and there would be five of them: student achievement was to be number one, followed by leadership, safety, communication, and culture/climate.

Some additional changes at the elementary level included the implementation of more practice in test-taking skills into an after-school program. This program was created for grade 4 students and ran for a duration of seven weeks. In the program, students were also piloting the use of published materials such as TEST READY and AIM. Funding for the program was provided by the PTO, and 22 elementary students were targeted at a cost of $1,250.

At the middle school, the district funded an after-school tutorial for students in grades 5-8. The program ran for 12 weeks and was focused on test-taking skills in math and using test-taking materials such as Buckle Up/Sharpen Up. The middle school also purchased software called Study Island that could be used on a home computer. Interviewees stated that summer school for middle school students had been discontinued in 2003-2004 due to lack of local funding. It had been a six-week session for four half-days per week. The middle school principal created a math intervention team in 2006-2007 to address lagging student achievement in mathematics for all students, but especially for those in special education. Special education students were no longer pulled out of regular education classrooms to go to math lab for their daily math instruction; instead they were included in the regular education program with support. The district also offered and continued to fund a pre-algebra class to selected grade 8 students in an after-school

setting. This accommodated about 18 students who had been recommended to the program and had transportation provided by parents.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district monitored for current and updated Massachusetts licensure and maintained a list of teachers on waiver. Although administrators checked teachers for progress toward attaining certification, teachers on waiver were not always evaluated on an annual basis.
- Most but not all administrators were evaluated on all components of the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership. Their evaluation was not clearly linked to compensation.
- Evaluations of teachers were not necessarily timely, and the stated comments/recommendations and the ratings on various indicators appeared incongruous, communicating a mixed message regarding the need for improvement.
- The funding of the district's professional development plan was not adequate with respect to the needs of the district.
- The overall focus of ongoing district professional development was on curriculum mapping; respective schools were at various stages of implementation of that effort.
- The district allotted minimal time for collaboration and mandatory in-service; the district was in the process of creating 11 release days in the 2007-2008 school calendar.

- The district's human resource policies and practices encouraged professional growth and recognition, placing high priority on retaining professional staff.
- The mentor program for teachers failed to include an emphasis on assessment, data analysis, and use of student achievement data to inform practice.
- The school system's crisis plan was current and disseminated to principals and teachers throughout the district.

Summary

The Newburyport Public Schools advertised for and sought highly qualified candidates to fill the positions of those who departed the district. The school system was in the process of eliminating many positions due to budget cuts. Although there were limits to hiring salaries, the district did not deter from hiring those who were highly qualified and commanded a higher rate of pay. The district's hiring practices were consistent, involving administrators, teachers, parents, and the superintendent. All administrators were currently licensed for the positions they held. The district had 21 teachers who were working on waiver at the time of the EQA review. Due to a new requirement that all middle school teachers be certified in a specific content area, 15 of those teachers were working toward such certification. Progress toward certification of teachers on waiver was monitored by district staff.

During the period under review, curriculum mapping was the districtwide focus of professional development at all grade levels. Administrators and teachers had consultant training and ongoing professional development within the district to map and come to consensus on what should be taught at each grade and in each subject. The goal was alignment with the state curriculum frameworks and development of more explicit benchmarks and exit criteria. TestWiz training was not widespread in the district, and during the period under review, in most schools analysis of data was limited to trends, patterns, and item analyses. Analysis of programs and of subgroup data was in the beginning stages, as was more training across the district on using data to make better decisions.

The district made efforts to encourage professional growth, recognition, and retention of effective staff members. All new teachers were required to take the Effective Teacher training, and they were also required to take differentiated instruction training in their second year unless

they could provide evidence of prior completion of this training. The mentoring program for new teachers encouraged regular communication, support, and encouragement. Teachers were recognized through their receipt of the Edward Molin award, through acknowledgement of their accomplishments such as attainment of additional degrees, and through requests to present their best practices at faculty meetings. Stipended extra-curricular positions and course reimbursements were also available to teaching staff.

Teachers and administrators stated in interviews that non-professional status teachers were evaluated on an annual basis in Newburyport and that teachers on professional status were evaluated in alternate years. They also told the EQA examiners that teachers on waivers were evaluated on an annual basis, although EQA examiners found this was not always the case. In a review of a sample of 40 teacher evaluations, the EQA examiners found that 13 out of 40 written evaluations of teachers were not always completed in a timely way in accordance with district policy during the period under review. Furthermore, EQA examiners found that there was one teacher on professional status and one teacher on non-professional status who had no completed evaluations.

Administrators reported that they annually met with the superintendent to prepare goals and met at least once a month to discuss progress toward the attainment of goals. A self-evaluation and a meeting with the superintendent preceded the superintendent's final evaluation. The EQA examiners found that evaluations of district administrators by the former superintendent were timely, informative, and instructive, and they promoted professional growth. Student performance was not a factor in these evaluations.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviews with administrators and staff indicated that hiring practices were consistent throughout the district. Teachers, and often parents, were involved in screening candidates.

Principals indicated that they had a number of candidates to choose from. Once chosen, they forwarded their selection to the superintendent. Many of the open positions in recent years were the result of retirements.

The school district teacher licensure survey stated that the district employed 225 teachers. Of these teachers, 220 were listed as currently licensed. Fifteen licensed teachers were teaching out-of-field for one or more period a day. It should be noted that many of the teachers listed as teaching out-of-field were middle school teachers, and that at the middle school level there was a change in the certification law which required teachers to be certified in a specific subject area rather than as generalists.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The EQA examiners reviewed the Massachusetts licensure of all the current administrators and the licensure of a random sample of 40 teachers. Examiners found that all administrators were certified for their current positions, and they were all up to date.

The district presented a list of 21 teachers employed on waiver at the time of the review, 15 of whom were working on middle school content area certification. Since the middle school moved to a grade 5-8 departmentalized model with all teachers teaching one specific content area, elementary teachers at grades 5-6 and those certified as middle school generalists at grades 7-8 were required to become certified in a specific core content area. This increased the number of teachers working on new certification.

According to principals, progress on attaining certification was tracked by both the respective principal and by the director of curriculum, who reports to the superintendent, at the central office.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to teachers who often served on interview teams, most candidates who reached the interview stage were appropriately certified. Principals in the review of applications usually screened out those applicants who applied without having certification. Exceptions to this process were in hard to find certification areas such as secondary science.

In the event that a teacher was hired on waiver, principals, department heads at the high school, and the director of curriculum checked to ensure that the teacher was making progress toward attaining certification.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In an effort to obtain and retain effective staff, the district provided a mentoring program for new teachers. Interviews conducted with teachers and administrators confirmed that all new staff members were assigned a mentor, with the exception of two of four new principals. Teachers matched with a mentor, preferably in the same grade level or subject area, and the two worked together to achieve a smooth first-year experience for the new teacher. New teachers received a resource binder that contained general information regarding personnel, curriculum, professional development, and student support and referral services, and they attended monthly meetings. The induction program academies supported and educated new teachers. As part of the training process, new teachers were expected to participate in Effective Teacher training using *The Skillful Teacher* book. Differentiated instruction training was available after year one, but was not mandatory.

Based on documents provided and interviews with teachers, the EQA examiners found little evidence that the effective utilization of student data was emphasized during the initial orientation period for new staff. Student assessment was listed as one of several topics to be addressed during mentoring activities in years one and two in the district's induction program booklet.

In one interview there was a concern expressed that some mentors and mentees have not been ideal matches, in that they did not have the same role in the school and thus did not derive the maximum benefit from observing each other. In addition to the formal mentoring process, individuals mentioned that support was generally available from a variety of sources including other teachers and administrators.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district provided professional development opportunities during the period under review, but did not provide staff members with sufficient options to increase their knowledge base in the area of data analysis. Although some teachers looked at the MCAS test results for trends and patterns and some had participated in doing an item analysis each year, no widespread training in the use of TestWiz to analyze the MCAS data occurred. Interviews with members of the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) and district administrators stated that results of the item analyses did not change curriculum and instruction at the elementary or middle school level. Principals told the EQA team that they depended on TestWiz reports generated from the central office and indicated that teachers who were knowledgeable in using TestWiz had received training before coming to the district.

Newburyport had in place a Professional Development Committee (PDC) consisting of teachers, the director of curriculum, and administrators. These individuals planned, organized, and reviewed professional development activities in the district. Teachers wrote proposals and principals suggested topics for their individual buildings. The district's strategic plan provided

goals and focused on supporting teachers in gaining common language and concepts with which to guide instruction and to support continuous improvement in practice. Districtwide professional development included a number of curriculum and instruction related topics. These included curriculum mapping, effective teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and job-embedded training to assist teachers in writing and adapting integrated curriculum units intended to increase student achievement. The district provided embedded technology professional development as well as embedded literacy training. During the period under review, curriculum mapping was the districtwide focus at all grade levels. The district lacked professional development in the area of developing benchmarks and exit criteria at each grade and in each subject area.

At the high school level, professional development occurred during departmental meetings and included data analysis and remediation. The MCAS test results were the primary source of available data. At the middle and elementary school levels, full- and half-day release time for professional development focused on analyzing the results of the MCAS tests.

During the period under review, interviewees reported that surveys conducted each spring sought input for professional development offerings, although most professional development initiatives originated from the central office. In 2006-2007, the minimum of professional development release days took place in the district. The 2007-2008 calendar under discussion by the school committee included additional release days.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

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

Administrators told the EQA examiners that the mentoring program in Newburyport was an effective strategy to retain teachers in the system. Principals stated that they supported new teachers by holding regular meetings, offering suggestions and encouragement, and expressing a willingness to help. According to the induction plan, better teacher retention would be an indicator of the program's success. New teachers at the high school especially praised the support and encouragement they received from their subject-specific department chairs.

The teachers' contract stated that longevity pay commenced after 10 years of service. Stipended extra curricular positions paid through a point system included after-school clubs, grade-level advisors, and the National Honor Society. A 10-point position would pay $200 while a 40-point position would pay $1,100. A sabbatical policy in the contract stated that after seven years of continuous service, a teacher could request a leave with half of his/her pay for the period of the leave. During the period under review, interviewees told examiners that no sabbatical had been granted in the district. Course reimbursement in the district totaled 50 percent, up to $800 per contract year. The FY 2005 budget contained approximately $40,000 for course reimbursements. The district provided numerous opportunities for professional development during the period under review such as embedded, in-house, and graduate coursework.

When asked about how teachers received recognition, interviewees stated that the Edward Molin Award was given annually to a teacher in the system who exhibited outstanding characteristics. Teachers nominated staff members for this award with the recipient selected by his/her peers. This enviable award was steeped in tradition in Newburyport. The superintendent also recognized staff members at school committee meetings who earned advanced degrees as well as those who had been awarded recognition in respective subject areas by professional organizations. During the period under review, teachers attended school committee meetings with their students and demonstrated outstanding lessons. Teachers also presented best practices to peers at monthly departmental or faculty meetings.

During the period under review, interviewees stated that opportunities for promotion and leadership existed in the district. These opportunities included department head positions at the high school, dean of student life at the high school, house coordinator at the middle school, elementary principal, elementary assistant principal, and curriculum director. Currently, the high

school and one elementary school had administrative interns in place. Opportunities also existed for teachers to serve on the CAB and the PDC.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district had a PDC during the period under review that was assigned the task of gathering input from staff with respect to professional development needs and desires. The PDC had an advisory role, and teacher interviewees told the EQA examiners that professional development decisions had been essentially "top down," directed from central administrators to each school. In contrast, administrators told the EQA examiners that school issues were brought forth by teachers to the PDC, but that scheduling of professional development topics was done at the administrative level, with suggestions from the PDC. The PDC consisted of representatives from the administration and teachers from each school.

An examination of teacher evaluations and interviews with teachers failed to uncover much evidence that classroom performance or the programmatic needs of the district as indicated by student achievement scores influenced the scope of professional development in the district.

During the period under review, the district focused its professional development on curriculum mapping, which was aligned with its strategic plan and DIP but not closely connected to student achievement data. In addition, some piecemeal professional development continued on Project Read, balanced literacy, and guided reading at the elementary school level, which was aligned with the elementary SIPs.

All new teachers were required to take *The Skillful Teacher* during their second year of teaching in the district. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that "consistent and ongoing professional development" had been provided with the district's focus on "effective teaching strategies," mapping the curriculum, using differentiated instruction, and upgrading technology skills.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the most part, central office administrators and principals were new to their respective positions in Newburyport. Therefore, it was difficult to determine whether changes in the expectations for programs and practice had been monitored and supported by changed supervision and changed evaluation standards during the period under review. However, new district leadership in 2006-2007 was in the process of changing the expectation for instructional programs and practice, focused on creating academic benchmarks and raising the rigor of teaching and learning.

During the period under review, the district strategic plan, the DIP, and respective SIPs were heavily focused on social-emotional aspects of school climate, such as making school a welcoming place for students and parents, providing social-emotional support for students, and improving communication with parents and other stakeholders in the community. The former superintendent evaluated progress on school goals in written form and presented it to the school committee on an annual basis. Principals told the EQA team that individual professional development plans (IPDPs) were current and maintained at the school level and were aligned with the respective SIPs during the period under review.

New administrative leadership in the district recognized the need to focus on measurable academic goals in the future. This was evident in the Superintendent's Entry Plan Report, dated December 18, 2006, which the new superintendent presented to the school committee and disseminated throughout the school district. Administrators and teachers who were interviewed all expressed the need to focus on academic goals in the future and to use achievement data analysis to a greater degree to determine the needs at each level of the district. These changes were demonstrated in one completed SIP for 2007-2008, which was shared with the EQA examiners.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Contracts for principals and the assistant superintendent provided for evaluations based on their respective job descriptions and annual goals. The instruments used included some components of the Education Reform Act as well as their job descriptions and goals. Principal evaluations were tightly connected to the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership. Administrators reported that they met with the superintendent annually to prepare goals and at least once a month to discuss progress on goals. A self-evaluation and a meeting with the superintendent preceded the superintendent's final evaluation. The EQA examiners found these evaluations to be timely, informative, and instructive, and they promoted professional growth. Student performance was not a factor in these evaluations. For one administrator, the evaluations clearly cited problem areas and reasons for not renewing the administrator's contract.

School committee evaluations of the superintendent were performed annually with the exception of 2006 when the former superintendent retired. The instrument and evaluations were based on the strategic plan and successive DIPs.

Evaluations of the special education director, director of curriculum, middle school house coordinators, and high school deans were in narrative form and some included recommendations but did not include all components required under education reform.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The teacher evaluation form was aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching. A different evaluation form was used for special education professional staff working within the teachers' contract and contained some, but not all, of the categories included in the Principles of Effective Teaching.

The process required non-professional status teachers to be evaluated two times on an annual basis. At the high school, department heads completed one of the evaluations and an administrator completed the other. The process included a pre-conference, classroom observation, and post-conference. Professional status teachers were to be evaluated in alternating years. During the period under review, an alternative was added to the evaluation process. At that time, a Collaborative Evaluation Option Process was offered as an alternative to formal classroom observations in alternating years and included mutual goal setting, informal observations, meeting to discuss progress of the project with the principal, a mid-year progress report submitted by the teacher, a final analysis/reflection of the project, and a year-end summary report. In the event that teachers chose this collaborative alternative, the evaluation procedure would not be in compliance with the DOE requirement that summative evaluations, based on formal classroom observations, be completed in alternating years. When asked about this collaborative option, teacher association leadership was not sure that anyone had ever used this option, and teachers who were interviewed stated that no one ever exercised this option. The sample of evaluations reviewed by EQA examiners did not contain any of the paperwork connected to the collaborative option.

In a review of the random sample of 40 evaluations, the EQA examiners found that 12 of the evaluations were not timely, in that they were not completed on an annual basis for non-professional status teachers and completed in alternating years for teachers on professional status. Although principals told the EQA that teachers working on a waiver were evaluated as if they were non-professional status teachers, two out of five teachers on waiver in the sample had not been evaluated on an annual basis. The EQA examiners found that there was one teacher on professional status and one teacher on non-professional status who had no completed evaluations.

Almost all evaluations were informative, using some of the common language from *The Skillful Teacher* training, which had been offered about six years ago for administrators and was required in year two for new teachers. Twenty-two of the evaluations were considered by the EQA examiners to be instructive in that they offered specific recommendations focused on improving instructional practice. Five of the evaluations had statements that promoted higher professional growth and overall effectiveness. The evaluation system in the negotiated contract contained a provision for placing underperforming teachers on an improvement plan. Teachers and principals who were interviewed did not know of any time when an improvement plan had ever been used in the district with a teacher who was on professional status. All 40 evaluations reviewed contained a majority of "above average" ratings on every indicator. In many instances, although many recommendations addressed important issues with respect to improving instruction, the corresponding indicator was then rated "average" or "above average," communicating a mixed message about the need for improvement of instruction.

During the period under review, the district had two school days dedicated to mandatory professional development. The focus of most professional development was curriculum mapping with administrators and teachers using available mandatory meeting time on mapping the curriculum at all levels. With the exception of teachers who were new and in the induction/mentoring program, most other professional development opportunities were optional but available. These options included professional development on implementing differentiated instruction, using technology, and reimbursement for university courses. Teachers who were interviewed stated that there was too little time for professional development in the district. The new superintendent was working with the school committee to include 11 half-days dedicated to ongoing professional development in the school calendar for 2007-2008.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Most administrators in the district were new in 2006, and reported that most teachers had considerable freedom in what and how they taught, with little consistency or continuity between classrooms. They stated that many teachers were "doing their own thing." Student achievement, as measured by the MCAS scores, showed little or no improvement from 2003 to 2006, with scores at some grade levels having declined below state averages.

Administrators reported that they had appropriate autonomy to run their schools in accordance with personal and SIP goals, and the supervision of the buildings was site based. Only in one case, in which administrative goals were not met, did the former superintendent intervene more assertively.

Principals reported that they made frequent walk-throughs, made informal observations of classrooms on a daily basis, and discussed staff performance regularly with their assistants. In 2006-2007, the superintendent observed classes twice a month during visits to each school. High school teachers reported that department heads were especially supportive and helpful to new teachers. At the high school, department heads informally visited new teachers' classrooms twice a month and contributed to their supervision and evaluation, along with the deans and/or principal, who wrote the final evaluation. At the middle school, the new principal reported that he had conducted "closed-door" meetings with his teachers since his arrival. The house coordinator at the middle school assisted with supervision and evaluations.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Responsibility for the district's human resources, supervision, and professional development was assigned to different administrators, sometimes making it more difficult for administrators to ensure these systems were connected and supported by appropriate funds. The EQA examiners found through an examination of the district's organizational chart that the human resources and financial duties were part of the assistant superintendent's responsibilities, while professional development leadership was part of the job of the curriculum director, who also had

responsibility for the Title I grant. This split of professional development from human resources was further complicated by a wide variety of administrative duties being assigned to principals as well as the turnover in and loss of curriculum positions during the period under review.

District fiscal records showed that the district expended $14,255 in FY 2005 for professional development activities, and $25,705 for teacher substitutes. The FY 2006 budget included $38,518 for "in-service education," or professional development. Administrators told the EQA examiners that private endowment grants to the district and individual schools were generous in Newburyport and were used to send staff to professional seminars and workshops but they were not included in district financial records.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Staff handbooks for all schools included the detailed procedures from the district crisis management plan and the memorandum of understanding with police. While the district professional development plans included workshops on student behavior, they contained no mention of emergency training. The assistant superintendent and high school administrators participated in tabletop drills of emergency procedures with city police and fire officials, and administrators reported that they knew what to do in emergencies. Training included procedures in the event of a nuclear accident at the Seabrook plant and nurses were equipped with iodine pills in case of such a disaster. Administrators and parents reported that safety drills had been done with students, but that bus evacuation drills for all students were not routinely done. Newburyport did its first lockdown drill in the fall of 2006.

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

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: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district did not utilize disaggregated data to inform the provision of support for at-risk populations.
- A review by EQA examiners of the 2006 MCAS data for special education students in grades 4-8 demonstrated a need for examination of the support being given to at-risk students in ELA and math.
- The curriculum mapping process remains to be completed so that benchmarks and exit criteria could be established at each grade level.
- Both student and teacher attendance were found by the EQA examiners to be above the state average.
- The district had established a secure, welcoming learning environment for its students.
- Although the district had a dropout prevention program, it did not have a dropout recovery program.
- The procedure for informing the director of the homeless program of possible clients was not formalized.

Summary

During the period under review, the district did not utilize assessment data effectively. It relied primarily on the MCAS test results to monitor student achievement. A curriculum mapping process had been underway for several years. The ultimate goal, that the curriculum be aligned horizontally and vertically, had not been achieved at the time of the review especially since benchmarks and exit criteria had not been created and implemented. The limited number of staff members trained in using TestWiz further hampered utilization of assessment data as an effective tool to adjust instruction.

When teachers identified students needing support, the district offered few remedial services with more time for learning. A literacy program for support was in place at the elementary grades, but not all students had equal access to it. For example, not all staff had received training in using Project Read at the elementary grades, and the Brown Elementary School no longer qualified for Title I services. No comparable services for math support were available at this level.

At the middle school, district staff had serious concern about the performance of special education students on the MCAS tests, especially in math. Students who were performing at the lowest levels attended a math lab that included additional support, instead of attending classes offered to regular education students. Further, the district offered little additional support for at-risk students who were not on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan.

At the high school, programs were not proactive in providing support before a student failed a course or the grade 10 MCAS exam. Additionally, students taking Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, or Pre-Algebra in grade 9 or 10 were not taking courses that were aligned with the grade 10 MCAS test, and they needed a means to accelerate their learning.

Statements in interviews, as well as reports reviewed, indicated a lack of effective inclusion teaching at the elementary and middle school levels during the period under review. Some co-teaching took place at the high school in the lower-level courses. The removal of children from the regular classroom in grades K-12 raised concern about the need for exposure to the same grade-level curriculum, as well as the need to provide appropriate instruction in the least restrictive environment.

According to interviewees, administrators, teachers, and parents commonly viewed the district as providing a safe learning environment. It was, as one teacher described it, a good place to be. This perception was supported by favorable attendance rates for both students and teachers. According to interviewees, most teachers who departed the district did so to retire. The rate of student suspensions in the district was below the state average.

Interviewees expressed concern regarding transitions from level to level and school to school in the district. Programs were put into place that attempted to alleviate some of the stress felt by students and their parents. Those individuals charged with overseeing the transitions did not have the benefit of exit criteria or a vertically aligned curriculum. Teachers at the sending and receiving schools did schedule transition meetings so staff members could share information about students and programs. Students and parents were invited to their new schools to meet teachers and see the new facility.

The high school had a program for preventing dropouts. During an interview, interviewees described the strategy for keeping students in school, consisting of meetings held, alternatives presented, and data shared in an effort to keep a student in school. However, once a student dropped out of school, the district did not follow up and attempt to have the student return.

With respect to accelerating learning, the high school lacked a strategy for increasing subgroup participation in advanced or accelerated courses. Although parents could sign a waiver and change a student's placement, no extra support was provided to encourage students to take the challenge.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The primary standardized assessment used to monitor student achievement was the MCAS tests. The effective utilization of results from the MCAS exams was hindered by the lack of training in TestWiz and availability of the software to teachers and administrators.

The SIPs examined did not specifically address the issue of raising the MCAS test scores in any particular subject or at any particular grade level. Instead, they focused on establishing a secure, welcoming learning environment, but they were not focused on improving the climate for learning. This observation was confirmed during interviews with school council members. Many teachers, parents, and administrators expressed the opinion that the community had achieved that goal.

Interviews with administrators and teachers informed the EQA examiners that district staff spent a good deal of time examining the MCAS test results, but that the main focus had been on item analysis rather than on subgroup or program evaluation. Interviewees also stated that high school staff members had not analyzed the MCAS test results to confirm that students had been correctly placed by teacher recommendations or to determine what academic supports might be needed for individual students.

The EQA examiners asked teachers and administrators how the MCAS tests had impacted instruction. In response, interviewees stated that they had altered vocabulary in math and ELA for the sake of consistency across classrooms and grades, they taught geometry concepts earlier, and they taught test-taking strategies that could prove useful when taking the MCAS tests.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Based on information gathered during interviews and an examination of documents provided, the district did not ordinarily utilize formative and summative data during the period under review.

During this time the district engaged in a process of curriculum mapping with the goal of putting benchmarks and exit criteria into place. The DIP for FY 2005 called for benchmarks at each grade level and in each subject. At different levels in the district, schools were at various stages of completing the process. The first stage was diary mapping in which individual teachers were to record what they did in a single class. In the second stage of the process, called consensus mapping, teachers were to record what was taught across a grade level or in the same course. At the time of the review, none of the levels in the district had completed the establishment of benchmarks and exit criteria for students.

At the secondary level, the district did not use formative assessments in an effective way. According to the latest DIP, the middle school was asked to develop a report card that reflected a standards-based curriculum. The high school was to bring the High School Learning Expectations rubric project to a review-ready stage for benchmarks and established learning outcomes. The examiners found no evidence that this had been completed by June 2006. During interviews, high school teachers told the EQA team that they had been using common midterms and final exams as summative instruments to change instruction for the following year.

In Newburyport, 15 percent of the total population received special education services, compared to a state average of 16.3 percent. The district's special education students performed below the state average on the MCAS tests at several grade levels. For example, in 2006 94 percent of grade 4 special education students scored below 'Proficient' on both the ELA and math tests, 100 percent of special education students scored below 'Proficient' on the grade 6 math test, 74 percent of special education students scored below 'Proficient' on the grade 7 ELA test, and 100 percent of special education students scored below 'Proficient' on the grade 8 math test. In a report entitled *Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data*, district curriculum leaders stated that Newburyport's regular education and low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. During the same period under review, special education students declined in ELA performance. In math between 2003 and 2006, all students declined in math performance, and the greatest decline was for students with disabilities. In addition, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups widened in both math and ELA during this period of time.

According to the CPR Report of Findings, dated April 28, 2006, the special education evaluation team process did not always place students in the least restrictive environment in Newburyport. Interviewees perceived that the lack of special needs staff at the lower grades due to budgetary constraints was a contributing factor. However, a recent outside evaluation done at the elementary level attributed some of this to the resistance of staff to use an in-class model of service.

The middle school made progress toward this goal by having a special education teacher on each team to facilitate inclusion. In 2006-2007, the only exception was at grade 7 where one special education teacher had to work with two grade-level teams. During the period under review, students had been pulled from their regular math class to attend a math lab to receive special education instruction in a pull-out setting. The new middle school principal had concern that this implementation model contributed to a lack of access to the same grade-level curriculum for special education students, and eliminated it. At the high school, co-teaching in the lowest level classes had been the service delivery model for several years.

Another contributing factor to the underutilization of inclusion was the number of new teachers in the district. Interviewees stated reluctance to have new teachers instruct inclusion classes during their first year of teaching. Teachers who were new to the district but were veteran teachers were more likely to have inclusion assignments. Administrators and staff members reviewed the district curriculum accommodation plan (DCAP), and all faculty interviewed indicated an awareness of the document. The current DCAP had been in existence for several years but was subsequently revised, according to interviewees. The director of special education presented the most recent revisions to the faculty during the 2005-2006 school year.

There was very little opportunity for after-school, extended time on learning in the district. The Bresnahan Elementary School offered after-school math help with PTO funding. At the other elementary schools, extra help was left to the generosity of individual teachers. Some extra support for MCAS math preparation at the middle school was made available after school. Interviewees stated that 30 of 80 potential participants had taken part in this after-school program at the middle school. At the high school level, freshmen who had experienced difficulty in mathematics took either Integrated Math I or II or the Introduction to Algebra course as opposed

to Algebra I. The majority of students who had failed the grade 8 MCAS math test was placed as freshmen in one of these classes, which were team taught with an emphasis on MCAS-like questions. As sophomores, these students then took Introduction to Geometry and Algebra I with the goal of subsequently moving to college preparatory level coursework. Students who failed the MCAS tests as sophomores were put into an MCAS preparatory class. A very small portion of the student population, most recently four students, took a Pre-Algebra class taught by the special education department. For a period of several weeks prior to the grade 10 MCAS tests, an academic support class was available during the school day. Students could take advantage of this class if it was scheduled during his or her study period.

The special education director also supervised the English language learner (ELL) program. Approximately 11 students were in the program. A home survey was part of the district's registration process. The district had one .75 ELL teacher/facilitator who wrote support plans and tested the ELL students if the classroom teacher or literacy specialist had not yet been trained to administer the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). Each year, additional classroom teachers received MELA-O training, with the training of teachers in classrooms with ELL students present targeted first.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

Examination of the MCAS test results demonstrated that not all of the district's students were reading at the 'Proficient' level on the MCAS test by the end of grade 4. In 2006, 68 percent of the district's students scored in the 'Advanced' or 'Proficient' levels on the grade 3 MCAS reading test. In 2005, 75 percent of grade 3 students who took the test scored at the 'Proficient' or above level. In 2004, the figure was 69 percent.

In 2006, 55 percent of the students in the district scored at the 'Advanced' or 'Proficient' levels on the grade 4 ELA test. In 2005, 46 percent of grade 4 students who took the test scored at the

'Advanced' or 'Proficient' levels. In 2004, 62 percent of all students had scored in these categories.

The district used the DIBELS with kindergarten and grade 1 Title I students during the period reviewed. The DRA was used in grades 2 and 3 by literacy support teachers. Reading Recovery services were available to the most delayed grade 1 students through the Title I program. At the Kelley School, the 2005-2006 Title I report indicated that four grade 1 students participated in the program and met the benchmark on Clay's Observation Survey. In grade 2, five of the six students participating achieved the benchmark of DRA Level 28. At grade 3, five of six students achieved the benchmark of DRA Level 38. At Bresnahan Elementary, the Title I report stated that 49 kindergarten students participated in Title I services and 26 of them reached the benchmark on the DIBELS. In grade 1, 34 students were serviced and 31 made the benchmark on Clay's Observation Survey. In grade 2, nine students participated and five reached the benchmark of DRA Level 28. In grade 3, seven of the eight participating students reached the benchmark of DRA Level 38. The Brown Elementary School no longer qualified for Title I, but its students did receive literacy support.

Many teachers received training in using Project Read; additional training was scheduled for more staff. Interviewees expressed concern that since not all teachers were trained at the same time, there were inconsistencies in implementation of the program. A total of 86 students were participating in the various phases of the district's literacy support program.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The DIP for 2005 called for a revised and updated transition plan to address transition practices and annual assessments related to the effectiveness of the transition process. The DIP for FY 2007 calls for an assessment of both school-to-school and grade-to-grade transitions. The Superintendent's Entry Plan Report, dated December 18, 2006, called for the continued improvement of the transitions between schools.

According to a document entitled *Newburyport Public Schools Guidelines for Student Information Sharing at Points of Transition*, the discussion of past performance on the MCAS tests was not mentioned as an important part of the transition process from level to level. The Title I/literacy support directions for the transition between grades 4 and 5 stated that the Title I/literacy support information sheet be attached to the student services card and included in the cumulative file. The document presented no evidence that any of the aforementioned data were used at any of the district's transition points, although it noted that IEPs and 504 plans should be reviewed as a student made each transition.

The transition from elementary to middle school began in May with meetings between elementary and middle school counselors and grade 4 and 5 teachers. Team meetings were also held in May to ensure continuity of service and development of related amendments. The grade 4 report card was used to share curriculum experiences and expectations. During interviews, both teachers and administrators stated that the lack of common planning time hindered curriculum coordination and transitions. A lack of vertical planning time hindered curriculum coordination at the elementary level.

According to interviewees, at the middle school the establishment of teams that utilized looping strategies aided the academic transitions between grades 5 and 6 and again between grades 7 and 8; however, this was not evidenced in increased achievement, based on the MCAS results. A concern was expressed that there was little time allocated for cross-team planning and horizontal academic coordination, as well as for the transition of students from grades 5 and 6 to grades 7 and 8.

Interviews with teachers and administrators indicated that problems had occurred with the transition between the middle school and high school with respect to course placement. Formerly, the grade 8 teachers did the placement, based on a student's grade point average (GPA) and teacher recommendations. In 2005-2006, the Scholastic High School Placement Test was implemented to aid in the mathematics placement process. In all cases, if a parent disagreed with a high school placement, they were referred to the grade 8 guidance department. A parent could place his or her child in a desired class if he or she signed a waiver acknowledging that it was his or her decision and not the school's recommendation. In all cases the transition process

offered students the opportunity to visit their new school before they were formally enrolled there,+ and an open house opportunity was available for parents, as well as specific scheduled times during the summer when students and parents/guardians could visit the new school.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees told the EQA examiners that there were no formal benchmarks embedded in the curriculum, with the exception of what teachers expected students to know and be able to do on common midterm exams at the high school. Therefore, the process of determining what knowledge a student should have acquired at each grade level in order to move on to the next grade was informal. Also, the district had no written policy for promotion or retention in grades K-8. Despite the lack of a written policy, the examiners found that the retention rates in the district were low: 0.7 percent in 2003-2004, 0.8 percent in 2004-2005, and 0.9 percent in 2005-2006. In one interview, a teacher credited the child study team process for working with parents to prevent retentions.

Interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents revealed that the community perceived that the schools provided a safe learning environment. The student handbook at each school discussed discipline in depth and clearly stated an explanation of possible ramifications regarding both special education students and students with 504 plans. All school handbooks examined contained a copy of a memorandum of understanding with the police and district attorney regarding the district's policy against harassment.

The elementary school handbook's section on discipline began with the following statement: "A Discipline Committee comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators has created a list of school rules that are firm, fair, consistent, and necessary." At the elementary schools, the consequences for unacceptable behavior began with a verbal warning, loss of recess, and temporary removal from group activities. The list of consequences continued with a parent/teacher communication, a parent/teacher/student conference, followed by the involvement

of the principal including parental notification. The list of consequences concluded with in- or out-of-school suspension. Due process was described for both suspension and expulsion.

The middle school handbook began the section devoted to discipline issues with a statement of a code of conduct. It continued by listing several pages of offenses and their consequences. In most instances it differentiated between first-time and repeat offenses. Headings included attendance, plagiarism, cheating, cafeteria, physical contact, threats, attitude, language, and the violation of other students' civil rights. Illegal substances were listed, as were the consequences for bringing them to school. Due process was addressed as was discipline and possible ramifications for both special education students and students with 504 plans.

The high school handbook's section on discipline contained an extensive list of terms. For example, definitions were given for: office detention, suspension, short-term suspension, exclusion, multiple suspension alternatives, loss of activity privileges, and expulsion. The student's right to a preliminary hearing and due process were outlined. A list of examples for teachers, which delineated when it was appropriate to involve either the principal or the dean of student life, was given. The drug and alcohol policy was presented, as were the consequences for violating the policy. Due process was addressed as was discipline and possible ramifications for both special education students and students with 504 plans.

Across the district, suspension rates were below the state average for each year of the period under review. For example, with respect to out-of-school suspensions, in 2004 the district rate was 1.3 percent, compared to 5.9 percent for the state. In 2005, the rate was 1.6 percent for the district, compared to 6.0 percent for the state. In 2006, the district rate was 2.4 percent, compared to the state rate of 5.8 percent.

The statistics for in-school suspensions were also favorable for the district. In 2004, the district rate was 3.3 percent, while the state rate was 3.6 percent. In 2005, it was 2.3 percent, compared to 3.5 percent for the state, and in 2006 it was 2.7 percent, compared to 3.4 percent for the state.

6. <u>The district had policies, procedures, and practices to prevent or minimize dropping out, and to recover dropouts and return them to an educationally appropriate placement.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district lacked a plan to follow students once they had dropped out of Newburyport High School. Furthermore, the district did not have a dropout recovery program. The high school dean explained the district's plan for dealing with dropouts. Several steps were taken, from meeting with parents, to attempting to convince the student to stay in school, to providing alternative educational paths if the student left early. The district also provided a packet of useful information for students who left school regarding the General Educational Development (GED) certificate program, career initiatives, adult education English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and the Job Corps.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district had a program for homeless and transient students in place. At the time of the review, the curriculum director was designated supervisor of the program. She made those students referred to her office aware of the programs in Newburyport designed to assist them. Most often, she was notified of the existence of homeless students by a variety of school personnel. The most recent case cited was a family of children who were displaced due to a house fire. She told the EQA team that she desired a more formal referral process and was working on developing one. At the time of this review, fewer than 10 students were involved in the district's homeless program.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the attendance rates for students in the district exceeded the state average. For example, in 2004 the district had an average attendance rate of 95.2 percent, while the state rate was 94.2 percent. In 2005, the district attendance rate was 95.8 percent, compared to 94.4 percent across the state, and in 2006, and the district attendance rate was 95.7 percent,

compared to 93.8 percent across the state. Interviews with teachers and administrators revealed that they believed the practices regarding attendance in place at the time of the review were effective.

Each school's student/parent handbook contained a list of suggested steps that would be taken to deal with student attendance problems. At the elementary level, the student handbook stated that parents of students with excessive tardiness or absences would receive a letter from the principal. Should subsequent absences or tardiness occur, the situation could be reported to the superintendent.

The middle school handbook stated that the school would send a notice home in the event of more than five absences per quarter. This notice would inform parents/guardians that they were required to attend a conference. The handbook also stated that frequent communications made this conference unnecessary in most cases. Also outlined was the process for the completion of make-up work due to illness or family vacation.

The high school student handbook stated it was the students' responsibility to be aware of their own attendance. The handbook listed steps that could be taken to prevent attendance problems including counseling and conferences with parents and teachers, as well as a list of possible disciplinary actions. Students who submitted a signed note from their parents which was deemed acceptable by the dean of student life were allowed to make up work they had missed. A student who exceeded 10 absences, excused or unexcused, per course, or three unexcused absences per semester, would receive a grade of Administrative Failure or Medical. Students could appeal this decision to the dean of student life's office and have the opportunity to present the circumstances surrounding their absences. If their appeal succeeded, they received credit for the course.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In 2005-2006, the district's yearly attendance data showed that if professional development days were not counted, daily teacher attendance for the district was 95.1 percent. If professional development days were included, the annual rate was 93.8 percent.

The district regularly notified teachers about their attendance record as required by the teachers' contract. Teachers received commendations for good attendance. Teachers who had poor attendance records were dealt with on an individual basis by the administration.

During interviews with administrators and staff, the EQA examiners were told that there were expectations of teachers regarding planning during absences. Aside from instructions for whom to call to request a sick day, staff handbooks contained little information regarding sick day procedures.

At the high school, the teacher attendance figures were 94.7 percent with professional development days counted and 95.6 percent without professional development days counted. At the middle school, the teacher attendance rates were 94.5 percent including professional development days and 95.6 percent excluding professional development days. At the Kelley Elementary School, the figures were 93.1 percent including professional development days and 95.6 percent excluding professional development days. At the Brown Elementary School, the figures were 92.9 percent including professional development days and 94.5 percent excluding professional development days. Finally, at the Bresnahan Elementary School, the teacher attendance rates were 92.2 percent including professional development days and 94 percent excluding professional development days.

During interviews, the examiners were told that the district used a consistent pool of substitute teachers and that many of them were retired educators. The school secretary was the contact person for substitutes upon their arrival at school. She provided them with necessary information.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviewees, the district did not implement any policies, procedures, or practices to increase proportionate subgroup representation in advanced or accelerated programs in an effort to close the achievement gap.

Placement in advanced classes was most commonly gained with a prior teacher's recommendation. If parents disagreed with a placement, the student could gain admission if the parents signed a waiver stating that the placement was their decision rather than the school's decision. The EQA examiners found this policy contradictory to the safe, welcoming, and nurturing focus of the goals in the district's strategic plan, DIPs, and SIPs for the three years under review.

The Newburyport High School program of studies listed the following Advanced Placement (AP) courses: AP English, AP U.S. History I, AP U.S. History, AP Calculus, AP Statistics, Physics H/AP, AP Biology, and AP Chemistry.

The College Board offered reduced fees for students with financial difficulties. Examiners were informed that approximately nine percent of the district's students fell into that category.

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

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:

- Instructional services to students declined during the period under review due to restricted budgets and rising health and retirement costs.
- High student bussing fees, activity fees, and athletic fees created a financial burden for the parents of the district's children.
- The lack of a written agreement or memorandum of understanding concerning city charges to the district led to confusion on the part of both city and district administrators as to the basis and validity of those charges.
- The district did not have a centralized purchasing system, which negated the one business office administrator's possession of MCPPO credentials.
- A lack of equity existed among the elementary schools which were built in 1871, 1923, and 1957. All were not equally capable of supporting a modern educational program, and all were in need of replacement or renovation.
- The district's schools were clean, free of graffiti, and effectively maintained.

- The district had an up-to-date preventative maintenance plan and a five-year capital improvement plan.

Summary

Budget restrictions and cutbacks over the three years of the period under review have led to a decrease in instructional services for students. Interviewees told the EQA examiners that there had been cutbacks in music and foreign language in the district over time. For example, the district eliminated foreign language at the elementary schools. Foreign language at the middle school was cut back so that it became an exploratory program rather than a regular subject. The theater arts program was eliminated at the middle school. Across the district, 33 positions were eliminated during the period under review. The cutbacks primarily impacted the elementary and middle schools during the period under review.

At the time of the review, the elementary schools, built in 1871, 1923, and 1957, were not suitable for modern educational programs because of infrastructure and electrical deficiencies. The district's custodial and maintenance staff kept these buildings clean and maintained to the extent possible, given the age of the buildings and the limits of the district budget. The assistant superintendent had business manager responsibilities, along with human resources responsibilities and other administrative duties. She was responsible for the budget's development and presentation to the school committee and city council with the superintendent.

The budget process was open and the resulting document was clear and understandable with all necessary information complete and current. City administrators informed the examiners that the community was satisfied with the way the budget had been documented and presented to it during the last two years of the period under review. All budget sessions were held during open school committee meetings and were televised on the local cable channel.

No formal practice or procedure was in place for the use of aggregated or disaggregated student achievement data to develop a more effective budget. The school committee received a general overview of the MCAS test results which highlighted weaknesses, but not a formal analysis with aggregated and disaggregated data. The district's budget was driven instead by a cap on the budget increase, which was determined by city officials and by the amount of state aid that the district was to receive.

The district used MUNIS software, as did the city, to track expenditures from school accounts and to forecast line items when necessary. However, the two systems, while the same, were not electronically connected to one another. According to the business office staff, this required the information for purchase orders, invoices, and balance statements to be entered and printed out at the school department and then sent to city hall to be re-entered by city personnel into MUNIS on the municipal side. This process was inefficient and created additional work hours and the opportunity for data entry errors. This incongruence had been cited by the district's auditors in each of the last two years of the review period.

The district had performed evaluations of the cost effectiveness of some of its programs. These evaluations were undertaken with the goal of finding ways the district could save money. When asked, the assistant superintendent was unable to name any evaluations that were undertaken to assess the effectiveness of programs based on student performance or need.

The main office doors of most schools were found unlocked when visited. Although examiners were told that the doorways were locked and main entrances monitored, the EQA examiners found that they were open and they then had to go into the school offices and gain the attention of the office personnel in order to sign in. At one school, students opened a side entrance, and only when asked directed the EQA examiner to the main office. Based on these experiences, the EQA examiners concluded that there was a lack of school safety with respect to unauthorized entrance to the schools.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During interviews with the superintendent, in which a description of the process of weekly meetings with school principals was described, the EQA examiners found the budget development process to be an open, participatory process. According to interviewees, the school administrators received input from department heads and teaching staff. This was corroborated

in interviews with school administrators who also explained the role of parent councils in the development of the SIPs.

According to interviews with school committee members and a review of meeting minutes, budget sessions were held during open sessions, with all business meetings televised on the local cable channel. The budget document for the last two years had three prior years of historical data and had costs broken down by school, grade, and subject matter, as well as the normal line item comparisons.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

No evidence of the use of student assessment data in making decisions was found in reviews of school committee meeting minutes covering budget discussions. In interviews, school committee members told the examiners that they received information from the MCAS assessments and attempted to direct monies to correct weaknesses, but did not have the resources needed to assure effectiveness in supporting improved achievement for all student populations.

The administration did not present a formal analysis of student assessment data to the school committee during budget meetings. The report received was a general presentation that did not include aggregated and disaggregated data. The school committee had received a PowerPoint presentation of the MCAS scores when they were made available to the school district. The EQA examiners could find no connection between these data and the budget process, as written in the minutes of the school committee meetings. Furthermore, in interviews with administrators, and according to school committee members' questions and answers during their interview sessions, there was little stated to convey the meaning that there was a clear connection between student assessment results and the budget process. From interviews it was clear that

district budget development was driven by a cap on the budget increase, as determined by the mayor, city council, and the anticipated amount of state aid to the community.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, funding was not adequate to provide level services to the district's students. A review of budget documents for the period under review revealed that significant cuts had been made in the level of instructional services provided to students. Between 2003 and 2006, the district had to eliminate 33 full-time equivalent positions. The foreign language instruction at the elementary level was discontinued and it was reduced at the middle school. Classes grew larger in some elementary schools, and the middle and elementary curriculum positions were reduced. Library services were reduced at the high school and middle school levels. One elementary principal had to supervise two schools. The district eliminated theatre arts at the middle school.

The district had to institute bussing fees along with athletic and student activity fees. A family with two students needing the bus would pay up to $450 in bus fees and could be paying $100 in student activity fees. Athletic fees varied by sport with no limit for multiple sports.

Newburyport's elementary school students were educated in three schools built in 1957, 1923, and 1871. The Kelley School, built in 1871, with 125 K-4 students, had never been renovated. The Brown School, built in 1923, with 194 pre-K-4 students, was renovated in 1974. The Bresnahan School, built in 1957, with 552 K-4 students, had eight modular classrooms added in 2003. All schools were crowded with a lack of storage space and substandard electrical service. Many classrooms lacked adequate electrical outlets.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, evaluations of cost effectiveness of some of the district's programs were completed. For the most part, these evaluations were not based on the analysis of student performance or student need. For example, a cost analysis found that creating a special needs program within the district would save the district money as well as keep Newburyport students within the community. As a result, the district created two applied behavior analysis (ABA) programs to provide educational services to students with autism spectrum disorders. This saved the district out-of-district tuition and transportation costs, estimated by the district to be approximately $80,000 per student. Another example cited was an in-house heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) program which was put into place two years ago to replace contracted services, at a savings of approximately $150,000 over two years.

The district developed a new budget format during the last year of the period under review, which listed district costs by individual school and individual subject. The district presented little evidence, when asked to cite specific examples, that there was a method in place for evaluating the efficiency of programs. Interviewees confirmed that this had not been done at any time during the period under review.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district did not have an appropriate written agreement or memorandum of understanding related to 603 CMR 10.0 that detailed the manner for calculating and the amounts to be used in calculating indirect charges levied on the school district budget by the community.

The method used to determine costs was calculating actual costs for health insurance and retirement contributions. The EQA examiners received conflicting statements from district administrators and city officials with respect to the other amounts charged to the school budget. The district administration told the EQA that the city determined the amounts for administrative services provided by the city. In contrast, the city administrators stated that district officials compiled the cost. The EQA examiners found no documentation to explain how "instructional services" were determined on line 2000 of the city charge-backs to the school budget. No official of the municipality or district could explain to the examiners how they were calculated or what they included.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In a review of documents submitted to the EQA, the examiners found that the district exceeded the net school spending (NSS) requirements of the education reform formula for the period under examination, with respect to indirect charges levied upon the district budget by the city, for city services to the school district. These charges totaled $10,583,615 for FY 2004 and $11,530,207 for FY 2005. Charges for FY 2006 were not available to the EQA examiners.

The documents showed that in FY 2004 the district exceeded net school spending (NSS) by 11 percent or $2,178,092. In FY 2005 the district exceeded NSS by nine percent or $1,856,806. In FY 2006 the district exceeded NSS by 8.8 percent or $1,876,528.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the last two years of the period under review, the examiners found, through a review of school committee meeting minutes, that the school committee received complete, up-to-date, and accurate financial reports from the district administration. These reports were submitted at monthly business meetings of the school committee and were discussed during the meetings. The meetings were televised over the local cable channel and were available to the public.

In interviews, administrators told the EQA examiners that they had immediate access to their financial accounts in the district's financial software system on a "read only" basis. In reviewing local, state, and federal monthly financial and end-of-year reports, the examiners found them to be accurate and timely. Reports reviewed included special needs end-of-year grant reports, Title I end-of-year grant reports, budget end-of-year reports, and monthly reports to the school committee.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school district and the city used the same financial software, MUNIS, but the software was not linked electronically during the period under review. Interviewees from the city and district administration told the EQA that financial information was manually taken from the school district's software and sent to the treasurer and auditor's office on paper. Then the information was manually entered into the city MUNIS software program.

In interviews, district administrators told the EQA team that forecasting mechanisms were in place and had, during the period under review, predicted shortages in accounts such as utilities and substitute pay that resulted in budget freezes.

District administrators told the EQA examiners that they were able to regularly and accurately track spending and other financial transactions through the financial software system on a "read only" basis.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews, the district administrators stated that the district received all entitlement grants but had not done well with competitive grants. Interviewees stated that this was due to the demographics of the city, which had low minority and poverty rates. The administrators said that no system was in place to pursue and acquire competitive and/or private grants. However, Newburyport was the recipient of many generous donations such as DRA assessment materials and science labs for the middle school. Although the district had a protocol and specific form for the accounting of gate receipts, there was contradictory evidence presented regarding the actual process followed.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

No formal system was found or presented to the examiners to ensure that state procurement laws were followed. The assistant superintendent stated that the district did comply with all state bid

laws. Interviewees also told the EQA that all supplies had been purchased from the state bid list during the period under review.

A district administrator held MCPPO certification. Purchase orders were centralized but individual school administrators did the purchasing and receiving of materials.

The city had selected the Melanson, Heath, & Company, PC as auditors in a bid process three years ago. Audit concerns involving the lack of integration between the school district and the city's financial software was cited for the last two years and had not yet been addressed. According to both district and city administrators, this was due to a lack of district and city funds.

The EQA examiners did not find procurement, tracking, and monitoring systems nor were any described during interviews with school and city administrators. The external financial audits by Melanson, Heath, & Company, PC were current and accurate.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district gave the EQA examiners documentation of a formal, written preventative maintenance program that had been in use during the period under review. In addition, the district employed a maintenance worker with the prime responsibility for preventative maintenance throughout the calendar year.

A tour through the district's five schools confirmed the claims of administrators that the schools, although old and in need of renovation, were clean and well maintained with updated lighting. The elementary schools were crowded with little storage space and outdated electrical service.

Boilers in two of the elementary schools, Brown and Kelley, were more than 20 years beyond their optimistic life expectancy.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees gave the examiners documentation of a five-year capital plan that had been updated each year of the period under review. The district and city had separate capital improvement reserve funds to facilitate infrastructure improvements. A group of city and district administrators, along with citizens and parents, reviewed capital improvement needs during the period under review.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The doors on all school buildings were locked by custodians, with the exception of the office doors, after students reported to their classrooms. Outside office doors were visible by office personnel but no staff member had the responsibility for monitoring these and there were no door bells or cameras to monitor entrance to the building. Therefore, it was possible for an intruder to enter a school without being seen or stopped by a staff member. All visitors were directed by signage to report to the office to sign in and get a visitor's pass.

The district had a crisis management plan with school staff having predetermined duties outlined for different types of crises such as school intruders, fire, bomb threat, or evacuation needs.

A tour of the five schools confirmed that fire extinguishers were in place and recently inspected by the fire department, and all classrooms had posted exit plans. As the district was near the Seabrook nuclear power plant, the school nurse in each school nurse's office had been supplied with anti-radiation pills. Parent permission slips were also updated and on hand in the nurse's possession for each student.

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, FY1997 – 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	2,269	2.1	12,363,801	4.4	12,018,643	2,214,865	8.3	14,233,508	4.5	14,831,324	9.5	597,816	4.2
FY98	2,207	-2.7	12,387,624	0.2	12,695,436	2,380,390	7.5	15,075,826	5.9	15,646,510	5.5	570,684	3.8
FY99	2,220	0.6	13,187,405	6.5	13,327,080	2,602,390	9.3	15,929,470	5.7	16,111,497	3.0	182,027	1.1
FY00	2,159	-2.7	12,887,819	-2.3	14,108,954	2,926,240	12.4	17,035,194	6.9	17,255,346	7.1	220,152	1.3
FY01	2,180	1.0	13,476,312	4.6	14,626,514	3,307,740	13.0	17,934,254	5.3	18,437,339	6.9	503,085	2.8
FY02	2,186	0.3	14,097,905	4.6	15,215,127	3,492,275	5.6	18,707,402	4.3	19,401,197	5.2	693,795	3.7
FY03	2,163	-1.1	14,138,308	0.3	16,361,244	3,492,275	0.0	19,853,519	6.1	20,995,399	8.2	1,141,880	5.8
FY04	2,207	2.0	14,817,025	4.8	16,953,486	2,793,820	-20.0	19,747,306	-0.5	21,925,398	4.4	2,178,092	11.0
FY05	2,234	1.2	15,310,556	3.3	17,788,982	2,793,820	0.0	20,582,802	4.2	22,439,608	2.3	1,856,806	9.0
FY06	2,284	2.2	16,302,852	6.5	18,514,828	2,908,020	4.1	21,422,848	4.1	23,046,410	2.7	1,623,562	7.6

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
FY97	5,449	976	6,537	17.9	115.1	120.0	14.9
FY98	5,613	1,079	7,089	19.2	121.7	126.3	15.2
FY99	5,940	1,172	7,257	19.7	120.8	122.2	16.2
FY00	5,969	1,355	7,992	22.7	132.2	133.9	17.0
FY01	6,182	1,517	8,457	24.5	133.1	136.8	17.9
FY02	6,449	1,598	8,875	24.8	132.7	137.6	18.0
FY03	6,536	1,615	9,707	24.7	140.4	148.5	16.6
FY04	6,714	1,266	9,934	18.9	133.3	148.0	12.7
FY05	6,853	1,251	10,045	18.2	134.4	146.6	12.5
FY06	7,138	1,273	10,090	17.8	131.4	141.4	12.6

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.