North Adams Public Schools
District Review

Review conducted May 29–June 1, 2012

This document was prepared by the
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Date of Report Completion: February 2013

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Overview of District Reviews

Purpose

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

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school year include districts that were in Level 3[1] (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers' union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

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[1] In other words, as Level 3 is defined, districts with one or more schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide of schools serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a).

North Adams Public Schools

The site visit to the North Adams Public Schools was conducted from May 29–June 1, 2012. The site visit included 33 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 65 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers' association representatives. The review team conducted focus groups with 16 teachers: 11 from kindergarten through grade 3, 4 from grades 4–7, and 1 from grades 8–12. The team also conducted visits to all the district's four schools: Sullivan (kindergarten through grade 7), Greylock (kindergarten through grade 7), Brayton (pre-kindergarten through grade 7), and Drury High School (grades 8–12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2009–2011. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team's suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

District Profile[2]

North Adams is a small city with a population of 13,654 in 2011. The city's government takes the form of a "Plan A," a legislative body composed of the mayor and a city council. The mayor and nine members of the city council are elected at large by and from all the voters of the city.

The school committee has seven members with the mayor of the city serving as chairperson. This group meets monthly on the first Tuesday.

The superintendent has been in the district for a number of years and talks of eventually retiring but has not announced any date. His leadership team consists of the administrator of special education, the district administrator, the director of technology, the director of Title I Services (.2 FTE), the business manager, and school principals.

Schools

In 2009–2010 the district closed the Conte Middle School, which served students in grades 6–8. The school was closed because of issues with the facility, but at the time of the review officials in North Adams were collaborating with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and there were plans to renovate the school and reopen it within the next 2 to 3 years as a K–8 elementary school. With the closing of the Conte school grades 6 and 7 were sent to the Sullivan, Greylock, and Brayton elementary schools and grade 8 was incorporated into Drury High School, resulting in a new configuration for the district's schools. In 2010–2011 the

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

schools were: Sullivan (265 students), Greylock (247 students), Brayton (467 students), and Drury High School (578 students). Three nearby towns—Clarksburg, Florida, and Monroe— send students to Drury High for grades 9–12. This arrangement is facilitated by a tuition agreement.

According to the superintendent, the grade reconfiguration has had unexpected positive features. For example, there have been fewer transitions for students and more students have been choosing to stay in the district after grade 8 instead of attending other schools in the area. However, after the reconfiguration the accountability profile of the district's schools changed. The high school went from Level 1 in 2010 to Level 3 in 2011 after amendment of Mass. Gen. Laws c. 69, s. 1J, because it was in the lowest 20 percent of the 57 schools across the state with similar grade configurations.[3]

At the time of the review the district was optimistic about its plans for the Conte renovation. The district anticipated receiving 80 percent of the funding for the renovation of the Conte school from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, leaving $5.2 million for the local contribution of the $26 million project.[4]

Enrollment

The total enrollment for the 2011–2012 school year was 1,554 students, according to ESE data. This was a decrease of only three students from the previous year. However, the district's enrollment decreased by 13 percent between 2007 and 2011, from 1,789 to 1,557. The proportion of students with disabilities increased from 17 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2008 and 26 percent in 2011. Also, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage of students from low-income families (those students receiving free and reduced-price lunches) from 2011 to 2012. In the 2010–2011 school year 57.8 percent of the district's students were in this category while in 2011–2012 the proportion was 41.5 percent. The review team was unable to find information that would explain this decrease. In discussions the superintendent said that he did not believe that there had been a decrease and questioned the accuracy of the data.

Tables 1a and 1b show student enrollment by race/ethnicity and special populations for the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 school years, respectively.

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[3] In 2011 this group of schools included other middle\high schools, including K-12 schools, but did not include charter schools.

[4] Since the review, the MSBA voted to approve $23 million for upgrades to the Conte Middle School. The district was eligible to receive reimbursement from the MSBA for up to 80 percent of eligible expenses for the Conte renovation. See the article about the MSBA approval of the upgrades to the Conte Middle School at http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/news_events/11.14.12_Board/North_Adams.

Table 1a: North Adams Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
2010–2011

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total
Total enrollment	**1,557**	**100.0**	African-American/ Black	51	3.3
First Language not English	27	1.7	Asian	6	0.4
Limited English Proficient*	19	1.2	Hispanic/Latino	85	5.5
Special Education**	398	25.3	White	1,327	85.2
Low-income	900	57.8	Native American	6	0.4
Free Lunch	837	53.8	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	8	0.5
Reduced-price lunch	63	4.0	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	74	4.8

*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
 Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Table 1b: North Adams Public Schools
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
2011–2012

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total
Total enrollment	**1,554**	**100.0**	African-American/ Black	47	3.0
First Language not English	19	1.2	Asian	4	0.3
Limited English Proficient*	13	0.8	Hispanic/Latino	78	5.0
Special Education**	394	25.1	White	1,318	84.8
Low-income	644	41.4	Native American	4	0.3
Free Lunch	604	38.9	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	9	0.6
Reduced-price lunch	40	2.6	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	94	6.0

*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as "English language learners."
**Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
 Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data

Finance

Table 2 below shows that total expenditures increased by 5 percent in fiscal year 2011, in large part because the district drew down $867,477 in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in fiscal year 2011 after drawing down none the previous year (these funds were distributed in fiscal years 2009-2011.) ARRA funds are accounted for in grants and revolving funds though to some degree they covered a drop in Chapter 70 funding from the state, which is accounted for in the general fund. Estimated general fund expenditures for fiscal year 2012 were about $375,000 lower in fiscal year 2012 largely because of a drop in municipal expenditures after paying down on fixed assets with aid from the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Because of declining foundation enrollment, a trend for a number of years, Chapter 70 aid increased modestly in fiscal year 2012. The district's actual net school spending was 10.8 percent above required in fiscal year 2009, but declined to a projection of only 0.8 percent above required in fiscal year 2012.

Table 2:
North Adams Public Schools
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending
Fiscal Years 2010–2012

	FY10		FY11		FY12
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
Expenditures					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	15,415,212	15,450,214		15,404,905	15,463,351
by municipality	7,866,197	6,710,140		7,772,754	7,342,719
Total from local appropriations	23,281,409	22,160,354		23,177,659	22,806,070
From revolving funds and grants	---	4,826,026	---	5,230,427	---
Total expenditures	---	26,986,380	---	28,408,086	---
Chapter 70 aid to education program					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	14,175,431	---	13,347,304	13,418,958
Required local contribution	---	4,425,733	---	4,393,858	4,489,714
Required net school spending**	---	18,601,164	---	17,741,162	17,908,672
Actual net school spending	---	19,242,718	---	18,553,308	18,052,365
Over/under required ($)	---	641,554	---	792,146	143,693
Over/under required (%)	---	3.4	---	4.5	0.8

*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.

**Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.
Sources: FY10, FY11 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website.
Data retrieved on September 20, 2012.

Findings

Student Achievement

The district's proficiency rate in mathematics declined each year from 2007 to 2011, while the gap between it and the statewide proficiency rate in math grew every year, to 19 percentage points. The district's median student growth percentile in math was in the low range in every year from 2008 to 2011.

The district's proficiency rate has been in decline since 2007. As shown in Table 3 below, the highest proficiency rate was 44 percent in 2007. In the following years the rate declined to 39 percent. In contrast, during this same time period, the state's proficiency rate increased five percentage points from 53 percent in 2007 to 58 percent in 2011; accordingly, the gap between district and state proficiency rates grew to 19 percentage points.[5]

Table 3
North Adams and State Math Proficiency Rates for All Grades
2007–2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
North Adams	44	43	40	40	39
State	53	55	56	58	58
Source: District Analysis and Review Tool for 2007; School/District Profiles for 2008-2011;both on ESE website					

As shown in Table 4, the district's median student growth percentile was in the low range in each year from 2008 to 2011, and lower in 2011 (35.5) than in 2008 (38.0). The low median SGP suggests that the district may find it difficult to increase the share of students who achieve proficiency.

Table 4
North Adams Math Median Student Growth Percentiles for All Grades
2008–2011

2008	2009	2010	2011
38.0	38.0	35.0	35.5
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website			

There are grades that are of specific concern (see Table C2 in Appendix C). In 2007, the proficiency rate in mathematics of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 either matched or was higher

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[5] In ELA, although the proficiency rate increased from 52 percent in 2007 to 56 percent in 2011, it was still 13 percentage points lower than the statewide rate (69 percent).

than the state's proficiency rate but dropped below thereafter, except for 2008 when the proficiency rate for grade 5 matched the state's rate. There was a negative gap between grades 3 and 4 and their statewide peers starting in 2008 and widening to gaps of minus 14 and minus 22 points, respectively, in 2011. The performance in grade 5 was steady until 2011, when a sharp decline created a minus 22 point gap with the state rate. Furthermore, in 2011, in grade 8, the proficiency rate was only 25 percent, which was 27 percentage points below their peers statewide, and in grade 4, the proficiency rate was only 26 percent, 21 percentage points below their peers statewide.

In discussions with the superintendent, the review team was told that this decline was recognized by the district and that the district "is doing everything right on paper." In 2005, the district introduced a new standards-based math curriculum. This new curriculum was developed in an effort to improve achievement. Further, math coaches were hired and during the past year (2011-2012) they worked with the Math Curriculum and Assessment Committee, which included teachers, to revise the curriculum maps together to reflect the new Massachusetts standards. Also in 2011-2012 the district introduced professional learning communities; while the goal was to use these communities to discuss assessment data, some teachers reported that this did not always take place. Teachers have been trained in the use of data, but there was some concern about the ability of all teachers to analyze data.

The district's decline in math achievement and its efforts to improve the situation are a cause for concern because the actions that the district has taken have not proven to be effective, leaving questions as to how the district can improve the ability of students to conceptualize and perform mathematical problem solving.

In ELA, the proficiency rate in the district has increased since 2007 from 51 percent to 56 percent in 2011 (see Table C1 in Appendix C for 2009-2011). However, the statewide proficiency rate in 2011 was 69 percent. The median SGP for ELA was steady around 40.0, which is the low end of the moderate range. In grades 4 and 5, the proficiency rates have declined since 2009, and the gap between the state and the district was 19 percentage points and 15 percentage points, respectively. In grade 8, although the proficiency rate of 59 percent was higher than the rate in 2009 (51 percent), it was still 20 percentage points lower than the statewide rate.

There are large gaps between Brayton Elementary School's proficiency rates in ELA and mathematics and the proficiency rates of the other two elementary schools, Sullivan and Greylock. The ELA proficiency rates for Sullivan and Greylock were higher in 2011 than they were in 2008, while the proficiency rate for Brayton was lower.

At the Sullivan School, the ELA proficiency rate increased from 46 percent in 2008 to 57 percent in 2011. Similarly, the proficiency rate at the Greylock School was 62 percent in 2011, compared with 56 percent in 2008. In contrast, the Brayton school's proficiency rate was 42 percent in 2011, which was lower than its proficiency rate of 44 percent in 2008. It had increased to 54 percent in 2009, but it then declined in 2010 and 2011. The gap between the share of students

achieving proficiency between the Brayton and Greylock Schools was 20 percentage points, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
North Adams Elementary Schools ELA Proficiency Rates
2008–2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Brayton	44	54	50	42
Sullivan	46	51	49	57
Greylock	56	54	59	62
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website				

A similar pattern took place in mathematics. Between 2008 and 2011, there was a decline in the proficiency rate at Brayton School from 42 percent to 23 percent. The mathematics proficiency rates at the other two elementary schools fluctuated during this same period, but their proficiency rates were higher than that at Brayton. In 2011, at the Sullivan school, 45 percent of the students were proficient, and 52 percent of the students at the Greylock school were proficient. There was a gap of 29 percentage points between the proficiency rates at Brayton and at Greylock, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
North Adams Elementary Schools Math Proficiency Rates
2008–2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Brayton	42	40	30	23
Sullivan	46	40	49	45
Greylock	54	58	49	52
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website				

According to ESE data, in 2011 63.4 percent of the students (Pre-K–7) at the Brayton School participated in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. At the Greylock, 55.5 percent of the students participated in this program, and 62.7 percent of the students at Sullivan participated in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

A review of the proportions of students with disabilities shows that in 2011 students with disabilities made up 30 percent of Brayton's Pre-K–7 students. Greylock had 16 percent students with disabilities and 28 percent of the students at Sullivan were identified as students with disabilities.

In addition to the district's inclusion program, the special education department runs three programs that provide support services through partial inclusion. The Brayton School houses an Autism Program and a grade 4–7 Transition Program while the Greylock School does not have any district special education programs. The Sullivan School is home to the K–3 Transition Program.

There have been five principals at Brayton in nine years with only one retirement and the others selecting to leave of their own accord. The only extra help that the Brayton School receives other than staff necessary for the special education programs is a full-time dean, as compared with the half-time dean that Sullivan and Greylock share. District staff did agree that they were perhaps some inequities among the three elementary schools, but at this time no changes have been made at the school.

Leadership and Governance

In connection with a plan to renovate the Conte Middle School building, in 2009–2010 North Adams closed the Conte Middle School and reconfigured its school system as three K–7 elementary schools and one 8–12 high school. The new grade configuration has meant fewer transitions for students in general and more academic and extra-curricular opportunities for grade 8 students in particular. Since the grade reorganization fewer students have chosen to leave the district after grade 8.

Closing of the Middle School and Grade Reconfiguration

In 2009–2010 the district closed the Conte Middle School, which served students in grades 6–8. The school was closed because of issues with the facility, but at the time of the review officials in North Adams were collaborating with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and there were plans to renovate the school and reopen it within the next 2 to 3 years as a K–8 elementary school. With the closing of the Conte school grades 6 and 7 were added to the Sullivan, Greylock, and Brayton elementary schools and grade 8 was incorporated into Drury High School, resulting in a new configuration for the district's schools.

At the time of the review the district was optimistic about its plans to renovate the Conte Middle School. The district anticipated receiving 80 percent of the funding for the renovation of the Conte school from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, leaving $5.2 million for the local contribution of the $26 million project.[6] Also, the district was looking to close and rebuild the Greylock Elementary School once the renovation of the Conte Middle School was completed, but tabled this plan because the MSBA told the district that it was to select one project at a time.

Benefits of the Grade Reconfiguration

Before the closing of the Conte Middle School, the grade structure of the district was K–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Three years before the review, when the Conte school was closed, the district grade configuration became K–7 and 8–12. This grade reorganization was scheduled to be in place until the Conte school was renovated into an elementary school, at which time the district would

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[6] Since the review, the MSBA voted to approve $23 million for upgrades to the Conte Middle School. The district is eligible to receive reimbursement from the MSBA for up to 80 percent of eligible expenses for the Conte renovation. See the article about the MSBA approval of the upgrades to the Conte Middle School at http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/news_events/11.14.12_Board/North_Adams

have three K–8 elementary schools and one 9–12 high school. However, because leadership personnel found that the new grade configuration had many positive features, the grade structure was to remain the same in the future.

Principals and central office administrators said that the K–7 grade structure resulted in continuity for students, better test scores, fewer transitions, and fewer behavior issues. Also, they said that because the middle-school concept no longer existed in the district, older students were now paired, and worked periodically, with younger students. In addition, they mentioned that this grade arrangement kept students in grade 7 with younger students for an additional year and opened up opportunities for the acceleration of students in grade 8. For example, grade 8 students were able to take grade 10 math, do independent study, and participate in internship/work/based-experiences, music, and choral and jazz ensembles.

In addition, several administrators mentioned the benefits of grade 8 becoming part of Drury High School. They said that some of these benefits were:

- transitioning to the high school a year earlier provides students with exposure to the building, schedule, academic and discipline expectations, support services, and the expanded peer group;

- students have options for placement into pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement courses and have opportunities to take elective courses;

- students are able to participate in extra-curricular activities such as band, chorus, theater, and athletics.

Additional benefits reported by the administrators were:

- more students choose to remain at the high school at the end of grade 8 as opposed to enrolling in a private, parochial, or charter school;

- teachers have an extra year at the high school to prepare students for the grade 10 MCAS tests;

- students begin to form a relationship with the guidance counselor about college and career readiness and planning;

- teachers have assignments across grade levels and become knowledgeable about and are able to assess students' learning styles and needs, including identification for interventions.

Conclusion

In connection with a plan to renovate the Conte Middle School building, in 2009–2010 the district closed the Conte Middle School because of issues with the facility and reconfigured its schools as three K–7 elementary schools and one 8–12 high school. Since the grade reorganization, the district has found a grade structure, K–7 and 8–12, which meets the needs of its students.

School leadership personnel are hoping that city officials will consider, in the near future, moving forward with the renovation of the Greylock Elementary School as the district continues its work to provide North Adams students with safe, secure, and up-to-date facilities in which all students are able to learn.

The district does not have direction and accountability from its leaders as a result of not having action steps in the DIP, effective evaluation and supervision practices, an administrator to supervise curriculum and instruction, and uniform academic student support services across grades and schools.

District Improvement Plan

Although the superintendent has developed a District Improvement Plan with goals, the district does not have action steps, responsibilities, and a timeline accompanying the goals, and no evidence was made available to the review team that the school committee holds the superintendent accountable for making progress toward attainment of the goals in the DIP. During an interview school committee members indicated receiving the DIP and having "very strong communications with the superintendent."

Superintendent's Evaluation

When school committee members were questioned about a yearly written evaluation of the superintendent's performance, they said that they did not evaluate him. They said that they "know they're required" to do it. However, members indicated that they had informal discussions with him.

Also, the superintendent mentioned that he received no formal, annual, written evaluations from the school committee. He said that he did get oral feedback from them. In addition, a review of the superintendent's personnel file indicated that there were no written evaluations of his performance as superintendent in the file.

Principals' Evaluations

Similarly, although the principals along with their school council members have developed School Improvement Plans (SIPs), they have not been held accountable in writing for progress toward achieving the SIP goals or for their overall yearly job performance. Also, interviewees said that they did not report regularly to stakeholder groups on progress on SIP goals. The superintendent said that there have been no administrator evaluations written since the last review team's visit, referring to the visit by a team from the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in February 2006. He said that the evaluation form was "antiquated" and that the district was going into a new evaluation process which should be more "meaningful." The superintendent also said that he met with principals every two weeks and if a principal was not doing something that was expected, he (the superintendent) would inform the principal.

Principals confirmed that they had not received annual, written evaluations from the superintendent in recent years. They remarked that they "didn't know why there were no evaluations." Also, they said that they did receive informal feedback from the superintendent

when they met with him. Once again, a review of the personnel files of the principals indicated no recent written evaluations of their yearly job performance.

Teachers' Evaluations

Principals said that they evaluated teachers and teachers indicated that they received evaluations. However, the absence of accountability extends through the evaluation of teachers, as the evaluations examined by review team members were basically informative[7] with few recommendations for improvement.

Supervision of Teachers

Although school administrators said—and teachers confirmed—that principals, coaches, and team leaders visited classrooms regularly, the review team was told by teachers and administrators that a structured walkthrough process with a protocol that provides teachers with either oral or written feedback on the quality of instruction was not in place. Concomitantly, principals did not provide feedback on teachers' lesson plans as teachers were not required to develop these plans. The review team was told by interviewees that some walkthroughs were conducted at the high school in the year before the review using an ESE protocol to gather information about the school's instructional climate.

Development and Implementation of the Curriculum

The absence of accountability is also evident in the district in the area of curriculum. When interviewees were asked about curriculum and who was responsible for overseeing its development and implementation, responses varied. Some said that the facilitators were responsible because they chaired the various districtwide curriculum committees. Others said that the team leaders were responsible because they supervised the teachers in their departments. Still others said that the principals were responsible as they evaluated the teachers in their schools. And yet others expressed the opinion that the district administrator had this responsibility because this individual chaired the facilitators' meetings and was a member of the central office administrators' team. However, the review team found no evidence that the superintendent had designated anyone with the responsibility to oversee the development of K– 12 curriculum in all subject areas and to assure its implementation.

Support Services and Finance

Interviewees reported the absence of accountability in several other areas. In the area of support services, according to leadership personnel, insufficient direction and accountability have resulted in an absence of uniform academic student support services across grades and schools. In the area of school finances, school and city officials indicated that the school district did not have a comprehensive budget development process driven by student achievement or asset management programs, especially for long-range capital and energy plans.

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[7] "Informative" means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

RTTT-Supported Initiatives

With the Race to the Top (RTTT) funds that the district received in the three years before the review, the district leadership has initiated committees and activities to address areas in need of attention in recent years. According to school leaders, the RTTT funds have supported initiatives such as:

- the establishment of districtwide curriculum committees led by facilitators who are developing curriculum in subject areas K–12

- the implementation of a new evaluation process and evaluation instruments for teachers and administrators

- an expansion of assessments to measure student achievement and additional supports for students such as intervention programs and career and college planning

- a re-examination and revision of the mentoring program

Conclusion

Without direction and accountability, the district will not continue to improve. Direction from the school committee and the superintendent is essential and it is important that all staff be held accountable in order to achieve the mission and meet the goals and expectations of the school system. One interviewee summed up the situation in the district quite well with the statement that the district has strengths and weaknesses, but if no one is held accountable to address what needs to change, then the necessary change will not happen. The absence of direction and accountability prevents the district from operating effectively.

Curriculum and Instruction

Although North Adams has taken steps in curriculum design and mapping, especially in mathematics, curricular areas are in various stages of development. Implementation and monitoring of the curriculum are inconsistent. There is not clear responsibility for decision-making about the curriculum, so that districtwide leadership to make and drive the curriculum agenda is absent.

In 2005, in an effort to improve student achievement in math, North Adams instituted a standards-based mathematics curriculum. The intent was to focus math teaching on the state standards rather than use a textbook-led approach. Recent work, using Race to the Top (RTTT) funds, has replicated this process in other curricular areas. Curricula are in the process of development by committees and will be refined once the curricula are completed. The committees are composed of a majority of teachers along with subject-area leaders and administrators.

In its initial Curriculum interview, the review team was told how North Adams has made strides in curriculum design and development. In response to MCAS and other assessments, North Adams has used its RTTT grants to develop Curriculum Guide Overview Maps in many

subjects. The most finished exemplar is in mathematics and includes K–9 Maps with components such as specific objectives and assessments, explanatory notes, and vocabulary. Other areas (English language arts, social studies, science, physical education/health, and ELL) are outlined K–8 or K–12 and are in various stages of development. All partially follow the district design model and are being matched to state guidelines.

In interviews with the District Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Humanities Teams, the review team was told that implementation of the curriculum maps has varied widely across schools and individual classrooms. Principals indicated that they monitored the implementation, but expectations varied. A subsequent interview with principals confirmed that it was a challenge to make sure that all teachers were working toward common goals. At the high school, the team leaders' role in curriculum and instructional leadership makes them responsible for evaluating veteran teachers and overseeing the curriculum. However, lesson plans and posted daily objectives are not required. The review team's class observations indicated that daily objectives were not regularly displayed in classrooms. It became clear in the humanities curriculum interview that still to be completed social studies and science assessments were not implemented equally across the elementary schools. For example, social studies assessments were not administered by all teachers.

At the humanities curriculum interview, the review team was told that many teachers have not received training to use the ELA standards. It emerged in the STEM interview that there was a substantial variation in the use of collaborative time across the elementary schools.

From several interviews, it became evident that districtwide leadership to complete and implement the curriculum was absent. Various curriculum committees send their work to the RTTT Committee, which passes their recommendations to the central office administrative team; it was unclear who had the responsibility to make decisions about curriculum. There was concern not only about the absence of districtwide leadership to make and drive the curriculum agenda but also about the absence of staff training and uniform supervision.

The district's curriculum design work, originally driven by concerns about students' progress in mathematics, has coalesced with recent state initiatives around the frameworks. The mathematics curriculum is easily the most developed while others are incomplete. Implementation of the Curriculum Guide Overview Maps has varied widely, affecting their impact upon student learning. Absence of staff training and of uniform supervision has also been having an impact. Finally, the positive effects of the steps the district has taken in curriculum design and mapping have been mitigated by the absence of strong district leadership and uniform supervision and its effect on student performance.

In the review team's classroom visits, competent classroom management and use of instructional time were relatively consistent, but differentiated instruction and student engagement in challenging work and higher-order thinking activities were not often observed.

Review team members observed instruction in 45 of the district's classrooms, 33 in the 3 K–7 schools and 12 at Drury High School (grades 8–12). The observations were approximately 20

minutes in length. All review team members used ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standards-based teaching and learning to record their observations. The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objective, use of class time, content learning, instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, instructional pacing, student thinking, student groups, and use of student assessments. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form.

The observations were unannounced and provided a snapshot in time; the team realized that it could not record evidence for all 35 characteristics in any visited classroom. The expectation was that the team would get an impression of teaching and learning in observed classes across the district.

Classroom Climate

Across the district behavioral expectations and positive and respectful relationships were generally excellent and were observed in approximately 90 percent of the classes visited. There were exceptions such as a high school class where students were disruptive during a review before a test and continued to talk during the test itself. The frequency of the interruptions led the teacher to threaten to take away student exams. Less frequently observed was another characteristic, teachers setting high expectations for learning and conveying these to students; of particular concern was the high school where this characteristic was evident in only 42 percent of the classes observed.

Learning Objective

In this area, there were mixed results. A clear objective was communicated to students in 69 percent of the overall observations, but review team members noted that, very often, these objectives for the day's lessons were primarily expressed orally and were not clearly posted in the classrooms. On the other hand, in a grade 5 math class, the learning objective was not only posted prominently, but drove the entire lesson. Students were expected to apply a formula to solve problems and to demonstrate a grasp of specific math terms, i.e., area, square feet, etc. Students engaged in extensive discussion and demonstrated active learning across the majority of the inventory characteristics.

Use of Class Time

In the use of class time, teachers were prepared in 98 percent of the classes observed overall and they explained instruction and students responded to routines and transitioned smoothly in 77 percent of the observations.

Content Learning

In the area of content learning, there was significant variance among the characteristics and levels. Students participated in differentiated activities based on their academic readiness in only 27 percent of the observed classrooms; differentiated activities were evident in only 8 percent of the high school classes observed. Students engaged in a variety of resources to

enhance learning during 35 percent of the observations overall. Student engagement with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodated learning styles was noted in 44 percent of the classes visited. A positive exemplar of this type of accommodation was a grade 7 ELA class where 5 different activities were offered for students to reenact, compare and contrast, create a scene, underline passages, or draw elements of a story that they were reading. Overall, teachers communicated academic content with clarity and accuracy in 78 percent of the classes observed.

Instructional Techniques

In the area of instructional techniques, the review team found a majority of the observed classes used whole-group instruction (60 percent), but guided and independent practice as well as small-group instruction took place in about 40 percent of the classes visited. Generally, in observed classrooms, the entire group was instructed in one fashion. In one high-school math class where the instruction was teacher centered, several concerns emerged. The learning objective was not posted, merely the day's assignment. Over half the class arrived late; students did not seem to have a note or an explanation. When they were advised to pick up calculators, many students were slow to respond. The class, a review of problems, was entirely teacher directed, with little or no sense of participation. There was an absence of enthusiasm throughout the observed portion of the lesson.

Higher-Order Thinking

In the area of higher-order thinking, students were observed examining information in 67 percent of classrooms overall, and in 85 percent of the classes at the high school and at one elementary school. However, active student learning and analysis of the lesson's content goals were seldom seen in observed classes. Students were observed evaluating information on their own in 18 percent of the visited classes and reflecting on their own thinking in 27 percent of the classroom visits. Students were observed generating their own questions in 35 percent of the observations. For instance, in a grade 4 class in reading, students were asked to generate questions that they would have as the main character faced the prospect of entering a new environment, namely a foster home. Students were also held accountable for their contributions to group work in this lesson.

Instructional Pacing

In 63 percent of observed classrooms lessons were paced in a way that allowed all students to be engaged. Teachers used wait time to allow for responses from all students in only 17 percent of the observed high school classes.

Student Thinking

Students were engaged in structures that advance their thinking such as "think-pair-share" in 18 percent of the classrooms observed in the elementary schools and in 50 percent of the classes visited at the high school.

Student Groups

Students were observed to inquire, explore, or solve problems together in small groups or pairs or to be held accountable for their contributions in groups in few observed classrooms (in 31 percent of the observed classrooms at the high school and in 21 percent of the classes visited at the elementary schools).

Use of Student Assessments

Observations in the area of use of student assessments indicated that instruction in observed classrooms was not typically adjusted during lessons, nor did students receive feedback on their learning or have the opportunity to revise their work based on feedback. Instruction was adjusted based on on-the-spot or formal assessment to enhance understanding in 31 percent of the observations. Students received relevant feedback and revised their work in 35 percent of the instances. The use of feedback to adjust instruction or for students to revise work was observed in only 14 percent of the high-school classes visited. However, 60 percent of classes observed at all levels used at least one informal assessment, such as thumbs up, to check for understanding or mastery. In one excellent example, a grade 7 math class generated data for understanding mean, median, and mode by having each student toss a soft rubber object into a small bin and count the number of successes. Eighteen students participated, including several pupils with disabilities. Students were given a choice of making their tosses from various distances. Calculations were made on the percentage of tosses from each distance, and students were asked to determine the mean, median, and mode of each. Several rounds were held with the teacher suggesting adjustments.

Conclusion

The review team's observations indicated limitations in the implementation of quality instructional practices. Many observed classrooms did not provide differentiated learning opportunities for students within a classroom, active learning such as small group/pair learning or independent practice (rather than teacher-driven question and answer), or expectations for higher-order thinking. High expectations for student learning were not prevalent in observed classes. Both the state frameworks and some of the district's curriculum guidelines emphasize the importance of these elements for optimal student learning. However, they were not regularly seen in the review team's observations. Curriculum development, implementation, and supervision to make sure that these approaches imbue classrooms have not yet taken root. Coaching, supervision, and evaluation of teachers have effected limited change in instructional practice. The district's progress in curriculum development will continue to be hampered unless instructional practice is advanced.

Assessment

While the district has the capability to analyze and disseminate data, not all schools and grade levels administer formative assessments. Further, assessment data is not always used to improve instruction.

Analysis and Dissemination of Data Districtwide

In interviews staff members readily agreed that the district had an administrator who was in charge of data. This administrator not only produced analyses of MCAS but also provided a needs assessment for each elementary school based on the analyses of MCAS data. Further, the office tabulated data from all districtwide assessments that were administered by teachers at the district's schools. The district uses Test Wiz to store most data and provides analysis reports to teachers for all district assessments. Interviewees said that in the beginning of the year the administrator in charge of data sent an email to all teachers in which she outlined the reports that a teacher might wish to access during the year. According to interviewees most of the teachers in the district have received some training in the use of data but there did not seem to be a cycle of assessment and instruction. However, interviewees did agree that some teachers "get it" but that follow up in terms of monitoring the use of data was the most difficult part.

Summative and Formative Assessments

The elementary schools use a variety of summative assessments and a few formative assessments. Although interviewees said that beyond grade 4 there was an absence of useful data, it was acknowledged that the number of assessments at the elementary level was larger than the number at the high school. The high school is making slow progress with assessments and while teachers understand the concept of using data they struggle to use it to change instruction. The superintendent said that one of the biggest issues was the "non use of formative assessments." The superintendent also said that he was not sure that teachers knew what to do with all the available data.

Formative Common Math Assessments

Curriculum committees in the district have developed assessments for various grade levels and the math committee has developed formative common math assessments that are administered 4 times a year in kindergarten and 5 to 8 times per year in grades 1 to 9. Teachers administer the assessments and the district's data office provides the tabulation of results. Teachers and the principal receive results as do the math coaches. The review team was told that math coaches discussed the assessment results with teachers. These discussions take place during common collaborative time that was instituted in 2011–2012 at the elementary level and consist of 2 scheduled 40-minute planning times each week. In response to concerns about student achievement in math the review team was told that up until 2011–2012 there was no scheduled time for coaches to meet with teachers; even in 2011–2012 with common collaborative time there were other meetings scheduled and sometimes several weeks went by before math data was reviewed.

However, a district administrator said that there were huge variations in the Collaborative Teams across the district with some teams exhibiting high energy around problem solving and with others having difficulty getting teachers engaged and solution oriented.

Math Curriculum and Assessments

In discussing the concern about math achievement the superintendent said that the district was doing everything right on paper. There was a standards-based math curriculum with everything mapped out about what should be taught and teachers have been provided with professional development but there was work needed in how to provide good instruction. He went on to say that in the past the district placed a heavy emphasis on ELA and did not spend as much time on math and as a result many teachers do not know how to teach math. According to the superintendent the district has tried to remedy this but there are very few organizations that can help teachers to teach math. The district is trying to improve the situation by having a math coach in every school as well as math tutors. However, as there is no mandated time for math instruction, the time spent on instruction varies from school to school, from between 45 and 60 minutes.

Teachers at the high school are informed of MCAS results, students needing help are identified through the MCAS tests, and tutoring is provided by math tutors. However, interviewees told the team that the use of formative math data at the high school was up to the individual teacher and that teachers were not directed to do anything with math data. In essence the analysis was up to the individual teachers. According to interviewees some teachers do nothing with math data as there are no expectations for data analysis and very little time is devoted to a discussion of student achievement at department meetings. Any conversations about student achievement are informal as the high school does not provide for professional learning communities. However, at the time of the review there was a plan to put this type of collaborative planning time in place during the 2012–2013 school year.

Assessments at the Elementary Schools

The elementary schools use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as both summative and formative assessments in kindergarten through grade 6. As a summative assessment DIBELS is administered three times during the school year but formatively it is used for progress monitoring for students who need additional testing to determine progress and grouping for acquisition of skills. The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is also used in grades 6 and 7 with testing twice a year. This is used as a summative test and is used mainly for placement and growth. A Reading Comprehension Assessment is administered to students in grades 3–8 and 10 twice during the year. The assessment is developed by the Literacy Committee and is basically an MCAS practice test with the questions derived from previous MCAS tests.

Social Studies Assessments

A common Social Studies Assessment, developed by the Social Studies Curriculum Team, is administered three times during the year to all students in grades 1–11, according to the District

Assessment Matrix provided to the review team. However, the review team was told that some teachers at the elementary level did not administer the assessment as social studies has not been taught in the past. Interviewees also said that the testing was a mandate that was not being complied with and that the curriculum chairpersons did not have the "power" to get the assessments done.

Science Curriculum

At the time of the review the science curriculum was not complete but in interviews the review team was told that in the past teachers in the science department volunteered to meet after school for an hour and discuss how to reach underperforming students. That meeting, referred to as a professional learning community by a staff member, has been discontinued because of preparations for the NEASC accreditation review.

Writing Assessments

The district has identified writing as an issue in the district. Many of the district's teachers have been trained in the Collins Writing Program and it is mandated that Collins Writing be used for instruction, according to interviewees. At the high school it is up to the team leaders to monitor how Collins Writing is implemented. Interviewees said that team leaders worked closely with teachers to carry out the program. A writing prompt is administered three times during the school year but it is not mandated; each school makes decisions about its administration. Interviewees said that student work was used as a formative assessment but at the time of the review there was no formal protocol in place.

Conclusion

When discussing assessment district and school leaders said that assessment pieces were in flux because of curriculum articulation and that the district was just now developing an assessment/curriculum system. Interviewees said that they believed that the analysis of data should increase teachers' expectations. Some described the district as having a culture of low expectations.

The regular assessment of students provides valuable information that has an impact on how instruction is delivered in the classroom. Summative assessments generally provide information that relates to placement and growth but the results do not serve to focus on how instruction can be modified to meet student needs. The uneven use of formative assessments across the district has meant that many teachers have not had the ongoing information that they must have to provide the appropriate and rigorous instruction that is needed to improve student achievement. As a result student achievement at many grade levels has not improved over time. As with all district initiatives, monitoring the implementation and subsequent use of assessments is a vital part of the process.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Administrator and teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Administrators have not been evaluated in a number of years. Most teachers' evaluations did not encourage the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. A structured walkthrough process with a protocol that provided teachers with either oral or written feedback on the quality of instruction was not in place.

Evaluations of Administrators

A review of eight administrator personnel files, including the superintendent's, showed an absence of administrators' evaluations for approximately five years before the review. Some files of administrators who had been employed in the district for a number of years contained older evaluations, but other files contained no evaluations. The review team was provided a document entitled Performance Evaluation of Administrators, dated June 5, 1996, which included an evaluation philosophy, the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership[8], and a two-page evaluation rubric. Review team members noted that this rubric had been used for the older evaluations. All files of administrators reviewed by the review team included documentation that the administrator held an active and appropriate license.

According to the superintendent and a review of administrator personnel files, administrators were not evaluated annually as required by state law and school committee policy. The superintendent said that he had not performed the annual required written evaluations, but did meet with the central office administrative team twice per month. He also said that he has scheduled meetings with the principals during the weeks in which the central office administrative team does not meet and has met with principals informally at the schools. He told the review team that during these meetings he provided feedback to principals and other administrators. When asked by the review team how annual raises for administrators were determined, the superintendent indicated that he considered many things including the quality of their performance, program changes that had taken place at schools, such as the recent grade reconfiguration (see the Profile and the first Leadership and Governance finding), and additional duties that they may be responsible for, such as summer school. The superintendent noted, and the review team confirmed in an interview with the school committee, that he had not been evaluated by the school committee as required by school committee policy and his employment contract.

Administrators confirmed that the evaluations had not been conducted by the superintendent in recent years and said that they wanted feedback to improve their performance. One administrator mentioned that a good performance evaluation should inspire and instruct. Administrators confirmed that they did receive informal feedback from the superintendent, but added there was

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[8] The Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership accompanied the regulations on evaluation of teachers and administrators (at 603 CMR 35.00) that were in effect through the 2010-2011 year; on June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to substitute a new set of regulations on the evaluation of educators.

no formal link between compensation and performance. The review team also was told that no formal mentoring program was in place for administrators and some relied on colleagues for feedback or advice or to discuss ideas.

Evaluation Procedures in the Teachers' Collective Bargaining Agreement

The review team reviewed the collective bargaining agreement between the North Adams School Committee and the North Adams Teachers' Association, dated 2010–2013. It included an attachment entitled Procedures for Evaluating Teaching Staff. This document stated that teachers with professional status must be evaluated at least every other year by April 1 and teachers without professional status must be evaluated twice each year, by December 15 and by March 1. It also included a description of the documents and forms used by supervisors to evaluate teachers. The team found the document detailed and the evaluation rubric aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching.[9] The document included an evaluation philosophy and rationale, the criteria and indicators for the teacher evaluation, a description of the evaluation cycle, and a description of the purposes of observations and conferences. Information on the structure of improvement plans was also included.

Evaluations of Teachers

The review team reviewed the formal evaluations included in the personnel files of 38 teachers with professional status and without professional status. All but two of the evaluations were conducted in a timely manner as described in the teachers' bargaining agreement. All were reviewed and signed by the teacher and the evaluator. The review team was told that at the high school evaluations were conducted by team leaders (department heads) who were members of the same bargaining unit as the teachers whom they evaluated. In addition, all team leaders did not have supervisor/director certification. The review team also was told that the principal of the high school reviewed teachers' evaluations, but did not sign them.

All evaluations reviewed were informative[10] and aligned with the Principles of Effective Teaching, but most were not instructive because they did not include recommendations on how to improve instruction. Only one recommendation for a teacher to attend a professional development session was noted. All teachers were licensed or teaching on a waiver. The district has assigned human resources administrative personnel to monitor the licensure status of teachers and administrators, and the review team found the personnel files well organized and orderly.

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[9] The Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership accompanied the regulations on evaluation of teachers and administrators (at 603 CMR 35.00) that were in effect through the 2010-2011 year; on June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to substitute a new set of regulations on the evaluation of educators.

[10] "Informative" means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

Supervision of Teachers

Although school administrators said—and teachers confirmed—that principals, coaches, and team leaders visited classrooms regularly, the review team was told by teachers and administrators that a structured walkthrough process with a protocol that provides teachers with either oral or written feedback on the quality of instruction was not in place. Concomitantly, principals did not provide feedback on teachers' lesson plans as teachers were not required to develop these plans. The review team was told by interviewees that some walkthroughs were conducted at the high school in the year before the review using an ESE protocol to gather information about the school's instructional climate.

ESE's Education Evaluation Model

As a Race to the Top (RTTT) district, the district was required to implement ESE's new educator evaluation system in 2012-2013. A review of a PowerPoint presentation made by ESE at the spring meeting of the Massachusetts Association of School Personnel Administrators showed that the new system has several key design features, including four standards with indicators, four performance ratings, three categories of evidence, and a five- step evaluation process. The district developed an evaluation working group and the review team was provided documentation of the group's February 2012 presentation to the North Adams Teachers' Association leadership, including model contract language, a teacher evaluation rubric, a self-evaluation guide, and proposed evaluation guidelines. While numerous district and teachers' association interviewees noted that a lot of work has been conducted on developing the new evaluation system, at the time of the review no agreement had been reached between the district and the teachers' association. According to the association, a meeting was scheduled for the second week of June 2012 and the main focus of the meeting was to be the evaluation rubric. There was a continued concern about the evaluation being partly based on test scores, according to association representatives.

Mentoring Program

According to information provided to the review team in interviews and confirmed through a review of documents, the teacher mentoring program was in the developmental stage. The superintendent told the review team that the mentoring program was evolving and the district was in the process of modifying the program that was in place because of an unanticipated problem. He explained that the district has always had a mentoring program and assigned mentors to new teachers. To strengthen the mentoring program, this year the district decided to have mentoring services provided by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), but were informed that this program did not reflect ESE induction requirements because MCLA was not providing individual mentors, but only mentoring workshops. To ensure that the program reflected ESE requirements, the district was to provide the mentors and MCLA would continue to provide the workshops. One interviewee told the review team not all new teachers elected to participate in the mentoring program. Mentors are compensated $500.

The district recognized that the mentoring program was in flux and needed improvement. As a result, the district's personnel/climate committee developed a draft April 2012 District

Mentoring Plan, which was provided to the review team. The plan has 15 sections and includes: a mission statement; goals, roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of the mentor; roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of the mentor program coordinator; and roles and expectations of school administrations. The review team also reviewed personnel/climate committee minutes for five meetings during school year 2011–2012 to assess committee discussion on the development of a mentoring program.

Conclusion

The evaluation, supervision, and support system for administrators and teachers is not organized, structured, and instructive enough to support high-quality instruction and teacher and administrator professional growth and accountability. Not having an organized walkthrough process that includes consistent written or oral feedback, the district is without a very useful tool to help teachers modify instruction quickly to meet individual student needs and to help administrators monitor the quality of instruction and the implementation of curriculum and professional development.

The district does not have a written districtwide professional development plan developed jointly by teachers and administrators. Teachers have limited involvement in identifying professional development needs, and no individual central office administrator is accountable for professional development across the district.

According to the superintendent, administrators, principals, and teachers, the district does not have a districtwide professional development plan or a central office administrator responsible for professional development. The review team was consistently told by numerous interviewees that professional development was developed by the central office administrative team after it received recommendations for professional development from Race to the Top (RTTT) curriculum committees. Some teachers indicated that they had no involvement in the planning of professional development, although teachers were included on the curriculum committees that recommended professional development to the central office administrative team. Teachers also noted that professional development was not differentiated to meet the needs of different teachers.

District administrators told the review team that last year a professional development committee was in place to plan professional development, but it did not have a focus and had not developed a clear path for training staff. Administrators said that the central office administrative team would probably plan professional development again in the 2012–2013 school year before considering reinstating a professional development committee. Administrators also said that in 2012–2013 there would be more focus on differentiating professional development offerings.

Professional Development Calendar

As noted before, the district does not have a written professional development plan; however, the central office administrative team did develop a professional development calendar for school year 2011–2012, which was provided to and reviewed by the review team. According to the superintendent, the district has nine half days, some of which are used for professional

development. In addition to the district's half days of professional development, he indicated, and a review of the calendar confirmed, all schools had multiple pull-out half days of school-based professional development when teachers met by grade level to work on curriculum by content area. Teacher assistants or substitutes covered classes when teachers met during this time. Administrators told the review team that the focus of professional development during the 2011–2012 school year was the common core standards. Administrators told the team that an orientation on this work was held for all teachers in the fall of 2011 and teachers were pulled out by grade level and discipline to work on the common core standards. This focus was confirmed by a review of the professional development calendar. According to the calendar, the overarching theme for professional development was "the transition to the Common Core/Standards-Based Curriculum and translation of that curriculum into instructional practice."

It was noted on the calendar that professional development on this theme encompassed both half days and special half-day grade-level/disciplinary meetings. Educators who were not directly involved in the implementation of standards-based instruction engaged in professional development or meetings directly related to their roles as indicated on the calendar. Examples of professional development sessions held on district half days included an ELA lesson review and common assessments sessions held for teachers in grades 4-12 and a series of three half days on math practice standards for K-12 mathematics teachers. Sessions were scheduled on the calendar for all content areas as well as the OT/PT and counseling department staff. Other opportunities for professional development were available to teachers. For instance, a number of faculty meetings were held throughout the year and teachers had 2 scheduled 40-minute collaboration blocks each week. Teachers told the review team that sometimes other activities such as IEP meetings were held during this collaboration time. The superintendent told the review team that the district paid for courses for teachers and many teachers also participated on RTTT committees and received stipends for this after-school work. Other administrators mentioned coaching and ESE-sponsored professional development as examples of professional development available in the district. When asked how he measured his return on investment for professional development, the superintendent said that it was difficult and ultimately the test results would indicate whether it was worthwhile.

Professional Development in the School Improvement Plans

A review of the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) showed that the plans included professional development training. For example, a review of the 2012 updated Sullivan School SIP noted training in Key Three Comprehension Routine, Reciprocal Teaching, and Collins Writing. A review of the Brayton School SIP showed that staff participation on the ELA curriculum committee was one progress indicator for the school's objective to improve the number of students scoring proficient or above in composition. A review of the Greylock School SIP showed that teacher training in Key Three instruction was a key action strategy to meet the objective of improving open-response writing scores.

Conclusion

The review team believes that the complexity of monitoring the effectiveness of professional development is compounded by the absence of a professional development plan, coordinator, or other central office administrator responsible for professional development planning, implementation, support, and monitoring. The development of a professional development agenda should come from a collaborative effort between teachers and administrators. The district has a commitment to providing professional development for staff; however, the system of professional development in place in the district does not have a structure of accountability that assures the implementation and evaluation of professional development strategies and the monitoring of the integration of strategies with district and schools goals and the performance evaluation system.

Student Support

The district has provided structures and resources that create an inclusion model that minimizes separation of students with disabilities from the mainstream of school activity.

According to ESE data, in 2011 Brayton Elementary enrolled 140 students with disabilities; Sullivan had 75 students with disabilities and Greylock, 39. In 2011 Drury High School enrolled 126 students with disabilities. The district has taken several steps to enable and support the mainstreaming of its students with disabilities across levels. In 2010, the proportion of its special education population in full inclusion was 62.5 percent, exceeding the state's 57 percent. Such was also the case with partial inclusion where the district's proportion was 23.3 compared with the state's 20.8 percent. More than half the district's special education population participate in full inclusion and 85.8 percent in some form of inclusion. According to reviewed documents, special education staff, and school leaders, the district's inclusion model has been made possible mainly by ensuring that students' Individualized Educational Programs reflect what is necessary for successful inclusion and that certain resources are made available to support the model.

Special Education Programs

In addition to its inclusion program, the district has several special education programs that provide support services through partial inclusion. One is the Transition Program for students identified as having severe social and emotional challenges that require special education supports. The K–3 Transition program, which is located at Sullivan Elementary, has 13 students, a certified special education teacher, and 3 teacher assistants. The Transition Program for grades 4 to 7 is at Brayton Elementary and has 10 students, a certified special education teacher, and 3 teacher assistants. The high school's Transition Program for grades 8 to 12 has a certified special education teacher and 2 teacher assistants. The Transition Program's goal is to transition students back into the regular education setting. Staff from the Transition Program may accompany students who need additional support in order to be focused, cooperative, and successful in the regular classroom. During some of the review team's classroom visits, teacher assistants of

transition students were observed assisting assigned students with their academic work in the regular classrooms.

According to special education coordinators and administrators, assistants also accompany several students from the CASTLE program (for students with autism and those with very limited communication skills) during their time spent in the regular classrooms. At the high school level the CASTLE program has one full-time certified special education teacher with three teacher assistants. One of the three children enrolled in the program at the high-school level is being mainstreamed into a regular classroom. The other two remain in the designated CASTLE program because of what are described as severe communication needs. The student-to-teacher ratio in each of these programs is low.

According to the team's document reviews and interviews with school and program administrators and support staff, the district relies heavily on the use of both regular and special education teacher assistants (TAs) in mainstreaming students with disabilities and supporting regular education students within the classroom and throughout the school. According to ESE data, in 2011 the district had more staff than the state average in every staffing category, as indicated in lower student-to-staff ratios. The district's student-to-TA ratio was 18:1, more than twice as low as the state's 42:1. According to school and special education administrators, decisions about mainstreaming are reflected in students' Individualized Education Programs. Students' IEPs dictate how much time a student will spend in the regular education classroom. Teacher assistants have been allocated across the district's schools, grade levels, and programs to support inclusion throughout the district.

The number of students with disabilities has increased over the years from 324 in 2008 (19.1 percent) to 398 (25.3 percent) in 2011, and the ratio of students with disabilities to special education teachers increased from 12:5 (state, 15:1) in 2010 to 22.7:1 (state, 16.5:1) in 2011. Members of the review team observed students with disabilities (some with one-on-one TAs) without a special education teacher during observed reading blocks. School leaders and support staff explained that special education teachers also known as liaisons assist students with disabilities through "push in" and "pull out" services. Liaisons were also reported to consult with teachers, plan lessons, and inform regular education teachers of students' accommodations. The absence of special education teachers in the classroom demonstrates some reliance by the district on non-certified special educators (both regular education teachers and TAs) for the instruction of students with disabilities.

The district has been able to successfully provide its students with disabilities with limited separation from the mainstream of school activity. However, as described in the next finding, instruction used within many classrooms where these children are being mainstreamed does not reflect methods that help to differentiate and support these students' needs.

While the district has coordinated student support services that help address the social and emotional needs of its students, provisions of academic support for students vary and are limited across classrooms and schools.

Student Behavior and Indicators

Positive outcomes have resulted from the districts' efforts to address the social and emotional needs of many students. According to classroom observations by the review team, student behavior across schools and classrooms was conducive to learning; in 40 of the 45 observed classrooms students behaved according to the rules and expectations. Also, in 42 of the 45 visited classes, students and teachers demonstrated positive and respectful relationships.

In 2010–2011, the district's graduation rate was 73.3 percent, which was lower than the state's rate of 83.4 percent. In addition, at 6.2 percent, the annual drop-out rate was high compared with the state's rate of 2.7 percent. However, there was an increase in the promotion rate of grade 9 students from 77 percent in 2010 (and 2007) to 90 percent in 2011, one percentage point below the state's rate. The district's retention rate was 4.1 in 2010–2011. Although, at 12.3 percent, the grade 9 retention rate was higher than the district's overall retention rate, the grade 9 retention rates have shown improvement, dropping from 22.1 in 2008 to 12.3 percent in 2011.

Overall, the chronic absence rate in the district was 13 percent in 2011. The chronic absence rate at the high school was higher, but it dropped from 28.9 percent in 2009 and 2010 to 16.3 percent in 2011. At 23.3 percent, chronic absence was a particular challenge at the grade 9 level where the rate was the highest of all K-12 grades and almost four percentage points higher than the state rate of 19.6 percent. High school administrators reported not having done much with the absence data to improve student attendance. Despite these chronic absence rates, in 2011 the overall attendance rate for the district was 95.0 percent, which slightly exceeded the state's attendance rate of 94.7 percent.

Along with students with disabilities and students from low-income families, those considered at risk throughout the district, by school administrators and support staff alike, include disruptive students not necessarily enrolled in the Transition Program (see the first Student Support finding). The district has established across grade levels and schools several student support initiatives that target the social and emotional needs of students. They include the Student Support Centers, the Transition Programs mentioned in the first Student Support finding, CORE Teams, adjustment counselors, and deans of students.

Student Support Centers

Every school has a Student Support Center (SSC). The SSC is quite similar across schools and consists of a classroom where disruptive students receive supports necessary to refocus or adjust disruptive behaviors to reenter the regular classroom and follow the classroom rules. Centers are carefully monitored. The type of incident resulting in each student's visit to the center is recorded. This information is later sorted and used during CORE Team Meetings as useful data on individual students in the schools' efforts to become more informed about the students' needs. SSCs are run by teacher assistants for the most part. Schools with larger student populations are

assigned more teacher assistants. Although the district's in-school suspension rate is high at 18.5, compared with the state rate of 3.5, SSCs are not used for in-school suspensions. At the high school, while the in-school suspension rate is high, it has been decreasing, dropping from 44.7 in 2009 to 43.3 in 2010 and to 35.3 in 2011. Out-of-school suspension rates at the high school increased from 26.9 percent in 2009 to 31.5 in 2010 and then declined to 24.4 in 2011. SSCs are the district's main means of managing and correcting student behaviors.

CORE Teams

According to school leaders and support staff, there is a CORE Team at every school. CORE teams meet weekly or as needed, depending on when students are reported to need behavioral interventions. Adjustment counselors serve on the CORE teams. There is one adjustment counselor per school. Adjustment counselors meet with individual students, consult with teachers about effective approaches to managing student behaviors, and in some cases teach classes about social skills development and positive interactions. The high school also has the Drury Building Early Support Team (BEST) that focuses on students' academic needs and is composed of administrators and support staff including guidance counselors. According to high-school administrators and support staff, BEST meets on the same day and directly after the CORE team meetings. Most often, members of CORE also attend BEST meetings because some at-risk students whose support is being addressed at CORE meetings may also be facing academic challenges. The after-school site coordinator for the high school (who also serves as the lead graduate coach) and other support staff attend these meetings. Similar to BEST is the Instructional Support Teams (IST) at the elementary level. These teams are also designated to discuss students' academic needs. Sometimes schools combine the IST and CORE meetings, especially when behaviors appear to be having a negative impact on students' academic performance.

Deans of Students

The role of school deans includes being involved in the day-to-day managing of student behaviors. Brayton Elementary and Drury High School, with enrollments of 467 and 578, respectively, have populations approximately twice the size of those in the Sullivan and Greylock elementary schools, with enrollments of 265 and 247, respectively. Thus they have full-time deans, one at Brayton and two at Drury. Because of their smaller student populations, Sullivan and Greylock share a dean of students.

Programs at the High School

In addition to those programs that exist across schools, the high school has programs that address other behavior/academic-related challenges specific to high school, including retention and dropping out. For example, STEPS is a summer transition program for rising grade 9 students. It targets students failing grade 8 who "exhibit other high risk factors" and "who historically fail and then repeat grade 9, increasing their risk of not graduating." According to documentation provided by the district to the review team, of the 44 students who completed STEPS in 2008 and 2009, 42 (95 percent) of those enrolled have remained at grade level within the high-school credit system and are on track for graduation. The number of repeating grade 9 students dropped

from 30 to 11 students between 2007–2008 and 2009–2010. According to high-school administrators and support staff, students who complete the STEPS program complete high school. Taking a preventive approach, the district also provides a summer transition program for at-risk, rising grade 7 students.

The Online Learning Program is another intervention at the high school and consists of 32 quarter-length, fully online modules that assist students with credit recovery for failed core courses. The dean of curriculum and instruction at the high-school level supervises this program. The first modules were piloted in 2010 with 30 enrolled students in 35 modules; 25 (83 percent) of those who took the modules successfully passed the program. And 23 (75 percent) of these students went on to have a reduced failure rate for the first quarter of the next school year.

The district also targets 16-to-18 year old students "who struggle to manage the social and at times academic expectations of the traditional high school setting and are at risk for dropping out." Targeted students can receive supports through the Positive Options Program. Participants often come from low-income families and in spite of their challenges have the goal to attend college. The program is located at Berkshire Community College and uses PLATO online learning to allow students to complete their high school course requirements. Of the 35 students who have participated in the program since 2007, 31 (89 percent) have graduated, according to a description of student support programs provided by the district. Of the 22 students from low-income families and 6 with disabilities who participated, 18 (81 percent) and 5 (83 percent), respectively, graduated. The hope is that the newly established Graduation Coaches program, established in the 2011–2012 school year, will enhance the district's efforts to identify and support students at risk of dropping out by reengaging at-risk students in grades 8 to 10 and in grade 7 at Brayton Elementary. The program's 28 graduation coaches work with students and their families to support students in making academic progress by engaging in face-to-face meetings with the students, discussing students' challenges at school, and helping students address and overcome those challenges with the goal of progressing toward graduation.

The district has also provided various other programs and resources to support the academic needs of students within the district. However, student access to these programs and resources varies and is limited across grades and schools. According to school administrators, Greylock, with an enrollment of 247 students in 2011, has two reading specialists (Title I reading teachers) and a reading tutor. Sullivan, with an enrollment of 265 students in 2011, has 3 reading specialists and a tutor and Brayton, with an enrollment of 467 students in 2011, has 4.75 specialists and 2 tutors. Specialists and tutors, who are certified teachers, see students during the school day. Brayton is the only elementary school with a math tutor. The high school, with an enrollment of 578 students, has 3 math tutors, with 1.5 designated to support grade 8, an identified, underperforming group where only 25 percent of students scored proficient or above in 2011. While students in kindergarten through grade 3 receive Title I services and tutoring in reading, the upper grades do not, in spite of the clear need for such at the grade 4 level in particular where the proportion of proficient students was 34 percent in 2011, compared with the state rate of 53 percent. Title I teachers and reading tutors provide both push-in and pull-out services.

Teaching Assistants (TAs)

In an effort to provide additional instructional support to students, the district has provided its schools with a large number of regular teaching assistants (not including TAs hired to support students with disabilities and run the Student Support Centers). According to ESE data, Brayton, with an enrollment of 467 in 2011, has a ratio of 29 students per TA. Sullivan, with an enrollment of 265, has a ratio of 16 students per TA. And Greylock, with an enrollment of 247, has a ratio of 10 students per TA. These numbers do not include one-on-one TAs.

In class visits the review team observed classrooms that had 5 adults in classes of up to 20 students. On one occasion during a visit in an elementary school's literacy block, the team saw the regular education teacher, a Title I teacher, the regular classroom TA, a one-on-one special education TA, the classroom's full-time TA, and a TA from the transition room who sat working with one of the transition students. Larger numbers of TAs and the presence of Title I teachers were observed mainly in the lower grades and during the ELA block. One adult in the classroom was observed in several upper grades.

After-School Programs

District efforts to support students academically are not limited to activities during the school day. For example, the district has a 21st Century Program of after-school programs for kindergarten through grade 3 with a focus on literacy and for grades 4–7 with a focus on math and problem solving. At the high school students enroll in career-focused "academies" in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), social issues, or arts and media, and develop and complete projects of their own design with the guidance of a teacher/mentor. The goal of the after-school programs is to enhance the learning that takes place during the day. The program is free for targeted students who include students from low-income families and students with social and emotional challenges.

The after-school program runs Monday through Friday, 2½ hours a day, and has project-based lessons aligned to the state frameworks. Enrollment in the program for the 2011–2012 school year was 255 students from Brayton, 109 from Greylock, 151 from Sullivan, and 31 from Drury. The coordinator, who develops and supervises the after-school programs, told the review team that she uses MCAS data and data from the schools' SIPs to assist with decision-making about enrollment.

The after-school programs are funded primarily by the 21st Century grant. According to administrators and support staff, the monies from the 21st Century grant were secured at the high-school level.

Challenges

The proportion of students with disabilities has increased in North Adams from 17 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2009 and 26 percent in 2011. The district has been able to successfully mainstream most of its students with disabilities, but they are underperforming. For example, of concern is the fact that in 2011 the median SGP in math for students with disabilities within the

district was 23.0 (compared with the state's at 43.0) and 26.5 in ELA (compared with the state's at 42.0).

The district and school leaders have made an effort to channel resources toward identified struggling groups including students from low-income families, through Title I and free after-school services such as the 21st Century program. In spite of the underperformance of grade 4 in 2011 with 34 percent of students scoring proficient in ELA, compared with 53 percent of their state peers, and 26 percent scoring proficient in math, compared with 47 percent of their peers across the state, there was no clear indication that interviewees identified this particular grade as needing interventions. Instead, students identified by principals and support staff as needing support were students with disabilities, students from low-income families, disruptive students, and students in grades 8 and 9.

For both students with disabilities mainstreamed into regular classrooms and the regular education students in those classrooms, instruction within the regular classrooms remains a work in progress. In part this is due to what the superintendent and central and school administration refer to as partial curriculum maps and very little differentiated and tiered instruction in the classrooms. When asked about the academic challenges, responses included an imbalanced emphasis on students' social and emotional needs compared with their academic needs, with a sense that not addressing the needs hinders learning. Special education staff had similar concerns as to their perceived overemphasis on students' social and emotional needs, saying that the measurement of progress within the district was often determined by "how long a child can be still" compared with the academic progress made by that child. The underperformance of students with disabilities throughout the district was also attributed to inadequate district testing, little or no tiered and differentiated instruction in the classroom, and the need for students' daily accommodations to reflect accommodations made to administer MCAS tests. During classroom visits by the review team, in only 20 of the 45 classrooms (44 percent) were students observed engaging with content through a variety of instructional strategies that accommodated their learning styles and needs. In only 12 of the 45 classrooms (27 percent) were students observed participating in different or tiered activities based on academic readiness.

In spite of the existing academic supports provided to students, large groups of students continue to underperform districtwide. While the district has provided many resources and programs designed to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs, students' access to academic supports are limited across grades and schools. Also, while the district has been able to successfully provide its students with disabilities with limited separation from the mainstream of school activity, instruction used within many classrooms where these children are being mainstreamed does not reflect methods that help to differentiate and support these students' needs.

The absence of instructional strategies in the regular classroom that accommodate the learning styles and needs of regular education students and of students with disabilities who were mainstreamed is a contributing factor to students' underperformance throughout the district. As a

result, many students throughout the district continue not to receive the academic supports necessary to enhance their academic achievement.

Financial and Asset Management

The budget process and budget document do not specifically cite student achievement data.

A previous review by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in 2006 found no evidence that analysis of student performance played a significant role in budget decisions, or that district programs and initiatives were evaluated for impact on student learning in the budget process. The absence of such data analysis in the budget persists today.

The superintendent and mayor said the mayor sets the maximum for the school budget, and the superintendent and other school leaders determine how the funds will be allocated. The superintendent meets with district leadership individually to discuss needs in their areas of responsibility. The school committee and finance subcommittee review the budget by line item, as well as anticipated class sizes at the schools.

The budget document is a spreadsheet with detailed line items including individual staff salaries for each school and administrative office. The superintendent and school business official acknowledged that student achievement is not actively analyzed during the budget development process. There is apparently no process to relate the budget to district goals. School leaders said that new initiatives required giving up something else. However, the budget process was described mainly in terms of what has to be reduced to stay within the budget limit set by the mayor. Reallocating funds to new initiatives might be possible however. For example, the ESE's District Staffing Report shows that the ratio of students to paraprofessional staff in North Adams of 18:1 is significantly lower than the state ratio of 42:1. In the budgeting process, the impact of this staffing pattern could be assessed, and alternatives considered to better meet student performance goals.

The school business official also said that the budget presented to the school committee for review and approval includes only general fund items and does not include state and federal grants or local revolving funds. In fiscal year 2011 the $3.7 million in state and federal grants was an additional 24 percent in funding, a significant fraction that should be evaluated as part of the overall spending plan. The school committee is made aware of grants, though they are not included in the budget deliberations. The superintendent and mayor said the city has had a financial crisis, which led to a proposed override of Proposition 2 ½ to increase the tax levy, which failed. When the override failed, the district reduced its spending by $200,000 to help the city avoid a larger crisis, although the funds had been appropriated. In recent years the district's expenditure above required net school spending has decreased, indicating the financial pressures on the municipality and district.

Facility maintenance, energy management, and capital improvement plans to prolong the effective life of school facilities do not exist.

The school business official said the condition of school facilities is viewed as important and as having an impact on student achievement. He said a paper work order system for identifying building repair needs is used. While this meets short-term needs, staff cannot create reports such as average amount of time to complete work orders, type of work performed and other information for decision-making. Preventive maintenance apparently is largely focused on HVAC equipment which is maintained on a regular basis. However, a comprehensive preventive maintenance program is not in place even for the HVAC equipment, so there is no documentation of how well the equipment is being maintained and how it is working.

The superintendent and school business official also said the district does not have a documented energy management plan, which would allow the district to reduce energy consumption and reallocate funds.

The district has applied for Massachusetts School Building Authority funding to renovate the Conte School, and it is likely to be funded without requiring an override vote. However, the district does not have a multi-year capital plan.

Documented plans for facility maintenance, energy management and capital improvement would enable the district to prolong the effective lifetime of school facilities and reduce energy costs.

Recommendations

The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.

Leadership and Governance

The North Adams school committee and superintendent should affirm their leadership, emphasize the importance of accountability in all areas of the school system, and hold all school personnel accountable in the district.

School committee members who were interviewed by review team members said that they did not evaluate the performance of the superintendent in writing yearly. By not doing so, they did not meet their own policy on the evaluation of the superintendent and a provision on this matter which is included in the agreement between the school committee and the superintendent. The school committee should meet its obligation by evaluating the performance of the superintendent in writing every year.

According to the superintendent, administrators were not evaluated annually as required by state law—Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 38—and school committee policy. The superintendent should evaluate each principal and central office administrator in writing yearly.

Progress toward attainment of the goals in the DIP and the SIPs is not reported regularly, as it should be, to the school committee, central office administrative team, teachers and other members of the staff, parents, and the community. Similarly, although the principals along with their school councils have developed School Improvement Plans (SIPs), they have not been held accountable in writing for progress toward achieving the SIP goals. The written evaluations of each administrator should contain informative and instructive statements about progress, or absence of progress, toward the attainment of DIP and SIP goals.

These examples demonstrate the absence of a supervision and evaluation structure for administrators in the district, which district leaders should address. There is also a need to improve the supervision and evaluation system for teachers: evaluations provided to the review team did not include many instructive comments or recommendations for professional development, and there is no formal walkthrough process in place. The district is required to address these matters as it implements a new evaluation system this year consistent with the new ESE system. See first recommendation under Human Resources and Professional Development below.

Curriculum is another area where there is insufficient direction and accountability. Teachers and administrators said that districtwide curriculum committees are developing curriculum but that it is at different stages of development in the various subject areas. However, interviewees were not able to identify one individual who was ultimately responsible for overseeing a fully developed and implemented curriculum, K–12, in each discipline. The superintendent should

designate a qualified and certified central office administrator with the responsibility for the districtwide development, implementation, and monitoring of all K–12 curricula. In addition, the superintendent should provide this individual with the time, support, and resources to accomplish the task. See first recommendation under Curriculum and Instruction below.

A need for more direction and accountability was also evident in the area of professional development. Though the district has a commitment to providing professional development for staff, its capacity to provide effective professional development is set back by the absence of a professional development plan, and of a coordinator or other central office administrator responsible for professional development planning, implementation, support, and monitoring. Professional development in the district does not have a structure of accountability that assures the implementation and evaluation of professional development strategies and the monitoring of the integration of strategies with district and school goals and the performance evaluation system. See second recommendation under Human Resources and Professional Development below.

The review team recommends that the superintendent and the school committee revisit the DIP and incorporate in it action steps, responsibilities, and a timeline to address these recommendations. It is important for the school committee to hold the superintendent accountable for accomplishing the action steps. In turn, the superintendent should hold administrators accountable and ensure support and accountability for teachers in carrying out their respective roles effectively. Finally, it is suggested that an individual be assigned to monitor the progress that the district is making to address this recommendation.

Curriculum and Instruction

The review team recommends that the central office put in place an administrator to supervise curriculum and instruction. Curriculum Guide Overview Maps in all areas should be completed as swiftly as possible, and curriculum implementation should be monitored in all subjects and classrooms.

North Adams has established a sound curricular design process with its work in mathematics. Curriculum Guide Overview Maps in other areas need to be finished, complete with the elements that are included in the mathematics format. A crosswalk to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, a range of teacher resources and formative assessments, and specific details on new responsibilities should be included. Staff interviews indicated that district leadership is vital to finishing this work.

Districtwide leadership to complete and implement the curriculum will be enhanced by establishing definitive lines of responsibility for the curriculum as well as specific processes for curriculum decisions. Though there is real benefit in teachers collaborating in developing curriculum, district curricular leadership should be put in place in order to oversee and coordinate the work that committees are doing. The review team recommends that the central office curriculum roles and responsibilities be fully clarified and that one administrator be

assigned responsibility for curriculum and instruction. Establishing clear district curricular leadership and a sense of priority is essential.

It will be critical for district leadership to expect that implementation of the district's curriculum will be consistent across all North Adams schools and levels. To ensure that takes place, monitoring is essential. Within each school the principal is considered the instructional leader. As such, the principal has primary responsibility for curriculum implementation and staff evaluation. Lesson plans should be required and available for review and all designated assessments administered.

District leadership has a responsibility not only to make sure all staff has the training to support student achievement, but also to ensure that all recommendations made by the curriculum committees are considered and responded to.

Finally, student achievement and growth should be the engine that drives the North Adams curriculum. North Adams should establish a regular cycle of curriculum review and revision to constantly improve the district's program.

Providing leadership at the district level and clear lines of responsibility will help North Adams to complete its curriculum expeditiously and make sure that it is implemented consistently, improving teaching and learning.

North Adams should develop a shared definition of high-quality instruction to include the use of differentiated instructional strategies, a focus on higher-order thinking skills and active learning, and high expectations for student learning. Improving instructional practice by training, monitoring, and evaluation will be critical to advancing student achievement.

In its classroom visits, the review team noted solid classroom management and teacher preparation and consistent use of class time. Generally, teachers and students worked together in mutually respectful relationships guided by clearly understood classroom rules. Teachers were prepared, explained tasks effectively, and had established classroom routines.

At the same time, the team did not observe many instances of differentiated instruction. Observed classes were primarily taught to the class as a whole; tiered learning opportunities were not readily seen. Student engagement in challenging group work or higher-order thinking was not regularly observed. The review team suggests that the district focus on defining quality instruction to promote active classroom learning through the specific instructional techniques and strategies noted above.

In classroom visits the lowest percentage of observed instances of setting high expectations for class learning was at the high school. It is important that teachers at all levels establish high expectations for student achievement.

The use of informal classroom assessments also was not often observed in the team's classroom visits. The district should also put in place training in and follow-up on frequent checking for

understanding and adjusting instruction accordingly. The use of formative assessments to check on students' learning progress is also essential.

Improved instructional practice will be achieved through training, monitoring, and evaluation. The DIP, the SIPs, and the professional development plan are essential tools here, as are the new district evaluation and supervision system. Defining and implementing best instructional practice will lead to increased student learning and achievement.

Assessment

The district should develop a comprehensive assessment system that includes not only summative but also formative assessments. Further, in order to create a functional system that will lead to improved student achievement the district should provide collaborative time for teachers at all levels to discuss student assessment results. Finally, the district should ensure that training continues on data use and that there is ongoing monitoring of instruction based on the assessment results.

The district has a variety of summative assessments in place that generate data that is analyzed at the district level. A district administrator is responsible for tabulating data and disseminating it to the district's schools. The district has some formative assessments, such as DIBELS, which is used for progress monitoring, and the district's math assessments that are administered 6-8 times a year in grades 1–9, but the district does not have a comprehensive program of formative assessments. The use of formative assessments is vital to the educational process and is the essential ingredient in developing instruction that is meaningful and addresses the identified needs of students. Summative assessments generally show growth and are not used to plan day-to-day instruction; formative assessments are administered frequently enough to have an effect on ongoing instruction. The district should develop a complete set of formative assessments so that teachers have the data to respond immediately to students' needs by adjusting instruction.

Teachers' ability to analyze the data generated by assessments is also a concern in the district. Interviewees said that most teachers had received training on data use; the superintendent said, however, that he was not sure that teachers knew what to do with all the available data. The elementary schools had made more progress in using data than the high school. At the time of the review there were no data teams in the district. The district should provide teachers with opportunities to increase their knowledge of data analysis.

During the year before the review the district provided two scheduled 40-minute periods of common collaborative time for teachers at the elementary level to meet and discuss student progress. However, the review team was told that this time was sometimes also used for other activities such as IEP meetings. At the high school, very little time at department meetings was devoted to discussing student achievement. Any other conversations about student achievement were informal as the high school did not provide for professional learning communities. However, at the time of the review there was a plan to put this type of collaborative planning

time in place during the 2012–2013 school year. The district should make sure that all teachers have enough collaborative time to discuss assessment results.

A vital component of the assessment process is monitoring the use of assessment results to make sure they are having an impact on instruction. As it develops the formal walkthrough process recommended below (see first Human Resources and Professional Development recommendation), the district should make sure that it is designed to allow this monitoring. The district should provide guidance and time for its school leaders to perform this essential task, as it has a direct impact on student achievement.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should continue its work to implement a new evaluation system consistent with the new ESE educator evaluation system; the district should also provide for frequent supervision of teachers as they teach, with feedback after each visit, as well as training for principals on supervision.

As a Race to the Top district, North Adams is required to implement a new educator evaluator system consistent with the new state system in 2012-2013. At the time of the review draft teacher and principal evaluation rubrics had been developed by the district's evaluation committee; however, the district and the teacher association had not completed negotiations related to the new evaluation process. The review team recommends that district leaders continue to work vigorously with the teachers' association to ensure that administrator and teacher evaluation processes and procedures are developed and implemented that are consistent with ESE's new educator evaluation system.

The review team learned from interviews and its review of personnel files that administrators had not been evaluated in recent years. The superintendent said that he did provide regular feedback to principals and administrators at bi-monthly central office administrative team meetings and at bi-weekly principal meetings.

The review team found that administrators evaluated teachers in a timely manner; however, the evaluations were generally not instructive, i.e., did not provide comments aimed at improving the teacher's instruction, and did not make recommendations for professional development.

Implementing a new evaluation system in alignment with the new ESE educator evaluation system provides opportunities for school districts to develop and implement

- Professional development for evaluators;
- Training to develop meaningful professional practice and student learning goals;
- Systems to ensure
    - that evaluators have the time and support to carry out the new system with fidelity and

       ○   that district and school goals are aligned with administrator goals

- Professional development for educators that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process.

Taking advantage of these opportunities will address the areas the review team identified for improvement in the educator evaluation system in use in the district at the time of the team's visit; it will improve the quality of instruction as well as teacher and administrator professional growth and accountability.

Supervision

Though principals, coaches, and team leaders visit classrooms regularly, the review team was told by teachers and administrators that a structured walkthrough process with a protocol that provides teachers with either oral or written feedback on the quality of instruction was not in place. Also, principals did not provide feedback on teachers' lesson plans as teachers were not required to develop these plans.

Frequent, unannounced observations and observations of teachers outside the classroom are both important aspects of an effective educator supervision and evaluation system, as stated in ESE's guide entitled *Strategies and Suggestions for Observations* (available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/). Specifically, the guide outlines the following:

- ▪ ***Frequent, unannounced observations.*** *Frequent observation of classroom practice – with feedback—is essential to improving practice, but only feasible if most observations are short, unannounced and followed by brief, focused feedback. There will be times when an evaluator is in a classroom or other work site and it becomes apparent that the visit needs to be extended, but a visit of approximately 10 minutes can yield a great deal of useful information. With short, unannounced visits, many more samples of practice can be collected, and many more powerful conversations about teaching practice can be had: when the typical observation of classroom practice is 10 minutes in duration and does not have to be preceded by a pre-observation conference or followed by a period-long post-observation conference, then evaluators can reasonably be expected to conduct 2 to 5 such observations on a typical day.*

  - ○ *3 observations conducted each day on 150 of the 180 days in a school year translate to 450 observations each year, or 10 observations per year for each of 45 teachers. 7-10 brief observations followed by focused feedback should be a sufficient number to secure a representative picture of practice and promote the reflection and discussion needed to support improving practice.*

  - ○ *Feedback can be provided during a conversation or in writing. Providing feedback through conversation promotes discussion of practice; providing feedback in writing creates an opportunity for the educator to more easily reflect on the feedback on an ongoing basis. Whenever possible, an evaluator should have a conversation with the educator and follow up with brief written feedback summarizing the conversation and/or offering targeted advice for improvement.*

o *It should be noted that not all observations can or should be 5 to 15 minutes. There will be circumstances where longer observations are appropriate. Novice or struggling teachers may benefit from longer observations on occasion.*

▪ ***Observations outside of the classroom.*** *Observation of practice need not be limited to classroom observation. Conferences with individual teachers or teacher teams that focus on unit planning or ways the team is responding to interim assessment data can yield useful information and provide opportunities for feedback and growth. They can also be well-aligned with school and team goals. Most schools have goals that depend on effective collaboration among educators, so observation of educators in settings where they are developing their skills in collaboration can support school-wide goals. That said, care needs to be taken to ensure that observation does not interfere with the free exchange of ideas that is important in any healthy collegial environment. Therefore, collecting, reviewing and giving feedback on specific artifacts from department and team meetings can serve a purpose similar to observation of meetings. Similarly observing educators with parents and/or reviewing a team's analysis of representative samples of home-school communications can support collaborative work, reinforce school goals, and provide opportunities for useful feedback.*

The district should implement a formal walkthrough procedure and clarify expectations about teachers writing and principals reviewing lesson plans. Also, the central office should organize and offer to principals professional development in the most effective ways of supervising and informing instruction. Close monitoring and supervision of teacher performance is important for meaningful and effective change in the district's classrooms.

The district should assign to a central office administrator the responsibility for coordinating, implementing, and monitoring professional development. The district should develop and implement a professional development plan that is informed by student achievement data and teacher needs and includes an accountability structure.

The district does provide access to professional development programs for staff; however, the professional development program does not have an accountability structure or a coordinated system for planning, implementation, and monitoring. The review team believes that developing, coordinating, implementing, and monitoring professional development is a complex and expensive endeavor and deserves the attention of a central office administrator. Consequently, the review team recommends that the district assign an administrator this responsibility.

The team was told that before the 2011–2012 school year a professional development committee was responsible for professional development, but that the committee did not have focus. As a result, the central office administrative team took responsibility for professional development. In line with recommendations made by RTTT committees, the central office administrative team developed a professional development calendar for the 2011–2012 school year that was focused on the new Massachusetts curriculum standards and translating the curriculum into instructional practice. Administrators said that the central office administrative team would probably plan professional development again in the 2012–2013 school year before considering reinstating a

professional development committee. The review team was told that some teachers did not have any part in professional development planning (though teachers are included on curriculum committees that do have a part); it was also told that professional development was not differentiated for individual teacher needs.

The review team recommends that the district continue to build on the professional development calendar developed by RTTT committees and the central office administrative team and develop a district professional development plan aligned with RTTT, district, school, and individual teacher goals. The review team believes that the collaborative development of a meaningful professional development plan among all district staff would enhance the competency of all district staff and improve student achievement.

Student Support

While the district has provided many supports for the social and emotional needs of students, it should explore the possibility of an existing imbalance between its focus on students' social and emotional needs and allocated supports for students' academic needs.

The district has been able to successfully mainstream its students with disabilities and provide ample supports to address the social and emotional needs of its students. It has seen areas of progress including a decrease in the retention rate and an increase in the promotion rate of grade 9 students, a drop in the chronic absence rate at the high school level, and the maintenance of an overall attendance rate close to the statewide attendance rate. However, the district continues to have lower four-year graduation rates and higher dropout and suspension rates than the state. And levels of student achievement and growth in the district, especially in math and especially at certain grade levels are a concern (see first Student Achievement finding.

The district has provided many social and emotional supports to address students' needs districtwide. While it is important to set the stage for learning by ensuring that students are ready to learn, it is also important to create, develop, and monitor effective instructional practices. When asked about academic challenges in the district, both regular education and special education staff referred to a perceived overemphasis on students' social and emotional needs as opposed to their academic needs. Addressing the academic needs of students goes hand in hand with addressing their social and emotional needs. Not doing so can contribute to frustrations that can lead to undesired behaviors, as well as to underperformance.

It is the recommendation of the team that the district conduct an in-house, informal assessment of all its student support programs, particularly its academic support programs and programs made available to identified underperforming groups of students. The district should examine the need for additional supports, perhaps targeting particular grades, and the continuity of services across grade levels to ensure ongoing academic supports for all students, particularly those at risk of discontinuing their education. The district should follow through on its internal analysis, developing plans for additional academic supports as indicated. And as the district strategizes,

plans, and implements support programs for its students, it should consider how and when it will monitor the effectiveness of any new programs and services it implements.

The district should develop a comprehensive system of tiered support and provide ongoing professional development in tiered and differentiated instruction; it should also make sure that those instructing students with disabilities in inclusion settings have appropriate supervision or consultation from licensed special education teachers.

In most of the classrooms throughout the district visited by the review team, tiered instruction was not evident. The district should develop a coordinated, consistent districtwide system of tiered support; this would address the absence noted by the review team of instructional strategies in the regular education classroom that accommodate the individual needs of students with and without disabilities.

Regular education teachers and special education TAs share responsibility for instruction of students with disabilities included in regular education classrooms. It is important that the district make sure that all regular education teachers have adequate time and an effective structure to consult and plan with special education teachers. Additionally the district should ensure that TAs have effective roles in their classrooms and are all provided with sufficient support and supervision to carry out their roles effectively. The district should also provide ongoing professional development in areas such as tiered instruction and making and implementing accommodations that can equip those working in regular education classrooms with strategies to help them successfully support the learning needs of both students with disabilities and other students.

Financial and Asset Management

The district should develop an expanded budget process that begins with a review of district and school improvement plans and student performance data. Budget proposals should refer to this framework.

Linking student needs and district goals and objectives to the budget is an important part of sound budgeting. The process enables the district to reflect on the impact of resources on student achievement and to align resources to meet district goals. It enables the district to provide stakeholders with a document that communicates the district's educational program more clearly, as well as creating a climate of accountability.

The review team recommends that the district consider reallocating resources as part of the budget process, rather than seeing the process as how to meet the funding level set by the mayor. For example, how does the high ratio of paraprofessional staff to students impact student achievement and are these resources allocated in the most productive way? As another example, what are the reasons that the Brayton Elementary School has lower achievement than the other two elementary schools, and should more resources be allocated to it?

The budget document should include an overview of projected grant revenues and expenditures. Federal entitlement grants especially are fairly consistent from year to year and are a significant portion of the district's overall expenditures.

District leaders and school committee representatives should develop a short document outlining a new budget process that can be shared with all stakeholders. The recently published *Smart School Budgeting: Resources for Districts* (prepared by the Rennie Center and the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials) provides information and links to resources available online from a variety of sources.

The district should develop formal plans for facility maintenance, energy management, and capital planning.

The goal of a formal facility maintenance plan is to prolong the useful life of the facility and provide a safe and clean environment that supports teaching and learning. Facility maintenance maintains safety, protects the community's capital investment, encourages pride in the schools, and helps manage costs both small and large.

Review team members found the schools to be safe, clean, and well-maintained. However, a formal facility maintenance plan remains important. It is a master plan for daily and annual work and provides documentation of the district's needs and intentions. It communicates the district's priorities and documents required funding. A facility maintenance system needs to produce good data for planning and decision-making.

An energy management plan will reduce consumption and energy costs. Elements of the plan would include (1) creating a school committee policy to establish the importance of energy management; (2) identifying changes that can be implemented at no cost; (3) collecting energy data, benchmarking energy consumption, and establishing energy reduction goals; and (4) distributing information to the staff, school committee and community. Reducing energy consumption frees up funds for other more productive uses.

A formal capital plan provides the foundation for asset management and prepares decision-makers for planning upgrades and replacement of buildings and equipment. The capital planning process will identify work that has been deferred and clarify any changes in standards or educational program needs. A multi-year capital plan will also include the timing for replacements of building systems to assist budget planning.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the North Adams Public Schools was conducted from May 29, 2012–June 1, 2012, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. John Kulevich, Leadership and Governance

Dr. Russell Dever, Curriculum and Instruction

Ms. Dolores Fitzgerald, Assessment, Review Team Coordinator

Mr. James Hearns, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. Alenor Williams, Student Support

Mr. Roger Young, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

District Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following financial personnel: North Adams mayor and North Adams administrative officer.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the North Adams School Committee: chairperson and one school committee member.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the North Adams Teachers' Association: president, secretary, vice president, and five members of the association.

- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the North Adams Public Schools central office administration: superintendent; the administrator of special education; the district administrator; the director of technology; the director of Title I services, and the business manager.

- The review team visited the following schools in the district: Sullivan School (kindergarten through grade 7); Greylock (kindergarten through grade 7); Brayton (pre-kindergarten through grade 7); and Drury High School (grades 8–12).

- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, and the team interviewed 16 teachers: 11 teachers in kindergarten through grade 3, 4 teachers in grades 4–7, and 1 teacher in grades 8–12.

  - The review team conducted 45 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the four schools visited.

- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:

  - Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.

  - Data on the district's staffing and finances.

  - Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).

o District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.

o All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the district review of the North Adams Public Schools, conducted from May 29, 2012–June 1, 2012.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
May 29, 2012	May 30, 2012	May 31, 2012	June 1, 2012
Orientation with district leaders	Classroom Visits to Brayton and High School	Student Support Interview	
Leadership Meeting with Superintendent	Interview with Brayton Principal	Classroom Visits to High School and Brayton School	Classroom Visits to Greylock, Sullivan, and High School
Curriculum and Instruction Interview	HR & PD Interview	Curriculum & Instruction Interview	Interviews with Greylock and Sullivan Principals
Assessment Interview	Finance Interview	Assessment Interview	
Finance Interview	Assessment Interview	HR & PD Interview	Superintendent Briefing
Student Support Interview	Curriculum and Instruction Interview	Finance Interview with Town Officials	
HR & PD Interview	Student Support Interview	Teachers' Association Interview	Emerging Themes Meeting with Superintendent and District and School Leaders
Review of Documents	Leadership Interview with Principals	Leadership Interview with Finance	
Classroom Visits at Drury High School	Review of Evaluations		
Interview with High School Principal	Focus Group Meetings		
School Committee Interview	Teachers' Association Interview		
	Meeting with School Council Parents		

Appendix C: Student Performance 2009–2011

Table C1: North Adams Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)[11]
2009–2011 English Language Arts

Grade	2009		2010		2011	
	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient	*Median SGP*
All Grades—District	**53**	***43***	**54**	***43***	**56**	***45***
All Grades—State	67	*50*	68	*50*	69	*50*
Grade 3—District	**44**	***NA****	**45**	***NA****	**46**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	57	*NA**	63	*NA**	61	*NA**
Grade 4—District	**46**	***41***	**43**	***45.5***	**34**	***40.5***
Grade 4—State	53	*50*	54	*50*	53	*51*
Grade 5—District	**63**	***61***	**57**	***54***	**52**	***44***
Grade 5—State	63	*50*	63	*50*	67	*50*
Grade 6—District	**45**	***38***	**60**	***30.5***	**63**	***48***
Grade 6—State	66	*50*	69	*50*	68	*50*
Grade 7—District	**47**	***48***	**57**	***50***	**65**	***49***
Grade 7—State	70	*50*	72	*50*	73	*50*
Grade 8—District	**51**	***22***	**49**	***40***	**59**	***29.5***
Grade 8—State	78	*50*	78	*50*	79	*50*
Grade 10—District	**72**	***63***	**67**	***54***	**72**	***61.5***
Grade 10—State	81	*50*	78	*50*	84	*50*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

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

Table C2: North Adams Public Schools and State
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)
2009–2011 Mathematics

Grade	2009		2010		2011	
	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	*Median SGP*	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	*Median SGP*
All Grades—District	**40**	***38***	**40**	***35***	**39**	***35.5***
All Grades—State	55	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 3—District	**44**	***NA****	**53**	***NA****	**52**	***NA****
Grade 3—State	60	*NA**	65	*NA**	66	*NA**
Grade 4—District	**38**	***37.5***	**25**	***34.5***	**26**	***30***
Grade 4—State	48	*50*	48	*49*	47	*50*
Grade 5—District	**52**	***64***	**51**	***52***	**38**	***43***
Grade 5—State	54	*50*	55	*50*	59	*50*
Grade 6—District	**41**	***22***	**37**	***26***	**43**	***36.5***
Grade 6—State	57	*50*	59	*50*	58	*50*
Grade 7—District	**26**	***31***	**32**	***45***	**33**	***44***
Grade 7—State	49	*50*	53	*50*	51	*50*
Grade 8—District	**22**	***32***	**26**	***29***	**25**	***23***
Grade 8—State	48	*50*	51	*51*	52	*50*
Grade 10—District	**58**	***43***	**57**	***43***	**58**	***47***
Grade 10—State	75	*50*	75	*50*	77	*50*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C3: North Adams Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 English Language Arts

	North Adams Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	CPI	*Median SGP*	CPI	*Median SGP*
All Students	*768*	**81.9**	*45*	**87.2**	*50*
African-American/Black	*35*	80	*40*	77.4	*47*
Asian	*1*	---	*---*	90.2	*59*
Hispanic/Latino	*47*	67.6	*33*	74.2	*46*
White	*638*	83	*47.5*	90.9	*51*
ELL	*10*	65	*---*	59.4	*48*
FELL	*2*	---	*---*	81.7	*54*
Special Education	*193*	60.6	*26.5*	68.3	*42*
Low-Income	*468*	76.3	*38*	77.1	*46*

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table C4: North Adams Public Schools and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
for Selected Subgroups
2011 Mathematics

	North Adams Public Schools			State	
	Number of Students Included	**CPI**	*Median SGP*	**CPI**	*Median SGP*
All Students	*767*	**69.8**	*35.5*	**79.9**	*50*
African-American/Black	*35*	65.7	40	65	47
Asian	*1*	---	---	89.5	64
Hispanic/Latino	*45*	55.6	33	64.4	46
White	*638*	70.9	36	84.3	50
ELL	*10*	50	---	56.3	52
FELL	*2*	---	---	75.1	53
Special Education	*195*	52.1	23	57.7	43
Low-Income	*467*	63.7	34.5	67.3	46

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.
3. "ELL" students are English language learners.
4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Student Achievement

1. The district's proficiency rate in mathematics declined each year from 2007 to 2011, while the gap between it and the statewide proficiency rate in math grew every year, to 19 percentage points. The district's median student growth percentile in math was in the low range in every year from 2008 to 2011.

2. There are large gaps between Brayton Elementary School's proficiency rates in ELA and mathematics and the proficiency rates of the other two elementary schools, Sullivan and Greylock. The ELA proficiency rates for Sullivan and Greylock were higher in 2011 than they were in 2008, while the proficiency rate for Brayton was lower.

Leadership and Governance

3. In connection with a plan to renovate the Conte Middle School building, in 2009–2010 North Adams closed the Conte Middle School and reconfigured its school system as three K–7 elementary schools and one 8–12 high school. The new grade configuration has meant fewer transitions for students in general and more academic and extra-curricular opportunities for grade 8 students in particular. Since the grade reorganization fewer students have chosen to leave the district after grade 8.

4. The district does not have direction and accountability from its leaders as a result of not having action steps in the DIP, effective evaluation and supervision practices, an administrator to supervise curriculum and instruction, and uniform academic student support services across grades and schools.

Curriculum and Instruction

5. Although North Adams has taken steps in curriculum design and mapping, especially in mathematics, curricular areas are in various stages of development. Implementation and monitoring of the curriculum are inconsistent. There is not clear responsibility for decision-making about the curriculum, so that districtwide leadership to make and drive the curriculum agenda is absent.

6. In the review team's classroom visits, competent classroom management and use of instructional time were relatively consistent, but differentiated instruction

and student engagement in challenging work and higher-order thinking activities were not often observed.

Assessment

7. While the district has the capability to analyze and disseminate data, not all schools and grade levels administer formative assessments. Further, assessment data is not always used to improve instruction.

Human Resources and Professional Development

8. Administrator and teacher supervision and evaluation practices were largely ineffective. Administrators have not been evaluated in a number of years. Most teachers' evaluations did not encourage the improvement of instructional quality or professional growth. A structured walkthrough process with a protocol that provided teachers with either oral or written feedback on the quality of instruction was not in place.

9. The district does not have a written districtwide professional development plan developed jointly by teachers and administrators. Teachers have limited involvement in identifying professional development needs, and no individual central office administrator is accountable for professional development across the district.

Student Support

10. The district has provided structures and resources that create an inclusion model that minimizes separation of students with disabilities from the mainstream of school activity.

11. While the district has coordinated student support services that help address the social and emotional needs of its students, provisions of academic support for students vary and are limited across classrooms and schools.

Financial and Asset Management

12. The budget process and budget document do not specifically cite student achievement data.

13. Facility maintenance, energy management, and capital improvement plans to prolong the effective life of school facilities do not exist.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The North Adams school committee and superintendent should affirm their leadership, emphasize the importance of accountability in all areas of the school system, and hold all school personnel accountable in the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

2. The review team recommends that the central office put in place an administrator to supervise curriculum and instruction. Curriculum Guide Overview Maps in all areas should be completed as swiftly as possible, and curriculum implementation should be monitored in all subjects and classrooms.

3. North Adams should develop a shared definition of high-quality instruction to include the use of differentiated instructional strategies, a focus on higher-order thinking skills and active learning, and high expectations for student learning. Improving instructional practice by training, monitoring, and evaluation will be critical to advancing student achievement.

Assessment

4. The district should develop a comprehensive assessment system that includes not only summative but also formative assessments. Further, in order to create a functional system that will lead to improved student achievement the district should provide collaborative time for teachers at all levels to discuss student assessment results. Finally, the district should ensure that training continues on data use and that there is ongoing monitoring of instruction based on the assessment results.

Human Resources and Professional Development

5. The district should continue its work to implement a new evaluation system consistent with the new ESE educator evaluation system; the district should also provide for frequent supervision of teachers as they teach, with feedback after each visit, as well as training for principals on supervision.

6. The district should assign to a central office administrator the responsibility for coordinating, implementing, and monitoring professional development. The district should develop and implement a professional development plan that is informed by student achievement data and teacher needs and includes an accountability structure.

Student Support

7. While the district has provided many supports for the social and emotional needs of students, it should explore the possibility of an existing imbalance between its

focus on students' social and emotional needs and allocated supports for students' academic needs.

8. The district should develop a comprehensive system of tiered support and provide ongoing professional development in tiered and differentiated instruction; it should also make sure that those instructing students with disabilities in inclusion settings have appropriate supervision or consultation from licensed special education teachers.

Financial and Asset Management

9. The district should develop an expanded budget process that begins with a review of district and school improvement plans and student performance data. Budget proposals should refer to this framework.

10. The district should develop formal plans for facility maintenance, energy management, and capital planning.