The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District *Reexamination Report:*

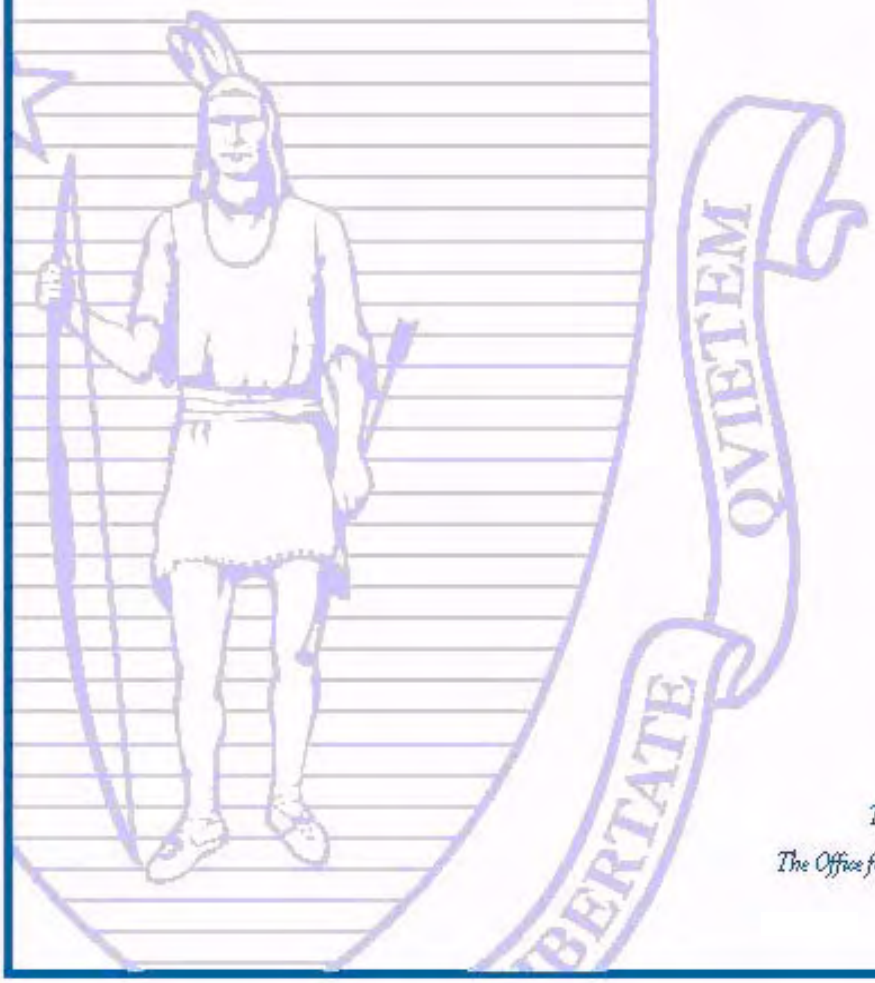
Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District

Technical Report

data driven

standards based

learner centered



The Education Management Audit Council

The Office for Educational Quality and Accountability

2005 - 2007

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Visiting Reexamination Team

Paula Hutton, Coordinating Examiner
George Gearhart, Senior Examiner
Stratos Dukakis, Examiner
Joanne Grenier, Examiner
Patricia McCusker, Examiner
Frank Sambuceti, Examiner

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings at its meeting on March 7, 2008, and to remove Pathfinder from 'Watch' status with a letter of concerns.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District, Gerald L. Paist; the school department staff of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District; and the town officials in Belchertown, Granby, Hardwick, Monson, New Braintree, Palmer, Ware, and Warren.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) conducted a reexamination of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District in November 2007. With an English language arts index of 78 proficiency index (PI) points and a math proficiency index of 72 PI points based on the 2007 MCAS test results, the district is considered a 'Moderate' performing school system based on the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement below the state average. On the MCAS tests, 41 percent of Pathfinder's students scored at or above the proficiency standard in ELA and 38 percent did so in math.

District Overview

The Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District, located in Palmer, serves eight communities in central and western Massachusetts: Belchertown, Granby, Hardwick, Monson, New Braintree, Palmer, Ware, and Warren. The district operates one school, Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, serving grades 9-12. The member towns are either small rural communities or small industrial towns. For nearly all the communities, the largest sources of employment are educational, health, and social services, and manufacturing. Seven of the member towns have a Board of Selectmen/Open Town Meeting form of municipal government with town administrators, executive secretaries, or administrative assistants to manage executive responsibilities. Palmer, however, has a Town Council form of government with a town manager.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), among Pathfinder's member towns, the median family income in 1999 ranged from a low of $39,598 in Warren (rank 342) to a high of $60,830 in Belchertown (rank 201), compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the member communities had a combined total population of 57,988, with a population of 12,276 school-age children, or 21 percent of the total. Among the towns, New Braintree had the lowest population of 927 with 233 school-age children, or 25 percent of the total, and Belchertown had the highest population of 12,968 with 2,795 school-age children, or 22 percent of the total. Of the total households in the member towns of Pathfinder, 36 percent were households with children under 18 years of age. Twenty percent of

the population age 25 years or older in the member towns held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide; among the towns, this proportion ranged from 10 percent in Warren to 32 percent in Belchertown.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2006-2007 the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District had a total enrollment of 661. The demographic composition in the district was: 92.7 percent White, 0.8 percent African-American, 0.6 percent Hispanic, 0.5 percent Native American, 0.3 percent Asian, 0.2 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 5.0 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 0.0 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 31.9 percent low-income, and 34.8 percent special education. Ninety-six percent of school-age children in Pathfinder's member towns attended public schools. The district participates in school choice, and 77 students from other school districts attended Pathfinder in 2006-2007.

The district's administrative team includes a superintendent-director, an assistant superintendent-director/principal, a vocational coordinator, a director of guidance, a director of special education, and a business manager. The director of cooperative education is generally considered a member of the team as well. The district has a 10-member school committee.

In FY 2007, Pathfinder's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was $17,528, compared to $11,789 statewide, ranking it 22 out of the 302 of 328 school districts reporting data. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2005 to FY 2007, net school spending increased from $7,024,028 to $8,374,082; Chapter 70 aid increased from $2,565,243 to $4,079,757; the required local contribution decreased from $2,961,582 to $2,722,408; and the foundation enrollment increased from 503 to 541. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending increased from 37 to 49 percent over this period. From FY 2005 to FY 2006, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending decreased from 65 to 63 percent.

Context

School districts examined by the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) are placed in 'Watch' status if the EQA examination reveals several areas of poor or unsatisfactory performance. All 'Watch' districts are monitored by the EQA and its

staff. For the next one to two years, an experienced and trained senior EQA examiner monitors a district in 'Watch' status. After a reexamination by the EQA, either the district is removed from 'Watch' status or an EQA report is forwarded to the Board of Education with a recommendation to declare the district underperforming. Underperforming districts receive additional support and services from the state to improve student achievement.

The EQA previously examined the Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School in February 2005 and issued a report of that examination in September 2005. As a result of the findings and performance cited in the report, the district submitted a remediation plan. At its December 2005 meeting, the EMAC expressed its concern regarding lack of progress on the deficiencies cited in the EQA report and its desire to see the district make progress on the remediation plan, and deferred action to its next meeting. At its February 2006 meeting, although it did not officially place the district in 'Watch' status, the EMAC voted to monitor the district's progress and send it a management letter stating that, although it respected the 2004-2005 improvement in MCAS performance, it had significant concerns regarding management that called into question the district's ability to sustain the growth. The district was monitored by an EQA examiner, Fred Savoie, and reexamined by a team of EQA examiners in November 2007. This reexamination report is the conclusion of this process, the purpose of which is to assess the progress the district has made since the prior examination.

Since the last EQA visit, the district has done a great deal of work under the leadership of four new administrators. For example, the district wrote a response to the last EQA examination in the form of an action plan, and it revised its School Improvement Plan (SIP) so that it had timelines, persons responsible for the initiatives, and the beginning of measurable goals. The district also created its first professional development plan and used its two days of in-service time in 2006 to focus the staff on analyzing MCAS data, and to encourage thought about how to develop systems of gathering data to inform practice as well as to demonstrate academic progress. The district purchased a Pearson Prosper assessment system and the READ 180 program, so that it could teach, assess, gather, and track formative assessment data in an organized way in reading as well as other core subjects. Pathfinder also required all students to create and keep up to date career portfolios so that each student could demonstrate what he/she was learning in each vocational area.

Overall, teachers and administrators had not yet had enough training in how to use assessment data to make instructional decisions in the classroom, and so this expertise was just developing. District employees also were beginning realize, with the purchase of the Pearson assessment system, how making data-driven decisions on a daily basis could improve instruction. The district was not yet looking at disaggregated data programmatically in order to improve programs and services for subgroup populations.

Since 2005, the district improved its administration of the alternative MCAS assessment for Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) students. Through an analysis of these MCAS results, the MVIP coordinator began to dispel long and widely held perceptions that providing the MVIP for 58 students in the community lowered the average Pathfinder MCAS score at grade 10. She demonstrated that in 2007, 14 of 15 MVIP students earned 100 points on their alternative MCAS portfolios, which translates to proficiency. The fifteenth score was currently under appeal with the Department of Education on the basis that a district clerical error prevented the student from attaining 100 points.

The greatest misunderstanding in the district, held by administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders, was that as long as all grade 10 students reached the 'Needs Improvement' category, they were "passing" the MCAS tests. In fact, by the time of the 2007 EQA visit, the district was just beginning to respond to a new understanding of "passing," realizing that in order to continue to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), the district had to increase the academic rigor and the number of students reaching the 'Proficient' level in ELA and math.

In the 2007 interviews with teachers and community members, the EQA team found that although the administrators understood that the academic rigor needed to improve and they had changed their way of thinking, not all of the teachers and community members shared that belief. Teachers, parents, and member communities persisted in the belief that Pathfinder was "holding its own" on the MCAS exams, in part by reading Pathfinder accomplishments submitted to the town report. As a result, the school committee was somewhat complacent about the need for change at Pathfinder.

In summary, the district was not yet using a systems approach to raise student achievement, which would require the district to look at the analysis of data and the current organization of the

district in light of long held perceptions. However, the district leadership had taken steps to get a better handle on student achievement data and analysis of the data to help them improve achievement.

The district was not yet using disaggregated MCAS data to help make broad decisions in support of changes to improve instruction. Therefore, this information was not yet instrumental in creating the SIP goals; many goals in the district's newly created action plan were not included in the SIP, nor were these goals tightly linked to the professional development plan. Systematically, the district had done very little program analysis to facilitate decisions about the best use of the professional and support staffs and other resources.

Organizational structures in the district served to maintain the status quo, although the district added fragmented improvements to instruction to address the need to improve student achievement. For example, starting in 2007-2008, in response to MCAS scores, teachers co-taught math in one special education class and students added one trimester of reading to their programs in grade 9. For the first time in 2007-2008, all math students taking the same course, such as Algebra 1 or Geometry, would use the same books. At the same time, the district lacked an efficient system to monitor and evaluate the quality of all the instruction, and lacked mandatory professional development focused on improving the overall quality of academic instruction.

For the most part, the assistant superintendent/director and other administrative team members relied upon the use of a "grass-roots" effort, building the capacity of the teachers from the bottom up. For example, some teachers had started to implement John Collins writing or reading across the curriculum, and administrators were hopeful that the school would either reach a tipping point by engaging more teachers or that the district would see the need for developing "a systems approach" for improvement. The school committee has the resources to finance the development of such an approach with the intent of raising student achievement.

Recommendations

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

- District leadership and central office need to focus on the evaluation of the staff, procure contracts for all administrators, and hold administrators accountable for the improvement of instruction.
- Develop and implement an instructional improvement plan for all academic areas.
- Conduct program analysis with appropriate data to inform decisions about the best use of staff and resources.

The EQA Reexamination Process

The Massachusetts Legislature created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in July 2000 to provide independent and objective programmatic and financial audits of the 350-plus school districts that serve the cities and towns of the commonwealth. The agency is the accountability component of the Education Reform Act of 1993, and was envisioned in that legislation. The EQA works under the direction of a five-person citizen council, appointed by the governor, known as the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC).

From November 5-8, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent reexamination of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School for the period 2005-2007, with a primary focus on 2007. This reexamination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the on-site visit.

For the period under reexamination, 2005-2007, Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District is considered to be a 'Moderate' performing school district, marked by student achievement that was 'Moderate' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Moderate' in math on the 2007 MCAS tests. Over the reexamination period, student performance improved by two PI

points in ELA and declined by two PI points in math, which narrowed the district's proficiency gap by eight percent in ELA and widened it by nine percent in math.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, nearly two-fifths of all students in Pathfinder attained proficiency on the 2007 MCAS tests, 32 percentage points less than the grade 10 statewide average and 17 percentage points less than the statewide vocational school district average. Slightly more than two-fifths of Pathfinder students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), and less than two-fifths of Pathfinder students attained proficiency in math. Ninety-four percent of the Class of 2007 earned a Competency Determination.

- Pathfinder's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2007 was 75 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points lower than that of grade 10 students statewide and seven PI points lower than that of vocational districts statewide. Pathfinder's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100 percent, in 2007 was 25 PI points.
- In 2007, Pathfinder's proficiency gap in ELA was 22 PI points, 10 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in grade 10 ELA and five PI points wider than the gap for vocational districts statewide. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of approximately three PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- Pathfinder's proficiency gap in math was 28 PI points in 2007, 13 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in grade 10 math and eight PI points wider than the gap for vocational districts statewide. This gap would require an average improvement of four PI points per year to achieve AYP.

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

Between 2004 and 2007, Pathfinder's MCAS performance showed improvement overall, in ELA, and in math.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by 10 percentage points between 2004 and 2007, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by six percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Pathfinder narrowed from 32 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 22 percent.
- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, Pathfinder showed improvement in ELA, at an average of nearly two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 20 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Math performance in Pathfinder showed greater improvement during this period, at an average of approximately three PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of close to 24 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2007 varied among subgroups of Pathfinder students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Pathfinder in 2007, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 25 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Pathfinder in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-seventh of students with disabilities and approximately one-third of low-income students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education and non low-income students. Approximately half of regular education students and approximately two-fifths of non low-income students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was the wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district

average in math but narrower in ELA. Approximately two-fifths of both male and female students attained proficiency.

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

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 15 PI points in 2004 to 24 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 18 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007.

- All student subgroups in Pathfinder had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students.
- In math, all student subgroups had improved performance between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in math was also low-income students.

Fidelity of Implementation

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

At Pathfinder, the extent to which school staff members exemplified fidelity in their implementation of goals, programs, and models varied by vocational or academic programming. Pathfinder's School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals targeted accommodating student needs as identified through testing, placement of students in remedial or developmental reading, and teaching reading and math across the curriculum. To accomplish these goals, the school needed to complete its "electronic data mining and warehousing system," install new software systems, and implement an "institutionalized training process" for staff development. At the time of the

EQA site visit, the school had not yet installed technology for individualized instruction and had not yet trained staff members in its use. Furthermore, staff development was primarily voluntary, so planning for a mandatory staff development system, some of which was proposed but not yet settled in a new teacher contract, would require a major change in beliefs and practice.

The administrative team at the school had new members as well as a new principal/director. They had recently revised the SIP (July 2006), primarily in response to the last EQA report, and they were in the process of convincing teachers and staff members that it was something that everyone needed to "buy into." This new plan would increase the time in mandatory professional development and use technology to assess students for placement into remedial or developmental reading and math courses when they entered the school. Teaching vocabulary, reading, and writing across the curriculum would become everyone's responsibility and would require training in teaching writing, such as using the John Collins Writing system in every classroom, as well as increased use of technology.

The EQA team found that the district had made more progress in accommodating diverse student needs in the vocational classes than in the academic ones. The vocational coordinator had periodically evaluated vocational teachers and had more baseline data about the readiness of the vocational staff members he supervised. Academic teachers had little common training on "best practices" or how to make accommodations based on student needs, and in observations of 32 randomly selected classrooms EQA examiners found that teachers over-relied on whole class instruction and the use of worksheets and workbooks. Since professional status academic teachers had not been consistently evaluted in alternating years, the principal/director did not have good baseline data on the current quality of instruction or the readiness of teachers in academic classes.

When interviewed, the teachers were not acutely aware of Pathfinder's MCAS performance as compared to that of other vocational schools in the state, although they were aware that the SIP focused on improving student achievement in ELA and math and they had looked at some aggregate MCAS data. Although teachers knew they needed to improve, they had no idea that Pathfinder's achievement, once at the top of vocational schools in the state, had slipped to the bottom 25 percent of vocational schools. Most teachers interviewed continued to believe that

they had a unique population of predominantly white, rural, and lower-income students who were doing "the best they could." This prevailing belief was evident in the low level of expectations of students that examiners noted in their classroom observations. Based on the current research on staff development, administrators were underestimating the amount of long-term mandatory professional development it might take to provide baseline training in reading and writing across the curriculum, as well as in using an embedded formative and summative assessment system, to be implemented through the planned new technology and the mandatory participation of Pathfinder's teachers.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

During the reexamination period, Pathfinder took several steps to remedy shortcomings cited in the EQA review of 2005. The superintendent created an action plan in 2005 for this purpose, and the 2006 School Improvement Plan (SIP) included goals, due dates, and responsible staff members. In the plan, administrators began to describe some measurable outcomes, some of which referenced student achievement data. The SIP specified activities to accomplish the goals, but EQA examiners did not consider it comprehensive enough to be a road map to improvement. The school committee also began a long-range planning process in October 2007, and considered these documents in its first meeting in this process.

According to interviewees, the SIP was not widely disseminated, understood, or cited by teachers and administrators as the basis for improving programs. A condensed version was available on the school's website. The school council reviewed the SIP and the superintendent gave progress reports on it to the school committee. According to interviewees, progress reports also were neither disseminated nor clearly understood. The EQA examiners found that the goals and objectives had generally been achieved or funded, or were in progress.

The district has begun to train staff members in the analysis of achievement data, especially from the MCAS tests, the Stanford 9 and 10 assessments, and common course exams, to improve programs. The district provided beginning professional development on the use of achievement data, appointed a part-time data analyst, and asked teachers to devote common planning time to the analysis and use of data. The district purchased new software, intended for installation in

2007-2008, to make better use of data at the classroom level. It planned training to implement the systems later in the school year. The district based curriculum decisions, such as those regarding the purchase of new math textbooks and improvements to English language arts (ELA) remediation, on the need to improve MCAS achievement. The staff members were studying changes in the science sequence in order to improve MCAS achievement. Administrators did not follow through on their goal to survey staff members about their use of data. Vocational teachers had also begun working on the alignment of their curricula with the state Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) frameworks. The district included funding in its budget to promote improved MCAS performance and compliance with the COP frameworks as well as to implement other provisions of the SIP.

Administrators generally communicated with the staff through staff meetings, and the staff generally understood the district's priorities, which were to improve MCAS scores, to use portfolios in vocational classes, and to align the curricula with the MCAS tests and the COP. Only one administrator (the vocational coordinator) reported directly to the assistant superintendent/director, who was responsible for leading the school and who served as the principal of Pathfinder. All other administrators reported directly to the superintendent. According to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation letter of November 16, 2007, its first recommendation out of four was to "review the organizational chain of command to reduce the number of staff reporting directly to the supervisor/director." According to interviewees' statements, school administrators seemed marginally empowered to manage their respective school-based programs.

The school committee evaluated the superintendent, in part, on the basis of improved MCAS scores. The superintendent did not evaluate administrators under his supervision, and the administrators did not have written contracts.

Examiners reviewed the district on new EQA indicators regarding partnerships and safety plans. The safety plans covered policies and procedures for emergencies, and according to interviewees the district disseminated the plans to the staff and students in their handbooks. The district developed several partnerships with community agencies and businesses.

Curriculum and Instruction

During the reexamination visit, the EQA team found that Pathfinder was at varying stages of completing its curriculum. The vocational area completed alignment of the curriculum to the Massachusetts vocational technical frameworks and was in the process of breaking out and sequencing the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) standards over the course of the program. Each shop had its respective curriculum displayed on the Pathfinder website.

The mathematics department had completed a curriculum review and revision for Algebra I, Algebra IA, Algebra IB, and Geometry, aligning the courses to the Massachusetts mathematics framework and cross-referencing them with the mathematics standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). The math department mapped the curriculum and selected and implemented new texts for algebra and geometry. For the first time, math teachers were using common textbooks.

The English department completed a revision of the grade 9 and grade 10 curricula, which thereafter aligned with the Massachusetts English language arts framework and included resources and some assessments and rubrics. The department was replacing low-level novels with more appropriate grade-level novels by purchasing new titles each year. The English department had not developed or used curriculum maps or pacing guides.

The science department was just beginning to review the MCAS science test and to review and align its curriculum and sequence to the Massachusetts science framework. The curriculum still consisted only of course syllabi and outlines.

Each academic department had a department head whose responsibilities included facilitating department meetings, preparing the department budget, and ordering materials. The department heads did not have supervisory or evaluative responsibilities; therefore, they were not responsible for monitoring or supervising implementation of curriculum and instructional initiatives in the classroom. They described themselves more as “lead teachers.” The vocational area had a vocational coordinator, an administrator, with these responsibilities. In contrast, the assistant superintendent/director of the school was expected to fill the role of academic coordinator in addition to other responsibilities assigned as the principal. In a letter dated November 16, 2007, NEASC recommended to the district that it “create an academic coordinator

position to provide similar academic services as are currently being provided by the vocational coordinator."

The collection and analysis of data had become a greater priority of the district since the last EQA visit. The district designated one staff member to be responsible for grants and for data gathering, analysis (primarily through TestWiz), and distribution. The departments received aggregated data, item analyses, and student profiles, which they used to review and modify the curricula to address strengths and weaknesses. It did not appear that they used any student achievement data to promote or encourage teachers to create flexible groups within the academic classrooms.

The district had moved to a full inclusion model for special needs students but retained the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) for severe special needs students. Teachers in the academic inclusion classroom received no professional development training in using this model. Not all inclusion classes had paraprofessional services. Interviewees stated that one paraprofessional was assigned to each department to cover classes to which most students on IEPs were scheduled. The EQA examiners observed the role the paraprofessionals played in providing instruction to students in 32 randomly selected classrooms, and found them actively involved in instruction in 53 percent of the classrooms observed.

During the reexamination period, participation in High Schools That Work, a model for data-driven decision-making, became voluntary, which interviewees stated increased the involvement of staff members. For example, the mathematics department used the model to create its new algebra and geometry curricula.

The school implemented the first phase of Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering sequence of courses taught in the vocational area and the physics class. The first class began in the 2006-2007 school year and the departments were planning for the implementation of the second stage. This program was grant funded.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

During the reexamination period, Pathfinder began to make some improvements in its overall ability to collect data, as well as to expand its capacity for the analysis and dissemination of

student assessment data. In addition to the expanded use of MCAS results, the district introduced or was in the process of introducing other standardized tests, such as the Stanford 10, and reading programs including Star Reader, Accelerated Reader, and READ 180. Teachers in ELA, mathematics, and social studies have developed some MCAS-linked common assessments, and MCAS Wednesday assignments that incorporate released MCAS questions were administered schoolwide in both ELA and math. For the most part, they utilized aggregated data and/or data for individual students and focused relatively little systematic attention on analyzing and using disaggregated student achievement data. The EQA team also noted some progress in the revision and internal realignment of Pathfinder's curriculum. Although the mathematics department had progressed furthest, all core academic areas were at varying stages in the processes of curriculum mapping, developing grading rubrics and common assessments, and aligning curriculum, instruction, and evaluation with state frameworks.

Despite some tentative and fragmented efforts, including the purchase of the assessment system Q1 MACRO, the district still lacked a comprehensive, fully integrated system for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating student performance data. Administrators expressed confidence that the soon to be installed Pearson Prosper assessment system would provide the district with a tool that will greatly expand its capacity to centrally manage and disaggregate a comprehensive battery of standardized as well as local student performance and assessment data. Questions remain relative to the subsequent training of teachers and staff members, as well as the clarification of the role and responsibilities of the staff member who will oversee the full implementation of this new data system.

Although the district was attempting to collect more and better assessment data and was making some improvements in its analytic capacity and its methods to disseminate the information, the team found little evidence that evaluative data informed significant modifications and/or changes to academic programs, services, or resource acquisition. The vocational division employed some program evaluation; for example, it used increased analysis of student enrollment data and shop interest inventories to inform curriculum decisions. Revisions to technology, pre-engineering, and health programs were made as a result of these efforts. Administrators also indicated that the High Schools That Work program and Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) both went through annual review. In general, however, the district did not engage in regular and

systematic evaluation of its academic, supplemental, or grant funded MCAS success programs to determine their efficiency or effectiveness. Examiners noted little change or improvement in the degree to which the district engaged in formal analyses of student performance and needs to determine the content and/or scope of academic programs and support services offered. A review of MCAS data revealed a corresponding failure by the district to move students from 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs Improvement' levels to the 'Proficient' level.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

Although Pathfinder's administrative team had four new administrators, they made very few changes to the school's system of supervision or evaluation of professional staff members since the last EQA visit. Academic department heads had no way of knowing what was going on in classrooms in their respective departments because they had no authority to supervise the taught curriculum or the quality of instruction. The assistant superintendent/director completed six evaluations of the 34 teachers whose files were randomly selected and reviewed by the EQA examiners. Of these six teachers, four of them had not been evaluated in alternating years, as required by Department of Education regulations. Furthermore, the district lacked a system of accountability for administrators, who did not have contracts or annual evaluations during the period under reexamination, a practice that was unchanged at Pathfinder. According to the superintendent, administrators had a "Meet and Confer" agreement which enumerated benefits.

Since 2005, the assistant superintendent/director was able to create one period of common planning time in alternating weeks for academic teachers, which increased time for teacher collaboration from 20 minutes at the end of each school day to a functional block of time during the school day in alternating weeks. Although teachers now had the time for collaboration within academic departments and they documented how they were collaborating during common planning time, only the assistant superintendent/director had the authority to observe in classrooms to see if any of the suggestions and recommendations were being implemented. On the vocational side, there had always been a coordinator of vocational education to supervise, monitor, and evaluate what was being taught and whether students were reaching benchmarks for learning, based on a competency-based reporting system, required by Chapter 74 regulations. The district recently added the requirement that each student have a career pathway portfolio to document what each student was able to do in his/her vocational area.

The superintendent developed an action plan for the district in response to the last EQA visit in 2005, and a professional development plan for the district. The assistant superintendent-director, with the assistance of the school council, developed a School Improvement Plan, but it was not clear to the EQA examiners how these written documents were linked together or how common professional development along with common expectations were going to improve instruction and result in improved student achievement.

Although all teachers and administrators could agree on improving MCAS scores as a measurable goal, what they did not describe in detail was how schoolwide goals and staff participation would translate into the required action steps. With the exception of initiatives such as High Schools That Work and John Collins Writing, participation in school improvement efforts was both voluntary and individualized with no system of accountability.

For example, although the professional development plan focused on improving student achievement, it did not have specific action steps linked to specific district goals. The one mandatory in-service day planned for the entire professional staff during school year 2006-2007 focused on MCAS data analysis. The school committee proposed adding one or two in-service days to the contract in the next contract that was under negotiation, but the school committee and the Pathfinder Educators' Association (PEA) had not yet adopted a new contract. From 2005 to 2007, the majority of professional development consisted of self-selected workshops that staff members chose to take on a voluntary basis and the superintendent approved for reimbursement. For any of the in-service that the district paid for and held in the district, records were not kept of who attended them from each department. The district still did not have a formal mentoring program for new staff members who were assigned mentors who had participated in common mentoring training, which was cited in the 2007 NEASC report. According to the assistant superintendent/director, he had made clear the expectation that teachers had to sign in and produce minutes and/or a product for common planning time.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

The district implemented various support programs for at-risk students. Tutorial classes, scheduled during the school day, provided students, most of whom had special needs, with academic and organizational support. A year-long remedial reading course supported by Title I

funds targeted students to improve their reading proficiency. The district had full inclusion classes, but interviewees stated that some teachers still perceived that accommodations written in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were recommendations or suggestions and therefore not required. Although the district employed paraprofessionals to assist special needs students in inclusion classes, the EQA examiners found that in only 53 percent of 32 randomly selected classrooms visited did they observe paraprofessionals as having an instructional role and being actively involved in the learning process.

In December 2006, the district had developed a program for its small English language learner (ELL) population and had just begun its implementation at the time of the EQA reexamination. During the 2006-2007 school year, the district distributed home language surveys that revealed seven students who spoke a second language at home. After further testing, only three students were identified as English language learners. They received service through the inclusion instructional approach utilizing sheltered English immersion. An ELL liaison, certified in English as a second language (ESL), monitored the progress of these students each trimester and had plans to test them using the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment-Reading and Writing (MEPA-R/W) in the spring to determine their progress.

Participation in MCAS testing was 100 percent for all subgroups in 2007. The district encouraged student attendance through communication sources that included Connect-ED, tailored messages on report cards prepared by the guidance staff, informational flyers, and the school's website. The guidance department oversaw all MCAS retests. In addition to the 100 percent participation rate for 2007, 15 students in the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) completed electronic portfolios for the MCAS Alternative Assessment, and all of them scored at the 'Proficient' level in ELA. Furthermore, 14 of the 15 students scored at the 'Proficient' level in math.

During the reexamination period, the district took a proactive approach toward improving student attendance and made changes in the student handbook, organized an attendance review committee, and monitored attendance regularly. It also reinstated the Renaissance program to reward students for good attendance as well as academic achievement. The district used three consistently enforced levels of intervention to correct patterns of poor attendance in which

chronic absenteeism affected course credit. As a result, the district reduced its rate of chronic absenteeism and increased its attendance rate for two years in a row. The average number of days of student absence per year decreased from 10.6 days in 2004 to 8.6 days in 2005 to 7.9 days in 2006. No attendance data were available from the DOE for 2007 at the time of the reexamination.

The district prioritized positive school climate and monitored suspension rates and discipline referrals much more closely. Out-of-school suspension rates declined from 8.6 percent in 2004 to 4.3 percent in 2005 but rose slightly to 4.6 percent in 2006. The district had a combined system for in-school suspension and offered a temporary "time out" option during the school day for students exhibiting significant anger or unacceptable behavior that affected the learning or welfare of others. Under the supervision of a certified special needs teacher, students referred to the "time out room" used a problem-solving method to prevent future referrals. Although the district's in-school suspension rates were lower than the state average for 2004 and 2005, it was higher than the state average in 2006. Administrators said they preferred to keep students in school where they could receive emotional and academic support and thought the combined "time out" and in-school suspension system may have contributed to the increase.

The district had procedures to prevent students from dropping out of school. In 2005, the district's dropout rate was slightly higher than the state average, but in 2004 and 2006 the rate was lower. DOE data were unavailable for 2007. To prevent students from dropping out of school, the guidance department worked with each student on a case by case basis to diagnose contributing factors and devise alternative solutions to problems. If a student dropped out of the school, the guidance department gave him/her a packet with multiple in-school and community resources. Through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program grant, the school offered a summer program for students to retrieve course credit. In addition, community resources included the Job Corps Owl School in Springfield with a school to work component, a GED program at the Palmer Pubic Library, and an adult education program in Ware.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

Rather than reexamine the district only on those 2005 indicators on which the district was rated 'Poor' or 'Unsatisfactory,' the EQA conducted a full examination of the district on Standard VI

covering the period 2005-2007. The EQA examiners gave the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on 10, 'Needs Improvement' on two, and not applicable on one of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

School committee policy defined the budget process, which gave the superintendent-director the responsibility for the preparation of the budget. The budget process commenced in December and concluded in February as required by the district agreement. The process began with the superintendent and the business manager conferring and surveying town officials regarding the financial conditions of the towns and what could be expected from the "cherry sheet" reimbursements. The superintendent provided specific guidelines to the staff regarding acceptable levels for the budget and the priorities of the school. The budget process included input from the faculty who submitted their recommendations to the department heads. The assistant superintendent/director (principal) and the vocational coordinator reviewed the requests prior to submittal to the superintendent's secretary for collation into a draft copy of the budget. The superintendent met with the appropriate members of the staff prior to preparing the recommended budget. The superintendent and the business manager reviewed the draft copy of the budget prior to the superintendent making a final recommendation to the school committee.

The school committee relied on the superintendent's many years of experience in preparing budgets. The superintendent presented the budget to the school committee followed by a public hearing. Following the public hearing, the school committee adopted the superintendent's recommended budget and assessments. The budget document did not include funding from state and federal grants and other revenue sources. The superintendent prepared several iterations of the budget as information of state revenue became available. The superintendent and business manager held a joint meeting with the member towns' selectmen, finance committee members, and council member at the school and made a presentation on the proposed budget and assessments. The superintendent and business manager presented the budget at town meetings.

The superintendent, administrators, and faculty members stated in interviews that the member towns provided adequate financial support to meet the educational needs of the Pathfinder students to improve student achievement. School committee members and town officials

interviewed stated that the superintendent provided a comprehensive financial presentation and analysis during budget discussions, and they relied on the superintendent's judgment as to the adequacy of the budget and assessments. Pathfinder exceeded the required net school spending (NSS) for the period under review. All of the district communities contributed above the required minimum contribution. The per pupil cost for Pathfinder was $16,629 in FY 2006, which was considered average compared to the other regional vocational-technical high schools in the state. The district received substantial increases in Chapter 70 aid during the period under review.

The district had a five-year capital plan that addressed the maintenance and capital needs of the 34-year-old original building and 19-year-old building addition. The plan focused on the replacement of antiquated equipment in the vocational-technical areas to assure student training on the latest state-of-the-art equipment. The vocational-technical advisory committees played an active role in recommending shop equipment procurements to the superintendent.

The school had been well maintained and the examiners noted in a walk-through that the educational and program facilities were in excellent condition and conducive to student learning and achievement. The superintendent expressed a need for more storage area and classroom space. The school had a surveillance system consisting of 33 cameras inside and outside the building. The school did not have locked doors while the school was in session but relied on a visitors' pass system.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

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

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

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

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

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

The basis for gap analysis is the *proficiency index*, which is a measure of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, or meeting the state standard. The unit of measure is proficiency index (PI) points, and a score of 100

indicates that all students in the aggregate or in a subgroup are proficient. It can be calculated for overall achievement as well as achievement in an individual subject. Please see Appendix A for more detailed information about the proficiency index.

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

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

Achievement

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

Findings:

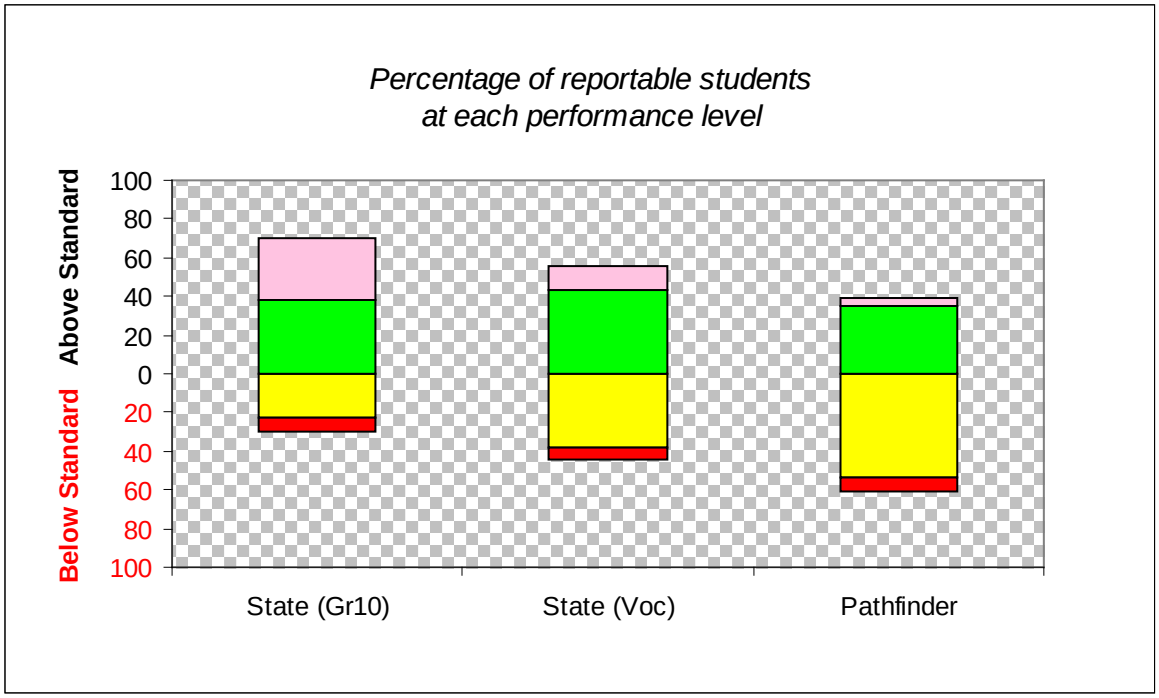
- On average, nearly two-fifths of all students in Pathfinder attained proficiency on the 2007 MCAS tests, 32 percentage points less than the grade 10 statewide average and 17 percentage points less than the statewide vocational school district average. Slightly more than two-fifths of Pathfinder students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), and less than two-fifths of Pathfinder students attained proficiency in math. Ninety-four percent of the Class of 2007 earned a Competency Determination.

- Pathfinder's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2007 was 75 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points lower than that of grade 10 students statewide and seven PI points lower than that of vocational districts statewide. Pathfinder's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100 percent, in 2007 was 25 PI points.

- In 2007, Pathfinder's proficiency gap in ELA was 22 PI points, 10 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in grade 10 ELA and five PI points wider than the gap for vocational districts statewide. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of approximately three PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).

- Pathfinder's proficiency gap in math was 28 PI points in 2007, 13 PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in grade 10 math and eight PI points wider than the gap for vocational districts statewide. This gap would require an average improvement of four PI points per year to achieve AYP.

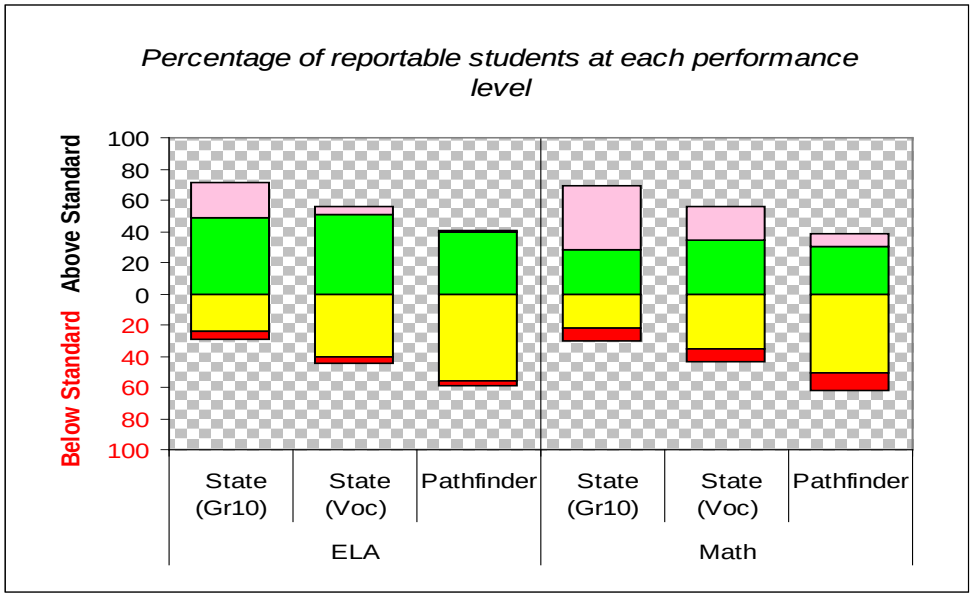
Figure/Table 1: MCAS Test Performance, 2007



	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder
Advanced	32	13	4
Proficient	39	43	35
Needs Improvement	23	38	54
Warning/Failing	7	6	7
Percent Attaining Proficiency	71	56	39
Average Proficiency Index (API)	86.5	81.7	75.1

In 2007, 39 percent of Pathfinder students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, 32 percentage points less than the grade 10 statewide average of 71 percent, and 17 percentage points less than the statewide vocational district average of 56 percent. Seven percent of Pathfinder students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, the same as that of grade 10 students statewide and one percentage point more than that of vocational districts statewide. Pathfinder's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2007 was 75 proficiency index (PI) points, 11 PI points lower than that of grade 10 students statewide and seven PI points lower than that of vocational districts statewide. Pathfinder's average proficiency gap in 2007 was 25 PI points.

Figure/Table 2: MCAS Test Performance by Subject, 2007



	ELA			Math		
	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder
Advanced	22	4	1	42	21	8
Proficient	49	51	40	28	35	30
Needs Improvement	24	40	56	22	36	51
Warning/Failing	5	4	3	8	8	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency	71	55	41	70	56	38
Proficiency Index (PI)	88.0	83.3	78.3	85.0	80.0	71.8

In 2007, achievement in grade 10 English language arts (ELA) and math in Pathfinder was lower than that statewide and lower than the statewide vocational district average. In ELA, 41 percent of Pathfinder students attained proficiency, compared to 71 percent statewide and 55 percent in vocational districts. In math, 38 percent of Pathfinder students attained proficiency, compared to 70 percent statewide and 56 percent in vocational districts.

Pathfinder students had stronger performance on the 2007 MCAS tests in ELA than in math. The proficiency index for Pathfinder students in ELA was 78 PI points, and in math it was 72 PI points. These figures compare to 88 PI points in ELA and 85 PI points in math for grade 10 students statewide, and 83 PI points in ELA and 80 PI points in math for vocational districts statewide.

The proficiency gap for Pathfinder students in 2007 was 22 PI points in ELA and 28 PI points in math. These figures compare to 12 PI points in ELA and 15 PI points in math for grade 10 students statewide, and 17 PI points in ELA and 20 PI points in math for vocational districts statewide. Pathfinder's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of approximately three PI points in ELA and four PI points in math to meet AYP.

Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

- MCAS performance in 2007 varied among subgroups of Pathfinder students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Pathfinder in 2007, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 25 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

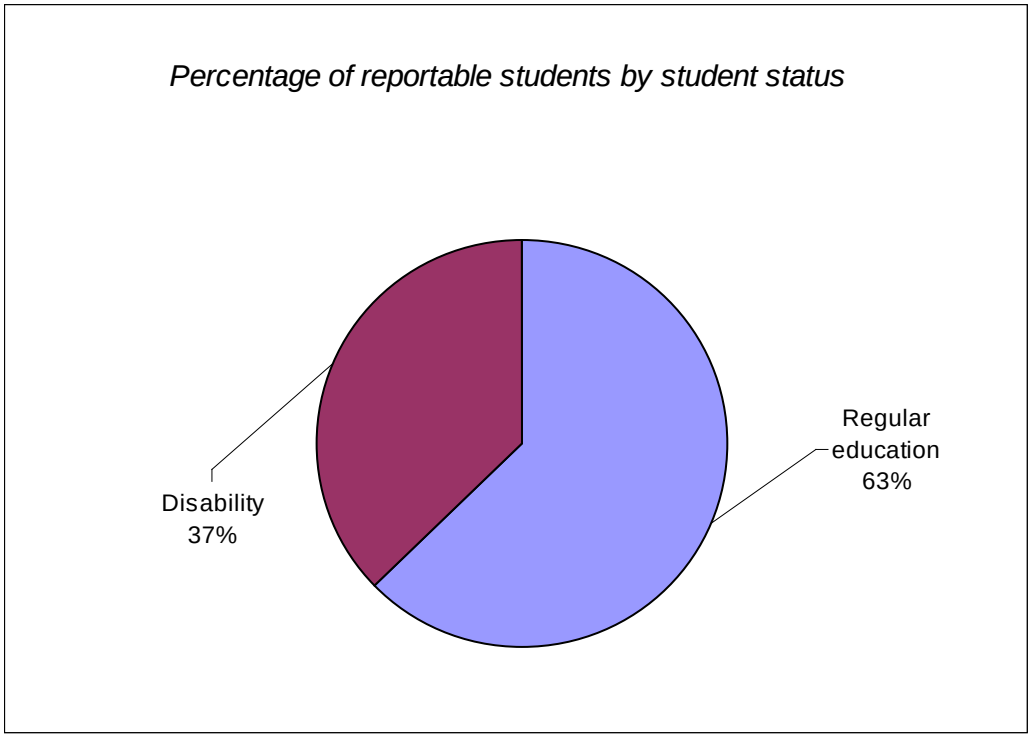
- The proficiency gaps in Pathfinder in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Less than one-seventh of students with disabilities and approximately one-third of low-income students attained proficiency.

- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education and non low-income students. Approximately half of regular education students and approximately two-fifths of non low-income students attained proficiency.

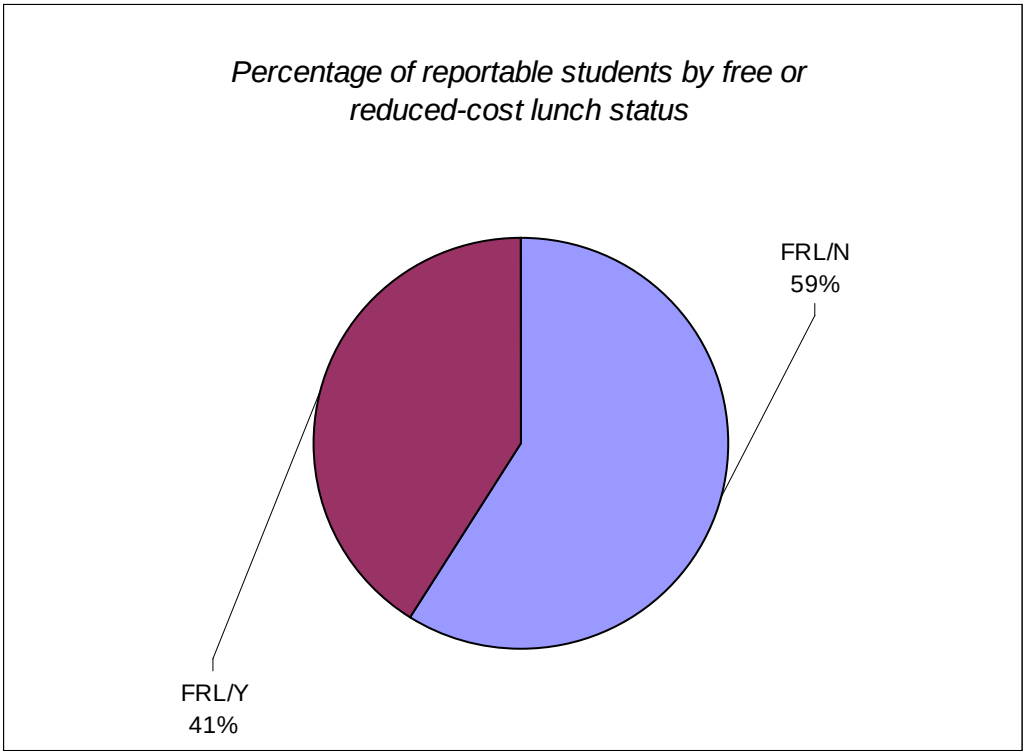
- The proficiency gap for male students was the wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. Approximately two-fifths of both male and female students attained proficiency.

Figures 3 A-B/Table 3: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2007

A.



B.

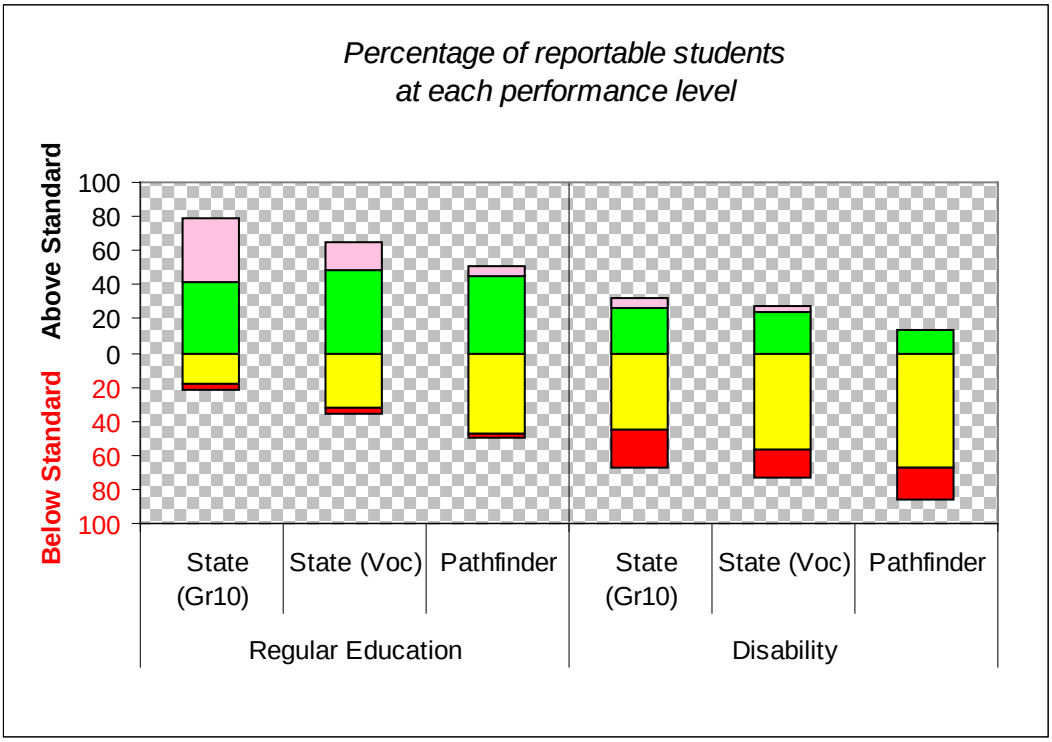


	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	98
	Disability	58
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	92
	FRL/Y	64

Note: Data include students in tested grades levels only.

In Pathfinder in 2007, 37 percent of the students were students with disabilities and 41 percent were low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program).

Figure/Table 4: MCAS Test Performance by Student Status Subgroup, 2007

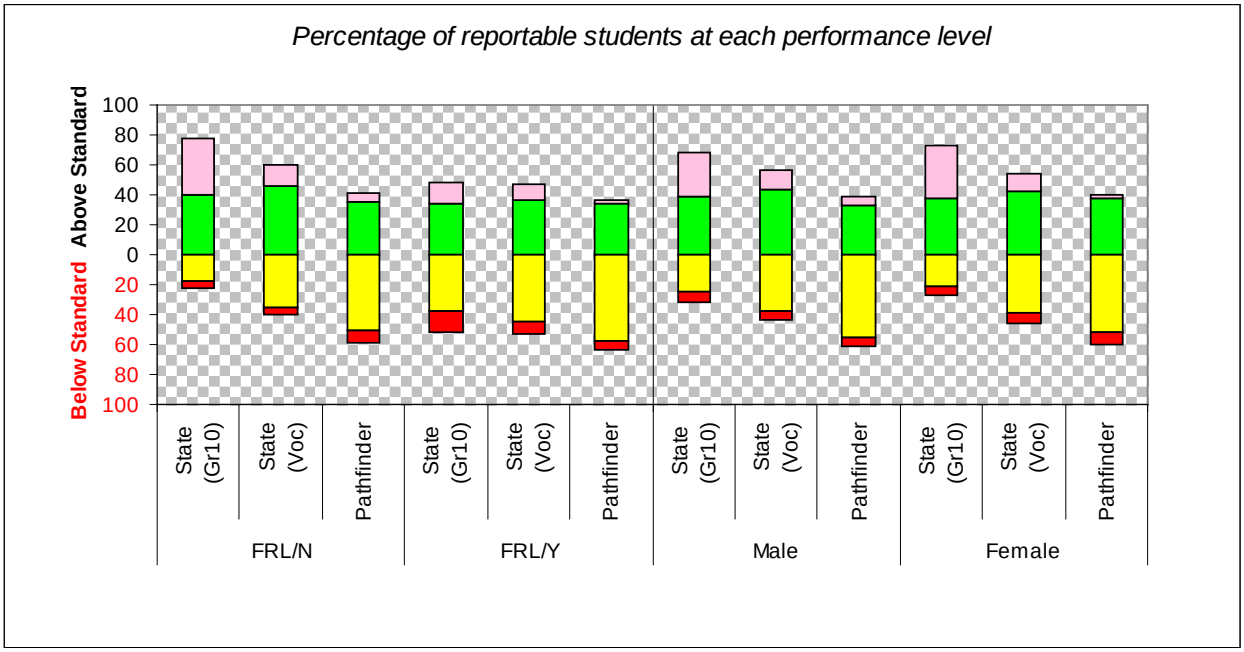


	Regular Education			Disability		
	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder
Advanced	37	16	6	6	3	0
Proficient	41	49	45	27	24	14
Needs Improvement	18	33	47	45	56	68
Warning/Failing	3	3	2	22	16	18
Percent Attaining Proficiency	78	65	51	33	27	14
Average Proficiency Index (API)	91.5	86.6	82.5	64.9	65.6	58.3

In 2007, the proficiency rate of regular education students at Pathfinder was nearly four times greater than that of students with disabilities. Fifty-one percent of regular education students and 14 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests. These figures compare to 78 and 33 percent, respectively, statewide; and 65 and 27 percent, respectively, for vocational school districts statewide.

Pathfinder's average proficiency gap in 2007 was 18 PI points for regular education students and 42 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 24 PI points. This compares to 27 PI points statewide and 21 PI points for vocational districts statewide.

Figure/Table 5: MCAS Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status and Gender Subgroups, 2007

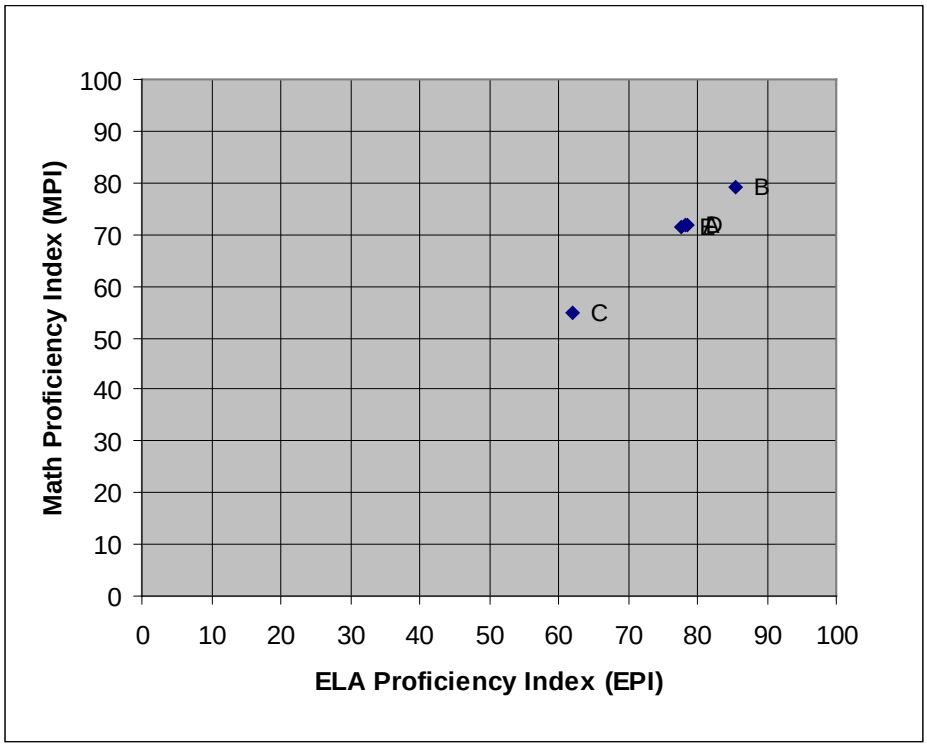


	FRL/N			FRL/Y			Male			Female		
	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder
Advanced	38	14	6	14	10	2	29	14	5	35	12	3
Proficient	40	46	36	34	37	34	39	43	33	38	42	38
Needs Improvement	18	35	51	37	44	58	25	37	55	21	39	51
Warning/Failing	4	5	8	14	9	6	8	6	6	6	7	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	78	60	42	48	47	36	68	57	38	73	54	41
Average Proficiency Index (API)	90.5	83.9	75.3	74.7	76.6	74.7	85.2	82.4	75.6	88.0	80.7	74.4

In Pathfinder in 2007, 36 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 42 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was slightly more than 25 PI points for low-income students and slightly less than 25 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was one-half PI point.

Thirty-eight percent of male students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 41 percent of female students. The average proficiency gap was 24 PI points for male students and 26 PI points for female students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was two PI points.

Figure/Table 6: MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index by Subgroup, 2007

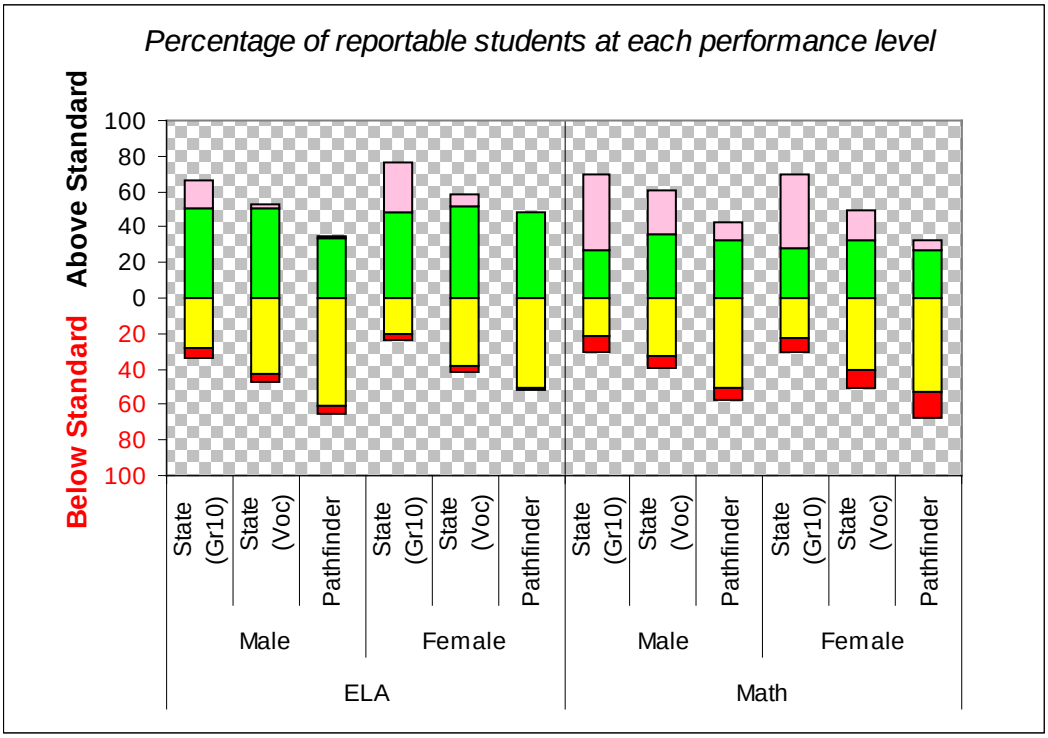


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Pathfinder	78.3	71.8	284
B	Regular Education	85.6	79.3	197
C	Disability	61.9	54.7	87
D	FRL/N	78.6	71.9	179
E	FRL/Y	77.8	71.6	105
F	Male	75.9	75.3	165
G	Female	81.7	66.9	119

Of the six measurable subgroups in Pathfinder in 2007, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 24 PI points in ELA and 25 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

The proficiency gaps in Pathfinder in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income (FRL/Y) students. The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income (FRL/N) students. The proficiency gap for male students was the wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA.

Figure/Table 7: MCAS ELA and Math Test Performance by Gender Subgroup, 2007



	ELA						Math					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder	State (Gr10)	State (Voc)	Pathfinder
Advanced	16	3	1	28	6	0	42	24	10	42	17	5
Proficient	50	50	34	48	52	48	27	36	33	28	33	27
Needs Improvement	28	42	60	20	38	50	21	32	50	22	41	53
Warning/Failing	6	4	5	4	4	2	9	7	7	8	10	15
Percent Attaining Proficiency	66	53	35	76	58	48	69	60	43	70	50	32
Proficiency Index (PI)	85.8	82.4	75.9	90.3	84.5	81.7	84.6	82.3	75.3	85.6	76.8	66.9

On the 2007 grade 10 MCAS test in ELA, female students outperformed male students in Pathfinder, whereas male students outperformed female students on the grade 10 math test. The proficiency gaps for Pathfinder's male students were 24 PI points in ELA and 25 PI points in math, and for female students they were 18 PI points in ELA and 33 PI points in math. Performance of both male and female students in Pathfinder was lower than that of their counterparts both statewide and in vocational districts statewide.

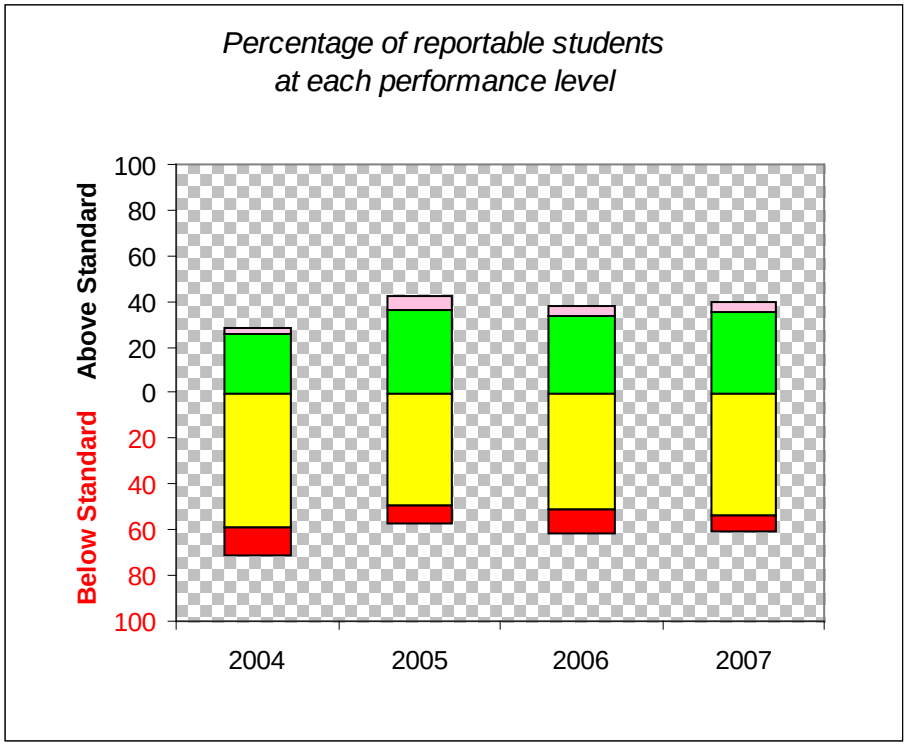
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2004 and 2007, Pathfinder's MCAS performance showed improvement overall, in ELA, and in math.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by 10 percentage points between 2004 and 2007, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by six percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Pathfinder narrowed from 32 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 22 percent.
- Over the three-year period 2004-2007, Pathfinder showed improvement in ELA, at an average of nearly two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 20 percent.
- Math performance in Pathfinder showed greater improvement during this period, at an average of approximately three PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of close to 24 percent.

Figure 8/Tables 8 A-B: MCAS Test Performance, 2004-2007



A.

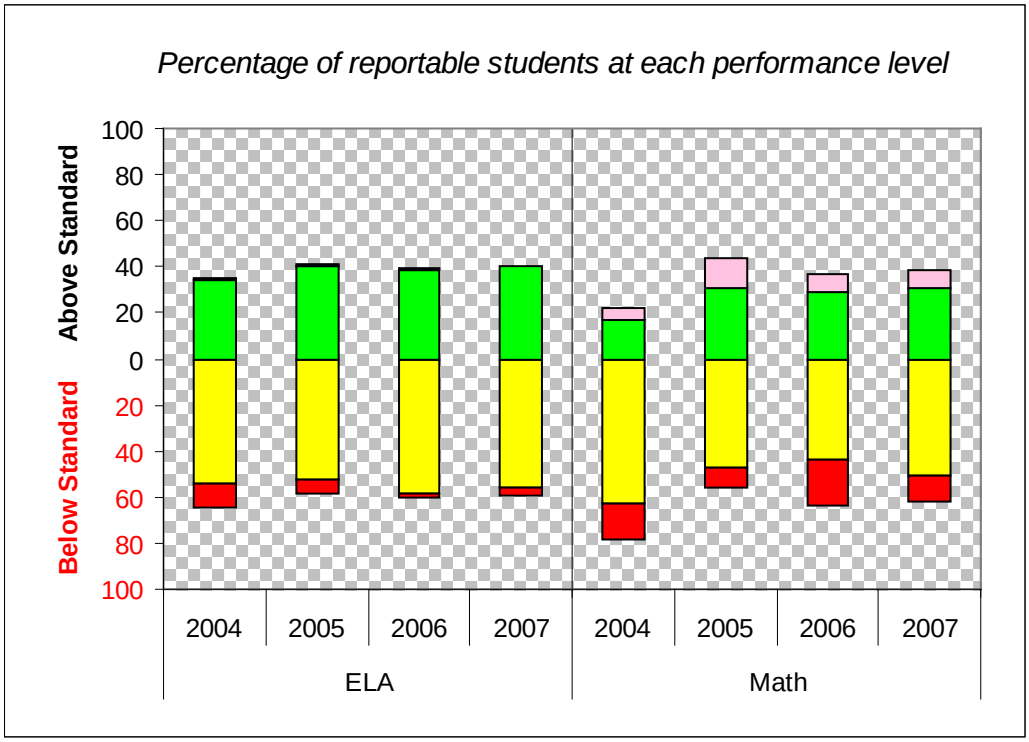
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Advanced	3	7	4	4
Proficient	26	36	34	35
Needs Improvement	59	50	51	54
Warning/Failing	13	8	11	7
Percent Attaining Proficiency	29	43	38	39
Average Proficiency Index (API)	68.0	75.4	72.2	75.1

B. n-values

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Advanced	9	20	14	12
Proficient	79	107	111	100
Needs Improvement	181	148	168	152
Warning/Failing	40	23	36	20
Total	309	298	329	284

The percentage of Pathfinder students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests increased from 29 percent in 2004 to 39 percent in 2007. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 13 percent in 2004 to seven percent in 2007. The average proficiency gap in Pathfinder narrowed from 32 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007, resulting in an improvement rate of 22 percent.

Figure/Table 9: MCAS Test Performance by Subject, 2004-2007



	ELA				Math			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
Advanced	1	1	1	1	5	13	7	8
Proficient	34	41	38	40	17	31	29	30
Needs Improvement	55	52	59	56	63	47	44	51
Warning/ Failing	10	7	2	3	15	9	20	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency	35	42	39	41	22	44	36	38
Proficiency Index (PI)	72.9	76.5	76.7	78.3	63.1	74.2	67.7	71.8

The percentage of Pathfinder students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 35 percent in 2004 to 41 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from 27 PI points in 2004 to 22 PI points in 2007, resulting in an improvement rate of 20 percent.

The percentage of Pathfinder students attaining proficiency in math increased from 22 percent in 2004 to 38 percent in 2007. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 37 PI points in 2004 to 28 PI points in 2007, resulting in an improvement rate of nearly 24 percent.

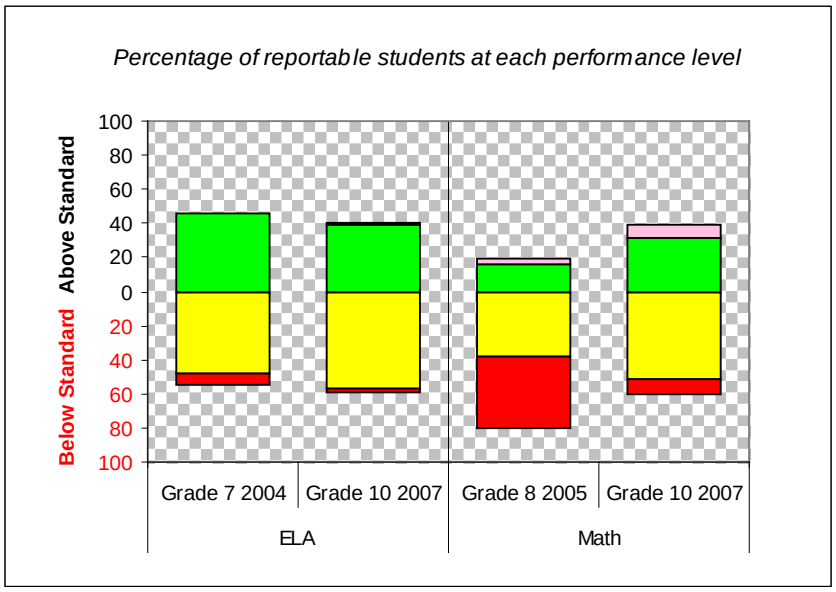
Table 10: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Vocational-Technical District, 2004-2007

District	2004 ELA PI	2004 Math PI	2004 API	2005 ELA PI	2005 Math PI	2005 API	2006 ELA PI	2006 Math PI	2006 API	2007 ELA PI	2007 Math PI	2007 API
Bristol County Agr	87.7	88.9	88.3	89.6	87.4	88.5	88.1	88.8	88.5	93.8	93.3	93.6
Norfolk County Agr	88.1	83.7	85.9	92.8	88.8	90.8	95.0	91.0	93.0	95.6	90.5	93.1
Blackstone Valley	84.5	79.9	82.2	83.0	82.7	82.9	87.9	86.5	87.2	90.9	89.3	90.1
Tri-County	72.9	63.9	68.4	80.9	73.9	77.4	85.1	86.3	85.7	87.1	88.0	87.6
Shawsheen Valley	82.2	76.4	79.3	84.6	79.2	81.9	89.1	81.4	85.3	88.8	85.5	87.2
South Shore	80.0	75.7	77.9	83.0	78.1	80.6	81.4	82.6	82.0	87.4	85.4	86.4
Whittier	72.3	64.9	68.6	75.7	72.8	74.3	82.6	90.4	86.5	84.8	87.6	86.2
Montachusett	75.4	64.4	69.9	79.1	74.7	76.9	82.1	82.4	82.3	87.7	84.6	86.2
Cape Cod	74.7	67.8	71.3	83.0	79.9	81.5	86.3	86.4	86.4	86.3	85.0	85.7
Minuteman	76.2	75.3	75.7	77.8	76.5	77.2	85.4	77.9	81.7	87.3	83.4	85.4
Assabet Valley	70.9	63.7	67.3	79.0	74.6	76.8	78.7	81.3	80.0	86.7	83.7	85.2
Old Colony	71.9	69.7	70.8	79.4	79.6	79.5	76.9	75.9	76.4	84.3	85.2	84.8
Upper Cape Cod	79.7	68.0	73.8	83.0	72.8	77.9	83.7	79.7	81.7	87.4	82.1	84.8
Northern Berkshire	81.2	72.9	77.1	76.4	67.0	71.7	80.3	76.6	78.5	86.9	82.1	84.5
Blue Hills	75.8	65.6	70.7	77.4	76.4	76.9	84.4	82.4	83.4	85.8	83.2	84.5
Southern Worcester	72.7	66.9	69.8	79.0	75.6	77.3	80.9	81.0	81.0	85.6	81.9	83.8
Greater Fall River	69.2	54.2	61.7	77.6	64.0	70.8	78.1	76.4	77.3	85.1	80.3	82.7
Essex Agr	71.7	52.8	62.3	81.8	60.4	71.1	89.5	79.0	84.3	89.8	74.8	82.3
State Average Voc	***73.6***	***66.6***	***70.1***	***78.4***	***72.3***	***75.3***	***80.9***	***78.0***	***79.5***	***84.0***	***80.5***	***82.2***
Greater New Bedford	69.8	59.6	64.7	75.7	64.6	70.2	80.2	73.4	76.8	84.6	78.1	81.4
North Shore	73.9	69.4	71.6	85.4	77.2	81.3	82.6	80.4	81.5	87.7	74.8	81.3
Bristol-Plymouth	72.9	67.6	70.2	80.6	74.0	77.3	85.4	79.6	82.5	83.7	76.3	80.0
Northeast Metro	65.0	61.8	63.4	70.8	69.8	70.3	71.5	74.1	72.8	75.4	80.3	77.9
Northampton-Smith	63.8	59.7	61.8	72.4	68.6	70.5	72.9	67.4	70.2	79.9	75.4	77.7
Nashoba Valley	68.5	70.0	69.2	75.9	67.5	71.7	77.5	79.8	78.7	77.4	77.9	77.7
Pathfinder	73.4	63.1	68.2	77.8	74.7	76.3	77.0	68.1	72.6	80.4	74.4	77.4
Greater Lowell	64.8	58.7	61.7	69.5	62.2	65.9	74.7	68.1	71.4	78.5	73.2	75.9
Franklin County	79.3	70.5	74.9	74.4	70.7	72.6	83.7	79.1	81.4	77.9	68.9	73.4
Southeastern	70.8	61.5	66.1	75.3	62.9	69.1	71.2	67.1	69.2	75.2	70.0	72.6
Greater Lawrence	59.1	50.1	54.6	61.8	52.4	57.1	67.4	57.6	62.5	69.8	68.8	69.3
So Middlesex (Keefe)	60.5	50.6	55.6	68.1	60.4	64.3	68.5	60.0	64.3	67.4	71.0	69.2

Note: The API reported here is the average of the ELA PI and the Math PI. Elsewhere in this report, the API is a weighted average of the ELA PI and Math PI, and therefore slight discrepancies may result. Also, the data reported here include students who took the MCAS-ALT assessment, who are not included in the data found elsewhere in this report, and therefore slight discrepancies may result.

Performance in Pathfinder on the 2004-2007 MCAS tests was below the average for vocational districts statewide. The average performance gap between Pathfinder and vocational districts statewide widened from two PI points in 2004 to five PI points in 2007. The performance gap in ELA between Pathfinder and vocational districts statewide widened from zero PI points in 2004 to three and one-half PI points in 2007, and in math it widened from three and one-half PI points in 2004 to six PI points in 2007.

Figure 11/Tables 11 A-B: Change in Students' MCAS Test Performance from 2004/05 to 2007, by Subject



A.

	ELA		Math	
	Grade 7 2004	**Grade 10 2007**	**Grade 8 2005**	**Grade 10 2007**
Advanced	0	1	3	8
Proficient	45	40	16	32
Needs Improvement	48	57	38	52
Warning/Failing	7	2	43	9
Percent Attaining Proficiency	45	41	19	40
Proficiency Index (PI)	78.3	78.6	51.7	72.7

B. n-values

	ELA		Math	
	Grade 7 2004	**Grade 10 2007**	**Grade 8 2005**	**Grade 10 2007**
Adv	0	1	4	10
Prof	59	52	21	41
NI	62	75	49	67
W/F	9	3	55	12
Total	***130***	***131***	***129***	***130***

Note: The above data include students whose 2007 grade 10 MCAS results could be linked with their 2004 grade 7 ELA results and 2005 grade 8 math results based on the student identifier (SASID).

Forty-one percent of the grade 10 students in Pathfinder attained proficiency on the ELA test in 2007; as grade 7 students in 2004, 45 percent had attained proficiency on the ELA test, a decrease of four percentage points. Forty percent of the grade 10 students in Pathfinder attained proficiency on the math test in 2007; as grade 8 students in 2005, 19 percent had attained proficiency on the math test, an increase of 21 percentage points. The proficiency gap of grade 10 students in 2007 in ELA was 21 PI points; in 2004 the proficiency gap for those same students in grade 7 in ELA had been 22 PI points. The proficiency gap of grade 10 students in 2007 in math was 27 PI points; in 2005 the proficiency gap of those same students in grade 8 in math had been 48 PI points.

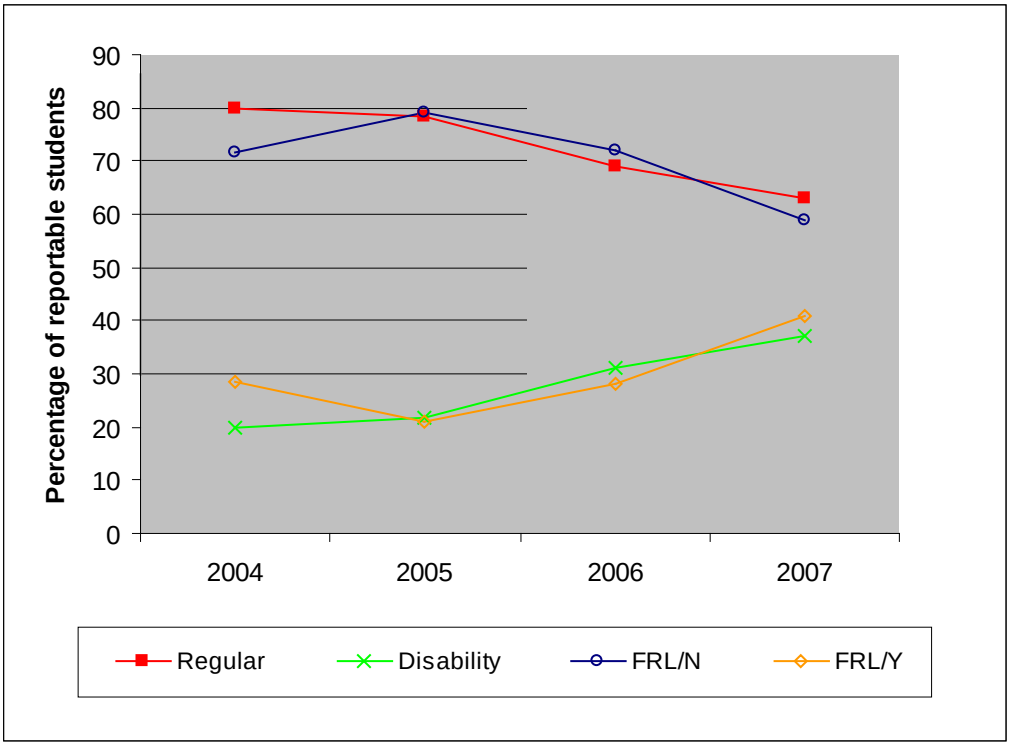
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 15 PI points in 2004 to 24 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 18 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007.
- All student subgroups in Pathfinder had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students.
- In math, all student subgroups had improved performance between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in math was also low-income students.

Figure/Table 12: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2004-2007



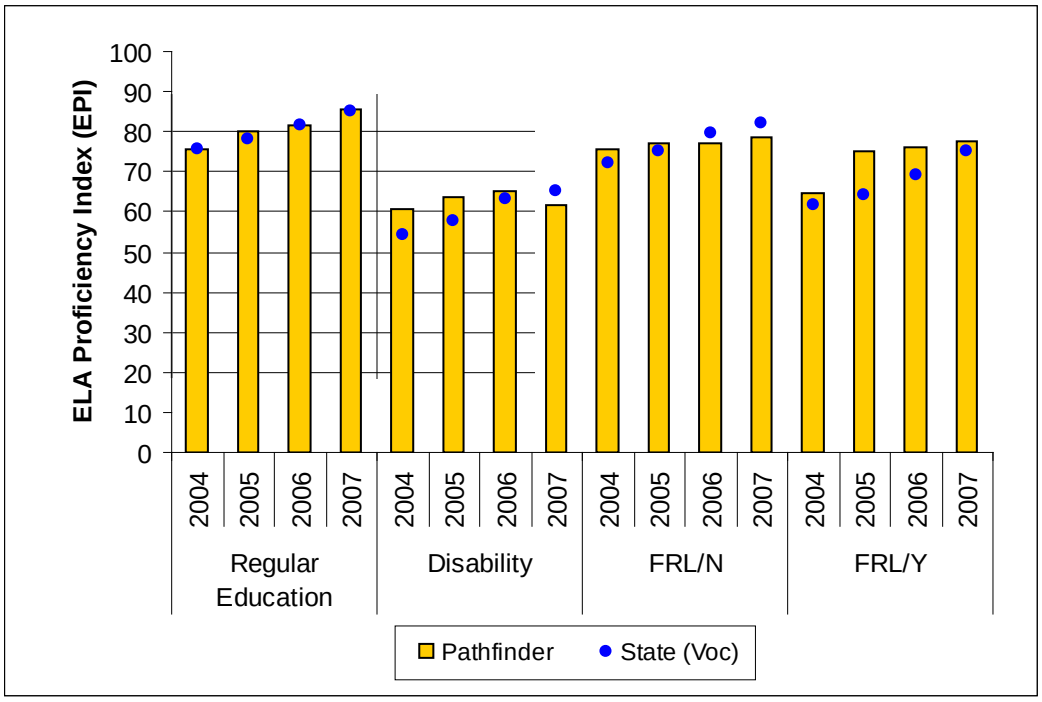
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2004	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**
Pathfinder	155	148	167	156	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	124	116	115	98	80.0	78.4	68.9	62.8
Disability	31	32	52	58	20.0	21.6	31.1	37.2
FRL/N	111	117	120	92	71.6	79.1	71.9	59.0
FRL/Y	44	31	47	64	28.4	20.9	28.1	41.0

Note: The 2007 percentages of students reported here may differ from those reported in Figure 3; the percentages shown here are based on the total number of students in the district, whereas the percentages shown in Figure 3 are based on the number of students in reportable subgroups. Data include students in tested grades only.

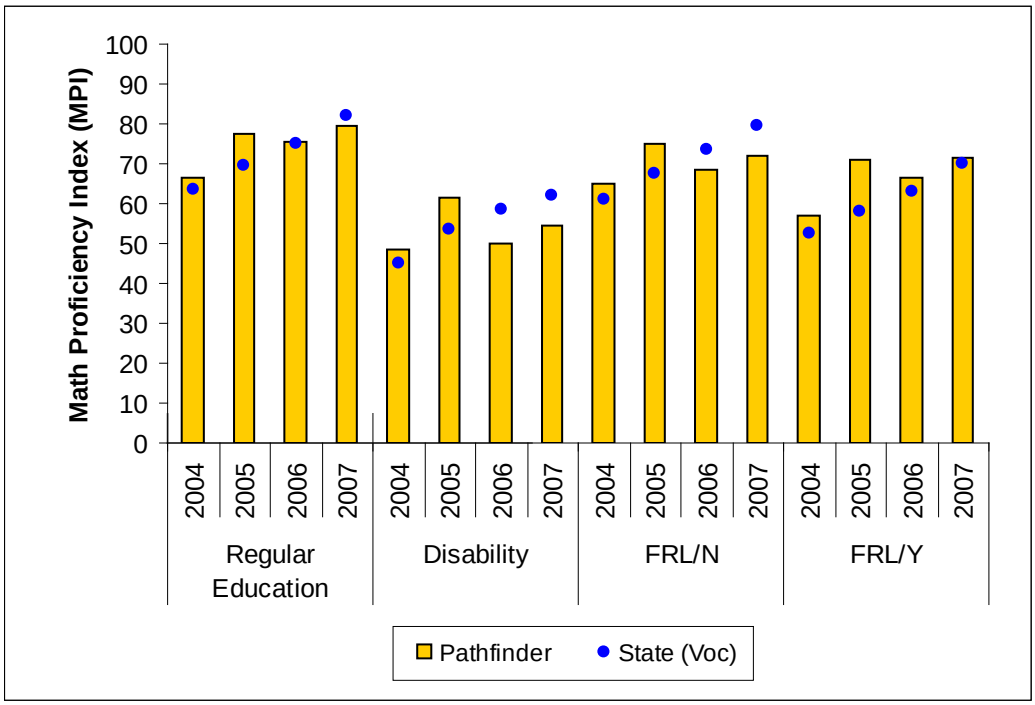
Between 2004 and 2007 in Pathfinder, the proportion of students with disabilities increased by over 17 percentage points and the proportion of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by approximately 13 percentage points.

Figures 13 A-B/Table 13: MCAS Proficiency Indices by Subgroup, 2004-2007

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



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

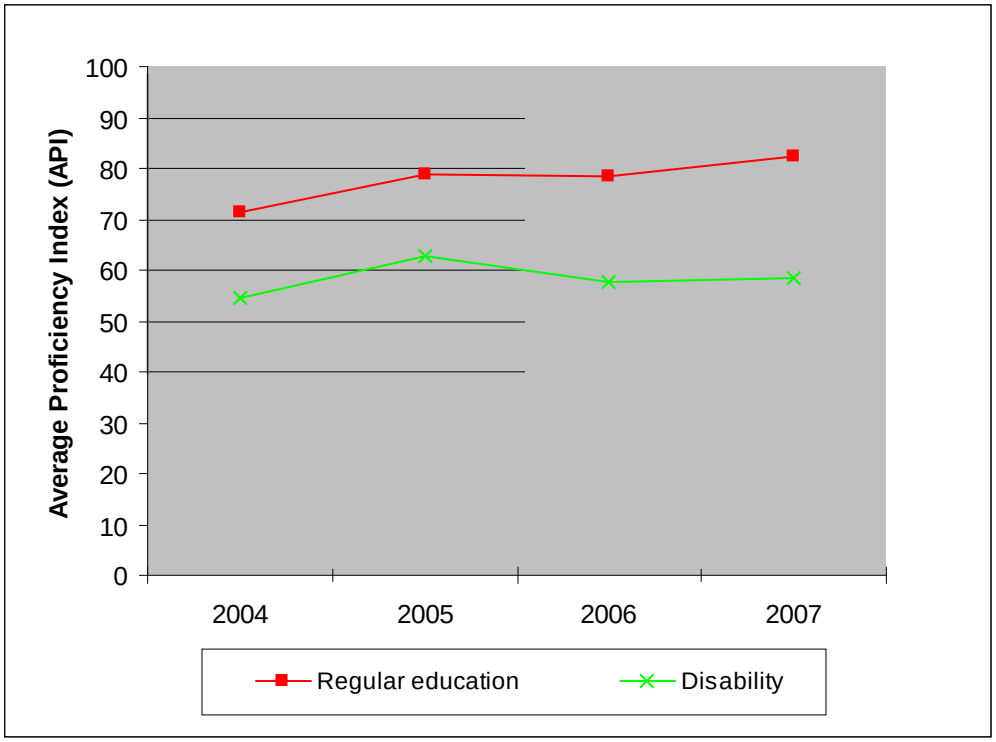


State (Voc)				Pathfinder			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2004	75.8	63.7	Regular Education	2004	75.8	66.7
	2005	78.0	69.3		2005	80.1	77.6
	2006	81.8	75.0		2006	81.8	75.4
	2007	85.0	81.8		2007	85.6	79.3
Disability	2004	54.2	44.8	Disability	2004	60.8	48.4
	2005	57.9	53.6		2005	63.6	61.7
	2006	63.2	58.7		2006	65.0	50.0
	2007	65.1	61.9		2007	61.9	54.7
FRL/N	2004	72.3	60.8	FRL/N	2004	75.7	65.1
	2005	75.2	67.4		2005	76.9	75.0
	2006	79.6	73.7		2006	76.9	68.3
	2007	81.9	79.5		2007	78.6	71.9
FRL/Y	2004	61.9	52.5	FRL/Y	2004	64.8	56.8
	2005	64.3	57.8		2005	75.0	71.0
	2006	69.4	62.8		2006	76.1	66.3
	2007	75.3	70.2		2007	77.8	71.6

All student subgroups in Pathfinder had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in ELA was low-income students. In math, all student subgroups had improved performance between 2004 and 2007. The most improved subgroup in math was also low-income students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 15 PI points in 2004 to 24 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 18 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007.

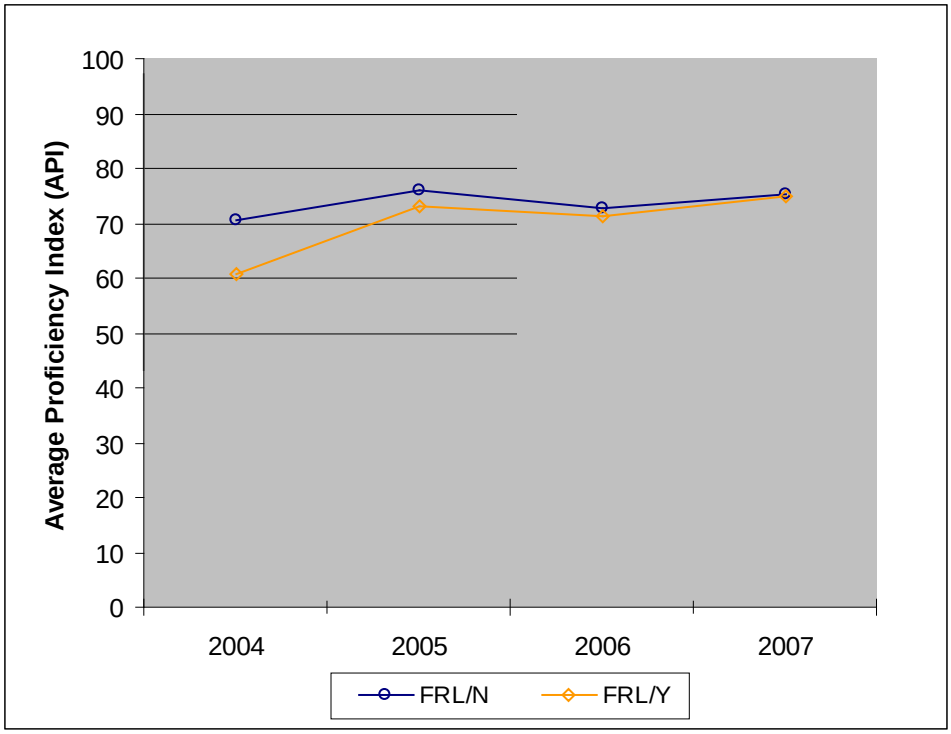
Figure/Table 14: MCAS Test Performance by Student Status Subgroup, 2004-2007



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2004	71.3	75.8	66.7	57	56
	2005	78.9	80.1	77.6	56	51
	2006	78.6	81.8	75.4	58	52
	2007	82.5	85.6	79.3	53	50
Disability	2004	54.5	60.8	48.4	26	26
	2005	62.7	63.6	61.7	30	28
	2006	57.5	65.0	50.0	41	28
	2007	58.3	61.9	54.7	37	33

Both regular education students and students with disabilities in Pathfinder had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2004 and 2007; for students with disabilities most of the gain was due to improved performance in math. The average proficiency gap for Pathfinder's regular education students narrowed from 29 to 18 PI points, and for students with disabilities it narrowed from 46 to 42 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 39 percent for regular education students and eight percent for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities widened by seven PI points during this period.

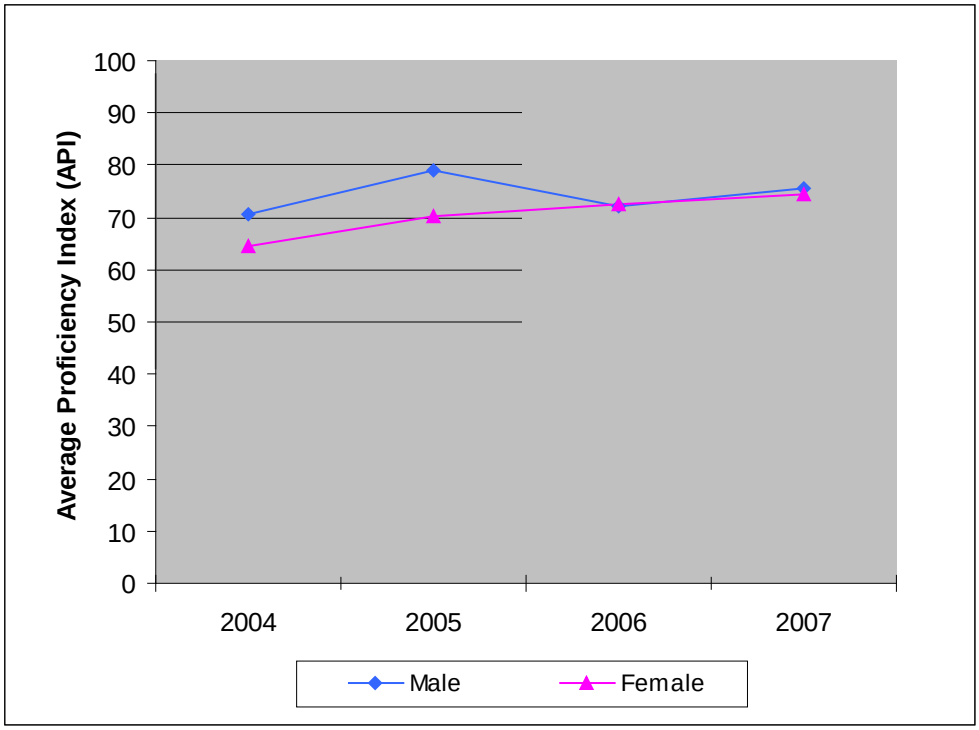
Figure/Table 15: MCAS Test Performance by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2004- 2007



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2004	70.4	75.7	65.1	40	26
	2005	76.0	76.9	75.0	40	44
	2006	72.6	76.9	68.3	39	39
	2007	75.3	78.6	71.9	42	40
FRL/Y	2004	60.8	64.8	56.8	32	35
	2005	73.0	75.0	71.0	26	23
	2006	71.2	76.1	66.3	37	32
	2007	74.7	77.8	71.6	40	37

Both the low-income (FRL/Y) and non low-income (FRL/N) subgroups in Pathfinder had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2004 and 2007. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 39 to 25 PI points, and for non low-income students it narrowed from 30 to 25 PI points. These gains in performance resulted in improvement rates of nearly 36 percent for low-income students and 17 percent for non low-income students. Between 2004 and 2007, the average performance gap between low-income students and non low-income students narrowed by nine PI points.

Figure/Table 16: MCAS Test Performance by Gender Subgroup, 2004- 2007



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2004	70.5	73.0	68.1	36	29
	2005	79.0	77.0	81.0	39	56
	2006	72.1	75.0	69.2	36	41
	2007	75.6	75.9	75.3	35	43
Female	2004	64.5	72.7	56.2	43	43
	2005	70.0	75.8	64.2	39	38
	2006	72.3	79.9	64.9	40	36
	2007	74.4	81.7	66.9	42	38

Both gender subgroups in Pathfinder had improved overall performance between 2004 and 2007 on the MCAS tests. The average proficiency gap for male students narrowed from 29 to 24 PI points, and for female students it narrowed from 36 to 26 PI points. These gains in performance resulted in improvement rates of 17 percent for male students and 28 percent for female students. Over this period the average performance gap between male and female students narrowed by five PI points.

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2007

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math
Pathfinder	ALL LEVELS	**143**	**141**
	Advanced	1	11
	Proficient	57	43
	Needs Improvement	80	72
	Warning/Failing	5	15
Regular Education	Advanced	1	11
	Proficient	50	38
	Needs Improvement	48	45
	Warning/Failing	0	4
Disability	Advanced	0	0
	Proficient	7	5
	Needs Improvement	32	27
	Warning/Failing	5	11
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	0
	Proficient	0	0
	Needs Improvement	0	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0
White	Advanced	1	11
	Proficient	51	38
	Needs Improvement	76	67
	Warning/Failing	5	15
Hispanic	Advanced	0	0
	Proficient	2	1
	Needs Improvement	2	3
	Warning/Failing	0	0
African-American	Advanced	0	0
	Proficient	0	0
	Needs Improvement	1	1
	Warning/Failing	0	0
Asian	Advanced	0	0
	Proficient	0	1
	Needs Improvement	1	0
	Warning/Failing	0	0
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	1	9
	Proficient	37	27
	Needs Improvement	48	43
	Warning/Failing	4	10
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	0	2
	Proficient	20	16
	Needs Improvement	32	29
	Warning/Failing	1	5
Male	Advanced	1	8
	Proficient	28	27
	Needs Improvement	50	41
	Warning/Failing	4	6
Female	Advanced	0	3
	Proficient	29	16
	Needs Improvement	30	31
	Warning/Failing	1	9

Notes

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

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Reexamination Findings

This section summarizes the conclusions of the EQA team's reexamination of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District. It reports on only those 2005 indicators that received a 'Poor' or 'Unsatisfactory' rating and that the EQA team reassessed. The table below displays the initial 2005 ratings and the 2007 reassessments. The narrative that follows presents the relevant 2005 indicators, followed by the ratings from 2005 and 2007 and corresponding evidence for the ratings. Because of the changes in the EQA standards and indicators, the 2005 indicators are organized according to the 2007 standards. In addition, the district was examined and rated on selected 2007 indicators that were not part of the prior examination.

Standard I: Leadership, Governance, and Communication														
	2005 Indicators												2007 Indicators	
Indicators► Ratings▼	**11.1**	**11.4**	**11.5**	**11.6**	**11.8**	**11.9**	**12.2**	**12.3**	**13.2**	**13.3**	**13.4**	**14.3**	**13**	**14**
Excellent														
Satisfactory						**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**
Needs Improvement	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**									
Poor					**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**		
Unsatisfactory	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**										

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Findings:

- The district consisted of one school so its School Improvement Plan served as a District Improvement Plan. The revised plan's goals included responsibilities, due dates, and the early stages of measurable outcomes.

- The district did not widely disseminate reports on the attainment of its SIP goals or cite them as a basis for educational decisions.
- The district had begun analyzing achievement data, had provided initial staff training on the use of data, and had begun to make some educational decisions informed by data. The district plans to improve its use of data.
- The school committee evaluated the superintendent during the reexamination period, and achievement data was a factor in his evaluation.
- Only one administrator reported to the assistant superintendent/director, and administrators were not fully empowered to manage their programs.
- Communication of policies, procedures, and goals was informal and relied on staff meetings and e-mail.
- The district based budget decisions and the allocation of resources, in part, on SIP priorities and achievement results, but was just beginning to use the SIP and disaggregated data to identify and address achievement gaps.
- The district had partnerships with many community agencies and business organizations, which provided services to students and helped improve vocational programs.
- The school safety plan covered emergency policies and procedures, and the district published its safety procedures in student and teacher handbooks.

Summary

During the reexamination period, Pathfinder took several steps to remedy shortcomings cited in the EQA review of 2005. The superintendent created an action plan in 2005 for this purpose, and the 2006 School Improvement Plan (SIP) included goals, due dates, and responsible staff members. In the plan, administrators began to describe some measurable outcomes, some of which referenced student achievement data. The SIP specified activities to accomplish the goals, but EQA examiners did not consider it comprehensive enough to be a road map to improvement. The school committee also began a long-range planning process in October 2007, and considered these documents in its first meeting in this process.

According to interviewees, the SIP was not widely disseminated, understood, or cited by teachers and administrators as the basis for improving programs. A condensed version was available on the school's website. The school council reviewed the SIP and the superintendent gave progress reports on it to the school committee. According to interviewees, progress reports also were neither disseminated nor clearly understood. The EQA examiners found that the goals and objectives had generally been achieved or funded, or were in progress.

The district has begun to train staff members in the analysis of achievement data, especially from the MCAS tests, the Stanford 9 and 10 assessments, and common course exams, to improve programs. The district provided beginning professional development on the use of achievement data, appointed a part-time data analyst, and asked teachers to devote common planning time to the analysis and use of data. The district purchased new software, intended for installation in 2007-2008, to make better use of data at the classroom level. It planned training to implement the systems later in the school year. The district based curriculum decisions, such as those regarding the purchase of new math textbooks and improvements to English language arts (ELA) remediation, on the need to improve MCAS achievement. The staff members were studying changes in the science sequence in order to improve MCAS achievement. Administrators did not follow through on their goal to survey staff members about their use of data. Vocational teachers had also begun working on the alignment of their curricula with the state Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) frameworks. The district included funding in its budget to promote improved MCAS performance and compliance with the COP frameworks as well as to implement other provisions of the SIP.

Administrators generally communicated with the staff through staff meetings, and the staff generally understood the district's priorities, which were to improve MCAS scores, to use portfolios in vocational classes, and to align the curricula with the MCAS tests and the COP. Only one administrator (the vocational coordinator) reported directly to the assistant superintendent/director, who was responsible for leading the school and who served as the principal of Pathfinder. All other administrators reported directly to the superintendent. According to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation letter of November 16, 2007, its first recommendation out of four was to "review the organizational chain of command to reduce the number of staff reporting directly to the

supervisor/director." According to interviewees' statements, school administrators seemed marginally empowered to manage their respective school-based programs.

The school committee evaluated the superintendent, in part, on the basis of improved MCAS scores. The superintendent did not evaluate administrators under his supervision, and the administrators did not have written contracts.

Examiners reviewed the district on new EQA indicators regarding partnerships and safety plans. The safety plans covered policies and procedures for emergencies, and according to interviewees the district disseminated the plans to the staff and students in their handbooks. The district developed several partnerships with community agencies and businesses.

2005 Indicators

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

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review (2001-2004), the School Improvement Plan (SIP) served as the District Improvement Plan (DIP), according to administrators. The EQA team reviewed the SIPs for 2002, 2003, and 2004, and found that the 2002 SIP was without goals, timelines, methods of implementation, or staff members responsible for implementation, and it did not mention student achievement. The 2003 SIP was without timelines, methods of implementation, or staff members responsible for implementation. None of the goals had any relationship to student achievement. The 2004 SIP had three goals, one of which was the improvement of the MCAS test scores, but it had no timelines, methods of implementation, staff members responsible for implementation, or methods to measure progress toward goals. Administrators stated in interviews that they were just getting to the point of knowing how to put together a School Improvement Plan.

During the reexamination period under review (2005-2007), the SIP continued to serve as the District Improvement Plan. The July 2006 revision included core beliefs, the philosophy of the school, objectives, and goals in seven areas: student learning, school climate, staff development, technology integration, district accountability, facilities, and public relations/accountability. Each goal included assignments/projects, responsible administrators, and due dates, and it identified some initial performance indicators that were, for the most part, measurable. Improved student achievement and the analysis of achievement data were priorities in the SIP, reflected in assignments/projects for the student learning goal. Indicators included implementation of and modifications to programs and services such as reading, writing, and math across the curriculum, the revision of the science course sequence, raising the passing grade to 65 percent, the completion of a data warehouse system, and compliance with the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) frameworks, trade certificates, and MCAS tests. The superintendent also indicated that the SIP was a major consideration in a recent school committee workshop on long-range planning.

In interviews, examiners asked administrators and teachers for their views of the priorities of the school, and they did not refer to the SIP in their answers. All agreed on its priority to improve math and ELA achievement as measured by the MCAS tests, but otherwise their expressed priorities were not consistent with those in the SIP. For example, they cited a wide variety of priorities not in the SIP such as purchasing new mathematics textbooks, revisions of the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP), inclusion, safety, and recruitment. School council members reported that their priority was communication, another goal not in the SIP. The superintendent and assistant superintendent/director also stated that the "Bible" for the school was the action plan, which was prepared to remedy deficiencies cited by the EQA in 2005, but did not closely correlate with the SIP.

11.4. An approved School Improvement Plan (SIP) for every school, aligned with the district's plan, was in use and based on the analysis of student achievement data.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

As mentioned above, for the initial period of review, the EQA team examined three SIPs. The 2002 and 2003 SIPs were narrative and described what the school had done in the past year. The SIPs did not have goals or any mention of student achievement. The 2004 SIP had three goals, one of which was the improvement of the MCAS test scores. However, the plan did not have procedures for achieving that goal, timelines, and staff members responsible for striving toward that goal. Administrators stated to examiners that because of administrative changes, they had been confused about the development of SIPs for the initial period under review.

During the reexamination period under review, the 2006 SIP continued to serve as the DIP, and the district modified it to include assignments, responsible administrators, due dates and strategies (assignments/projects). The school council endorsed the SIP and the school committee approved it. It contained some measurable outcomes and specified procedures for the improvement of MCAS scores such as the implementation of reading, writing, and math across the curriculum, and for gathering and utilizing data. However, it did not set specific targets for the increase in MCAS scores or other measurable benchmarks related to student achievement. It did include a project to bring the school's curriculum in line with trade certifications and the COP.

11.5. <u>District administrators, building administrators, and teachers demonstrated that they had the skills to use aggregate and individual test analyses to inform and assess the effectiveness of the planning process, and to improve instructional programs and services for all student populations.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, two administrators interviewed had reviewed the MCAS test scores with the help of a math teacher, but they did not disaggregate the data, nor did they have the skills to do so. Four administrators, in separate interviews, stated that they did not know how to use test data analysis in the planning process. Two administrators stated in an interview that although a review of the MCAS test scores indicated the necessity of making

changes in the math curriculum, those changes came about through the High Schools That Work program.

During the reexamination period under review, the district took steps to begin using achievement data to make educational decisions. Interviewees reported that the district gave one staff member responsibility for the analysis of achievement data, and that he used TestWiz and other software to prepare reports on the MCAS and Stanford 9 and 10 achievement data for teachers and department heads. He disaggregated the data only for special education students, but the special education director did not analyze the scores or use them for program analysis. Teachers and administrators reported that they used common planning time to review data analyses and to modify programs. Examples of modifications included new textbooks for grades 9-10 math, additional reading instruction, a study to revise the sequence of the science curriculum, and the use of ELA rubrics in preparing vocational portfolios. English teachers reported that they used data from the MCAS and Stanford 9 and 10 tests for placement and identification of students in need of additional remediation.

Teachers and administrators also reported that the district purchased additional software in October 2007 (Read 180 and the Pearson Prosper assessment system) to provide teachers more individualized data and a comprehensive profile of students. Since these were not yet installed, more time will be necessary for teachers to learn to use the system and the data effectively to inform and plan instruction as well as to track progress.

11.6. District leaders monitored student achievement data throughout the year, considered the goals identified in the DIP, and individual SIPs, and implemented programs, policies, and services that were most likely to result in improved student achievement.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the School Improvement Plans were narratives without student achievement goals, except for one general goal in the 2004 SIP that was without procedures for the attainment of that goal. The MCAS test scores were reviewed when received;

however, the changes in scope and sequence of math and ELA instruction that had been made were not part of any School Improvement Plan.

During the reexamination period under review, according to teachers and administrators, improving student achievement and MCAS scores became a priority. According to administrators, they distributed data from the MCAS and the Stanford 9 and 10 tests to department heads and teachers, and administrators expected teachers to use common planning time to analyze the results and to discuss program changes. Some of the changes cited were buying new mathematics textbooks for algebra and geometry, adding ELA remediation for grade 9, and a study of the science sequence. Students were selected for remediation in grade 9 and in the summer based on their MCAS and Stanford scores. Some teachers reported using data from Accelerated Reader to measure progress in reading, from pre- and post-tests to measure progress in math, and from classroom tests to revise lesson plans as needed. The school instituted an MCAS Wednesday program to practice for the test and identify weaknesses in skill areas. The district purchased Read 180 and Pearson software for 2007-2008 to synthesize and analyze data, and administrators described plans to begin training faculty members to use the programs in the hope that it would improve the monitoring of student achievement. The district had purchased these programs but had not yet installed them at the time of the second EQA visit.

Teachers and administrators reported working on most indicators specified in the SIP, including compliance with state frameworks for both academic and vocational curricula, an electronic data system, implementation of career portfolios, and compliance with COP standards. According to administrators, the district did not complete the SIP goal to survey staff members on their use of data, on the integration of technology, and on the climate of the school. School council members cited school communication and not the goals in the SIP as their top priority.

11.8. <u>The leadership reported annually to the school committee, staff, and community concerning the extent to which the implementation of the DIP and SIPs did/did not result in improved student achievement.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the assistant director brought the School Improvement Plans to the school committee for their approval. The district did not produce evidence in either document form or in interviews with school committee members, administrators, or staff members that it compiled a report on the implementation of the School Improvement Plan and the attainment of its goals, including the goal of improved student achievement.

During the reexamination period under review, the SIP and progress reports on completing it were not widely disseminated to staff members or parents. In interviews, most teachers admitted they were not aware of its content. As noted above, the SIP also served as the DIP.

According to administrators and minutes, the superintendent gave oral reports on progress on the SIP to the school committee in the spring and presented a revised plan for its approval. A condensed version was available to all on the school website. The school committee and staff also received annual reports on MCAS results. Interviewees indicated that previously the district had measured progress primarily in terms of the number of students who did not score in the 'Warning/Failing' category on the MCAS tests. In 2007, they stated that they raised their expectations of achievement by measuring progress in terms of how many students were attaining proficiency on the MCAS tests.

11.9. The superintendent's performance was evaluated annually based on the district's state assessment results and implementation of the DIP. This evaluation served as the basis for setting compensation and improving the future job performance of the superintendent.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the superintendent-director was evaluated annually. The district's MCAS results were not a factor in those evaluations. Instead, the evaluations were based upon his relations with the school committee, the member communities, and the school's staff. The evaluation of the superintendent-director was one factor in setting compensation and improving job performance.

During the reexamination period under review, the school committee evaluated the superintendent using a form that did not address student achievement data, but the chair of the committee included a recommendation to continue to improve students' MCAS scores in his summary of members' recommendations intended to improve his performance. Other recommendations that helped set a direction for the leadership of the district included organization of a long-term planning session, establishment of administrators' contracts, reporting on progress to institute a new pre-engineering program, to delegate more, and to present a fair and equitable budget. Examiners found that no other administrators had been evaluated and, with the exception of a retired administrator, none of the school administrators had an employment contract.

12.2. The district leaders ensured that:

a. all principals were aware of and understood published policies and district improvement plans, and

b. the district used system-wide and intra-district communication systems to keep all faculty and staff informed and to provide avenues for response.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the staff's knowledge of the SIP was not evident to examiners, beyond those directly involved with the planning process. The district did not distribute the plan. In interviews with administrators and staff members, it was stated that the school was small enough for informal communications, memos when needed, and monthly teachers' meetings to keep all informed. Response was also informal; in interviews administrators stated, "The doors are always open."

During the reexamination period under review, the superintendent and assistant superintendent/director understood the SIP, and they reported that the administration did not distribute the SIP to staff members but made it available to them and the public on the school's website. Although staff members interviewed did not appear to be familiar with the SIP itself, they stated that administrators had communicated to them what the school needed to achieve.

Staff members reported that faculty and department meetings were the primary venues for communication about priorities, policies, and procedures. Administrators also communicated with staff members via e-mail, and the local computer network contained a desktop folder of lesson plans and other initiatives, learning accommodations, and resource information. Many policies and procedures, including those for grading, safety and emergencies, were also included in the student and teacher handbooks.

12.3. The district was organized in a manner that addressed all aspects of administrative actions and had lines of responsibility. Job descriptions for all personnel were current, published, and available to all faculty and staff.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district had a clear organizational chart and the central office stated that it had current job descriptions for administrators, although the administrators said that they did not have job descriptions. They stated that they knew what their duties and responsibilities were from past practice and procedures. Further examination and interviews revealed that when the administration posted a position for a new hire, it drew up a list of qualifications that served as an unofficial job description, and published these requirements at the time of job posting, but they were not available after the position was filled.

During the reexamination period under review, the organizational chart for the district from 2000 was still in effect, and it showed all but one administrator reporting to the superintendent. The vocational coordinator was the only administrator who reported to the assistant superintendent/director, who served as principal of the school.

The district presented job descriptions to the EQA examiners, and the superintendent stated that the district updated the descriptions when it posted vacancies . The three most recently updated were descriptions for the assistant superintendent/director, assistant director, and vocational coordinator. The teachers' contract outlined duties of department heads.

13.2. Relevant budget development decisions were premised on a clear, documented systemic analysis of student performance data as well as other pertinent information.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did little systemic analysis of student achievement data to inform its budget development, according to the superintendent. In interviews, administrators stated that the district based relevant budget decisions on a review of MCAS test scores, although not in a documented, systematic analysis. This resulted in more resources for the academic areas, including additional math and English teachers and a remedial English teacher who worked with the vocational teachers. Funds were allocated to professional development for courses in reading across the curriculum and portfolio development. The primary focus was retaining teaching staff members and maintaining class size. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report indicated that the budgets were clear and understandable.

During the reexamination period under review, the district made several budget appropriations on the basis of achievement data. Administrators reported that concerns about MCAS performance and new priorities to improve achievement in ELA and math resulted in purchases of new algebra and geometry textbooks, the Read 180 program, and the Pearson Prosper assessment for 2007.

Administrators analyzed other pertinent information, such as enrollment data and special education scores, and hired or redeployed staffing as a result. For example, a special education paraprofessional was hired to improve the use of inclusion, a computer-aided drafting teacher was cut from the budget, and more staff people were added in cosmetology, information technology, and health.

13.3. The district's budget development process was clear, document and integrated district and school improvement plans, long-term goals, and action plans.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, school committee policy and the superintendent's many years of experiences in analyzing the fiscal conditions of the member towns, the availability of Chapter 70 aid, and transportation reimbursements were all factors in the budget development process. The budget development process did not integrate the School Improvement Plan. The administration addressed student achievement by reviewing the MCAS test scores; however, it did not use student achievement data in making budgetary decisions. The superintendent stated that the district had informal, long-term goals that included adding staff members and reviewing the MVIP and restructuring it into a collaborative. The long-term capital plan was reviewed periodically.

During the reexamination period under review, the budget development documents did not formally cite the SIP, but upon analysis, examiners found that they did include funding for most of the objectives included in the SIP. Administrators reported that the budget included funding to support the attainment of SIP goals, including ELA and math across the curriculum, technology, data analysis software, the video and security system, and the capital improvement plan. Similarly, the budget included funding for action plan goals to implement new texts in math and to provide training in the use of data to improve instruction. One of the NEASC recommendations from November 16, 2007 was that the district "develop a capital improvement plan to address facility needs," even though the district had been building small structures to address immediate space and storage needs.

13.4. <u>The district allocated its resources based on the ongoing analysis of student assessment data in the aggregate and disaggregated by student subgroups to improve achievement for all student populations.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not base its resource allocation on an ongoing analysis of student assessment data, although it did allocate some resources for special

education students based to a degree on an analysis of student assessment data. According to the administration, the district addressed the needs of its special education population by providing additional staff members and professional development to address the areas of alternative assessments. However, the district did not analyze assessment data of low-income students. The superintendent stated that Title I was used a resource to improve achievement for all student populations.

During the reexamination period under review, the district allocated some resources based on the analyses of aggregated student assessment data. Administrators reported that in 2007, the district purchased new math textbooks to improve MCAS scores, and in the fall of 2007 it purchased Read 180 software to improve ELA scores and the Pearson Prosper assessment system to better analyze data. Interviewees claimed that the district disaggregated the assessment data of the special education student population, but the data were not widely analyzed by the special education department. In response, a special education teacher and a math teacher were reassigned to co-teach an inclusion class, a paraprofessional was added to implement more inclusion classes, and MVIP students and other special education students took alternative assessments in increasing numbers to improve their performance.

Examiners found no evidence that the district disaggregated achievement data for other subgroups, such as low-income students (32 percent of students in the district), males and females, whose performance varied widely, or English language learner (ELL) students. However, it did allocate resources for subgroups in that Title I funds were used for low-income students, and a Spanish teacher was newly assigned the responsibility to oversee services for ELL students.

14.3. Regular, timely, accurate, and complete financial reports were made to the school committee and the public.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the school committee received budget expenditure summary reports showing expenditures, encumbrances, balances, and other financial data as

needed or upon request, according to the superintendent and the business manager. The annual audit reports were made available to the school committee, as confirmed in interviews with school committee members. The superintendent prepared an annual report in compliance with the district agreement and made the report available to the public.

During the reexamination period under review, the school committee continued to receive financial reports as needed. Administrators reported that in June they gave annual reports on the budget surplus, encumbrances needed for the following year, and transfers, and gave them audit reports when they became available. The superintendent did not give formal monthly financial reports or projected balances, but the chair of the school committee met with the business manager two or more times a month to review warrants and received financial updates and projections at that time. The superintendent's annual report to the school committee and to member towns included financial and budget information for inclusion in their reports to all citizens. Administrators reported that they did not have on-line computer access to their accounts, but they did receive monthly expenditure reports.

2007 Indicators

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had partnerships with many community organizations. The recent five-year report by the NEASC listed partnerships with the chamber of commerce, the police chiefs' association, and the local hospital as well as collaborations with local businesses through the tech prep, school to career, and cooperative education programs. Students performed community service with various agencies, including Habitat for Humanity, open pantry, Special Olympics, and with blood and food drives. The community supported school programs through the school council, the boosters, and tech advisory committees. Administrators also reported on collaboration with the regional employment board, on agreements with local community colleges, and on school

referrals to social agencies such as the Job Corps' "OWL" school, and referrals to the program funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a safety plan, dated 2004-2006, which included policies and procedures for fire, bomb threats, hurricanes and tornados, serious injury, suicides, and intruders. It also included safety policies for shops. Teacher and student handbooks contained summaries of safety policies and procedures. Administrators reported that local fire and building inspectors visited the school building at least once a year to ensure compliance with safety codes, and examiners had the opportunity to observe the collaboration of school and local safety officials during a bomb threat. The district installed a new video surveillance system in 2006.

Standard II: Curriculum and Instruction											
	2005 Indicators									2007 Indicators	
Ratings▼ Indicators►	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	6.1	6.2	6.6	9	11
Excellent											
Satisfactory											
Needs Improvement	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007
Poor	2005		2005	2005	2005		2005		2005		
Unsatisfactory		2005				2005		2005			

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Findings:

- The department heads in the academic areas did not have supervisory/monitoring responsibilities that would ensure fidelity of implementation of the curriculum and instructional strategies; as a result, they considered themselves to be more like lead teachers.
- Academic departments lacked common initiatives or strategies to increase academic rigor and improve student achievement.
- Although the district employed a vocational coordinator to supervise and evaluate staff members, analyze data, oversee curriculum development and revision and the improvement of instructional strategies, and monitor the fidelity of the curriculum's implementation, it lacked a similar supervisory position in the academic realm that would bring departments together to support initiatives focused on increasing student achievement.
- The Project Lead the Way initiative was Pathfinder's first integrated model, and included the physics, math, and vocational teachers working together in a pre-engineering program.
- While each academic department had common planning time, there was limited communication between the departments.
- The district had revised and realigned the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula since the last EQA visit.

- The mathematics teachers who continued to work with the High Schools That Work model completed revision, alignment, and mapping of the mathematics curricula for Algebra I, Algebra IA, Algebra IB, and Geometry.
- While the inclusion model has kept students in the education mainstream, the achievement gap between regular education and special education students had grown during the reexamination period; academic teachers had received little or no training in working with the inclusion model and were not reaching all levels of students.
- While the district had begun to analyze data and increase its use of data, staff members used only aggregated data and did not disaggregate data for subgroups to modify instruction to close the achievement gap, except for special education students.

Summary

During the reexamination visit, the EQA team found that Pathfinder was at varying stages of completing its curriculum. The vocational area completed alignment of the curriculum to the Massachusetts vocational technical frameworks and was in the process of breaking out and sequencing the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) standards over the course of the program. Each shop had its respective curriculum displayed on the Pathfinder website.

The mathematics department had completed a curriculum review and revision for Algebra I, Algebra IA, Algebra IB, and Geometry, aligning the courses to the Massachusetts mathematics framework and cross-referencing them with the mathematics standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). The math department mapped the curriculum and selected and implemented new texts for algebra and geometry. For the first time, math teachers were using common textbooks.

The English department completed a revision of the grade 9 and grade 10 curricula, which thereafter aligned with the Massachusetts English language arts framework and included resources and some assessments and rubrics. The department was replacing low-level novels with more appropriate grade-level novels by purchasing new titles each year. The English department had not developed or used curriculum maps or pacing guides.

The science department was just beginning to review the MCAS science test and to review and align its curriculum and sequence to the Massachusetts science framework. The curriculum still consisted only of course syllabi and outlines.

Each academic department had a department head whose responsibilities included facilitating department meetings, preparing the department budget, and ordering materials. The department heads did not have supervisory or evaluative responsibilities; therefore, they were not responsible for monitoring or supervising implementation of curriculum and instructional initiatives in the classroom. They described themselves more as "lead teachers." The vocational area had a vocational coordinator, an administrator, with these responsibilities. In contrast, the assistant superintendent/director of the school was expected to fill the role of academic coordinator in addition to other responsibilities assigned as the principal. In a letter dated November 16, 2007, NEASC recommended to the district that it "create an academic coordinator position to provide similar academic services as are currently being provided by the vocational coordinator."

The collection and analysis of data had become a greater priority of the district since the last EQA visit. The district designated one staff member to be responsible for grants and for data gathering, analysis (primarily through TestWiz), and distribution. The departments received aggregated data, item analyses, and student profiles, which they used to review and modify the curricula to address strengths and weaknesses. It did not appear that they used any student achievement data to promote or encourage teachers to create flexible groups within the academic classrooms.

The district had moved to a full inclusion model for special needs students but retained the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) for severe special needs students. Teachers in the academic inclusion classroom received no professional development training in using this model. Not all inclusion classes had paraprofessional services. Interviewees stated that one paraprofessional was assigned to each department to cover classes to which most students on IEPs were scheduled. The EQA examiners observed the role the paraprofessionals played in providing instruction to students in 32 randomly selected classrooms, and found them actively involved in instruction in 53 percent of the classrooms observed.

During the reexamination period, participation in High Schools That Work, a model for data-driven decision-making, became voluntary, which interviewees stated increased the involvement of staff members. For example, the mathematics department used the model to create its new algebra and geometry curricula.

The school implemented the first phase of Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering sequence of courses taught in the vocational area and the physics class. The first class began in the 2006-2007 school year and the departments were planning for the implementation of the second stage. This program was grant funded.

2005 Indicators

5.1. The district had written curricula for all grade levels and tested core content areas that were clearly aligned with the State Curriculum Frameworks.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review (2001-2004), the district did not have a written curriculum for all content areas that clearly aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Administrators interviewed said that written curricula of this nature had been available throughout the period under examination. The EQA team reviewed curriculum guides for all of the content areas including ELA, math, and all 13 of the vocational shop programs, and found that most of them were simple syllabi or course outlines with some additional resources. The guides were available to teachers through the school's website. One of the website entries stated, "The individual departments review academic disciplines and all new curriculum updates or provisions are aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks." These guides were not dated and did not indicate any specific alignment with the frameworks. Teachers interviewed said that they were provided with curriculum guides. A number of vocational teachers explained that they had a curriculum developed in-house that did not align with any particular set of standards. Instead, they derived it from their knowledge of the industry and input from their respective program advisory committees. Only three of the

district's 13 shop areas, automotive, auto body, and culinary, had third-party, national certification.

During the reexamination period under review (2005-2007), the district had completed work on the math curriculum for Algebra I, Algebra IA, Algebra IB, and Geometry, and English language arts for grades 9 and 10. The English department completed its curriculum for grades 9 and 10 while the curriculum for the rest of the grades was under development. The science department had only begun to look at the curriculum for revision, alignment, and sequencing of topics.

The math curriculum document contained curriculum maps with time frame, essential questions (some just stated the topic covered), objectives, and a crosswalk of the Massachusetts mathematics framework to the standards of the National Council of Teacher of Mathematics (NCTM). In addition, the document included suggested activities, resources, and assessment. The district adopted a single text for Algebra I and Geometry. Interviewees indicated this was new, as teachers previously had used multiple texts. The math department also developed a scoring rubric and paragraph frames in algebra for Visual Modeling Projects.

The English curriculum contained the Massachusetts ELA strands and standards. Objectives in the curriculum came directly from the framework, organized by content and behavioral objectives. The curriculum also listed student activities, resources, possible weekly assessments, and focus correction areas (FCAs) for composition strand content. These FCAs were recently (October 2007) communicated to all departments, both vocational and academic, and placed in the common folder on the internal website.

The science curriculum remained a course outline or syllabus of each course. Interviewees indicated that they had worked to align the curriculum to the state framework in department meetings but had not yet produced written documents. The course sequence had shifted due to the design of the MCAS tests in science. The district implemented a pre-engineering course, Project Lead the Way, in grade 9 that would continue into grade 10.

Under the leadership of the vocational coordinator, each shop aligned its curriculum to the Massachusetts vocational technical frameworks. Each shop had distributed the sequencing of the framework competencies for the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP) over the

freshman to junior year, and had placed the curriculum and skills to master on the Pathfinder website.

5.2. Each school in the district had a curriculum leader to oversee the use, alignment, quality, currency, and consistency of the district's curricula.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the principal served as the overseer of all curriculum matters. In 2002, the district created the position of vocational coordinator with responsibility for all vocational area curricula and assigned responsibility for all academic area curricula to the principal. However, interviews with teachers and administrators and a review of documentation revealed a more complex system that lacked a clear accountability mechanism.

The district had a standing curriculum committee, composed of the principal, two academic teachers, two vocational teachers, and a special education teacher, responsible for "curriculum maintenance." These committee members received a stipend for their participation. Administrators explained in interviews that the effectiveness of the committee was in question. In the past the curricula had been reviewed when "teachers felt that the curriculum needed looking at." The district did not have a schedule for the review of each content area. When presented with a curriculum the role of the committee was to ensure only that the guide conformed to the formatting standards of the document. According to administrators, the committee did not critically review the content or the assessments to see that the guides aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The administration had attempted to abolish the committee because of its ineffectiveness, but could not do so because of the specific language in the teacher contract. In 2004-2005, the administration reconfigured the committee and redefined its role. According to all personnel interviewed, the role of monitoring the adequacy of the curricula, as well as their alignment to the frameworks, fell upon the individual teachers.

During the reexamination period under review, the assistant superintendent/director, who was in his third year in the position, still served as the overseer of all academic curriculum matters. The assistant superintendent/director had previously been the guidance director at Pathfinder. His

responsibilities included supervision and evaluation of all academic staff members in addition to all other duties of the principal. During interviews, administrators and staff members indicated that the assistant superintendent/director did walk-throughs frequently; however, the district lacked a system for the supervision and monitoring of the fidelity of implementation of the curriculum in classrooms. The vocational coordinator worked with vocational departments to align their curricula and monitored the curricula for implementation. There was no comparable position for academic departments.

Interviews with teachers and administrators and a review of documentation showed an improved ability for academic departments to meet since the implementation of common planning time, one hour every other week and 30 minutes at the end of the school day, dedicated to department issues. Interviewees could not consistently confirm that the 30 minutes at the end of each day, in all departments, were well utilized, especially since everyone did not arrive to their respective meetings at the same time. There was little evidence presented that the district had an efficient system of accountability in the academic areas of instruction. The assistant superintendent/director indicated that he relied on the department heads, who were more like lead teachers, to facilitate meetings, prepare department budgets, and complete ordering; however, they did not have supervisory responsibilities, did not visit other classrooms, and did not supervise or evaluate teachers. Lead teachers taught a full schedule of classes. Interviews with administrators and staff members indicated there was little opportunity for lead teachers to know what was happening in other classrooms, except through the discussions in department meetings.

The assistant superintendent/director disbanded the district curriculum committee because, according to its official function, the committee only had the authority to make changes in the curriculum format but not to revise the curriculum in any way. Subsequently, revising the curriculum took place during department meetings or at summer workshops. Administrators and department heads indicated in interviews that there was neither a committee nor a supervisor on the academic side comparable to the vocational coordinator on the vocational side to oversee the academic curriculum development and implementation of revisions.

5.3. The district had an established, documented process that involved teachers in the annual review and/or revision of curricula based on the analyses of results of standardized tests.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district had a system that involved teachers in the review of curriculum. As cited, the district had a curriculum committee established in the teacher contract, which met monthly and reviewed various curriculum guides, although only to ensure that they followed the district's standard format. They did not "validate" the guides, as suggested on the school website. According to administrators and teachers interviewed, revisions did not arise from the analysis of data from standardized tests. Typically, teachers made changes when the curriculum frameworks changed dramatically, or if a program advisory committee specifically recommended it. Administrators confirmed that the district lacked a regular review cycle for all content areas.

The EQA examiners found, through interviews and an analysis of district documents, that the district still had no documented process to analyze data and to use them to review and modify the curriculum during the reexamination period. The district did not have a regular curriculum cycle for curriculum review nor did it have a priority focus on one curriculum area annually. Each department developed it own curriculum, independently of other departments. Rarely did the teachers from one department ever get to meet with the teachers from another department. In some instances, teachers from one department could not name the department head in another core subject area.

Administrators and staff members reported that they used data much more frequently to revise and modify curriculum, but there was not yet a consistent process for using data. One staff member had the primary responsibility for grants and data and used TestWiz to analyze student achievement data. Generally, departments received aggregated data, item analyses, and student profiles. The district did not usually disaggregate data by subgroup, with the exception of special education students. Teachers referenced the use of data from Test Vault, computer software used to generate tests and data for MCAS Wednesdays, a whole-school academic initiative to address

areas of weakness identified by MCAS testing, but not done on Wednesday by all departments. Teachers stated that they used these data during department meetings to review, revise, and modify curriculum. They told the EQA that the analysis sometimes resulted in changing the sequence of what was taught, such as in math and science.

The math teachers used the High Schools That Work model, and during the period under reexamination the math department used that "decision-making model" to revise the curriculum and create curriculum maps. Since participation in the program became voluntary, more staff members have participated in the initiative. Interviewees said that the assistant superintendent/director had helped to create a more collegial atmosphere by allowing work with initiatives such as High Schools That Work to be voluntary instead of mandatory in order to move the school forward.

5.4. (In vocational districts and academic districts with Chapter 74 programs) The results of student assessment data (i.e., longitudinal, demographic, disaggregated, diagnostic, and/or surveys) and post-graduate placement data indicated that the district implemented an established process to ensure sequencing and alignment of learning goals, skills and expectations from one grade to the next in grades 9-12, and integration of academic skills, particularly in ELA, mathematics and science and technology (and other tested core academic areas as added) into each occupational area.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the amount of actual data analysis that took place, especially as part of a curriculum revision process, varied widely by department, according to administrators and teachers. The level of analysis varied from in-depth studies done in one area to some shop areas complaining that they never saw placement data. Administrators explained that even though data might not be provided in the regular course of business, in all cases data were available to teachers upon request. A number of teachers were either unaware of this fact, or did not avail themselves of the opportunity.

The district had made some effort to evaluate the sequencing of courses. In 2002, the math department had made changes to the sequence of the math curriculum in response to poor student performance on various aspects of the MCAS math test. The math department had found a weakness in geometry and discovered that the majority of students did not study geometry until grade 11, after they had taken the MCAS test. The department changed the math course progression to expose students to geometry by the time they took the grade 10 MCAS math test. The math department had also increased the minimum level of all math courses for freshmen. As of 2002, it raised the minimum standard to Algebra I. Previously, the department placed lower ability students in basic remedial level classes. Basic math and writing became an integral component of the students' related instruction for their vocational area.

During the reexamination period under review, the district continued to evaluate the sequencing of courses. The vocational area continued to support the academic math department by using time from the related shops to teach a basic math course to freshmen. This consisted of 20 units for the year. Students were pre-tested in academic math on the first day of school, and then the related shop area implemented the units and kept data on the students. All students now took Algebra I or IA in their freshman year and Geometry in their sophomore year. Science was adjusting the course sequence to match the MCAS science test content. Anatomy and physiology were recently added to the curriculum.

In the vocational area, the district had aligned the curricula to the Massachusetts vocational frameworks and posted them on the district website. The departments were in the process of breaking out embedded academic competencies into the four years of the programs. The EQA team observed the beginnings of integration with the writing across the curriculum initiative in the focus correction areas (FCAs) that are part of the John Collins Writing Program. Four vocational teachers had recently attended the initial training in the Collins program and the John Collins Writing poster was evident in many vocational or related classrooms. This created a more consistent structure to teaching writing in several areas, but not yet across the curriculum.

Access to and use of data, especially for incoming students, continued to vary, with some teachers receiving little or no data and others receiving printouts from their departments. Administrators indicated that the grants/data coordinator could not access TestWiz data for

incoming students since they came from seven primary districts and 23 different middle schools. In 2007-2008, Pathfinder administered the Stanford 10 for the first time to all grade 9 students. However, results arrived in mid-October, which was too late to inform student placement. According to interviewees, teachers often had to seek out data in the absence of a protocol or systematic process for distributing the data to teachers.

5.5. The district's curricula in all tested content areas were aligned horizontally to ensure that all teachers of a common grade level addressed specific subject matter following the same time line, and vertically to ensure complete coverage, eliminate redundancies, and close any gaps.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district's curricula did not align horizontally and vertically in some of the content areas. In many cases, the district's curriculum guides were more like syllabi or course outlines. In interviews, teachers and administrators explained that these guides provided a framework and that teachers were allowed to develop specific activities or use the resources they saw fit to address the requirements of the curriculum. As a result, in some areas teachers at a similar level of the same subject might be teaching completely different material. This variation in practice among teachers was also true in the sequencing of concepts they taught throughout the year.

Administrators and teachers explained that departments decided about how closely their teachers mirrored each other. While they cited the social studies department as an example of a group with highly synchronized instruction from class to class and teacher to teacher, they viewed the English department as permitting much more variation.

It was a unanimously held belief that the vocational areas had a great deal of articulation both horizontally and vertically. Teachers in the same shop areas worked closely together and covered the same types of projects. Additionally, the competency lists in place for each shop area ensured that the entire curriculum was covered.

During the reexamination period under review, examiners found that teachers in the shop areas worked closely together, especially with the alignment of curricula to the Massachusetts vocational frameworks, the competency lists for each department, and certifications for shop areas. In addition, six vocational shops had attained national or state certification.

The math curriculum documents revealed a well developed curriculum. Math courses aligned horizontally and vertically for grades 9-11. Using the High Schools That Work protocol, the department had mapped out the curriculum and implemented a single textbook to address topics and skills consistently.

During interviews, the examiners learned that the English department was well along in revising its curriculum and had completed the alignment for grades 9 and 10. At the time of the EQA visit, there were no curriculum maps for ELA or science yet, although interviewees told examiners that the sequence of science topics already aligned with the Massachusetts framework. There appeared to be wider latitude in implementation of the English curriculum than the other curricula. Department heads had no supervisory responsibilities for curriculum and instruction, which was the official responsibility of the assistant superintendent/director.

5.6. Modifications to the curriculum resulted in improved, equitable achievement for all student populations.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the initial period of EQA review, the district did not have equitable achievement for the various student populations in the district, as revealed through an examination of the MCAS test data. Scores of students with disabilities had improved from a performance index (PI) of 37.2 PI points in 2002 to 48.4 points in 2004. However, the PI for Pathfinder special education students was 5.2 points lower than that of special education vocational students statewide. According to teachers and administrators interviewed, no formal evaluations were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the various curricula, nor were any modifications made to them. Administrators described discussions that took place in meetings concerning a particular initiative. However, in most cases these were limited to the use of anecdotal evidence.

During the reexamination period under review, modification to the curriculum did not result in improved equitable achievement of all populations. Although progress was made in some areas, the overall trend in MCAS results appeared to be relatively flat. For example, the percentage of students scoring at the 'Proficient' level in ELA went from 42 percent in 2005 to 39 percent in 2006 to 41 percent in 2007. In math, the percentage of students who were proficient ranged from 44 percent in 2005 to 36 percent in 2006 to 38 percent in 2007. In English language arts, the proficiency index for students with disabilities was 63.6 PI points in 2005, 65.0 in 2006, and 61.9 in 2007. In math, the proficiency index for students with disabilities was 61.7 PI points in 2005, 50.0 in 2006, and 54.7 in 2007.

According to interviewees, most academic classes moved to full inclusion since 2004 and the improvement rate for special needs students was greater than the aggregate student population. Students in the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) developed and submitted electronic portfolios to the Massachusetts alternative assessment program, with all 15 students scoring 100 points in ELA (which was proficient) and 14 of 15 scoring 100 points in math.

On the grade 10 MCAS ELA test in 2007, 48 percent of the females attained proficiency, while in mathematics only 32 percent did so. For males, 35 percent attained proficiency in ELA while 43 percent attained proficiency in mathematics. When asked about the discrepancy in ELA and math performance between female and male students, interviewees were unaware of the existence of a gender gap in the scores and stated that they did not routinely review much disaggregated data, especially by gender or income status.

6.1. <u>The district had policies in place that expressed rigorous/high expectations for teachers, their work as professional educators, and the effectiveness of the instructional process.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the initial period of EQA review, the policy manual did not contain any expressions of high expectations for teachers or the effectiveness of the instructional process. Additionally, a random sample of personnel files of professional status teachers revealed that in the vast majority of cases the evaluation process was not used to reaffirm any high expectations for instruction. In

most cases, the evaluations were benign and consistently laudatory. Administrators explained during interviews that they would give teachers verbal directions and encourage higher standards for instruction but would not necessarily put any specific recommendations in writing. Interviews with approximately 15 teachers could not confirm they either had a conversation about or had any written recommendations regarding raising the expectations for instruction.

During the reexamination period under review, the district added to the policy manual two recently adopted policies that reflect high expectations for teachers. According to interviewees, those policies were adopted in response to the previous EQA examination. The district had a teacher handbook that addressed the professional duties of teachers and set standards for professional conduct regarding punctual arrival at school and attendance at meetings at the end of the school day, even if one was a coach or involved in after-school activities. The handbook included consequences for continued infractions after initial notification of the problem, followed with letters from the principal, as evidenced in the personnel files. Nonetheless, evaluations contained in personnel files reviewed included little feedback regarding the maintaining of high expectations of teachers. Evaluations that the vocational coordinators wrote, both past and present, were far more informative concerning the quality of classroom instruction.

Administrators stated that they found conducting conversations with teachers to be a more effective way to encourage change, in preference to putting it in writing. Interviews with staff members indicated that the assistant superintendent/director had made inroads into developing a culture where higher expectations and “moving forward” was part of the conversation. In interviews, teachers reported that they now have to document everything, such as signing in at meetings, producing meeting minutes, and passing in documents. Conversely, interviewees were less consistent in their views that actual change versus “the appearance of change” in instructional practice was really occurring in all departments.

According to interviewees, voluntary participation in High Schools That Work had counteracted an acrimonious atmosphere in the school. Interviewees stated that voluntary participation had strengthened the data-driven decision-making process as seen through accomplishments in the new mathematics curriculum, curriculum mapping, and textbook implementation.

6.2. The district expected that teachers used current assessment information to plan instruction and provided teachers with support and training in this process. MCAS and other trend data indicated that the district's practices, provisioning, and support for the instructional program were sufficient, as indicated in student achievement that consistently equaled or surpassed the state averages across grade levels.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the trend in MCAS test performance did not show the district consistently equaling or surpassing the state averages. The district did not expect the teachers to use current assessment information to plan instruction. Several documents reviewed, including the policy manual, teachers' contract, and the teachers' handbook, did not contain any requirement that teachers use assessment information to plan instruction. Administrators interviewed supported this finding; however, teachers were expected to assess the progress of their students, and it was assumed that the results from these assessments would affect what instruction took place.

Though Pathfinder had participated since 2002 in the High Schools That Work program, which required data-driven decision-making, the district was still in the early stages of achieving the goal of using data for decision-making at the time of the first EQA visit. Administrators said that they expected teachers to consider data; however, this recommendation was merely a suggested practice. Administrators did confirm that a primary focus of the professional development program was differentiated instruction and the different ways that students learn. The professional development program allowed teachers to receive reimbursement for courses taken at local colleges, with prior approval from the superintendent. Administrators were certain that the superintendent would approve training on the use of data; however, they could not cite an example of when this type of training took place in the district.

In interviews, teachers consistently agreed that the district had provided sufficient materials. Even in shop areas, where equipment purchases were often expensive, teachers confirmed that if they needed something and their program advisory committee (PAC) supported it, the district

made every attempt to make the purchase. Very expensive items were then included in long-term capital plans. Departments received their own discretionary funds for use as they saw fit. The administration assumed that departments could best decide what they needed and would spend the money accordingly.

During the reexamination period under review, the district had a professional development in-service session on understanding MCAS test data, presented by an administrator from another vocational school. Pathfinder departments received MCAS results and, according to interviewees, used them to modify curriculum. However, in interviews with administrators and staff members, the EQA team did not find explicit expectations for using the data to modify classroom instruction. Interviewees indicated that they held ongoing discussions at department meetings concerning assessments, strengths and weaknesses on a topic, and strategies to address them. The team found little evidence that the district disaggregated much data to support flexible grouping within academic classrooms, and the team did not observe any differentiation of instruction at Pathfinder, with the exception of the special needs students in the MVIP classrooms. During random classroom observations, EQA examiners looked for the use of a variety of instructional teaching strategies to reach students who learn in different ways. In only 34 percent of academic classrooms observed did the EQA team see more than one instructional strategy. The team observed greater variety in instructional strategies in vocational classes.

The district implemented MCAS Wednesdays to address areas of weakness identified in aggregate MCAS test results or areas/ topics not stressed in the curriculum, such as charts and graphs. Based on a look at the aggregated data, each department developed a packet for each week around that topic or skill. There was no discussion across academic departments to coordinate and address topics common to more than one departmental area.

Interviewees indicated that most data analysis came from one source, the grants/data coordinator. According to interviewees, departments generally received aggregated data, item analyses, and student profiles. Classroom teachers depended on the special education teachers for data on their inclusion students, including accommodations. Most assessment results were not readily available at the start of the school year to aid teachers in placement or planning instruction.

MCAS data showed little change from 2006 to 2007. For students with disabilities and students not receiving free or reduced-cost lunch, the achievement gap in ELA widened slightly between Pathfinder and the state vocational average. In math, the test results revealed a slight gap between the performance of Pathfinder regular education students and those across the state (even though at Pathfinder, there was much less ethnic diversity when compared to the state average). In comparison, a much wider gap existed for students with disabilities and students not receiving free or reduced-cost lunch.

6.6. The district recognized the importance of instructional stability by maintaining not only accurate information on staff attendance but also by evaluating the effects of staff attendance on student achievement.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the initial period of EQA review, the district did have a system in place to monitor staff attendance and track absences over time; however, the district had not conducted any analyses of staff attendance and its impact upon student achievement, according to administrators interviewed.

During the reexamination period under review, the district collected data on staff attendance and monitored attendance over time. According to data submitted to the EQA on Attachment C, staff absences for the 2006-2007 school year averaged 14.4 days, and 13.7 days excluding time for professional development. The data listed 383.5 days as "days absent for other reasons," an average of 4.4 days per person, and according to interviewees the district had not analyzed them although they were considered quite high in comparison to the state average and in considering the amount of time that students would not have access to their regular teacher.

2007 Indicators

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the reexamination period under review, the district used an inclusion model in its academic classrooms that minimized separation from the mainstream. In analyzing the professional development of teachers, it appeared that teachers had received little or no professional development for implementing this model. Administrators and interviewees reported that a regular education math teacher and a special education teacher had co-taught one math class, with additional support from a paraprofessional. All of the students in this class were on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). According to department heads, one paraprofessional was assigned to each department to work in those academic classrooms that had the greatest number of students on IEPs. The paraprofessional assigned to the English department was in this assignment for the second year and the math paraprofessional was in this assignment for the third year. Overall, there was little evidence presented or observed in classrooms that teachers or paraprofessionals had received specific training in providing support in inclusion classrooms.

The professional development offerings for the period under reexamination did not include training or professional development in any inclusion model. According to archived initiatives listed on the Pathfinder website, differentiated instruction had been a focus of in-service several years ago, but the EQA team did not observe regular use of this strategy in academic classrooms. The MCAS test data showed that the achievement gap between regular education students and those with learning disabilities had widened during the period when the inclusion model was used in academic classrooms; the performance of regular education students improved and the performance of students with disabilities declined. According to MCAS test data, the ELA proficiency index (EPI) in 2005 was 80.1 PI points for regular education students and 63.6 points for students with disabilities, a gap of 16.5 points. In 2007, the EPI for regular education students was 85.6 PI points while for students with disabilities it was 61.9 points, a gap of 23.7 points. The math proficiency index (MPI) in 2005 was 77.6 PI points for regular education students and 61.7 points for students with disabilities, a gap of 15.9 points. In 2007, the MPI was 79.3 PI points for regular education students and 54.7 points for students with disabilities, a gap of 24.6 points.

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed 32 randomly selected classrooms at the school and recorded the presence or absence of 33 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching, grouped into five categories: classroom management; instructional practice; expectations; student activity, work, and behavior; and classroom climate for learning. Examiners recorded the attributes observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. In total, the EQA examiners observed seven ELA classrooms, five math classrooms, five science classrooms, and 15 vocational classrooms. In calculating the presence of observed practices, where appropriate, the practices that would not be applicable were noted and were removed from the total to obtain a proper basis for determining the percentage.

With respect to classroom management, some classroom routines and rules were well established in the service of learning. However, transitions at the beginning and end of classes did not maximize instructional time. This was better handled in vocational classes than academic ones, where students got right to work.

Questioning techniques observed did not include those that encouraged elaboration, thought, and broad involvement. Rather, questioning strategies relied on cuing for recall of information rather than asking open-ended questions and expecting students to explain their own thinking. The teachers used strategies that checked for understanding more often in vocational classes than academic ones. In both academic and vocational classes, the teachers did not use a variety of instructional techniques, with the exception of special education classes. Most academic lessons were “chalk and talk” with students completing worksheets or workbooks as follow up. In the vocational classes, teachers relied on project-based or competency-based learning, and technology was observed to be used with twice the frequency as in academic classes. Paraprofessionals were rarely observed to be engaged in an instructional role and often passed

out papers and then sat and listened to the lesson until it was time to do worksheets, when they would assist targeted students.

Teacher expectations for student work were much higher in vocational classes than in academic ones. Models or rubrics to help students understand how to achieve at a higher level were provided more often in vocational settings than academic ones. Academic examples of student work were rarely posted or exhibited to serve as models, yet in vocational classes this practice was more frequently used as an instructional tool. Students typically showed an understanding of learning goals in vocational classes more so than in academic ones. Students were more likely to ask questions in vocational classes than in academic ones.

Teachers created an inclusive environment in which all students felt they belonged in both vocational and academic classes. According to interviewees, for the first time teachers were coming to the realization that accommodations to instruction stated in IEPs were mandatory. Only vocational classrooms, which were much better provisioned than academic ones, included multiple resources that a teacher could use to address diverse learning styles. In vocational classes, the teacher appealed to students' interests or curiosity much more often to motivate them. The interaction between students in both types of classes was equally respectful and productive.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Classroom rules and routines are established and internalized, and students take responsibility for their work with or without teacher direction. The teacher models and promotes respectful behavior and maintains safety in the classroom. Instructional time is maximized due to smooth transitions between activities. Other adults working in the classroom have an active instructional role.

Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 82 percent of the classrooms observed. For example, generally students took responsibility for their work and it was evident that classroom rules and routines had been taught and internalized by students. The teachers modeled appropriate and safe behavior. However, the instructional role of paraprofessionals was passive and they were generally not engaged in the learning process.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher implements instructional strategies that reflect school and/or district priorities. The teacher makes learning goals clear to students, and students understand their relevance. The teacher increases the level of learning by using a variety of instructional techniques. Instructional time is allocated and used effectively, and the pace of instruction is appropriate to students' varied rates of learning. The teacher elicits student contributions and uses a variety of questioning techniques that encourage elaboration, thought, and broad involvement. The teacher checks for student understanding and corrects misunderstandings, and provides clear and explicit directions that are understood by students. English language acquisition and language development are embedded in all subject areas. The teacher uses available technology appropriately to deliver instruction. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 63 percent of the classrooms observed.

Overall, the EQA observers saw a preponderance of whole class instruction in academic classes; this was less so in vocational classes. In many classes, teachers and students participated in "round-robin reading" in which the teacher calls on one student at a time to read aloud from a textbook or called on students to answer in one word without asking the student to explain his/her own thinking.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. The teacher communicates and enforces expectations and guidelines for student work and behavior, and the teacher encourages students and expresses confidence in their ability to do challenging work. Instructional time focuses on having students produce high quality work, and the teacher provides models and rubrics to exemplify such work. High quality student work is shown to be valued through activities such as celebration, citation, exhibition, and publication. Positive indicators of expectations for students were evident in 61 percent of the classrooms observed.

The team observed little in classrooms to indicate that the teacher had communicated high expectations of students. Instructional time was wasted at the beginning and end of the class periods, and there was little use of rubrics or exhibition of student work. Students working on academic software seemed to be clicking answers at random, without regard to the question asked or an understanding of the skill being taught.

Positive *student activity, work, and behavior* are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They show an understanding of the lesson's objective, and they demonstrate ownership of learning by asking their own questions. Students are able to recall information from prior learning and make connections to new learning. They make appropriate use of technology in the classroom. The interaction between students is respectful, and they are purposefully and productively engaged in learning. Student work reflects quality, complexity, and care. Positive indicators of student activity, work, and behavior were evident in 69 percent of the classrooms district-wide.

Most of the interaction in classes was between the teacher and students and not between students. Students appeared actively engaged only when called upon and were not particularly attentive the rest of the time when other students were called upon to read or answer. Generally, teachers did not list goals or objectives of the class on the board or did not explain them for students. The teacher had not asked students, prior to the end of class, to summarize or explain what they had learned and how they might use this information the next day or week.

Finally, indicators of positive *classroom climate for learning* are considered evident when the teacher creates an inclusive environment where all students are accepted and where the space is used to accommodate a range of learning activities. The teacher uses positive reinforcement to enhance students' self-esteem and self-confidence, and appeals to students' interests or curiosity to motivate them. The classroom is well provisioned and includes multiple resources that address different learning styles. Positive indicators of classroom climate for learning were evident in 69 percent of the classrooms observed.

Although teachers were kind and accepting of all students, the classes were lacking in multiple resources to address different learning styles. Usually the classroom had one packet of worksheets, or one book, and everyone was expected to learn from that despite the fact that the students possessed different skill levels and learning modalities. Students were not even encouraged to work together to assist one another in the learning process.

Summary of Classroom Observations

Number of Classrooms					Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
ELA	Math	Science	Voc	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
7	5	5	15	32	13.7	0.3	135	109	4.0

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Classroom Climate
Total observations	119	219	97	148	109
Maximum possible	145	345	159	214	158
Avg. percent of observations	82%	63%	61%	69%	69%

Standard III: Assessment and Program Evaluation																
	2005 Indicators															
Indicators► Ratings▼	**1.1**	**1.2**	**1.4**	**1.5**	**1.6**	**1.7**	**4.1**	**4.2**	**4.3**	**4.4**	**4.5**	**4.6**	**10.1**	**10.2**	**10.3**	**10.5**
Excellent																
Satisfactory					**2007**									**2007**		
Needs Improvement	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**		**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**		**2007**	
Poor	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**	**2005**		**2005**	**2005**		
Unsatisfactory												**2005**			**2005**	**2007 2005**

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Findings:

- During the reexamination period, the district began to make more and better use of aggregated data to assess student performance, modify the curriculum, and to a lesser degree evaluate program effectiveness.
- The district did not systematically examine the academic performance and needs of student subgroups and it did not routinely analyze disaggregated data.
- Although the role and responsibilities of the grants/data coordinator gradually increased, the district lacked a coordinated, fully integrated system for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of assessment data.
- The district made some progress in its use of standardized tests and local benchmarks to determine student needs and measure academic growth. It was awaiting the installation of the Pearson Prosper assessment system, through which it hoped to greatly improve its ability to collect and analyze assessment data.

Summary

During the reexamination period, Pathfinder began to make some improvements in its overall ability to collect data, as well as to expand its capacity for the analysis and dissemination of

student assessment data. In addition to the expanded use of MCAS results, the district introduced or was in the process of introducing other standardized tests, such as the Stanford 10, and reading programs including Star Reader, Accelerated Reader, and READ 180. Teachers in ELA, mathematics, and social studies have developed some MCAS-linked common assessments, and MCAS Wednesday assignments that incorporate released MCAS questions were administered schoolwide in both ELA and math. For the most part, they utilized aggregated data and/or data for individual students and focused relatively little systematic attention on analyzing and using disaggregated student achievement data. The EQA team also noted some progress in the revision and internal realignment of Pathfinder's curriculum. Although the mathematics department had progressed furthest, all core academic areas were at varying stages in the processes of curriculum mapping, developing grading rubrics and common assessments, and aligning curriculum, instruction, and evaluation with state frameworks.

Despite some tentative and fragmented efforts, including the purchase of the assessment system Q1 MACRO, the district still lacked a comprehensive, fully integrated system for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating student performance data. Administrators expressed confidence that the soon to be installed Pearson Prosper assessment system would provide the district with a tool that will greatly expand its capacity to centrally manage and disaggregate a comprehensive battery of standardized as well as local student performance and assessment data. Questions remain relative to the subsequent training of teachers and staff members, as well as the clarification of the role and responsibilities of the staff member who will oversee the full implementation of this new data system.

Although the district was attempting to collect more and better assessment data and was making some improvements in its analytic capacity and its methods to disseminate the information, the team found little evidence that evaluative data informed significant modifications and/or changes to academic programs, services, or resource acquisition. The vocational division employed some program evaluation; for example, it used increased analysis of student enrollment data and shop interest inventories to inform curriculum decisions. Revisions to technology, pre-engineering, and health programs were made as a result of these efforts. Administrators also indicated that the High Schools That Work program and Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) both went through annual review. In general, however, the district did not engage in regular and

systematic evaluation of its academic, supplemental, or grant funded MCAS success programs to determine their efficiency or effectiveness. Examiners noted little change or improvement in the degree to which the district engaged in formal analyses of student performance and needs to determine the content and/or scope of academic programs and support services offered. A review of MCAS data revealed a corresponding failure by the district to move students from 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs Improvement' levels to the 'Proficient' level.

2005 Indicators

1.1. The district utilized assessment policies and practices that resulted in the formal, regular evaluation of student assessment results.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review (2001-2004), the district lacked assessment policies and did not have consistent practices in the evaluation of student assessment results. MCAS test results and grade 9 placement data were evaluated annually, analyzed to varying degrees, and used to provide information about general areas of strength and weakness and to modify programs accordingly. Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, departmental midterm and final examinations were required of all academic and vocational departments, which the principal reviewed.

During the reexamination period under review (2005-2007), although the district had begun to increase its capacity to collect data and improve its policies and practices for the formal, regular evaluation of student assessment results, it lacked an integrated and fully developed data system. In interviews with EQA examiners, administrators and staff members reported expanded analysis and use of MCAS data to enable staff members to better serve students. Interviewees also indicated that data from other standardized tests, such as the Stanford 10 for all grade 9 students (as of 2007-2008), and the Star Reader and Accelerated Reader programs (primarily for grade 9 students) were now employed as a means of compiling student performance results.

In addition, teachers in ELA, mathematics, and social studies have developed MCAS-linked common questions, and MCAS Wednesday assignments using former MCAS questions were administered schoolwide in ELA and math. Science teachers explained that they were also in the initial stages of incorporating this initiative into their curriculum. In addition, the district had recently purchased the Pearson Prosper assessment system software and scanner to enhance its capacity to centrally store, analyze, and disaggregate a battery of both standardized and local student performance and assessment data. At the time of the reexamination visit, the district was still awaiting delivery and installation of this new data assessment system, along with the training and support required to make it fully operational. It will take more time to determine whether Pearson and Prosper Read 180 become integral components of an assessment system or whether they become "just another task" to complete each month.

1.2. In order to improve achievement for all students, the district used aggregate and disaggregated assessment scores to assess student progress for all populations. Student performance has improved across all subgroups.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district used aggregated data for all populations and analyzed individual test scores from grade 9 admissions testing and MCAS testing to assess progress. Examination of individual test scores and item analysis were the most frequently used methods of analysis. The district did not disaggregate and analyze the test data for student subgroups.

During the reexamination period under review, the EQA examiners noted an increase in the district's collection and use of aggregated assessment data to evaluate student academic progress. Administrators and staff members identified an expanded number of standardized and local assessments employed in the district. Among the data described by interviewees as most significant were MCAS data generated through improved and expanded TestWiz analysis; data from the Stanford 10, High Schools That Work, and Star Reader; assignments from the schoolwide MCAS Wednesday; and performance data generated from common units and/or

course assessments in ELA, mathematics, and social studies. With the exception of students in the school's Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) and to a lesser extent the special education population, the district analyzed most performance data only for the aggregate student population or for individual students. Administrators acknowledged that the academic performance and needs of student subgroups were not monitored and analyzed systematically or extensively, and no significant improvement(s) in achievement across all subgroups was documented.

1.4. In addition to the MCAS, the district regularly employed the use of standardized tests, local benchmarks, or other assessments to measure the progress of all student populations at regular intervals and used these results to measure the effectiveness of achieving district objectives for student learning.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, standardized tests, local benchmarks, and assessments in addition to the MCAS tests that measured student progress over time included grade 9 intake assessments in math and ELA, as well as departmental midterm and final examinations. It was reported to EQA examiners that some freshmen had some pre- and post-testing in reading during the review period. The effectiveness of achieving district objectives for students as a result of using these assessments could be seen in the development of three levels of math, the increased enrollment in those classes, and improved MCAS test scores as students moved from 'Warning/Failing' to 'Needs Improvement.'

During the reexamination period under review, the district expanded its efforts to employ assessment results to measure student progress and to do so at regular intervals. In addition to the MCAS tests, beginning in the 2007-2008 school year the district utilized the Stanford 10 Achievement Test in both ELA and mathematics for all grade 9 and 11 students and the Star Reader program for all grade 9 students. Interviewees explained that pre- and post-testing and data analysis were integral components of those programs. The English, mathematics, and social

studies departments have developed common assessments, and science teachers indicated they were in the process of doing the same.

The MCAS Wednesday assignments, using former MCAS and MCAS-like questions, were administered weekly in all ELA and math classes. Administrators and teachers emphasized that more and better use has been made of MCAS data. They cited improved analysis of MCAS questions and results, as well as more comprehensive and systematic communication of this information to all staff members. District interviewees stated that they had also purchased Test Vault, a computer software system that enabled teachers to more easily identify former MCAS questions and better analyze those items or curriculum areas that required attention or remediation. At the time of the review, however, administrators stated that the district primarily collected and analyzed aggregated data and that considerably less attention was devoted to the academic performance of student subgroups.

In the classrooms observed, the EQA examiners saw little correlation between identified learning issues and daily classroom instruction. Administration and staff members acknowledged that, although they were optimistic that their enhanced efforts would result in improved academic outcomes, little improvement in district MCAS results had occurred during the reexamination period.

1.5. <u>The district engaged in a formal, documented annual review of student assessment data to reallocate staff and prioritize resource distribution to improve achievement for all student populations.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district used informal assessment, teacher input, and requests by students for specific courses and levels to determine teacher assignments. Additional resource teachers or Title I instructors were hired as necessary, as exemplified in the remedial ELA program. For the last year of the initial review period, academic teachers who had traditionally worked with advanced students were assigned to one or two periods with students who were struggling in academic courses. Through this reassignment plan, the district hoped to

improve student achievement by introducing these underachieving students to teachers who presented material in a more challenging manner. The district did not provide documentation of an annual formal, documented review of student assessment data to reallocate staff members and prioritize the distribution of resources for the initial period under review.

During the reexamination period under review, review of student assessment data had resulted in a number of revisions to curriculum and instruction, although the district lacked a clearly defined curriculum review and revision process and prioritized timetable, according to interviewees. In the vocational program, for example, the school introduced the nationally recognized pre-engineering program Project Lead the Way. Interviewees told examiners that within a few years this would lead to a comprehensive and rigorous pre-engineering program that will involve the formal collaboration of both the science and mathematics departments. In 2006, Pathfinder received DOE approval to convert its Information Technology program into two separate, four-year offerings: Programming/Web Page Design and Office Technology. The district cited numerous efforts to reallocate resources and staff members to improve student achievement. These included expansion of the student portfolio requirement to academic, as well as vocational, studies, the infusion of MCAS related mathematics and ELA writing units in all vocational classes, and the alignment of vocational programs with state curriculum frameworks in preparation for attaining the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency (COP).

Administrators and staff members also provided examiners with examples of several data-driven modifications to the academic program of studies. For instance, the comprehensive revision of the mathematics curriculum resulted in the realignment of course sequencing, increased academic expectations, and detailed alignment with the state framework. Interviewees reported that similar efforts to map and revise the curriculum scope and sequence, improve internal alignment with MCAS strands, and develop grading rubrics and regular common assessments were also underway in ELA and science, though in various stages of completion.

Examiners also learned that the district lacked a formal curriculum review program and/or cycle, and that a former curriculum committee that had played some role in the process had been disbanded. As a result, curriculum development, review, and revision were not centrally

coordinated or planned in any systematic manner and appeared to be fragmented and conducted by individual teachers and/or by departmental initiatives.

1.6. The district and each of its schools disseminated assessment analyses to appropriate staff at regular intervals.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, dissemination of assessment analyses to department staff members had occurred; however, teachers had to request the data. Interviews with district administrators revealed that data were shared as they became available. The TestWiz data analysis program was available to teachers during the initial review period. For the 2003-2004 school year, teachers received copies of students' written MCAS test responses with exemplars. Teachers in a focus group disclosed that vocational instructors received a general synopsis of individual student MCAS test results rather than a more specific analysis of performance, but they did not receive positive placement data.

During the reexamination period under review, the district made efforts to expand its data collection strategies, increase data collection capacity, and greatly improve the dissemination and communication of student assessment data among the faculty. In interviews with administrators and focus group meetings with teachers, the EQA examiners learned of numerous improvements in the quality and frequency of a schoolwide dialogue that increasingly targeted academic performance. For example, several workshops held at Pathfinder during regularly scheduled in-service and/or released time or immediately after school included programs in data analysis and using data in the classroom, curriculum development, portfolio assessment, and the John Collins Writing Program. In addition, interviewees reported that the grants/data coordinator now meets regularly with individual academic departments, as well as the entire staff at faculty meetings, to present and explain assessment results from MCAS and other standardized student testing.

Finally, the EQA examiners noted that the district had scheduled regular, biweekly common planning time for all departments and expected them to use a significant portion of this time to analyze data and develop appropriate modifications to curriculum and instruction. According to

interviewees, department heads must submit meeting agendas to the assistant superintendent/director to confirm that they have used the time to focus on assessment data analysis and related activities.

1.7. Assessment trend data indicated that classroom assessment standards, practices, and expectations for students were consistently linked with the learning standards articulated in the State Curriculum Frameworks.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, students were tested in content and technical areas on a weekly basis, and assessment trend data covering the review period indicated that classroom assessment standards, practices, and expectations were not consistent with the learning standards of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. For the first year of the initial period under review, the curriculum did not align with the state curriculum frameworks. For the remaining years, curriculum remained insufficiently linked to the frameworks. Overall, curriculum minimally aligned with the frameworks. However, the 2002 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) report revealed that the district was commended for "setting high standards for all students," and the recent inclusion of the High Schools the Works program in 2003-2004 reinforced the expectation of high standards. When asked in an EQA interview how the administration knew students were aware of the high standards set for them, they said that students stated that their "teacher(s) pushed them harder."

One of the goals of the SIP for 2003-2004 was "the improvement of student performance on all standard and alternative assessments," as reflected in the rearrangement of math courses to require algebra of all grade 9 students and geometry of all grade 10 students for three years of the initial period under review. The district was in the process of developing a study skills curriculum at the time of the initial EQA review.

During the reexamination period under review, the district focused attention on curriculum revision and alignment with the state frameworks. Interviewees reported that they were

beginning to link classroom assessment standards, practices, and expectations for students to the learning standards contained in the state curriculum frameworks.

As cited, the math department had conducted the most complete revision of curriculum. Supported by a detailed MCAS student performance analysis, the department substantially adjusted course, scope, and sequence to align content and skills with the state framework. Similar initiatives were underway, though in widely varying stages, in the other core academic areas. Interviewees indicated that although each of these efforts was in process, no uniform curriculum format, completion cycle, or timetable existed and that as a result completion targets or deadlines were indefinite.

According to interviewees, the district also addressed identified deficiencies in student MCAS performance in both ELA and mathematics in a variety of other programmatic ways. For example, the schoolwide academic initiative MCAS Wednesday was one of the primary strategies interviewees cited that Pathfinder had introduced to bolster student academic skills. In addition, an MCAS-linked basic math component with weekly pre- and post-testing had been embedded in all the related shop classes. Further, interviewees stated that in an effort to better prepare students to respond to higher order open-ended questions, writing across the curriculum had increasingly become a school priority. In support of this, all English as well as several shop and academic teachers have received training in the John Collins Writing Program and have begun to implement uniform writing strategies and are using similar focused correction area (FCA) techniques. The English department has added a trimester of language arts for all grade 9 students, as well as a full year of language arts for all grade 10 students. They explained that the school offered the program as a supplement to the regular grade-level English course of studies and they designed it to help students become better readers and to improve student skills in targeted areas in preparation for the MCAS test.

4.1. <u>The district and each of its schools implemented a data-driven system for the evaluation of programs and services, and resource acquisition that was linked to student achievement data.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district generally did not use formal evaluations, with few exceptions. The district used TestWiz item analysis and grade 10 MCAS test scores as a pre-test and grades 10, 11, and 12 MCAS retests as post-tests to analyze programs and services but not to analyze resource acquisition. The district's grant coordinator, who was full-time before becoming part-time during the initial period under review, was responsible for the overall program evaluation. A comparison of scores on original MCAS tests and retests served as an evaluation of program success. The district did maintain post-graduation placement data but did not use them for program evaluation.

During the reexamination period under review, the district increased and improved its use of a variety of student assessment and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional programs and services, according to interviewees. They stated that curriculum revision and alignment with state frameworks was a schoolwide priority. All academic departments, including the vocational programs, were beginning to incorporate instructional strategies and assessment techniques intended to strengthen identified student deficiencies and to improve student performance on standardized tests, including the MCAS tests.

Interviewees indicated that the role and responsibilities of the data director/grants coordinator had been expanded and he compiled additional assessment data from both standardized and local student assessments. They said that some professional development training in the collection and classroom use of student achievement data was provided to all staff members. Enhanced use of MCAS data analysis techniques and pre- and post-testing in Star Reader, mathematics, and writing programs served to generate relevant information about program effectiveness and student progress.

Overall, the district's efforts to create a comprehensive data-driven system for the coordinated evaluation of programs and services was in a developmental stage and was still somewhat fragmented. The superintendent pointed to the utilization of Q1 MACRO software and the purchase of the Pearson Prosper assessment system as evidence of the district's efforts to collect comprehensive student achievement data for both aggregate and subgroup analysis and to measure equitable access and participation in all programs. Interviewees told examiners,

however, that the Q1 MACRO system has not been optimally utilized and that they were still awaiting the delivery and subsequent implementation of the Pearson system.

Although the district action plan, drafted in response to the EQA's 2005 examination report, indicated that a schoolwide format would be used to evaluate all programs and services on a periodic basis, those administrators interviewed were unable to explain what that format was or how this process was to be conducted. The district subsequently submitted a one-page sample, which was unclear.

4.2. District and school administrators used student assessment and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of the district's instructional, supplemental, and support programs and services.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district offered grant generated Title I programs, grant generated MCAS remediation programs, and a self-supporting (tuition) summer school program.

Data from the Saturday and after-school programs consisted of comparison of scores on original MCAS tests and retests. No formal evaluation procedure existed during the period under review. The grants/data coordinator reviewed and compared scores, and then gave administrators and some teachers informal verbal reports and lists of scores by student. Program success was determined based upon the numbers of students with significant increases in scores and/or advancing from the 'Warning/Failing' to 'Proficient' categories.

The analysis of pre-test scores had an impact on teacher scheduling. To provide the needed support, the Title I and MCAS test monies were used to hire additional personnel, usually aides or tutors. Student schedules were modified for students found to be in need of additional support who were "pulled" from non-academic courses, such as physical education or health, and scheduled into focused tutorial classes.

During the reexamination period under review, the administration gave increased attention to the use of student assessment and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional, supplemental, and support programs and services. Interviewees stated that staff members utilized a variety of both standardized and school-generated benchmarked data. In addition to improved analysis of MCAS scores, they cited the Stanford 10, Star Reader, Accelerated Reader, and the soon to be implemented READ 180 as sources of valuable and extensive pre and post-test data.

The vocational department listed data collected for the High Schools That Work program, the Perkins Grant, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program standards assessment, numerous national program approvals for specific vocational offerings, and student portfolios as additional sources of data to inform decision-making and assess program effectiveness. Administrators and teachers identified a variety of district initiatives that generated data for measuring the effectiveness of programs and services, citing the increasing development of grade-level benchmarks and common assessments in mathematics, social studies, ELA, and science, and the purchase of new MCAS-oriented algebra and geometry texts for use by all students in grades 9 and 10.

Pathfinder also conducted annual assessments of its Title I services as well as its Peer Tutoring Program. As indicated previously, the creation of a comprehensive, fully integrated data system at Pathfinder was in its beginning stages. Although significant progress has been made during the reexamination period, many of those interviewed acknowledged that additional formal training for department heads and classroom teachers, improved assessment analysis software, and a clarification of the role and responsibilities of the individual(s) who performed the tasks of data collection, analysis, and dissemination were still needed.

4.3. <u>The evaluation results of the district's instructional, supplemental, and support programs and services were used to inform decision-making and resulted in sustained or continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, evaluation results were used to inform decision-making in teaching and learning. Pre- and post-tests of students assigned to the reading program showed positive results, and the district felt these improved results were a direct result of the additional classes and the hiring of additional personnel. Improvement was linked to interventions. During the period under review, student data that were assessed led to the acquisition of a number of materials for the district, including a Kurzweil computerized reading program with a five-seat license in 2003.

During the initial period under review, evaluation was based on individual success or failure on MCAS tests, rather than the impact of a particular program on student achievement. For the period under review, the district evaluated and measured the effectiveness of instructional, supplemental, and support programs and services. At one point, the district employed a permanent substitute in reading to free up the grants/data coordinator to focus more on the grants for the district. Analysis had an impact on scheduling, and the district used Title I and MCAS grant funds to provide support for students. The school pulled students from courses such as physical education or health to participate in a focused tutorial for one period a day for the entire year.

During the reexamination period under review, the district continued to rely heavily on MCAS data to identify student needs, inform decision-making, and make subsequent revisions to academic programs, services, and course sequencing. Interviews with administrators and staff members revealed that the district was beginning to use some additional sources of student performance data, such as the Stanford 10, Star Reader, and Accelerated Reader programs to assist in course placement/level decisions, assignment of support services such as special education and Title I, and for recommendations to specialized programs such as remedial reading. Further, interviewees told the EQA examiners that the growing use of academic benchmarks, common assessments, departmental scoring rubrics, portfolios, pre- and post-testing in the interdisciplinary embedded basic math component, and the adoption of the Collins Writing Program were also beginning to inform decisions about curriculum and instructional practice.

4.4. District and school administrators used student assessment and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of acquired resources, including capital improvements and projects, equipment, materials, and supplies.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, a few examples of the use of student assessment and other pertinent data to measure effectiveness of resources were evident. The guidance department had used a program entitled EXPAN, but due to the ineffective nature of the program relative to its cost, the district discontinued the program.

Although the district had followed advisory committee recommendations to obtain equipment in shops, the district did not have data or procedures to measure the impact of these acquisitions on program enrollment, student achievement, or post-graduate placement.

During the reexamination period under review, with the exception of the limited use of data generated for the Perkins Grant, the High Schools That Work program, and Title I funding, the district presented little evidence to show that student assessment and other pertinent data were utilized to measure the effectiveness of acquired resources. Overall, the district provided little evidence that it had made much progress in addressing this indicator since the last EQA review in 2005.

4.5. The results of the district's evaluation of acquired resources, including capital improvements and projects, equipment, materials, and supplies, were used to inform decision making and resulted in sustained or continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the MCAS retest scores, which had shown a gain during the period under review, were the standard used to inform decision-making, according to

interviewees when asked how resources, equipment, materials, and supplies supported improved teaching and learning. Beyond the use of MCAS retest scores, the district provided little evidence that it used evaluations of any kind to inform decision-making or continue improvements. Cooperative education students and supervisors wrote weekly evaluations on the students' projects. The cooperative education coordinator reviewed these evaluations; however, the district provided no evidence that these reports were used to improve teaching and learning.

During the reexamination period under review, the district continued to rely more on qualitative and anecdotal assessments than on student achievement and other pertinent data to evaluate the effectiveness of acquired resources, including capital improvements and projects, to inform decision-making and modifications to curriculum and instruction. Administrators cited enrollment data and shop interest inventories as sources of pertinent data the district had begun to use to influence curricular decisions.

Interviewees pointed to significant revisions made to the information technology, pre-engineering, and health programs resulting from this effort. They noted a survey recently distributed to the faculty and students from the assistant superintendent/director and school council, seeking to gather input from stakeholders (with the exception of parents) on issues of communication and school climate. The results were not available at the time of the EQA visit.

4.6. <u>When evaluations indicated that programs, services, and resource acquisition were not effective and efficient, the district made appropriate modifications and/or changes.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not make modifications or changes in programs, services, and resource acquisition based upon district assessments of effectiveness and efficiency.

It was apparent that during the reexamination period the district was collecting more assessment data and was beginning to improve its ability to analyze them. Yet, the district presented little evidence to show that significant modifications and/or changes were made in instructional

programs, services, and/or resource acquisition, beyond the changes made in the math department and those few examples already cited in the vocational program.

One example was the elimination of the curriculum committees, due to the determination by the assistant superintendent/director and administrative team that the cost of maintaining the committee was not cost effective, since the standing committee could only make changes in the format of the curriculum and not the content in each subject area. The money allotted for this expenditure was then applied to after-school or summer efforts to revise or write new curricula.

10.1. The district engaged in a documented, formal, comprehensive analysis of the results from student performance assessments and student needs to determine the content and scope of academic programs and support services offered.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district examined MCAS and Stanford assessment data for incoming grade 9 students to implement programs and curriculum modifications that would improve test scores, but did so with minimal participation of classroom teachers. Although teachers had access to MCAS test and other data, the district did not systematically distribute the information to teachers during the initial period under review. The district conducted the analyses and disseminated the results through the department heads, according to district administrators. Although teacher involvement had increased, teachers would need more training, time, and involvement before they would likely "own" this responsibility.

The grants/data coordinator conducted an item analysis for each MCAS data set to identify specific skills to address in the curriculum and support programs. In interviews, teachers stated that a few teachers routinely examined individual student test data to discover trends and patterns. Teachers also stated that departments as a whole rarely conducted detailed analysis of test results. The English department teachers did receive the names of students who had failed the MCAS test from the administration.

During the reexamination period under review, the district increased its efforts to collect, analyze, and disseminate student performance data. While analyzing MCAS test and other pertinent data and communicating the results to faculty and staff members remained primarily the task of the grants/data coordinator, the role and responsibilities of the grants/data coordinator were increased and data collection and distribution processes were enhanced and formalized. In interviews with the EQA examiners, administrators identified, and teachers verified, numerous examples of the district's attempts to address issues cited in the 2005 EQA report.

Both teachers and administrators confirmed that data collection and distribution procedures had become more important. According to interviewees, the grants/data coordinator provided detailed assessment information, which teachers discussed at faculty meetings as well as at individual department meetings. Beginning professional development training was provided to enhance faculty data analysis proficiencies, and interviewees indicated that department heads and teachers were starting to be more actively involved in the data analysis process. Departmental common planning time, although minimal, served as a vehicle to facilitate and promote these efforts.

Interviewees explained that analyses of aggregated data were generated using TestWiz and that every teacher now received a TestWiz analysis profile for each of his/her students that included both scoring and detailed item analysis data. Academic departments had enhanced their ability to examine MCAS results to identify areas of concern in their curriculum and/or instruction. In addition, interviewees stated that analyses of disaggregated data were distributed to both special education and Title I teachers; what they were doing with the information was less organized and clear. Administrators reported that additional progress was still required to enhance the district's ability to conduct comprehensive and systematic analyses of the results of student performance assessments. They also cited the need for further professional development training for both administrators and staff members, especially regarding the anticipated full implementation and use of the Pearson Prosper student assessment system in the future.

10.2. <u>The district used MCAS grant funds to develop or enhance academic support programs for students scoring in 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs improvement' categories.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, several grant funded MCAS test support programs were in place from 2002 to 2004, as described by administrators. MCAS preparation school year and summer programs were cited as examples of programs for students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category. School officials stated that the programs did not target or serve those students who scored in the 'Needs Improvement' category. One brief report, Part III-A Equity and Access, stated that "Pathfinder actively pursues special education monies, Title I and Academic Support (funds) to offer programs and services to these at risk populations." Academic support and other MCAS grants supported after-school tutorial programs during the initial period under review. Administrators stated that a combination of Title I and MCAS support grants provided in-school tutorial programs for failing students. They stated that students were reassigned tutorial classes from some physical education or health education classes to work on targeted weaknesses. A Saturday tutorial program for grade 10 students operated during 2002 and 2003. District administrators provided no documentation of the program. No single document listing MCAS grant funds and linking funds to specific academic support programs for the years under review was available at the time of the EQA site visit.

During the reexamination period under review, the district continued to offer MCAS preparation and remediation programs and services both within and beyond the school day, despite reductions in state grant funding that contributed to the elimination of the Saturday tutorial program. Administrators cited a number of examples, including MCAS Wednesday, more systematic alignment of core curricula with state frameworks, the language arts curriculum for all grade 9 and 10 students, and increased time scheduled for enhanced mathematics instruction during the academic week and embedded in shop weeks. They further described the growing interdepartmental use of student portfolios, grading rubrics, and writing standards, and the addition of a trimester of reading for all freshmen with increased reading supports for all students.

Interviewees explained that MCAS funds from the DOE, in combination with other grant monies, supported a summer remediation program for students who, based on their grade 8 MCAS scores, were identified as being at risk. Originally limited to grade 9 students who had

failed the test, the district recently expanded it to include students who had scored in the 'Needs Improvement' category as well, according to administrators. Interviewees told examiners that the summer program was well attended and that they believed it was a significant contributor to the decreasing number of Pathfinder students who failed the MCAS tests. They acknowledged, however, that although the district had made adequate yearly progress (AYP) during the reexamination period, there had been little progress in increasing the percentage of their student population attaining proficiency. Interviewees stated that this was now becoming the focus of their improvement efforts.

10.3. District and/or school administrators evaluated the overall effectiveness of its grant-funded MCAS success program.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the school district did not evaluate the overall effectiveness of its grant funded MCAS success program, except by simply tabulating the MCAS test and MCAS retest scores of the participants. The district did not compare one type of intervention with others because of the mix of possible supports funded from several sources received by students.

Several times the EQA audit team requested but did not receive a listing of MCAS success grants received during the period under review that linked the grant, program, duration, hours, and evaluations. The district submitted one folder of records from one program during the end of the EQA visit. It contained student rosters and pre- and post-test scores, plus sample individual student worksheets. The only other documentation of grant funded MCAS success programs submitted was the Massachusetts Department of Education FY 2003 and FY 2004 End of Year Grants pages from the state website.

During the reexamination period under review, the district made some additional efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of its grant funded MCAS success summer program. The district incorporated some regular pre- and post-testing in ELA and mathematics into the program to better monitor and measure student progress and identify needed modification(s) to the

curriculum or instruction, according to administrators. They stated that enrollment and daily student attendance data were more carefully compiled and examined informally as an indicator of program effectiveness, as were subsequent student success rates in MCAS testing. However, no formal assessment report relative to the summer program was provided to the EQA examiners for consideration as a formal program evaluation.

10.5. Evaluations of academic support programs indicated that overall programs were efficient, managed effectively, and resulted in moving students from 'Warning/Failing' and 'Needs improvement' to the 'Proficient' category.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not evaluate academic support programs, except through examination of MCAS retest results attained by individual students. District administrators stated that the school dropped programs and courses such as study skills from the program of studies because low achievement gains on the MCAS retests led them to think these were ineffective. No other evaluation was made or was available. Through an informal procedure, departments would recommend changes in courses or programs. An external evaluator supported by district funds had evaluated the program for severely handicapped students (MVIP), according to district administrators. The MVIP evaluation document was not located for review by the EQA audit team. During the initial period under review, MCAS test scores showed improvement with a large increase in the percentage of students scoring in the 'Needs Improvement' category and a decrease in the percentage of students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category. School officials stated that students were motivated to pass the MCAS tests and to score at the 'Needs Improvement' level, but generally were not sufficiently motivated to work toward the 'Proficient' level.

During the reexamination period under review, the district formally evaluated the MVIP, and all 15 of the grade 10 students enrolled in that program took and passed the MCAS Alternative Assessment (MCAS-Alt) in 2007, according to district administrators. However, when the EQA examiners asked for a copy of any written report completed on the program, in order to review

its contents and assess its relevance and value, the district did not provide such a report. It was unclear to EQA examiners from interviews with administration and staff members how district practices had changed regarding the evaluation of academic support programs.

Standard IV: Human Resource Management and Professional Development															
	2005 Indicators														2007 Indicator
Indicators► Ratings▼	**3.1**	**3.2**	**3.3**	**3.4**	**3.5**	**3.6**	**3.7**	**3.8**	**8.1**	**8.2**	**8.3**	**8.4**	**8.5**	**8.7**	**13**
Excellent															
Satisfactory															
Needs Improvement	**2007**				**2007**				**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**	**2007**		**2007**
Poor			**2005**		**2005**				**2005**	**2005**			**2005**		
Unsatisfactory	**2005**	**2007 2005**	**2007**	**2007 2005**		**2007 2005**	**2007 2005**	**2007 2005**			**2005**	**2005**		**2007 2005**	

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Findings:

- The district was not yet using a systems approach requiring it to look at analyses of data and the current organization of the district in order to raise student achievement.
- The district's capacity to analyze disaggregated MCAS data and to use these analyses to make decisions that were likely to improve instruction was not well developed.
- Administrators were not proposing systemic change in programs with respect to personnel, staffing, and professional development in light of MCAS data analysis.
- The district did increase its capacity to collect formative and summative assessment data but not its capacity to analyze different types of data and to make instructional decisions based on that information.
- Lack of decentralization of power at the top of the district made it more difficult for the assistant superintendent/director and administrative team to build participatory decision-making from the bottom up, which might result in an increased capacity of the district to do things differently.
- The district did not have a functional and efficient system for the evaluation of teaching and administrative personnel.

- The superintendent had written no evaluations for any school administrators at Pathfinder, prior to or during the last two years.
- The current processes for supervision and evaluation lacked oversight and accountability in the service of improving instruction, especially in academic areas.
- The professional development plan in the district was not well informed by the evaluation of personnel and was only loosely connected to the analysis of student achievement data or the School Improvement Plan.

Summary

Although Pathfinder's administrative team had four new administrators, they made very few changes to the school's system of supervision or evaluation of professional staff members since the last EQA visit. Academic department heads had no way of knowing what was going on in classrooms in their respective departments because they had no authority to supervise the taught curriculum or the quality of instruction. The assistant superintendent/director completed six evaluations of the 34 teachers whose files were randomly selected and reviewed by the EQA examiners. Of these six teachers, four of them had not been evaluated in alternating years, as required by Department of Education regulations. Furthermore, the district lacked a system of accountability for administrators, who did not have contracts or annual evaluations during the period under reexamination, a practice that was unchanged at Pathfinder. According to the superintendent, administrators had a "Meet and Confer" agreement which enumerated benefits.

Since 2005, the assistant superintendent/director was able to create one period of common planning time in alternating weeks for academic teachers, which increased time for teacher collaboration from 20 minutes at the end of each school day to a functional block of time during the school day in alternating weeks. Although teachers now had the time for collaboration within academic departments and they documented how they were collaborating during common planning time, only the assistant superintendent/director had the authority to observe in classrooms to see if any of the suggestions and recommendations were being implemented. On the vocational side, there had always been a coordinator of vocational education to supervise, monitor, and evaluate what was being taught and whether students were reaching benchmarks for learning, based on a competency-based reporting system, required by Chapter 74 regulations.

The district recently added the requirement that each student have a career pathway portfolio to document what each student was able to do in his/her vocational area.

The superintendent developed an action plan for the district in response to the last EQA visit in 2005, and a professional development plan for the district. The assistant superintendent-director, with the assistance of the school council, developed a School Improvement Plan, but it was not clear to the EQA examiners how these written documents were linked together or how common professional development along with common expectations were going to improve instruction and result in improved student achievement.

Although all teachers and administrators could agree on improving MCAS scores as a measurable goal, what they did not describe in detail was how schoolwide goals and staff participation would translate into the required action steps. With the exception of initiatives such as High Schools That Work and John Collins Writing, participation in school improvement efforts was both voluntary and individualized with no system of accountability.

For example, although the professional development plan focused on improving student achievement, it did not have specific action steps linked to specific district goals. The one mandatory in-service day planned for the entire professional staff during school year 2006-2007 focused on MCAS data analysis. The school committee proposed adding one or two in-service days to the contract in the next contract that was under negotiation, but the school committee and the Pathfinder Educators' Association (PEA) had not yet adopted a new contract. From 2005 to 2007, the majority of professional development consisted of self-selected workshops that staff members chose to take on a voluntary basis and the superintendent approved for reimbursement. For any of the in-service that the district paid for and held in the district, records were not kept of who attended them from each department. The district still did not have a formal mentoring program for new staff members who were assigned mentors who had participated in common mentoring training, which was cited in the 2007 NEASC report. According to the assistant superintendent/director, he had made clear the expectation that teachers had to sign in and produce minutes and/or a product for common planning time.

2005 Indicators

3.1. The district and each of its schools implemented systems for the evaluation of personnel performance that were linked to student achievement data and resulted in sustained or continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the initial period of EQA review (2001-2004), the EQA team had randomly selected 24 teacher files from 87 for examination. The evaluations in these files showed no evidence of any link to student achievement data. In interviews, the administrators who performed evaluations stated that the evaluation process did not have a formal link to student achievement. The forms used in the teacher evaluation process did not provide an area to address student achievement.

During the reexamination period under review (2005-2007), it was not evident that the district had an efficient or effective system for the evaluation of personnel performance. Department heads, who considered themselves more to be lead teachers, did not have the authority to make observations of department members, give feedback on instruction, supervise the quality of instruction, monitor the written curriculum being taught, or coach teachers in making improvements in instruction. A vocational coordinator was the designated person to complete the evaluations of vocational staff members, and the assistant superintendent/director was the administrator responsible for completing the evaluations of academic staff members.

According to interviewees, the present Pathfinder Educators' Association (PEA) contract made it difficult to implement an appropriate system of supervision and evaluation. As a result, in current negotiations the school committee had made a proposal to "amend the evaluation procedure to enable evaluators to do classroom observations of teachers without advance notice to the teacher being observed." The proposal also amended the evaluation instrument by adding items that "show evidence that the teacher is utilizing data to plan and modify curriculum and lesson plans" and "show evidence that the teacher demonstrates familiarity with the curriculum frameworks and standards-based instruction, and plan lessons accordingly." According to the superintendent,

this proposal was made on March 28, 2007 but had not yet been acted upon by the school committee or the PEA.

The EQA team randomly selected 34 teacher files from those of 90 professional employees presented. They were equally divided between academic and vocational positions. The evaluations of vocational staff members were completed annually (non-professional status) or biannually (professional status), as dictated by state law. They were also informative in that they described aspects of the teacher's instruction in the classroom, in contrast to the evaluations of academic teachers. When the EQA examiners asked teachers about the timeliness of their evaluations, interviewees who were vocational teachers consistently stated that the vocational coordinator evaluated them on time and that they consistently received feedback from him. Examination of random personnel files verified this statement.

In contrast, when interviewed, academic teachers did not consistently state that they had been evaluated in a timely way, according to the teacher contract. Of the academic teachers in the random sample of the 34 files chosen for review by the EQA, four of the six evaluations were not timely in that they were not completed annually for non-professional status teachers or in alternating school years for professional status teachers.

There was little evidence presented that the evaluation of personnel performance was linked to student achievement data, and there was little evidence presented that personnel evaluation resulted in sustained or continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

3.2. <u>The district utilized evaluation procedures for administrators that were aligned with the requirements of the MGL Chapter 71, §38 and 603 CMR 35.00.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, administrators' performance had not been formally evaluated. No written evaluations were found for administrators. Two administrators stated in interviews with the examiners that their performance had never been evaluated.

The superintendent-director stated in an interview that his evaluation of administrators was informal and consisted of casual conversations and memos when he felt they were necessary. When asked for their evaluations, two other administrators stated that they had not been evaluated in written or verbal form during their careers at the school; each had been at Pathfinder for more than 20 years.

During the reexamination period under review, the school committee had developed procedures for the evaluation of administrators in conjunction with the superintendent-director at Pathfinder, but administrators had still not been evaluated with the exception of the superintendent, whose evaluation was completed by the school committed and dated December 1, 2006. According to the superintendent, he and the school committee had worked on developing a written format to evaluate the performance of administrators, dated December 2006. The superintendent called the instrument "a work in progress" and told the EQA examiners to ask the school committee about the status of the evaluation tool. According to the superintendent, he had not yet used the instrument to evaluate any of the administrators in writing. When the school committee was asked whether this was the final form and ready for use, they stated it was and that the superintendent should have used it to evaluate Pathfinder's administrators. When the EQA examiners audited the files of 10 Pathfinder administrators serving since 2005, they found no completed evaluations of administrators.

Subsequent to the EQA site visit, the superintendent sent a packet of additional administrator evaluation samples to the EQA to demonstrate that he was making progress in choosing a final format for Pathfinder's administrator evaluation form. This action confused the examiners, who had been told by the school committee members that the one form given to examiners during the site visit had been approved by the school committee and should have been used by the superintendent to evaluate Pathfinder administrators. Although most of the forms sent to the EQA were equally suitable, the fact that no annual, written, formal administrator evaluations had been completed was an issue.

3.3. The form and content of the district's evaluation process for administrators was informative, instructive, and used to promote individual professional growth and overall effectiveness.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, evaluations consisted of informal conversations or memos from the superintendent-director when he felt they were necessary. The superintendent stated in interviews with the examiners that he sent a memo when he felt an administrator needed to change or improve a procedure or practice. These memos had not been filed; no memo was submitted to the EQA examiners. Four administrators stated to the examiners that the superintendent's memos were informative, instructive, and helped them to increase their effectiveness.

During the reexamination period under review, the administrators had no written contract and no written goals for the year, and feedback from the superintendent continued to be conversational, whenever the superintendent felt it was necessary. According to the organizational chart of the district, all of the administrators with the exception of the vocational coordinator reported directly to the superintendent and should have been evaluated by the superintendent. The new form of the administrator evaluation included the required Principles of Effective Leadership, and the form could be used, but was not being used, to give feedback that was informative, instructive, and promote professional growth.

3.4. Administrators in the district were held accountable for student assessment results in their yearly evaluations.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, no annual evaluations for administrators were found or submitted by the district. Administrators in four separate interviews stated to examiners that they were not evaluated formally or on a regular basis. The superintendent-director stated to

examiners in an interview that while administrators shared a great concern and effort to improve student scores on assessments, administrators were not specifically held accountable for those assessment scores.

During the reexamination period under review, there was no evidence presented that administrators in the district were being held accountable for student assessment results in their yearly evaluations. In fact, one administrator, the grants/data coordinator, had the primary responsibility of downloading, analyzing, and presenting the MCAS data to other administrators and teachers. Most analysis was of aggregated data and there was little evidence presented that analysis of disaggregated subgroup data was completed. For example, according to interviewees the special education director did not receive either aggregated or disaggregated MCAS data and was not responsible for analyzing and using the data or sharing them with other special education teachers.

According to interviewees, most administrators were beginning to understand the implications of the 2005 EQA report and the need to implement the action plan that was written in response. Interviews with teachers and parents evidenced a less than complete understanding of the enormity of the problem in the academic areas. Stakeholders were just beginning to understand and acknowledge the problems in academic achievement. According to the 2006 annual report, published by the school committee and superintendent: “Pathfinder students have continued to ‘hold their own’ and have demonstrated continued improvement in their performance and achievement on the MCAS tests. The number of students who scored in the ‘advanced’ category increased significantly.”

In fact, when compared to other vocational schools, in 2007 Pathfinder ranked 25 out of 30 schools, according to MCAS data. In 2004 it had ranked 20, in 2005 it had ranked 17, and in 2006 it had ranked 25 out of the 30 vocational schools.

Pathfinder’s 2007 Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) in ELA was 80.4 CPI points for the aggregate student population, compared to its 2007 AYP performance target of 85.4 points. The 2007 CPI in ELA was 71.6 CPI points for special education students, 81.9 points for low-income students, and 79.6 points for white students. None of the subgroups met the performance target in ELA.

In mathematics in 2007, Pathfinder's CPI was 74.4 CPI points for the aggregate student population, compared to its 2007 AYP performance target of 76.5 points. The 2007 CPI in math was 65.9 CPI points for special education students, 76.6 points for low-income students, and 73.8 points for white students. Only the low-income subgroup met the performance target in math.

3.5. The district utilized an evaluation procedure for teachers that was aligned with the requirements of the MGL Chapter 71, §38 and 603 CMR 35.00.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district had an evaluation form that was aligned with the requirements of MGL Chapter 71, Section 38 and 603 CMR 35.00. Of the 24 examined folders, 17 (70 percent) contained the required alternate year evaluation. In two cases, only one evaluation was found for staff members who were hired more than 10 years previously. Administrators stated that they did not have formal evaluation forms for the positions of school librarian and the director of the Modified Vocational Instructional Program (MVIP).

During the period under reexamination at Pathfinder, the procedure for the evaluation of teachers was minimally aligned with the requirements of the MGL Chapter 71, Section 38 and 603 CMR 35.00. Although the teacher evaluation form itself was aligned with the Principals of Effective Teaching, the contract expressly stated that the evaluator could only make an announced visit to a teacher's classroom for a minimum of 15 minutes in one class period which was 42 minutes long on an annual basis or biennially for professional status teachers. Furthermore, for purposes of evaluation the evaluator could not comment on any teacher behavior observed outside of that announced classroom visit. For example, some requirements of MGL Chapter 71, Section 38 and 603 CMR 35.00, especially section VII, which is fulfillment of professional responsibilities, much of which cannot be expressly observed in a classroom, could not be considered according to the Pathfinder Educators' Association (PEA) contract, and therefore were not considered in the teacher evaluations at Pathfinder.

As cited, the school committee had made a proposal to the PEA to change some of this language in the contract, but it had not officially been acted upon or approved in a new contract.

3.6. The form and content of the district's evaluation process for teachers was informative, instructive, and used to provide professional development offerings that promoted individual growth and effectiveness.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district's teacher evaluation form ranked teachers' performance on 17 activities. The rating scale was 1) needs improvement; 2) acceptable; 3) competent; and 4) commendable. The form also required a comment for every needs improvement rating and every commendable rating.

The EQA examiners randomly selected 24 of 87 teacher evaluation folders for review. Of the 408 activities rated in these 24 evaluations, the administrators had not rated any teacher's performance as 'needs improvement.' In addition, while the form stated that a written comment was required for all ratings of 'commendable,' no comments were found. In interviews, administrators responsible for evaluating teaching staff performance cited three restrictions on the use of that form: only what was seen in the one classroom lesson observed could be written in the evaluation; activities observed outside the classroom visit could not be commented on in the written evaluation; and other activities connected to teaching duties would not appear in the written evaluation.

During the reexamination period under review, the form and content of the district's evaluation process for teachers remained the same and was not considered to be informative, instructive, and used to provide professional development offerings that promoted individual growth and effectiveness. In the completed evaluations written since 2005, very few evaluations had any written narrative which conveyed specific feedback that was informative or instructive about the quality of instruction. There was no evidence found that the evaluations were connected to professional development offerings or in some specific way contributed to individual growth and overall effectiveness.

3.7. Teachers in the district were held accountable for student assessment results in their respective schools and classrooms. These results were cited in the evaluation process.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

For the initial period of EQA review, student assessment was not mentioned in any of the 24 evaluation folders examined. The forms used in the evaluation process did not have a place for student assessment. In interviews, the administrators responsible for teacher performance evaluation stated that only what was observed during a classroom visit could be recorded in the evaluation. The administrators stated that student assessment results were not broken down by individual classroom, as a rule.

During the reexamination period under review, no progress had been made in this area, with the exception of a proposal made to the PEA that had not yet been accepted as of the time of the EQA visit.

3.8. When evaluations were not satisfactory, after following due process, the district had and applied consequences for compensation, advancement, or employment.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district policy and the union agreement did not have a provision for consideration of evaluations in setting compensation or advancement. No unsatisfactory evaluation was found in the 24 randomly selected teacher evaluation folders of a total teaching staff of 87 and spanning the four years of the period under review from 2001 to 2004. Administrators and the superintendent-director stated to the examiners that the performance of administrators had not been formally evaluated during the initial period under review. One non-professional status teacher was denied continued employment during this period. It was not clear to the EQA examiners that an unsatisfactory evaluation was a factor in the decision not to rehire this teacher.

During the reexamination period under review, this remained unchanged under the same contract with the PEA.

8.1. The district had an annually approved professional development plan for all administrative and instructional staff employed by the district.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not have an annually approved professional development plan. A review of a sample professional development plan dated 2002 showed that it contained the school philosophy, content, goals, and options. A review of this document revealed that it was very generic in nature and lacked specific information about the activities that were to be offered. The professional development plan stated that "[there would be] opportunities for all individuals who work with students attending [the] school." An administrator explained that the same plan was used each year, and that the revised focus was "verbalized" to the staff each year.

During the reexamination period, interviews with administrators and teachers revealed that professional development opportunities were made available to them throughout the year. These were in the form of in-school professional development days, off-site workshops, or college credit courses for which they could be reimbursed.

In July 2007, the district produced its first formal professional development plan, but it was only loosely aligned with goals in Pathfinder's SIP. It contained an introduction, philosophy, purpose, and content section, along with a set of professional development goals and professional development options. The majority of professional development options consisted of self-selected opportunities that needed to receive prior approval by the superintendent and lead to individual recertification. In addition to in-service sessions scheduled for the two in-service days of the school year, other in-house workshops were held during after-school hours for two or three hours. Very few options had a direct connection to improving MCAS scores, with the exception of the John Collins Writing course taken by some vocational and academic teachers.

According to documentation provided by the district, since 2005 the district provided the following in-service sessions during in-service and/or release time: data analysis, curriculum development, writing across the curriculum, writing lesson plans, portfolio assessment and implementation, special education modifications and accommodations, John Collins Writing, ELL training, Serve Safe training (culinary arts), and Career Safe training (OSHA). According to interviewees, most professional development was individualized rather than focused on whole school improvement, including ongoing participation in High Schools That Work. Administrators and lead teachers told the EQA that although the school still was involved with the initiative, with the exception of lead teachers few other teachers participated.

All teachers had an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP), according to interviews with teachers, department heads, and administrators. These plans were also evident in separate professional development files maintained by central office. Overall these IPDPs had little or no relationship with a specific whole school improvement effort, the current School Improvement Plan (SIP), or the action plan that the administrators at Pathfinder wrote in response to the EQA report and expectations expressed by members of EMAC in December 2005. According to the PEA contract, all teachers could receive reimbursement for the tuition of one college course per year, and 33 teachers took a course and submitted for tuition reimbursement since the last EQA report. The most common course taken was either Writing Across the Curriculum or Writing Standards in a Vocational Setting, which, according to administrator and lead teacher interviews, was a focused effort to improve MCAS scores. One of the proposals made by the school committee to the PEA was to increase professional in-service time by one or two additional days, with input from the PEA.

8.2. <u>The district's plan met or exceeded state requirements for resources committed to professional development, and the plan was evaluated for its effectiveness in advancing student performance.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district exceeded state requirements for spending for professional development during the first two years of review, but not during the third year. No plan was evaluated for its effectiveness in advancing student performance.

According to the end of year reports, the district spent $90,000, which was $52,000 above its requirement of $38,000, in 2001. In 2002 the district spent $63,000, which was $14,000 above its requirement of $49,000. In 2003 the district spent $38,000, which was $24,000 below its requirement of $62,000; the superintendent explained that this lower amount was due to a changed reporting requirement and not a shortfall in the overall budget.

Interviews with administrators revealed that the professional development program was not formally evaluated to gauge its effectiveness in advancing student performance. Interviewees further explained that evaluations were "strictly anecdotal" and not based on data.

During the reexamination period under review, all interviewees stated that time and not money was the issue in creating more effective professional development. To respond to this need, one of the proposals to the PEA was to add one or possibly two professional days to the school calendar, with the association's input as to how the day(s) would be used. However, this was not yet approved in a new contract at the time of the EQA visit. According to the superintendent, the district expended $37,742 in FY 2005, $54,713 in FY 2006, and $67,250 in FY 2007 on professional development.

The EQA examiners could not find any evidence that individual participants evaluated activities in the new district professional development plan, individual coursework, or professional development days, or that the plan as a whole was reviewed or monitored.

8.3. <u>All of the following informed the district's Professional Development program: evaluation results of personnel, programs, and services (i.e., teacher evaluations, curriculum alignment, instruction, assessment results, and MCAS remediation needs), student assessment data by student subgroups, and district and school improvement plans and goals.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not have a formal system in place to inform the professional development program. Administrators explained that administrators had discussions of MCAS results and their relationship to possible workshops. Generally, if aggregate scores demonstrated areas of weakness in MCAS performance, the district planned some activities that attempted to address the need. The district did not use disaggregated student data for this purpose.

Administrators confirmed in interviews that decisions concerning the types of professional development offerings did not rely on information from staff or program evaluations. They pointed out that a staff member could select courses of his/her own choosing as part of the tuition reimbursement program. Administrators stated that courses were eligible for reimbursement only if they related to the teacher/administrator's area of responsibility. However, the courses did not have to address areas of improvement identified in evaluations.

At the time of the reexamination visit, the professional development program had just been written and was only loosely connected to evaluation results of personnel, programs, and services (i.e., teacher evaluations, curriculum alignment, instruction, assessment results, and MCAS remediation needs); student assessment data disaggregated by student subgroup; and district and school improvement plans and goals. For example, the district had just written a SIP with goals that focused on student achievement and with rudimentary attempts at creating measurable goals. Efforts in the areas of the evaluation of personnel, assessment, and analysis of disaggregated data were not yet developed well enough into systems and so that this information could be used to support improvement in other areas.

8.4. <u>The district's professional development programs included training in the teaching of the curriculum frameworks, participatory decision-making, community and parental involvement, and other skills required for the effective implementation of education reform.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial EQA review, when interviewed neither administrators nor teachers were able to demonstrate any professional development activities that had taken place about the teaching of the curriculum frameworks, participatory decision-making, community and parental involvement, or other skills required for the effective implementation of education reform. They explained that certain past professional development activities may have contained elements of these topics; however, the connections were coincidental and not by design. Of the topics required by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, they had spent more time on curriculum matters than any other requirements.

During the reexamination period under review, the district was just beginning to focus the professional development program on topics such as the teaching of the curriculum frameworks, standards-based instruction, and writing across the curriculum. The program also lacked specific linkage to Pathfinder's SIP or to the Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) of teachers.

When the EQA team interviewed school council members, they said they had received specific training in participatory decision-making and/or community and parental involvement. According to interviewees, maintaining membership on the school council was difficult and people were not elected; they asked to serve since the council usually had open seats. Interviewees stated that the number one priority of the council was communication and parental participation, which did not match the priorities named by teachers, administrators, or the superintendent. With school-based employees, the first priority tended to be improvement in MCAS performance. Although school council parents were aware of MCAS scores, they were not aware that Pathfinder's performance put the school in the bottom six of 30 vocational schools across the state. Furthermore, school council parents did not have an operational understanding of the role of school councils under education reform and had received little training in the skills required for the effective implementation of education reform. On the other hand, the vocational advisory council consisting of parents and local tradespeople was well organized and met twice a year in formal meetings. It did participate in equipment procurement decisions in service of higher achievement in the vocational areas, and its recommendations affected the district's budget.

8.5. The district's programs included data analysis skills for staff, the use of item analysis, and disaggregated data to address all students' achievement, accommodations for diverse styles of learning, and skill building in curriculum development, delivery, and instructional techniques.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district's 2002 professional development plan did not show what professional development activities were available to either teachers or administrators. Additionally, the district was unable to provide a listing of the activities that it had offered. Administrators explained that certain key personnel had training in data analysis. The majority of the teachers had reviewed some student data in group settings. Administrators stated that personnel had already analyzed the data at that point and teachers were able to assist each other with interpreting the data. Interviewees recounted professional development activities that had taken place in the past that included special education accommodation workshops, No Child Left Behind, and National Automobile Technicians Education Foundation training.

During the reexamination period under review, the district had improved its ability to collect and manage student achievement data in the service of raising student achievement. In contrast, the district presented little evidence that its capacity to analyze student achievement data, with the exception of aggregated data, had substantially increased since 2005. Although the content of presentations on MCAS data had become more formalized and they were more frequent, especially to school committee and faculty members, the EQA examiners found a general lack of understanding about how quickly and how much the level of student performance needed to rise for Pathfinder to continue to make AYP. According to MCAS data, over a four-year span, while Pathfinder's achievement had remained relatively the same, student achievement in other vocational schools had risen dramatically. Therefore, Pathfinder now found itself closer to the bottom of the 30 vocational schools in the state, where it had once been near the top in student performance. According to those interviewed, the administrative team was aware of this fact, but teachers, parents, and school committee members were just starting to understand what the

student achievement data were indicating about the level of performance and improvement on the MCAS tests.

In fact, the further one got from contact with the administrative team, the greater one's lack of understanding of the school's MCAS data. For example, union representation had little comprehension of how far Pathfinder's MCAS performance had fallen compared to other vocational schools in the state. When the EQA examiners asked teachers in focus groups about what conditions they needed to improve student performance, academic teachers stated changes such as lower class size, more paraprofessionals, teachers with fewer than six periods a day of teaching, and teaching fewer class periods in a day. In contrast, vocational teachers mentioned factors such as focus on math and ELA performance, higher-order thinking, and writing across the curriculum.

Interviewees did not mention steps that the district was already taking such as creating portfolios of student career pathways and implementing the Pearson Prosper system or READ 180 to collect and use ongoing assessment data. Administrators and lead teachers, rather than teachers, mentioned increasing common planning time so that teachers could look at and understand what steps to take in response to assessment data. Department heads mentioned steps that more accurately matched the SIP, such as the need to do writing across the curriculum using a structured system such as John Collins Writing and to develop a system of accountability such as that used in High Schools That Work. Overall, classrooms observed by EQA examiners generated little evidence of accommodations for diverse styles of learning, or of skill building in curriculum development, delivery, and instructional techniques, with the exception of vocational classes.

8.7. Teachers were involved in the development, implementation, and assessment of the district's professional development program.

EQA Rating from 2005: Unsatisfactory

EQA Rating from 2007: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the teachers were minimally involved in the development and implementation of the professional development program. Administrators and

teachers explained in interviews that when the school year started the professional days were already scheduled. At that time, some activities were planned; however, in most cases these time slots were open, which allowed activities to be plugged in as needed. Interviewees explained, however, that they were often unsure of the relevance of the various activities. They complained that the professional development activities were frequently stand-alone workshops and rarely had the desired follow-up.

Teachers had no part in developing the professional development plan, with the exception of self-selected courses for which they received reimbursement. Administrators stated that the lack of involvement of the staff in the planning and implementation of the professional development program led to a lack of engagement. As a result, administrators and teachers felt that the professional development program was not as effective as it could have been.

For the reexamination period, the district presented little evidence of increased teacher involvement in the development, implementation, and assessment of the professional development program since 2005. In fact, individual teachers continued to express the preference to take whatever courses they needed pertaining to their individual recertification. Teachers presented little evidence that they saw the need to increase the number of professional development days or receive ongoing professional development in a number of key areas. Department heads, working with members of the administrative team, had just begun to work with teachers across the school, convincing them that some schoolwide needs remained unmet, especially in the academic areas of ELA, math, and science. This realization was becoming apparent as the district asked teachers more consistently to review data to plan action steps responding to what the MCAS assessment data were indicating.

2007 Indicator

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although all classrooms had a posted fire escape route, the posting was in an 8 by 11 inch frame, and the escape path was difficult to discern from any student seat in the classroom. The district had a crisis plan and at a minimum provided annual, ongoing, and regular training in dealing with crises and emergencies to all staff members. The district published a Pathfinder Crisis Guide in a flipchart format and distributed it to all teachers. According to interviewees, teachers and administrators shared information about the crisis plan with substitute teachers, student teachers, and parent or community volunteers in an informal process. In classroom observations, the crisis flipchart of emergency procedures was not visible in an obvious place in classrooms.

On the fourth day of the EQA visit, the school experienced a bomb scare, which permitted the EQA team to witness the plan in operation. The EQA team members observed that some but not all teachers left the building carrying class lists, and the EQA examiners did not see anyone carrying the crisis plan flipchart with emergency procedures and phone numbers. Furthermore, two EQA examiners, who were speaking with the superintendent in his office at the time, noted that it was difficult to hear the fire alarm in the closed office of the superintendent, and the other examiners stated that the same was true in the nearby conference room. The audible alarms were not accompanied by flashing strobe lights. On the way out, the EQA examiners observed procedures for using the wheelchair lift at the back entrance to the building that were either unclear or misunderstood. There the EQA examiners saw some delay and confusion of responsibilities regarding exiting a student in a wheelchair from the building.

Standard V: Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support									
	2005 Indicators						2007 Indicators		
Ratings▼ Indicators►	2.5	2.6	7.1	7.4	9.2	9.6	4	5	6
Excellent									
Satisfactory	2007	2007	2007			2007	2007	2007	2007
Needs Improvement				2007	2007				
Poor	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005			
Unsatisfactory									

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Findings:

- The district published changes made in attendance procedures in the student handbook, regularly monitored student absenteeism data, and consistently enforced procedures that resulted in the reduction of chronic absenteeism by students.
- The district monitored discipline referrals more closely and used the "time out" room for in-school suspensions and other discipline referrals in an effort to keep students in school, resulting in a reduction in the out-of-school suspension rate from 8.6 to 4.6 percent during the reexamination period.
- The district's data collection and analysis procedures lacked a formalized process and did not include disaggregated data for all subgroup populations.
- The district used data analysis to track the effectiveness of curriculum, programs, and instructional adjustments.
- In December 2006, the district developed an English language learner program in collaboration with the Center for English Language Learning at the Hampshire Educational Collaborative to meet the needs of the three students currently enrolled.
- The district's Workforce Investment Act program grant provided services and academic assistance to students from low-income families, homeless students, and those in danger of

dropping out of school.

Summary

The district implemented various support programs for at-risk students. Tutorial classes, scheduled during the school day, provided students, most of whom had special needs, with academic and organizational support. A year-long remedial reading course supported by Title I funds targeted students to improve their reading proficiency. The district had full inclusion classes, but interviewees stated that some teachers still perceived that accommodations written in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were recommendations or suggestions and therefore not required. Although the district employed paraprofessionals to assist special needs students in inclusion classes, the EQA examiners found that in only 53 percent of 32 randomly selected classrooms visited did they observe paraprofessionals as having an instructional role and being actively involved in the learning process.

In December 2006, the district had developed a program for its small English language learner (ELL) population and had just begun its implementation at the time of the EQA reexamination. During the 2006-2007 school year, the district distributed home language surveys that revealed seven students who spoke a second language at home. After further testing, only three students were identified as English language learners. They received service through the inclusion instructional approach utilizing sheltered English immersion. An ELL liaison, certified in English as a second language (ESL), monitored the progress of these students each trimester and had plans to test them using the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment-Reading and Writing (MEPA-R/W) in the spring to determine their progress.

Participation in MCAS testing was 100 percent for all subgroups in 2007. The district encouraged student attendance through communication sources that included Connect-ED, tailored messages on report cards prepared by the guidance staff, informational flyers, and the school's website. The guidance department oversaw all MCAS retests. In addition to the 100 percent participation rate for 2007, 15 students in the Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) completed electronic portfolios for the MCAS Alternative Assessment, and all of them scored at the 'Proficient' level in ELA. Furthermore, 14 of the 15 students scored at the 'Proficient' level in math.

During the reexamination period, the district took a proactive approach toward improving student attendance and made changes in the student handbook, organized an attendance review committee, and monitored attendance regularly. It also reinstated the Renaissance program to reward students for good attendance as well as academic achievement. The district used three consistently enforced levels of intervention to correct patterns of poor attendance in which chronic absenteeism affected course credit. As a result, the district reduced its rate of chronic absenteeism and increased its attendance rate for two years in a row. The average number of days of student absence per year decreased from 10.6 days in 2004 to 8.6 days in 2005 to 7.9 days in 2006. No attendance data were available from the DOE for 2007 at the time of the reexamination.

The district prioritized positive school climate and monitored suspension rates and discipline referrals much more closely. Out-of-school suspension rates declined from 8.6 percent in 2004 to 4.3 percent in 2005 but rose slightly to 4.6 percent in 2006. The district had a combined system for in-school suspension and offered a temporary "time out" option during the school day for students exhibiting significant anger or unacceptable behavior that affected the learning or welfare of others. Under the supervision of a certified special needs teacher, students referred to the "time out room" used a problem-solving method to prevent future referrals. Although the district's in-school suspension rates were lower than the state average for 2004 and 2005, it was higher than the state average in 2006. Administrators said they preferred to keep students in school where they could receive emotional and academic support and thought the combined "time out" and in-school suspension system may have contributed to the increase.

The district had procedures to prevent students from dropping out of school. In 2005, the district's dropout rate was slightly higher than the state average, but in 2004 and 2006 the rate was lower. DOE data were unavailable for 2007. To prevent students from dropping out of school, the guidance department worked with each student on a case by case basis to diagnose contributing factors and devise alternative solutions to problems. If a student dropped out of the school, the guidance department gave him/her a packet with multiple in-school and community resources. Through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program grant, the school offered a summer program for students to retrieve course credit. In addition, community resources

included the Job Corps Owl School in Springfield with a school to work component, a GED program at the Palmer Pubic Library, and an adult education program in Ware.

2005 Indicators

2.5. The district and its schools had and enforced, when necessary, clear consequences for students with chronic absenteeism.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review (2001-2004), grade 10 students did not meet the state standard of a 93 percent attendance rate. In 2003, DOE data classified 10.6 percent of district students as chronically absent, and in 2004 this rose to 13.7 percent. In 2004, the average absence rate for grade 9 students was 8.0 days; for grade 10 students the rate was 12.4 days; for grade 11 students the rate was 10.9 days; and for grade12 students the rate was 12.0 days. Ten percent of grade 9 students, 13 percent of grade 10 students, 14 percent of grade 11 students, and 16 percent of grade 12 students were classified as chronically absent. These absence rates translated to an attendance rate of 95.2 percent for grade 9 students, 92.8 percent for grade 10 students, 93.3 percent for grade 11 students, and 93.1 percent for grade 12 students.

Although the district's philosophy was to prevent chronic absenteeism before it began, and all student handbooks outlined chronic absenteeism, district administrators stated that they were unaware that "chronically absent" was defined as students who were "absent more than 10 percent of their days in membership." The district used detentions, parent letters, and parent meetings to prevent chronic absenteeism. Consequences of chronic absence included loss of credit and mandatory summer school. Routinely skipping school or a class resulted in three hours of after-school suspension, served over three days, after school hours. Missed detentions resulted in additional detentions and additional time in the "time-out-room" where students spent time writing reflectively on curriculum packets that addressed specific discipline issues such as smoking, fighting, insubordination, or harassment.

During the reexamination period under review (2005-2007), the district regularly monitored student attendance data and enforced procedures resulting in reduced chronic absenteeism. Administrators described their approach toward student absenteeism as proactive and explained changes to procedures that they felt resulted in the improved attendance rates. The district revised the codes that applied to various types of absences to simplify the data submitted to the school's SASI computer system. The handbook stated the expectation that students maintain a 90 percent attendance record collectively in academic and vocational classes. Students missing nine academic single period classes or 18 double period classes within a year were considered to be "over-cut," which resulted in loss of course credit. Students missing nine shop days equal to 54 shop hours for absence, tardiness, and/or dismissal also lost course credit. Teachers submitted student absence data each class period through e-mail and shared student absence concerns with the administration using a red card, also used for discipline and guidance referrals.

Midpoint in each trimester, members of the administration, including guidance and special education staff, analyzed student attendance reports and identified negative absence patterns. The administration checked tardiness records once a week and revoked a student's parking privilege for 10 days for arriving late to school three times. The district used a three-level intervention system for absences. At the first level, a letter was mailed home to parents alerting them of their student's attendance activity. At the second level, the student met with his/her guidance counselor to review the attendance record and determine ways to improve it for the remainder of the school year.

At level three, a hearing format instituted in September 2006 required the parent and student to meet with the attendance review committee comprised of members of the administration and teachers. The committee, which met three to four times each year, provided an opportunity for appeal of absences to consider relevant information presented by the student and parents that may indicate extenuating circumstances unknown to the school. The committee's authority included waiving, enforcing, or modifying policies and actions as needed, and its decision was final. These new procedures implemented during the reexamination period resulted in a reduction in the chronic absence rate from 13.7 percent in 2004 to 10.3 percent in 2005 to 8.6 percent in 2006. According to the DOE, 2007 data on district absenteeism were not yet available.

2.6. The district maintained and used accurate records on attendance, suspensions, discipline, and dropouts by student subgroup populations and frequently analyzed these records to improve participation, involvement, and achievement for all students.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not analyze the data produced from its SASI system to improve participation, involvement, or achievement. The district reported that it noticed differences more by gender than by any other subgroup; however, it did not track referrals. The district implemented Positive Alternatives to Student Suspensions (PASS), and cited more frequent parent meetings and writing reflectively in the time-out room as positive deterrents to suspensions.

During the reexamination period under review, the district maintained and monitored student records on attendance, suspensions, discipline, and dropouts for all students and regularly analyzed these records to improve participation and involvement of all students. The district did not disaggregate these data for its subgroup populations. Although achievement data did not align with attendance, discipline, or dropout data, interviewees said they believed that the school's emphasis on good attendance and responsible behavior had a positive effect on students' work ethic.

Administrators stated that one of the district's priorities for the three years under reexamination focused on improving student attendance. According to the DOE, for all students at Pathfinder the rate of attendance increased from 93.6 percent in 2004 (the state average was 94.2 percent) to 94.9 percent in 2005 (the state average was 94.4 percent) to 95.4 percent in 2006 (the state average was 94.5 percent).

Additionally, the average of absences per student decreased from 10.6 days in 2004 to 8.6 days in 2005 to 7.9 days in 2006. According to the DOE, the average number of days students were absent across the state in 2006 was 9.4. Administrators said that they felt the overall attendance had improved because of new initiatives the district implemented over the period of reexamination that included handbook revisions, implementation of the attendance review

committee in 2006, use of Connect-ED (an automated phone service), and reinstatement of the Renaissance program rewarding students for good attendance as well as academic achievement.

In addition to attendance data, the district prioritized positive school climate and used the Pearson SASI computer system to track discipline referrals including out-of-school and in-school suspensions. Over the period of reexamination, the out-of-school suspension rate continued to decrease from a high of 8.6 percent (state average of 5.9 percent) in 2004, to 4.3 percent (state average of 6.0 percent) in 2005, and 4.6 percent (state average of 5.8 percent) in 2006. The in-school suspension rates of 3.4 percent in 2004 and 3.3 percent in 2005 were lower than the state averages. However, in 2006 the in-school suspension rate at Pathfinder increased to 5.2 percent, compared to the state average of 3.4 percent. Administrators said that the combined system of time out and in-school suspension might have contributed to the higher in-school suspension rate in 2006. In addition to in-school suspensions, referrals to the time out room, supervised by a certified special needs teacher, occurred during the school day through a teacher referral or a self-referral by the student.

The Positive Alternatives for Student Suspension (PASS) system used for referrals provided students an opportunity to use a problem-solving method in an effort to prevent future referrals. The time out room teacher logged in data for each referral and met weekly with guidance personnel to communicate and provide additional support for students if necessary. In addition, the current assistant principal reviewed discipline data regularly and met monthly with teachers to review detentions, safety issues, and to discuss progress resulting from any parent meetings. In September 2007, the school implemented two initiatives to affect a positive school climate. The Character Counts program integrated into the student agenda books for 2007-2008 emphasized six themes highlighting positive character traits. The second initiative focused on respect and responsibility as a trimester theme with a plan to display related posters throughout the school and to incorporate discussions of these traits into class meetings.

In 2005, the student dropout rate of 4.0 percent at Pathfinder was higher than the state average of 3.8 percent. However, in 2004 and 2006 the district's dropout rate was 2.8 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively, both lower than the state average for each year. Administrators stated that students dropped out of school due to the effect of a dysfunctional family and that the guidance

and special needs staff provided intervention on a case by case basis for students considered to be at risk. In addition to providing counseling services and diagnosing contributing factors and alternatives, a reassessment of the student's IEP occurred if applicable. The district provided a packet of in-school and outside contact information to any students who were dropping out. In addition, the district referred students to a variety of outside programs, some with a school-to-work component. Programs included the Job Corps Owl School in Springfield, the GED program at Palmer Public Library, and an adult education program in Ware. The school also sponsored a summer program, partially funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant, that provided the opportunity for students to retrieve course credits.

7.1. All of the students in the district graduated in their senior year. All senior students met or exceeded the state's Competency Determination.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, not all students in the district graduated in their senior year. The district averaged a 91 percent Competency Determination (CD) rate for 2002, 2003, and 2004, lower than the state's requirement; however, the inclusion of students enrolled in the historic and unique Modified Vocational Instruction Program (MVIP) at Pathfinder for severely mentally disabled students dramatically affected that average. This program originated in the mid-1970s in conjunction with and under the auspices of the Massachusetts Bureau of Institutional Schools. Pathfinder agreed to provide skills training to low functioning, developmentally disabled students in cooperation with the former Belchertown State School and the Monson Developmental Center. Separate staff members served the students, but students took classes in six of Pathfinder's vocational shops in order to satisfy the skills training components of the students' IEPs. The 50 to 60 students in the program came from other area towns as well as from the eight member towns of Pathfinder.

In each of the years of the initial period under review, 10 to 11 MVIP students had been included in the Competency Determination (CD) attainment data. If excluded from the data, Pathfinder would have had a CD average attainment rate for 2002-2004 of 97 percent.

During the reexamination period under review, the district's graduation rate fluctuated. In 2005, 83 percent of Pathfinder's seniors graduated. In 2006, 79 percent graduated compared to the state average of 79.9 percent. Of the seniors at Pathfinder in 2007, 90 percent graduated. During the previous review, students in the MVIP program had affected the CD attainment rate, but during the last two years of the reexamination period many students in the program took the MCAS Alternative Assessment and by doing so reduced their impact on the graduation rate.

7.4. The district used aggregate and disaggregated student achievement data on participation and achievement to adjust instruction and policies for populations at risk and evaluated the effectiveness of these adjustments.

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district used student achievement data to adjust instruction for individual students who demonstrated risk of failure. Subgroups of students included males and females, special education students, low-income students, and white students. The district had neither a large minority population nor students classified as ELL or LEP. Administrators stated that the district evaluated the effectiveness of these practices solely through the comparisons of individual student pre- and post-test scores. They stated that weaknesses in student skills revealed by MCAS test scores prompted the district to adopt instructional strategies that focused on skill deficits, including the use of Bloom's Taxonomy, instruction that emphasized open-ended questions, and the use of a common language that incorporated the terms of the state curriculum frameworks. In 2003, the district instituted a practice that required the attendance of each student who received a failing grade in any academic subject for any marking period at tutorial sessions in that subject. Another practice cited was that of enrolling students who were failing in math and ELA courses in a second parallel course in math and ELA concepts that emphasized teaching to the specific skill deficits of individual students.

During the reexamination period under review, the district used aggregated and individual student data on participation and achievement and implemented programs in an effort to raise the

achievement of at-risk populations. Although the district had procedures for collection, analysis, and distribution of the MCAS data, little evidence was found that the district used a formalized protocol that included longitudinal analysis or tracking processes to determine the effectiveness of curriculum, program, or instructional adjustments based on data. Administrators admitted that they had not seen improvements in student achievement data and performance had remained relatively flat. They also indicated that the district was just beginning to understand what to do with test data.

The procedure for data collection and analysis started with the staff member who managed data collection and grants. Department heads and classroom, Title I, and special education teachers received aggregated data, item analyses, and student profiles.

Pathfinder did not disaggregate data for low-income or ELL students. In addition to MCAS results, the district also used a version of the Stanford ELA and math assessments. Prior to 2007, the Stanford 9 results assisted with placement of students into reading and math classes. In 2007-2008, the district assessed incoming grade 9 students using the Stanford 10 but was unable to use the results for placement since they arrived after students started school. The district purchased an array of data collection programs including the Pearson Prosper assessment system, Test Vault, and Q1 Macro and was in various stages of staff training.

In response to MCAS data analyses, the district implemented various programs to assist at-risk populations, but did not focus on instructional adjustments except in the full inclusion co-taught math class implemented in the fall of 2007. Programs implemented to assist at-risk populations include tutorial classes, a full-year Title I development reading class, and the use of paraprofessionals. Tutorial classes with a vocational component provided assistance to special needs students in a 42-minute period scheduled during the school day. In the tutorial classes, students worked on academic and vocational assignments in addition to organizational skills under the guidance of special needs teachers. The district employed seven paraprofessionals to work with at-risk students and assigned them to different departments of the school. According to the instructional inventories completed by EQA examiners during the 32 classroom visits, paraprofessionals had an instructional role and were actively engaged in the learning process in only 53 percent of observed classrooms.

In response to the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Mid-Cycle Review from 2006, the district began addressing the needs of English language learner (ELL) students. The district assigned an ELL liaison from the staff who collaborated with the director of the Center for English Language Learning (CELE) at the Hampshire Educational Collaborative and developed a plan in December 2006 to address the needs of Pathfinder's small ELL population. The home language survey initially identified seven students. Further testing using the MELA-O, MEPA R/W, BSM II, and LAS R/W III resulted in identifying only three of the seven students as English language learners. Two of the three ELL students were also designated as having special needs and had IEPs developed for them. None of the students took the MCAS tests in 2006-2007, but one of the three students was expected to take the 2007-2008 MCAS tests in the spring. The ELL liaison, a certified ESL teacher, told the EQA examiners that she individually reviewed the student's MCAS results. According to the ELL liaison, all three students would be assessed in the spring of 2008 with the MEPA R/W to determine their progress in the inclusion instructional approach at Pathfinder.

In 2007, the participation rate in MCAS testing was 100 percent for all subgroups. The district used a variety of procedures to encourage student participation. In addition to procedures the administration used to monitor student attendance patterns throughout the year, the guidance department tailored messages on student report cards relative to MCAS test dates and related information. The school and special needs calendars posted on Pathfinder's website included the test dates. The guidance department administered retests to students who had failed either the ELA or the math portion of the assessment. For the past two years, approximately 12 to 15 MVIP students took the MCAS Alternative Assessment. In 2007, all 15 students who developed the electronic portfolio submitted for the alternative assessment scored 100 ('Proficient') in ELA and 14 of the 15 scored 100 in math.

9.2. <u>The district adopted and implemented a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) as a component of the District Improvement Plan (DIP) to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts were made to meet students' needs in regular education.</u>

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Needs improvement

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district adopted a DCAP and a School Improvement Plan that served as the DIP. A review of these documents revealed that the DCAP was a voluminous but "stand-alone" document composed of long lists of accommodations and interventions that teachers used in their efforts to meet students' needs in regular educational settings. The SIP was a minimal and highly generalized document containing broad goals for the improvement of educational outcomes of the school's students. The EQA team reviewed the one printed copy of the DCAP available. Teachers interviewed stated that they had access to the DCAP on the district's server.

During the reexamination period under review**,** the district expected teachers to use elements of the DCAP to make accommodations for students in regular education. In 2006, the district replaced the voluminous DCAP mentioned in the previous report with a more user-friendly version and distributed additional resource material to help teachers make accommodations. However, EQA examiners did not find strong evidence of the use of these resources to increase the level of learning in most classes. In addition, the district was not able to provide evidence that teachers were all making the accommodations required in students' IEPs.

In 2006, teachers received the condensed DCAP summary, with an information sheet explaining its purpose for regular education teachers. In a faculty meeting in the fall of 2007, the special education director presented information to teachers about the differences between an IEP and a 504 plan. Administrators stated that teachers received additional information on student accommodations at faculty meetings throughout the year, as well as through interdepartmental mail. Examples of some of these resources included "Suggestions to Try in Class/Shop," "Strategies for Motivating the High School Student," and "Recognizing Student Diversity."

Interviewees alluded to a perception prevailing among some teachers that the accommodations in students' IEPs were recommendations or suggestions and therefore not required for implementation. Although administrators said they hoped that teachers provided the accommodations, the district was not able to provide evidence of a formal supervision and evaluation process to monitor teachers in implementing accommodations written in IEPs.

While on site, the EQA examiners conducted 32 classroom visits in academic and vocational classes and completed an instructional inventory with six components aligned to the Principles of Effective Teaching. Two indicators, under the components of instructional practice and expectations, relate to how teachers plan and deliver instruction that accommodates the varying learning needs of students. The EQA team saw evidence that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies in only 34 percent of the classrooms observed, and in 44 percent of classes did they observe teachers using questioning techniques that encouraged elaboration and broad involvement. Specific comments made in the instructional inventory described classes as "mostly teacher-directed" and whole class "stand and deliver" instruction with a lack of varied instructional techniques and low-level questioning such as recall questions or those requiring a one-word answer.

9.6. The district's MCAS success plan was approved by the Department of Education, and contained the elements articulated in MGL Chapter 69, §1I (in applicable districts only).

EQA Rating from 2005: Poor

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the initial period of EQA review, the district did not have evidence of DOE approval of its MCAS success plan, except that the district received Academic Support Services program funding, and such approval was a condition of receipt.

During the reexamination period under review, the state no longer required districts to submit MCAS success plans. However, the district made efforts to provide programs and services to assist students to pass the MCAS tests and achieve at least at the 'Needs Improvement' level. Yet, administrators admitted that they had not evaluated the effectiveness of Pathfinder's remediation programs or services.

Programs the district implemented to assist students varied from in-school remediation to after-school and summer options. For example, to provide grade 9 students with practice in taking released MCAS questions, the district implemented MCAS Wednesday in all subject areas. All students completed the same question from previous MCAS tests on Wednesday and teachers followed up on the students' answers on Friday.

Tutorial classes with a vocational component assisted students, mostly with special needs, during a 42-minute period during the school day. In the tutorial classes, students worked on academic and vocational assignments in addition to organizational skills under the guidance of special needs teachers. For students who had failed the grade 10 MCAS tests in either ELA or math, a pull-out program from the student's shop class provided remediation. A peer tutoring program held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons provided students with assistance in math and ELA facilitated by honor society students. A late bus schedule enabled students to take advantage of the tutoring help. Through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program grant, the district offered a tuition-free summer program for low-income students with failing MCAS scores.

Administrators stated that during the 2007-2008 school year, the district planned to develop Individual Student Success Plans (ISSP) for students scoring below the level of 'Proficient' on the MCAS tests.

2007 Indicators

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used data and records provided by the 23 districts whose students applied for admission to Pathfinder. Administrators said that the sending districts provided necessary student information that eliminated the need to assess student skills and needs on an immediate basis.

Interviewees told the EQA examiners that students who became homeless during the school year were already enrolled at Pathfinder, so decisions regarding their placement or programs had already occurred. They also said that they usually learned about a homeless student from other Pathfinder students or from observant teachers and administrators within the school. When homeless students were identified, the school's homeless liaison coordinated transportation needs and support services, including free lunch and guidance assistance, as required by the McKinney-Vento Act. Through the WIA grant and school resources, the district provided the necessary funding to assist homeless students. The school adjustment counselor assisted

homeless students in addition to special needs staff if applicable. Depending on the student's circumstances, the district also contacted the Department of Social Services (DSS) or the Department of Youth Services (DYS). Administrators stated that the school nurse together with administrators informally and discreetly provided for the hygiene and clothing needs of homeless students.

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided programs and services to help alleviate the adverse effects of poverty. They included the federally funded Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program, no fee practices for busing and extracurricular activities, and financial assistance for students within the school. The WIA program, which a staff member coordinated, provided assistance specifically for students from low-income families. For the period under review, the district offered a summer program for students with low achievement scores on the MCAS tests. Approximately 15 students received instruction in either ELA or math from Pathfinder teachers in addition to computer reinforcement activities and student mentors. The district provided free transportation, breakfast, and incentives such as a lottery for a $25 gift certificate. As a result, student attendance was high. As mentioned in previous indicators, the WIA program grant combined with school funding sources provided assistance for homeless students and those who dropped out of school. In addition, the district did not charge fees for extracurricular activities or busing. Using data from the free/reduced lunch list, the administration offered financial assistance to students unable to afford uniforms or materials for selected vocational courses and fee waivers to students for the SAT and PSAT.

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

EQA Rating from 2007: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district involved parents and community organizations in the education of students through a variety of methods. Using the Connect-ED program, the district communicated with parents on a regular basis for school cancellations, student absence, upcoming meetings and events, and other pertinent information. The district's website provided parents with additional information and resources. Interviewees stated that in 2006 the website expanded to include more information for students through educational and research links and personal help links for homework help and book report writing. For the past 10 years, the district provided "no cost" agenda books for all students at the beginning of the year. Parents at the fall orientation learned the purpose of the agenda books for students to help them understand their student's responsibilities in school.

The district provided additional avenues for parent participation through the school council, athletic booster club, and membership on advisory committees. The school also encouraged participation on the Pathfinder Special Education Parent Advisory Council (PSEPAC) by distributing a flyer to students to give to their parents.

According to the NEASC Five Year Focus Visit report from May 2007, students interacted with a variety of community organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Open Pantry program, blood drives, Thanksgiving food drive, and Special Olympics. Some of the business and secondary education connections occurred through Tech Prep, School to Career, Project Lead the Way, and annual career fairs.

Although the district did not provide transportation or childcare as a means to encourage parent participation, the ELL liaison stated that the school did have a list of translators available if necessary. However, all home language surveys of students who spoke another language at home indicated that parents preferred all information in English. Interviewees also stated that the

culinary department of the school often provided food for some events that they felt positively affected parent participation.

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

Rather than reexamine the district only on those 2005 indicators on which the district was rated 'Poor' or 'Unsatisfactory,' the EQA conducted a full examination of the district on Standard VI covering the period 2005-2007.

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- Pathfinder's budget and supplementary funding were adequate to provide the financial resources to improve student achievement during the period under review, due a substantial increase in Chapter 70 aid and the support from the member communities.
- The superintendent-director based recommendations for the budget on an evaluation of the ability of the district's member communities to provide the necessary financial resources.
- Vocational and technical instructors and the members of the advisory committees stated in interviews that a need existed for state-of-art equipment in the vocational-technical areas.
- The district had not updated the GASB 34 asset requirements since FY 2004, as cited in the FY 2006 audit report.

- The district had employed the same auditing firm for many years, and did not plan to competitively bid for the procurement of an independent financial auditing firm.
- The superintendent-director stated that the district did pursue competitive state and federal grants but that Pathfinder did not meet the eligibility requirements of many of these grants.

Summary

School committee policy defined the budget process, which gave the superintendent-director the responsibility for the preparation of the budget. The budget process commenced in December and concluded in February as required by the district agreement. The process began with the superintendent and the business manager conferring and surveying town officials regarding the financial conditions of the towns and what could be expected from the "cherry sheet" reimbursements. The superintendent provided specific guidelines to the staff regarding acceptable levels for the budget and the priorities of the school. The budget process included input from the faculty who submitted their recommendations to the department heads. The assistant superintendent/director (principal) and the vocational coordinator reviewed the requests prior to submittal to the superintendent's secretary for collation into a draft copy of the budget. The superintendent met with the appropriate members of the staff prior to preparing the recommended budget. The superintendent and the business manager reviewed the draft copy of the budget prior to the superintendent making a final recommendation to the school committee.

The school committee relied on the superintendent's many years of experience in preparing budgets. The superintendent presented the budget to the school committee followed by a public hearing. Following the public hearing, the school committee adopted the superintendent's recommended budget and assessments. The budget document did not include funding from state and federal grants and other revenue sources. The superintendent prepared several iterations of the budget as information of state revenue became available. The superintendent and business manager held a joint meeting with the member towns' selectmen, finance committee members, and council member at the school and made a presentation on the proposed budget and assessments. The superintendent and business manager presented the budget at town meetings.

The superintendent, administrators, and faculty members stated in interviews that the member towns provided adequate financial support to meet the educational needs of the Pathfinder

students to improve student achievement. School committee members and town officials interviewed stated that the superintendent provided a comprehensive financial presentation and analysis during budget discussions, and they relied on the superintendent's judgment as to the adequacy of the budget and assessments. Pathfinder exceeded the required net school spending (NSS) for the period under review. All of the district communities contributed above the required minimum contribution. The per pupil cost for Pathfinder was $16,629 in FY 2006, which was considered average compared to the other regional vocational-technical high schools in the state. The district received substantial increases in Chapter 70 aid during the period under review.

The district had a five-year capital plan that addressed the maintenance and capital needs of the 34-year-old original building and 19-year-old building addition. The plan focused on the replacement of antiquated equipment in the vocational-technical areas to assure student training on the latest state-of-the-art equipment. The vocational-technical advisory committees played an active role in recommending shop equipment procurements to the superintendent.

The school had been well maintained and the examiners noted in a walk-through that the educational and program facilities were in excellent condition and conducive to student learning and achievement. The superintendent expressed a need for more storage area and classroom space. The school had a surveillance system consisting of 33 cameras inside and outside the building. The school did not have locked doors while the school was in session but relied on a visitors' pass system.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The budget development process conformed to the district agreement and school committee policy DB and MGL Chapter 71, Section 34. According to the superintendent-director, the budget process began in December with a presentation of budget guidelines to the faculty based

on the current fiscal conditions of the district towns. The superintendent's memorandum to persons concerned with budget preparation for FY 2007 stated that "because of the dramatic increase in health insurance and energy costs, all program areas must figure on not more than what was appropriated in the current year." The superintendent and business manager conferred and surveyed the town officials prior to the start of the budget process.

The budget process commenced with teachers providing input to the department heads, who then submitted the requests to the principal for the academic areas and to the vocational coordinator for the shops. The special education director, guidance director, maintenance supervisor, and tech director prepared their budget recommendations for their areas of responsibility. The superintendent received all budget information and the superintendent's secretary prepared a draft copy of the budget. The superintendent and the business manager reviewed the draft budget information and prepared the final recommended budget. After the initial budget, the superintendent made all decisions regarding reductions and transfers. The superintendent presented the budget to the school committee and the public. After a public hearing, the school committee approved the budget and assessments as recommended by the superintendent, at a meeting held on or before February 15, as required by the district agreement.

Adjustments to the budget and assessments followed receipt of the state Chapter 70 aid and transportation reimbursements. The school committee as a whole constituted the budget subcommittee. School committee members interviewed stated that they relied on the superintendent's judgment and expertise, developed through 32 years of experience. The vocational-technical advisory committees provided recommendations for capital items to be included in the budget. The superintendent made presentations to a joint meeting of the towns' finance committees, selectmen, council members, and other interested individuals, and followed these with presentations of the budget and assessments to town meetings for consideration and approval. Six of the eight communities, including the Town of Warren which was new to the district, had to approve the budget and assessments in order to have a certified budget for FY 2008.

The budget did not include funding from grants or revolving accounts. The school improvement council committee did not review and make recommendations of the proposed budget. The

budget document was clear, comprehensive, complete, current, and understandable, and it consisted of the final budget of the previous year followed by the recommended budget and the difference and the percentage change. The superintendent prepared the annual report, which contained information on the receipt of state and federal grants.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The superintendent-director and staff members in interviews indicated that although there had not been an ongoing analysis of the aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data as part of the budget process, the budget incorporated funding for curriculum changes to improve student achievement based on MCAS results. The grants/data coordinator was designated to analyze student performance using MCAS and Stanford 10 data. The district had previously used the Stanford 9 test for all incoming students to identify strengths and weaknesses in ELA and math. According to the superintendent, the district provided additional staff members and professional development in order to meet the needs of its special education population by addressing the areas of alternative assessment for special education students. Achievement scores for the low-income subgroup were not analyzed.

The district encumbered $40,000 in FY 2007 for student assessments and purchased Reading 180 to replace the language arts class for struggling readers. The district purchased and began to implement the Pearson Prosper assessment system, a computerized data analysis system, at a cost of $9,000, and had the support of the faculty, according to the superintendent. The system had the capability of synthesizing and analyzing disaggregated student data. The district purchased new standard algebra and geometry textbooks for the math classes that the district had aligned to the state frameworks and the MCAS tests. There had been a deployment of staff members to provide co-teaching in a math class. The action plan developed in response to the previous EQA audit report recommended the use of student achievement data for acquisition of instructional materials and equipment, software, and deployment of instructional personnel in the

preparation of the budget. The superintendent stated that Title I had been used as a resource to improve achievement for the school's student population.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

In interviews with the superintendent-director, administrators, and faculty members, they stated that the budget and supplementary funding had been adequate to meet the educational needs of Pathfinder students. In interviews with school committee members and town officials, they stated that the communities that made up the district had been supportive of the budget and assessments for the period under review. Showing its approval, one of the communities gave Pathfinder an ovation after the budget presentation at a town meeting. Most of the towns had been at their maximum tax levy. The town officials interviewed noted that each had adequate free cash, stabilization, and overlay funds. Pathfinder received $642,904 in federal and state grants in FY 2005 and $551,411 in FY 2006.

The district received substantial increases in Chapter 70 funds for FY 2006 and FY 2007. In FY 2006, Chapter 70 aid increased by 29.1 percent from $2,565,243 to $3,310,654, and in FY 2007 it increased by 23.2 percent to $4,079,757. Enrollment had stabilized at 650 students of which 585 were in-district students. The teaching staff remained at 71 FTEs, according to the end of year reports for the period under review.

Total school expenditures increased by an estimate of 13.6 percent during the reexamination period from $9,583,187 in FY 2005 to $10,169,453 in FY 2006, to an estimated expenditure of $10,885,211 in FY 2007. Instructional expenditures increased by 7.9 percent during that time, from $5,478,385 in FY 2005 to $5,717,341 in FY 2006 to $5,911,534 in FY 2007. The per pupil costs increased from $15,696 in FY 2005 to $16,629 in FY 2006, in increase of 5.9 percent, which some considered average in comparison with other regional vocational-technical schools.

The district received substantial out-of-district tuition and Medicaid funds used them to reduce assessments to the communities and as revolving accounts. The district had a certified free cash balance of $585,781 as of July 1, 2007. Since the amount exceeded five percent of the operating budget ($581,154), the difference had to be used to reduce the assessments. A review of data showed that the seven of the member towns (Belchertown, Granby, Hardwick, Monson, New Braintree, Palmer, and Ware) that made up the school district spent 47 percent to 56 percent of their respective towns' budgets on education. For FY 2007, each member community contributed above the minimum contribution as follows: Belchertown contributed $117,282, Granby contributed $41,296, Hardwick contributed $37,993, Monson contributed $147,015, New Braintree contributed $13,215, Palmer contributed $290,727, and Ware contributed $180,052 above the minimum.

With the Town of Warren joining the district in FY 2007, the district anticipated an increase in Chapter 70 aid as a result of an increase of in-district students and a redistribution of the district assessments. The out-of-district tuition would decrease with Warren joining the district. The superintendent was pleased that Warren joined the district since it benefited Pathfinder. Of Pathfinder's FY 2006 high school graduates, 53 percent attended higher educational institutions, including four- and two-year colleges in addition to other post-graduate schools; 42 percent went to work and the remaining four percent entered the military.

Following classroom observations, several of the vocational instructors and vocational–technical advisory committee and school committee members stated in interviews that there was a constant need for state of art equipment.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees stated that the district had been engaged in a review of the budget as it related to curriculum needs based on student data and needs, and would review programs, activities, and initiatives for cost effectiveness as part of the district budget process. The High Schools That

Work program had already been evaluated for cost effectiveness. The Modified Vocational Instruction Program at Pathfinder was reviewed to determine an alternative to providing services to the students between the ages of 17 and 22. The DOE reviewed the program and recommended that the district provide an alternative for the delivery of service for this age group. A report to the DOE was due in December 2006, according to the Coordinated Program Review (CPR). In it, the superintendent-director took the position that the district costs would be considerably more if required to change the delivery method. The superintendent-director stated that the district's goal was to review the MVIP and restructure it into a collaborative.

As a result of the Info Tech program, the school converted the program into two four-year offerings: programming/WEB design and office technology. The district had reviewed the cost of the faculty "compensation time" to determine if the program contributed to the high teacher absenteeism average rate of 14 days per year. The culinary arts program operated the school lunch program, resulting in cost savings as well as improved and more nutritional meals. The superintendent, noting the enrollment in the CAD (computer aided design) program, recommended that the program be converted to pre-engineering, utilizing the Project Lead the Way model. The district built a barn using students from the various shops at a cost of $120,000, resulting in substantial cost savings to the district. The district curriculum committee was disbanded and the curriculum work restructured, resulting in $2,000 in cost savings.

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

Rating: N/A

Evidence

This indicator is not applicable to regional school districts.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school system was funded above the required local contribution, which increased from $2,961,582 in FY 2005 to $2,722,408 in FY 2007, an increase of 8.0 percent. Pathfinder exceeded the required NSS for each of the years from FY 2005 to FY 2007, as it experienced increases in required NSS from $5,526,825 in FY 2005 to $6,802,165 in FY 2007, increasing by 23.1 percent over the two-year period. In FY 2005, Pathfinder exceeded the required net school spending by $1,497,203, or 27.1 percent over the requirement ($7,024,028 versus $5,526,825). In FY 2006, Pathfinder exceeded the required by $1,522,408, or 25.0 percent over the requirement ($7,619,146 versus $6,096,738). In FY 2007, Pathfinder exceeded the required NSS by $1,571,917, or 23.1 percent over the requirement ($8,374,082 versus $6,802,165).

Pathfinder also received a 29.1 percent increase in Chapter 70 aid in FY 2006 (from $2,565,243 to $3,310,654) and in FY 2007 received an increase of 23.2 percent (from $3,310,654 to $4,079,757). The foundation enrollment, not including tuition students, increased from 503 in FY 2005 to 541 in FY 2007, an increase of 7.6 percent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The superintendent-director and business manager both reported that the school committee received budget and financial reports on an as needed basis or as requested by the school committee. According to the business manager, local, state, and federal reports were accurate and filed on time in compliance with the requirements of the grants. The FY 2006 audit report had a finding with regard to one of the grants.

Staff members did not have electronic access to their budget or expenditures. The business manager stated that she provided monthly budget and expenditure financial reports to the administrators. Because the district is a single school, staff members had access to the business manager or the accounts payable clerk for financial information regarding their area of

responsibility. A review of the minutes of the school committee revealed that it had not approved the minutes of prior meetings on a regular and timely basis.

The superintendent prepared an annual report in compliance with the district agreement and made the report available to the school committee, town officials, and the public.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

For the period under review, the district used the Budget Sense financial system from Unifund. The software package provided the necessary data for management to make informed decisions and forecasting. The business manager maintained control of spending to ensure that expenditures were within fiscal budget limits. The district did not need to borrow monies since cash flow provided the necessary funds for the operation of the school. The superintendent signed all purchase orders and payroll requisitions for employees.

The business manger stated that the administration received monthly expenditure reports. As a single school with an administrative wing, the administrators had access to the business office for financial information. Administrators did not have electronic access to their department budgets and expenditures, and providing technology had not been a priority.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The superintendent-director and the business manager stated in interviews that the district pursued all federal, state, and local grants. The superintendent indicated that Pathfinder was not eligible for most state and federal competitive grants. Staff members indicated that the school did not apply for competitive grants. The district employed a grants/data coordinator who was responsible for the preparation and administration of the grants. In FY 2005, the district received $642,902 in state and federal grants, of which $100,000 was a competitive federal grant titled Tech. Enhancement. In FY 2006, the district received $551,411 in state and federal grants, all of which were entitlement grants. In FY 2007, the district returned $15,397 to DOE as unexpended. The business manager stated that all grants and revolving accounts were monitored using the financial accounting system that assured that they were managed effectively and used for the purpose intended. The encumbrance system was only for purchases orders and salaries.

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

Rating: Needs improvement

Evidence

The current business manager has been employed since August 2000 and was certified as a school business official. The business manager provided evidence of Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) credentials, as well as evidence that she was a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). According to school committee policy DJC regarding bidding requirements, the district should conform to the state biding law, MGL Chapter 30B. The business manager had oversight responsibilities for all bid documents. According to school district policy DJR-R regarding purchasing procedures, requisitions for items of equipment required a decision of the school committee. The superintendent reviewed and approved all purchase orders and bids. According to school committee policy DBK, authority for budget

transfers required that the superintendent recommend transfers to the school committee for their consideration and approval.

The culinary arts department managed the school lunch program with oversight by the business manager. The teachers were responsible for maintaining an up to date inventory of textbooks, supplies, and equipment. The business manager reported the district in non-compliance with GASB-34, since the last asset inventory was completed in FY 2004, and a new one will take two years for completion. The threshold amount had been $5,000, noted as an exception in the audit report. According to the business manager, all issues noted in the FY 2006 audit report were addressed and action has been taken.

The district has used a financial accounting system to monitor all purchases and expenditures to ensure efficiency and maximum effective utilization. The district has employed the current auditor, Melanson and Heath and Co., for many years, according to the business manager. The business manager stated that the district was satisfied with the audit firm and did not plan competitive procurement of an independent financial firm every five years. The treasurer of Pathfinder, who is responsible for investment, stated in an interview that investments had been placed in certificates of deposit.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district did not have a formal written preventive maintenance plan, but according to the maintenance personnel there was an "informal plan." The maintenance department of the school consisted of three maintenance personnel. Major maintenance activities of the school were outsourced and records kept in the maintenance office. The facilities report provided by the business manager indicated that the educational and program facilities were in excellent condition. The building was well maintained. The facilities had undergone a lighting retrofit that provided energy savings while increasing brightness. A walk-through of the school revealed that

the school was of adequate size, clean safe, well lit, well maintained, and conducive to promoting the student learning process and achievement. The superintendent expressed that there was a need for additional storage space and classrooms. The five-year capital plan addressed capital and maintenance needs of the school.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district spent $234,165 in FY 2006 and $173,716 in FY 2007 for equipment and capital technology. Long-term debt was $359,900 in FY 2006 and $338,900 in FY 2007.

The district had a five-year capital plan that reflected the future needs of the 34-year-old original school and 19-year-old building addition. The majority of the items in the capital plan were related to the vocational-technical areas. The faculty from the vocational-technical areas and the technical program advisory committees provided most of the input for the capital plan. The yearly capital goal for the budget for the past two years was approximately $372,029 per year, according to the superintendent. The five-year capital plan totaled $1,860,100 and reflected the most pressing needs and safety/health areas.

According to the superintendent, the district continues to replace older equipment on a three- to four-year cycle. The Perkins grant funded the replacement of equipment in the shop areas. The carpentry shop students completed a barn project that included general storage and school vehicle parking. The cost to the district was $120,000 and students participated in the building of the barn. A November 16, 2007 letter from NEASC noted the need for more classroom space and storage, and most importantly for the district to develop a capital improvement plan to address facility needs. The superintendent indicated that the growth of the school was limited by the lack of land.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The health and safety plan, dated 9/2004-8/2006, contained policy for Pathfinder that stated, "There is a safety plan which states that a vocational-technical school is the education that young people receive so directly related to their future, since the skills, attitudes and work habits developed will be with them the rest of their lives." The superintendent-director told the EQA examiners that the district had developed a safety plan that the school committee approved to assure the safety of the staff and the students. The safety plan was included in the student and faculty handbooks. A resource officer had been hired for 2.5 days per week.

According to interviewees, the personal safety of each student and employee of Pathfinder was of primary importance. The policy and safety plan were scheduled for review every two years. In 2006, Pathfinder installed 33 cameras that monitored the inside and outside of the building. The school lacked a full security system. Not all doors had keypads or other entering control entry systems. People entering the building were required to sign in and sign out and to receive a visitor's pass to wear while in the school. The school had evacuation and fire drills during the year. According to interviewees, the school practiced a lockdown once a year. The vocational-technical programs provided safety instruction to the students, including OSHA and hazardous chemical awareness. Interviewees stated that students were given written applied safety testing.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

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

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY98	440	2.8	3,877,871	8.7	2,115,737	1,898,802	1.9	4,014,539	4.2	4,662,756	11.3	648,217	16.1
FY99	452	2.7	4,115,791	6.1	2,298,300	1,956,234	3.0	4,254,534	6.0	4,816,024	3.3	561,490	13.2
FY00	488	8.0	4,397,591	6.8	2,456,433	2,146,187	9.7	4,602,620	8.2	5,170,381	7.4	567,761	12.3
FY01	505	3.5	4,735,880	7.7	2,617,299	2,234,562	4.1	4,851,861	5.4	5,613,284	8.6	761,423	15.7
FY02	487	-3.6	4,825,363	1.9	2,811,076	2,533,302	13.4	5,344,378	10.2	6,341,036	13.0	996,658	18.6
FY03	501	2.9	5,092,653	5.5	3,011,256	2,533,302	0.0	5,544,558	3.7	6,246,352	-1.5	701,794	12.7
FY04	495	-1.2	5,294,940	4.0	2,937,331	2,357,609	-6.9	5,294,940	-4.5	6,803,214	8.9	1,508,274	28.5
FY05	503	1.6	5,526,825	4.4	2,961,582	2,565,243	8.8	5,526,825	4.4	7,024,028	3.2	1,497,203	27.1
FY06	538	7.0	6,096,738	10.3	2,786,084	3,310,654	29.1	6,096,738	10.3	7,619,146	8.5	1,522,408	25.0
FY07	541	0.6	6,802,165	11.6	2,722,408	4,079,757	23.2	6,802,165	11.6	8,374,082	9.9	1,571,917	23.1

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY98	8,813	4,315	10,597	49.0	103.5	120.2	40.7
FY99	9,106	4,328	10,655	47.5	103.4	117.0	40.6
FY00	9,011	4,398	10,595	48.8	104.7	117.6	41.5
FY01	9,378	4,425	11,115	47.2	102.4	118.5	39.8
FY02	9,908	5,202	13,021	52.5	110.8	131.4	40.0
FY03	10,165	5,056	12,468	49.7	108.9	122.7	40.6
FY04	10,697	4,763	13,744	44.5	100.0	128.5	34.7
FY05	10,988	5,100	13,964	46.4	100.0	127.1	36.5
FY06	11,332	6,154	14,162	54.3	100.0	125.0	43.5
FY07	12,573	7,541	15,479	60.0	100.0	123.1	48.7

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