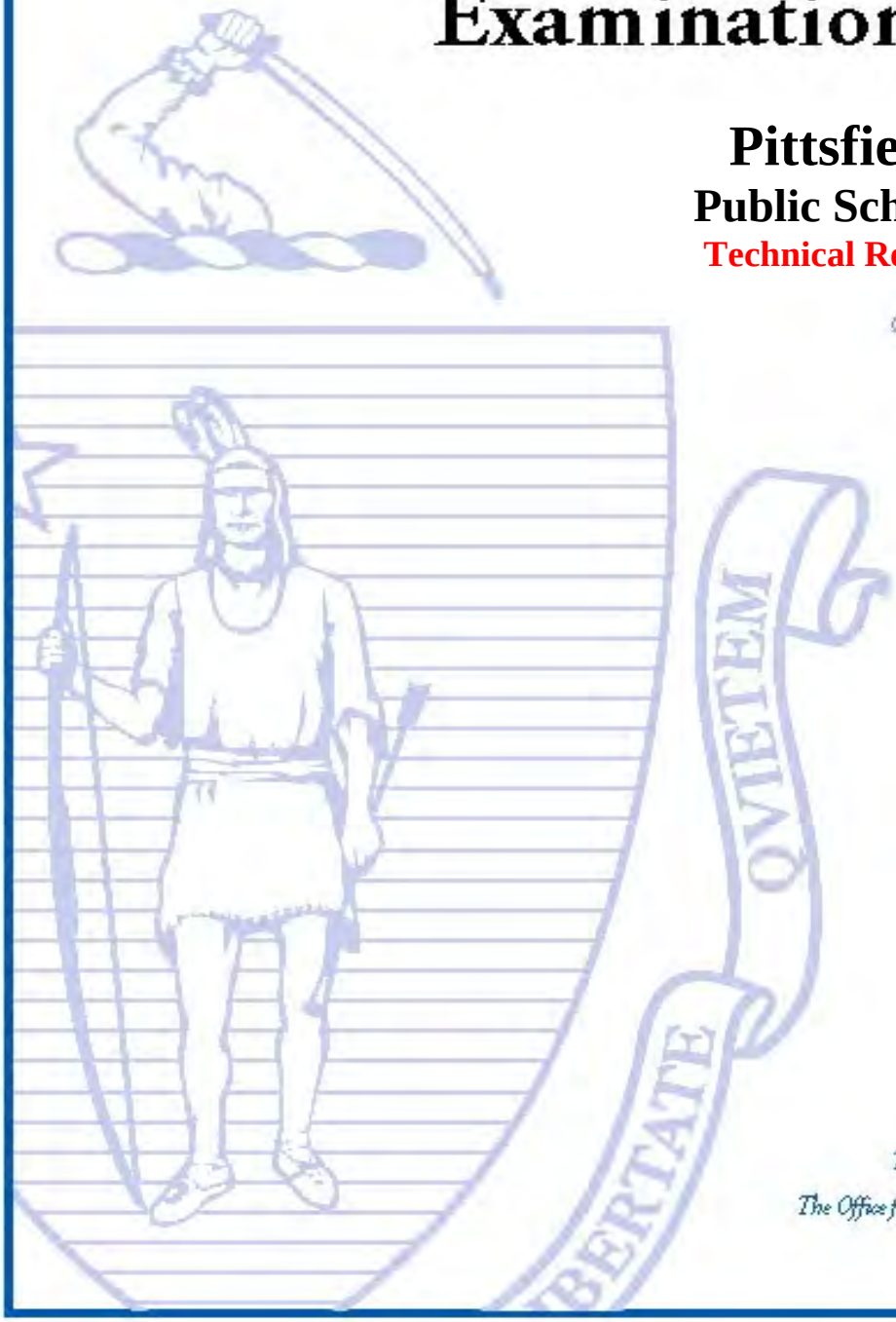
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Pittsfield
Public Schools
Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered



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

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Visiting Examination Team

Paula Hutton, Coordinating Examiner
George Gearhart, Senior Examiner
Kim Denney, Examiner
Andrew Paquette, Examiner
Tom Petray, Examiner
Linda Prystupa, Examiner
Charles Tetrault, Examiner
William Wassel, Examiner

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings at its meeting on October 24, 2007.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of the Pittsfield Public Schools, Katherine Darlington; the school department staff of the Pittsfield Public Schools; and the town officials in Pittsfield.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Pittsfield Public Schools in April 2007. With an average proficiency index of 71 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (79 PI points in English language arts and 64 PI points in math), 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. Less than half of Pittsfield's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

The city of Pittsfield, located in Berkshire County in western Massachusetts, grew as an agricultural and industrial center. Wool and later plastics were the main industries of Pittsfield. The city supports local cultural attractions and enjoys the natural beauty of the Berkshires. The largest sources of employment within the community are educational, health, and social services; retail trade; and manufacturing. The city is governed by a Mayor-Council form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), Pittsfield had a median family income of $46,228 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 324 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city had a total population of 45,793 with a population of 8,405 school-age children, or 18 percent of the total. Of the total households in Pittsfield, 29 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 30 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Twenty-one percent of the population age 25 years or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), in 2005-2006 the Pittsfield Public Schools had a total enrollment of 6,472. The demographic composition in the district was: 81.5 percent White, 9.7 percent African-American, 5.4 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent Asian, 0.2 percent Native American, 1.8 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 3.6 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 40.6 percent low income, and 16.6 percent special education. Ninety percent of school-age children in Pittsfield attended public schools. The district offers school choice;

109 students from other school districts attended the Pittsfield schools in 2005-2006, including 21 students who were tuitioned in to Pittsfield High School from Richmond. A total of 249 Pittsfield students attended public schools outside the district, including three students who attended charter schools.

The district has 12 schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including eight elementary schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 5, two middle schools serving grades 6 through 8, and two high schools serving grades 9 through 12. Pittsfield Public Schools' administrative team consists of a superintendent, a deputy superintendent, an assistant superintendent for personnel, a business manager, and a special education director. Each school has a principal; the John T. Reid Middle School and Herberg Middle School also each have a vice principal; and the Pittsfield High School and Taconic High School also each have a vice principal and dean of students. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2006, Pittsfield's per pupil expenditure (preliminary), based on appropriations from all funds, was $10,663, compared to $11,196 statewide, ranking it 159 out of the 325 of 328 school districts reporting data. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from $51,709,394 to $57,138,077; Chapter 70 aid increased from $26,664,443 to $28,114,213; the required local contribution increased from $22,057,033 to $24,611,444; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 6,641 to 6,516. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 52 to 49 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending decreased from 62 to 59 percent.

Context

Settlers from Westfield first settled Pittsfield in 1752. After the Revolutionary War, the city grew to 2,000 residents. While primarily agricultural because of the many brooks that flowed into the Housatonic River, the landscape was dotted with mills that produced lumber, grist, paper, and textiles. When settlers imported Merino sheep from Spain in 1807, the area became the center of woolen manufacturing in the United States. By the end of the 19th century, Pittsfield was a bustling metropolis and incorporated as a city in 1891. At that time, William

Stanley had recently produced the first electric transformer and relocated his Electric Manufacturing Company to Pittsfield from Great Barrington. This was the forerunner of the internationally known corporate giant, General Electric (GE). While GE Advanced Materials (plastics) continues to be one of the city's largest employers, the workforce that once topped 13,000 has been reduced to less than 700 employees, with the relocation of the aerospace portion of the GE empire.

Pittsfield has a beautiful and large downtown area, populated by many old and historic buildings. Pittsfield also contains an area designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a Superfund site, due to the high content of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a suspected carcinogen. The source of this contamination affected Silver Lake, former GE properties, residential properties, and "areas where soil was contaminated by the migration of wastes via the Housatonic River." The EPA selected the City of Pittsfield as a Superfund Development Pilot. Currently the economic redevelopment authority is using this fund to create "a reuse plan" for the GE site. One of the district's schools sits next to a currently active GE dumpsite and authorities monitor for possible pollution and/or contamination.

This was the EQA's third visit to Pittsfield, and although the district has made progress on the EQA standards and indicators, the MCAS scores have remained relatively flat. Overall, the district is attempting to centralize its curriculum and improvement efforts, which had been extremely site-based during the EQA's first visit in 2004. The district aligned School Improvement Plans (SIPs) with the District Improvement Plan (DIP), using the same template and similar goals. The district is also just beginning to use student achievement to measure progress toward SIP goals. The district has developed several programs and services to promote equity for at-risk students. Some interviewees told the EQA that pupil needs vary widely across the district, and staffing to provide needed services is not proportionate to respective school needs. Additionally, the district lost over 90 positions since FY 2002, and although the FY 2007 budget avoided layoffs and provided level services, the financing of new or improved programming had to be balanced with budget reductions in other areas.

By 2006-2007, the district had begun to implement the use of formative assessments from the bottom up in order to make better decisions about instruction. The district has implemented a

three-tiered intervention plan in both literacy and math to improve student achievement. The district used technology to increase the efficiency of giving formative assessments. The use of disaggregated student achievement data, as well as data on attendance, retentions, suspensions, student and teacher absences, and chronic absenteeism, was in the formative stage. The district rarely did an analysis of policies and procedures at the root level.

According to data presented by the district, in 2005-2006 nine percent (48 of 561) of Pittsfield's teachers did not hold licensure for the positions they held and the district employed them on waivers. Although the district had a new mentoring program, there were too few trained mentors and so some experienced mentors had to mentor multiple new teachers and some principals had to assume mentoring roles. New administrators were not provided with a formal mentoring program, even though the district employed a number of new principals. Through a grant from the Department of Education (DOE), principals and curriculum directors attended common National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training to move the district toward developing a standards-based curriculum and worked to develop a collaborative culture of leadership through the use of the Whole-Faculty Study Group (WFSG) model. The WFSGs comprised almost all of each school's site-based professional development which was, according to interviewees, still focused on "unpacking state curriculum frameworks" in order to create curriculum maps. The district had yet to create periodic and measurable benchmarks in ELA, math, and science that would culminate in a K-12 districtwide curriculum and assessment system.

The school committee had not evaluated the superintendent annually and the superintendent had not evaluated administrators annually in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38. Teacher evaluations were conducted in accordance with state law. Although the EQA found completed evaluations to be informative, they were rarely instructive or written in a way that would increase professional growth or the quality of instruction.

The district budget development process centered on maintaining level services with adjustments made within this amount. Even though student achievement data indicated that more needed to be done with associated costs, administrators usually prioritized a long list of needs and might be able to fund one or two. Although each school principal worked on fostering business

partnerships as well as relationships with respective parent teacher organizations, which could help raise additional money for the schools, equity was an issue among schools in different neighborhoods. Even though data were used in budget development, the focus was clearly on maintaining small class size and, to a lesser degree, funding what was considered necessary to serve student needs based on the analysis of a school's student achievement data. The city did fund the installation of security equipment in all schools, which was paid for by capital funds released by the mayor's office through the maintenance department.

The EQA Examination Process

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

From April 9-12, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Pittsfield Public Schools for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. This examination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the onsite visit.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Pittsfield to be a 'Moderate' performing school district with an average proficiency index of 71 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006, marked by student achievement that was 'Moderate' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Low' in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance declined

by two PI points in ELA and improved by four PI points in math, which closed the district's average proficiency gap by five percent.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

On average, more than two-fifths of all students in Pittsfield attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much less than that statewide. Slightly more than half of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), slightly more than one-third of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in math, and less than one-third of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-six percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- Pittsfield's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 71 proficiency index (PI) points, seven PI points less than that statewide. Pittsfield's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 29 PI points.
- In 2006, Pittsfield's proficiency gap in ELA was 21 PI points, five PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of more than two and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Pittsfield's proficiency gap in math was 36 PI points in 2006, eight PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of four and one-half PI points per year to achieve AYP. Pittsfield's proficiency gap in STE was 37 PI points, eight PI points wider than that statewide.

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

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

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by three percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Pittsfield narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 10 percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Pittsfield showed a slight decline, at an average of approximately one-third PI point annually.
- Math performance in Pittsfield showed improvement, at an average of two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 16 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Pittsfield had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately one and one-half PI points over the two-year period.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Of the nine measurable subgroups in Pittsfield in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 30 PI points in ELA and 34 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Pittsfield in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Slightly more than one-tenth of students with disabilities, and more than one-fifth of Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students, attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, approximately half the students attained proficiency.

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

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

In Pittsfield, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 28 PI points in 2003 to 31 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 32 to 34 PI points during this period.

- Only regular education students, non low-income students, and African-American students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in ELA was African-American students.
- In math, all subgroups in Pittsfield showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was non low-income students.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Major changes took place in the leadership of the Pittsfield Public Schools in 2005 with the arrival of a new superintendent and deputy superintendent. The district also hired new principals and curriculum coordinators effective August 2006. The new leadership placed strong emphasis on standards-based instruction and planning, accompanied by professional development for administrators and teachers in using data to make instructional and programmatic decisions. The new superintendent prioritized the systemic use of student achievement and attendance data, including analysis of subgroup data, to identify student needs. The district delegated appropriate authority to principals and administrators to hire staff and to manage their respective schools and

programs. Student achievement data had not yet been a major factor in assessing their leadership.

School committee members interviewed by the EQA were knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and shared a new commitment to standards-based decision-making. They received reports on dropouts, graduation rates, class size, attendance, and the MCAS test results. School committee interviewees cited recent examples in which they had used data to make budgetary and programmatic decisions, such as the decision to implement remedial programs and alternative programs for at-risk students. Using student achievement data, the district also decided to maintain half days in September as part of the kindergarten transition plan, allowing teachers to meet with all kindergarten parents and students on an individual basis. School committee policy provided for an orientation for each new member conducted by the superintendent and chair of the committee, and new school committee members participated in Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) training.

Communication and collaboration have been priorities of the district. The school committee, superintendent, and city officials have worked closely together to prepare and approve school budgets over the last two years. Administrators participated in professional development and worked together on teams. Principals formed Whole-Faculty Study Groups (WFSGs) and encouraged grade-level and departmental meetings at which teachers worked together to analyze data and use the data to develop and modify instruction. Communication with parents, community members, and business partners was achieved through websites, newsletters, public meetings, and interaction with parents at after-school and evening programs. The district encouraged the participation of these groups in school programs, which benefited from their funding. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) included goals for parental involvement.

During the period under review, the District Improvement Plan (DIP) was narrative, but new administrators prepared and the school committee adopted a new template and standards-based DIP for 2006-2007. SIPs used the same template and were aligned with the DIP in appropriate district goals. Principals reported on the progress of their SIPs to the school committee. Instructional decisions, such as those pertaining to use of flexible grouping, remediation, and acceleration, have begun to be based on achievement data, especially in elementary ELA and

middle school math. Administrators proposed programmatic changes at the secondary level, especially in the areas of instruction and attendance, as a result of data analysis. Budgets for FY 2006 and FY 2007 avoided layoffs and provided level services. Reductions in other areas permitted the implementation of new and improved programs.

Each school developed its own safety and evacuation plan and made it available to staff members during the period under review. The district has begun working with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and fire and police officials to prepare an updated districtwide safety plan.

Curriculum and Instruction

The EQA examiners gave the Pittsfield Public Schools an overall rating of 'Needs Improvement' on this standard. They rated the district as 'Needs Improvement' on all ten performance indicators in this standard.

During the period under review, the district had just begun to lay the structure for creating, documenting, revising, and communicating curricula, guided by the district's strategic plan and SIPs under the leadership of a new superintendent, deputy superintendent, and re-instituted curriculum leaders at the central office. Schools used different instructional programs in the core content areas during the review period, and the district planned to have schools conform in the use of a single program for consistency. Some horizontal and vertical alignment was present, but further work needed to be done to avoid gaps or redundancies in instruction. The district established a framework of curriculum committees, spanning grades preK-12, to work on curriculum and its alignment. By the end of the review period, the district had yet to document curricula that consistently aligned to the state curriculum frameworks and contained all key components: objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, measurable outcomes, and common assessments. Since the district had little completed curricula, a regular cycle of curriculum review and/or revision had yet to be established.

All district administrators were required to attend a two-year NISL training to learn how to implement standards-based instructional systems and to provide instructional leadership in their buildings. The staff received training in the WFSG model of professional development, and principals were expected to be actively involved with them to focus school efforts on using data

to improve instruction. Through the reinstitution of central office curriculum leaders, staff members were beginning to work on data analysis, curriculum development, and effective programs grounded in research to improve instruction. They had not looked at disaggregated data thoroughly nor had they allocated extra time consistently to ensure that all students would become proficient. Middle school students who were struggling in math were assigned to two math courses during the school year, one of which was remedial and called Encore math. More staff had been trained in the analysis of data since the district purchased TestWiz.net to organize and analyze the results of local assessments and the MCAS tests. According to data from the Merrimack Education Collaborative (MEC), the percentage of Pittsfield students who attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests was 39 percent in 2004, 38 percent in 2005, and 41 percent in 2006.

Administrators monitored teachers for effective instruction by the using the walk-through protocol in the district. All district leaders were supposed to use the effective daily instruction (EDI) protocol to monitor walk-throughs and assess instruction. According to district interviewees, they did not consistently implement this protocol nor was it necessarily linked to teacher evaluations in practice. Department chairs at the secondary level monitored teachers for effective instruction, and the principal facilitated the summative evaluation with the respective chair and teacher.

The district had recently made the use of technology and common assessments two priorities for effective instruction. The inequitable availability of up-to-date technology at all schools impeded the integration of technology into classroom instruction. Teachers were just beginning to create common exams and had not yet analyzed the results for strengths and weaknesses to determine the quality of the instructional program and student achievement. Although the district used the DIBELS and Galileo to assess student progress in addition to the MCAS tests, these assessments were used inconsistently districtwide and were not used to evaluate staff or school performance.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

The district was in the process of using formative assessments at the elementary level for reading and at the middle school level for mathematics. The district had mandated the use of the DIBELS and AIMSweb for ongoing assessment at the elementary level in reading and ELA, but had no similar assessment for math at grades K-5. The results of these assessments were used to implement the three-tiered intervention model for ELA. This model allowed for increased time on learning, more individualized attention for those in need, and less pullout intervention for those most in need.

Pittsfield Public Schools also created districtwide quarterly assessments in math at grades 6-8, using Galileo software, but did not have similar assessments at grades 6-8 in ELA or reading. The high schools had created partially common midterms and finals as summative evaluations, but had not yet implemented a standardized system of formative assessments. Benchmarks were not used at any level for science.

The district had yet to develop a written districtwide curriculum at each grade level and, therefore, a common assessment system at grades K-12, in ELA, math, and science based on that curriculum. The district relied primarily on the MCAS test results to determine what types of academic support were needed for students regarding placement and additional time on learning. Principals had the latitude within their buildings to assign staff appropriately to serve students in need.

In 2006, the district purchased 23 site licenses for TestWiz.net in order to manage and analyze the results of local and MCAS assessment data. Each principal and at least one teacher-leader per school was required to attend TestWiz.net training. The deputy superintendent was beginning to use past MCAS performance to predict future performance in the aggregate. This information would be sorted by school and teacher in the future to give feedback on how to modify instructional practices in order to improve student achievement.

The district was just beginning to look at the MCAS and local assessment results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs at all levels. The district implemented the use of PowerSchool and PowerGrade as a means to collect student data, including grades, attendance, retentions, and dropouts, and to make the data easier to analyze In addition, the technology allowed parents who had attended the training to get a password and then monitor their child's progress online. According to the district's technology professional development coordinator, so far 1,024 parents were trained to use PowerSchool. In April 2007, all secondary students received a password and instructions for use of PowerSchool, mailed to their respective homes. The district provided the training by means of in-person workshops to address the issue of scheduling parents to attend a workshop on using PowerSchool before they would receive a password. The district developed a videotape presentation to make it more convenient and accessible to all. In addition, all parents can also access a teacher's website. In 2007-2008, the district hoped to include assignment information in teachers' new PowerTeacher online grade books, which would also be available to parents through PowerSchool. This will make it easier to publish information about upcoming assignments, tests, and projects that parents and students can access at home.

New leadership at the central office created some districtwide initiatives to involve all administrators and teachers to work collaboratively toward the same district goals. All administrators and curriculum directors were required to attend a two-year program of NISL training, use the same EDI protocol for classroom walk-throughs to assess instruction, and use the WFSG model of professional development to focus school efforts on using assessment data to improve instruction. The district engaged only in audits that were mandated by the DOE or a grant funding entity to assess the effectiveness of its programs.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

The Pittsfield Public Schools had practices in place that allowed the district to recruit, select, and hire highly qualified professional teaching staff. According to the documentation presented by the district, over 91 percent (513 of 561) of the district's teachers had appropriate Massachusetts

licensure for the teaching assignments that they held. Ten licensed teachers were teaching out of field for one of more periods a day. Forty-eight teachers were not licensed at all. During the period under review, the district employed 29 licensed administrators. Twenty of them were licensed for the job they held, and nine administrators were not licensed for the job they currently held.

In those instances in which the district was unable to find highly qualified teachers, it hired non-licensed staff members and monitored their progress toward licensure. The district supported these unlicensed teachers through the district mentoring program and through professional development funds to subsidize the coursework necessary to gain teacher licensure.

The district also had a formal mentoring program in place for new teachers. However, due to a large teacher turnover and the retirement of trained mentors during the period under review, there was an insufficient number of mentors for new teachers in the latter part of the review period. Principals mentored new teachers, several at a time, in order to fill this gap. The district's mentoring program for administrators was informal, and those new administrators interviewed stated that mentoring consisted of the new administrator seeking out experienced administrators for support. Administrators indicated that the district encouraged professional growth and development for principals and coordinators through the NISL training, a grant-funded program designed to strengthen leadership skills in schools to impact student achievement.

Based on a 2005 survey of teachers, the district provided professional development in the areas of effective teaching, assessment, and positive learning environment. The school committee allocated $100,000 a year for professional staff reimbursement of tuition and related fees and expenses related to attending workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Prior to 2005-2006, professional development in the district was unfocused. In 2005-2006, the district began to concentrate on the use of data to improve student achievement. Under the leadership of the new superintendent, all principals and professional staff received professional development training in using WFSGs, which became the starting point of the analysis of data in the schools. In 2006, the district purchased 23 licenses for TestWiz.net and trained staff members to use the program. This allowed the schools to analyze the MCAS data and to analyze

subgroup data using the district's Macintosh operating system. In the WFSGs, faculty and principals analyzed data from the MCAS tests, the DIBELS, the AP tests, program-based assessments, and attendance records to create action plans to address student achievement.

According to a random sample of teacher evaluations reviewed by EQA examiners, the district annually evaluated teachers without professional status and biennially evaluated teachers with professional status, as required under Massachusetts General Laws and school committee policy. All teacher evaluations reviewed were considered to be timely, most were informative, and only some were instructive and considered to be conducive to overall professional growth and effectiveness. This was substantiated by the presence or absence of statements made in the written evaluations.

For 2005-2006, the Pittsfield school committee did not evaluate the superintendent, nor did the superintendent evaluate all central administrators, as required under statute. Neither teacher nor administrator evaluations were specifically linked to student achievement goals.

During the period under review, the district developed the EDI form to monitor classrooms and provide feedback to teachers. The EQA examiners found that not all administrators used the EDI in conducting walk-throughs and that they did not consistently use it to provide feedback to teachers.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Pittsfield Public Schools had early intervention literacy programs at the primary level, and the district used Early Reading Intervention for all its students along with several other reading support programs for its at-risk students. Thirty-six percent of the students reached the proficiency level or higher on the grade 4 MCAS test in ELA in 2006.

The district used aggregate achievement data, especially the MCAS test results, to identify the student needs at each grade level and determine the scope and sequence of the academic assistance. The district mandated that all grade K-5 teachers schedule 90-minute ELA

instruction blocks each day, and that the teachers assess students at least three times per year using the DIBELS. When teachers noted deficiencies in student performance, they provided additional ELA services (Tier II and/or Tier III interventions) through a combination of reading specialists, Title I teachers, and paraprofessionals. In contrast, no common, ongoing math assessment was in place at the elementary schools, and although the district was planning a three-tiered intervention program for math, it was just in the planning stages.

At the district's two middle schools, the district assigned all grade 6-8 students to a double period of ELA and assigned students who had done poorly on their previous MCAS math test to an additional daily math class. There were few formal, academic, after-school support programs at the middle level, but summer programs were offered to middle school students if they had failed one or more courses. The high schools offered MCAS tutoring in mathematics and ELA to grade 9 and 10 students who had performed poorly on the grade 8 math test and to grade 11 and 12 students who had not achieved a passing score on either the grade 10 math or ELA test. High school students could make up course credits at summer school. Neither high school offered a formal after-school support program for its at-risk students, but homework help, peer tutoring, and tutoring at the Juvenile Resource Center were available on a voluntary basis.

The district had discipline policies in place at each level and published the discipline code in each school's handbook. According to interviewees, implementation of these policies and practices varied from school to school. The district's two middle schools used in-school suspension as their main disciplinary tool, but teachers also used team leaders as the first point of referral. The two high schools, conversely, used out-of-school suspension as their main disciplinary tool and also used the services of the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office through its Juvenile Resource Center (JRC) for habitual offenders and excessive truants. The percentage of students disciplined with in-school or out-of-school suspension at the secondary level was well above the state average in each category.

The high schools' reported dropout rate was more than twice the state average, and the cohort group dropout rate in 2006 approached 33 percent. The district used several dropout prevention methods including the JRC and a five-year graduation plan. Several programs were available for

those students who did drop out; they could return to school or continue their education in a General Educational Development (GED) certificate program or the Adult Diploma Program.

The district's overall attendance rate in 2005-2006 was 93.8 percent, which was below the state and NCLB targets of 95 percent. Overall, the rate of chronic absenteeism, defined as absent more than 10 percent of the school year, was very high. This rate jumped to 14.1 percent in grade 5 and peaked at 29.5 percent in grade 9. The district employed one full-time attendance officer, two attendance coordinators at each high school, and each of the secondary schools had a Pittsfield police officer (DARE) stationed at the school. All of these individuals worked with school administrators on dealing with students who had attendance problems. They frequently visited the homes of truant students and filed Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions, especially for grade 8 and 9 students.

The annual number of days that teachers were absent in the district was less than 10 days per teacher. Interviewees did not perceive teacher attendance to be a problematic issue. The district employed 20 permanent substitutes across the district to help provide consistent substitute coverage when the regular classroom teacher was absent.

Pittsfield Public Schools' access policies stated clearly that the district would allow all students to participate in all course offerings, including the accelerated and/or AP courses offered at the two high schools. The district routinely honored parental requests, and, according to interviewees, the percentages of minority students in those classes closely resembled the percentages of minority students in the total school population. The district took pride in the fact that it offered as many as 16 AP courses at each high school; however, the average score, out of a maximum score of 5, for those students who chose to take the AP exams was 2.92 at Pittsfield High School and 1.83 at Taconic High School.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The EQA examiners gave the Pittsfield Public Schools an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' for management and budget development and 'Needs Improvement' for resources and use of data on this standard. They rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on nine and 'Needs Improvement' on four of the thirteen performance indicators in this standard.

The Pittsfield Public Schools' budget process was open and participatory. All administrators with budget authority solicited input from their staffs. The administrative team reviewed all requests to develop a superintendent's budget that was presented to the school committee's finance subcommittee, and then to the committee as a whole. The school district was in the beginning stages of analyzing and using data in its decision-making process, including budget development. At the time of the review, aggregate data, but little disaggregated data, were used. The main focus in developing the budget was on maintaining small class sizes. In addition, the district offered more AP courses at the high schools in an attempt to address school choice outflow.

The school district did not have adequate resources to address all perceived needs. However, there was a much better relationship with the city than seen in the prior EQA review in March 2003, and there was a much better understanding on the part of the mayor and city officials regarding what the school department needed to make improvements. The district relied on business partnerships and parent teacher organizations for routine operational expenses, including the salaries for two positions in the vocational program. The district budget booklet was easily readable and included detailed information regarding historical expenditures, revenues, personnel, grants, and other pertinent information to make the budget deliberations easily understood by all stakeholders. The district reviewed its programs and activities for cost effectiveness and provided several examples of its decisions to allocate resources more efficiently. These included providing in-district professional development, serving as a center for NISL training for other school districts, and partnering with the sheriff's office in the JRC program.

The city, under the new mayoral administration, focused its budget and resources for the school district on "no layoffs," which demonstrated a marked improvement in the financial picture than that seen in the prior EQA review. The city contributed above the minimum required local contribution each year under review. The school district did not request funding above the amount needed for level services and relied on outside sources of funding to supplement the city-provided budget.

The district's financial management practices were sound. It had systems in place to ensure that the budget was spent within its limits, purchasing regulations were followed, and proper procedures were in place to process payroll.

The district's facilities varied regarding their condition. Schools had individual, building-based safety plans. Some schools had doors locked with a doorbell or buzzer, and some had to have a staff member physically let people enter. The district addressed preventative maintenance primarily through contractual arrangements with vendors and through a work-order system. The city maintenance department provided the maintenance plan for the schools and the district's capital plan. Therefore, the district did not have a formal, long-term capital plan, but needs were addressed on a yearly basis through the city.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

The EQA's analysis of student achievement data focuses on the MCAS test results for 2003-2006, with primary attention paid to the 2006 MCAS tests. This analysis is framed by the following five essential questions:

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

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA subjected the most current state and district MCAS test results to a series of analyses to determine whether there were differences between the mean results of district students and those of students statewide or among student subgroups within the district. Descriptive analyses of the 2006 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Pittsfield 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 Pittsfield; and comparative analyses of districtwide, subject-area, grade, school, and subgroup achievement in relation to that of students statewide, in relation to the district averages, and in relation to other subject areas, grades, and subgroups.

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

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

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

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

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

Achievement

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

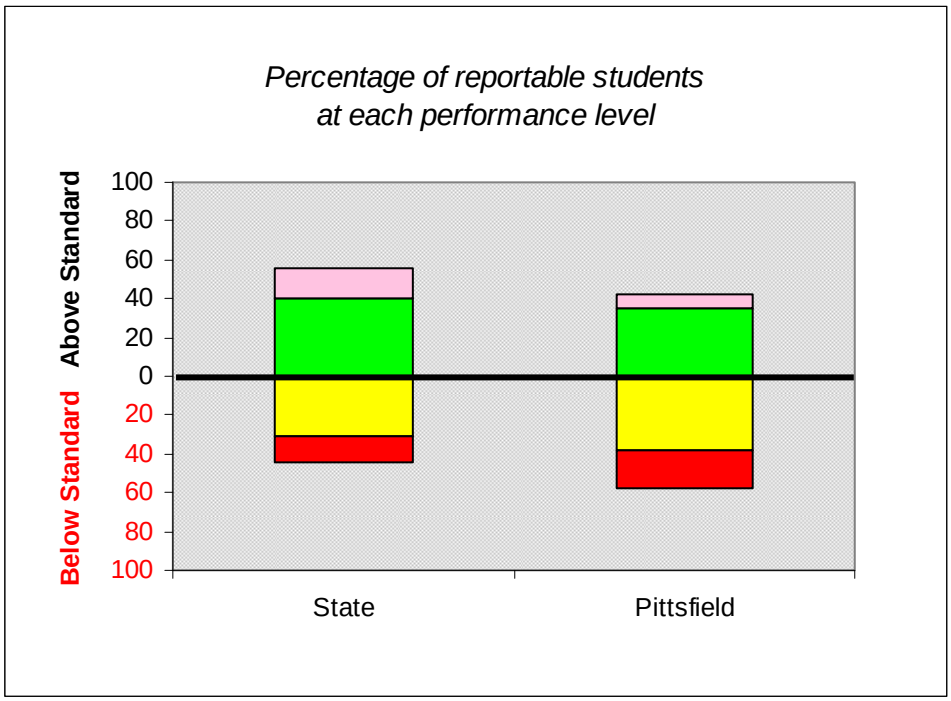
Findings:

- On average, more than two-fifths of all students in Pittsfield attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much less than that statewide. Slightly more than half of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), slightly more than one-third of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in math, and less than one-third of Pittsfield students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE).

- Pittsfield's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 71 proficiency index (PI) points, seven PI points less than that statewide. Pittsfield's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 29 PI points.

- In 2006, Pittsfield's proficiency gap in ELA was 21 PI points, five PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of more than two and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Pittsfield's proficiency gap in math was 36 PI points in 2006, eight PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of four and one-half PI points per year to achieve AYP. Pittsfield's proficiency gap in STE was 37 PI points, eight PI points wider than that statewide.

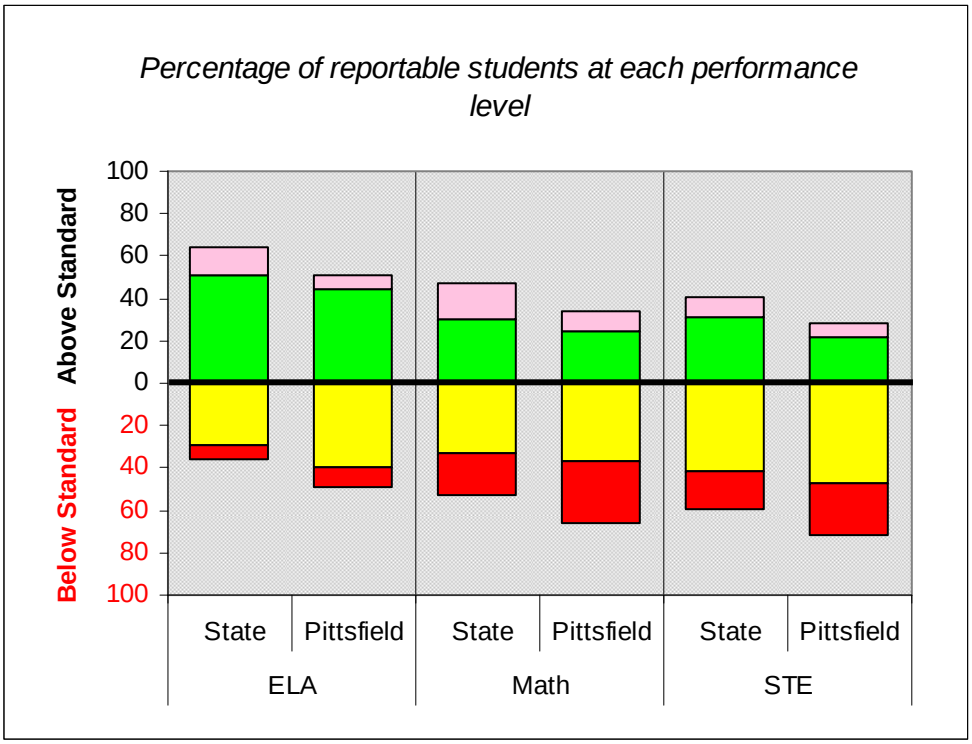
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State	Pittsfield
Advanced	15	8
Proficient	41	35
Needs Improvement	31	38
Warning/Failing	14	19
Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	43
Average Proficiency Index (API)	78.3	71.2

In 2006, 43 percent of Pittsfield students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, 13 percentage points less than that statewide. Nineteen percent of Pittsfield students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, five percentage points more than that statewide. Pittsfield's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 71 proficiency index (PI) points, seven PI points less than that statewide. Pittsfield's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 29 PI points.

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



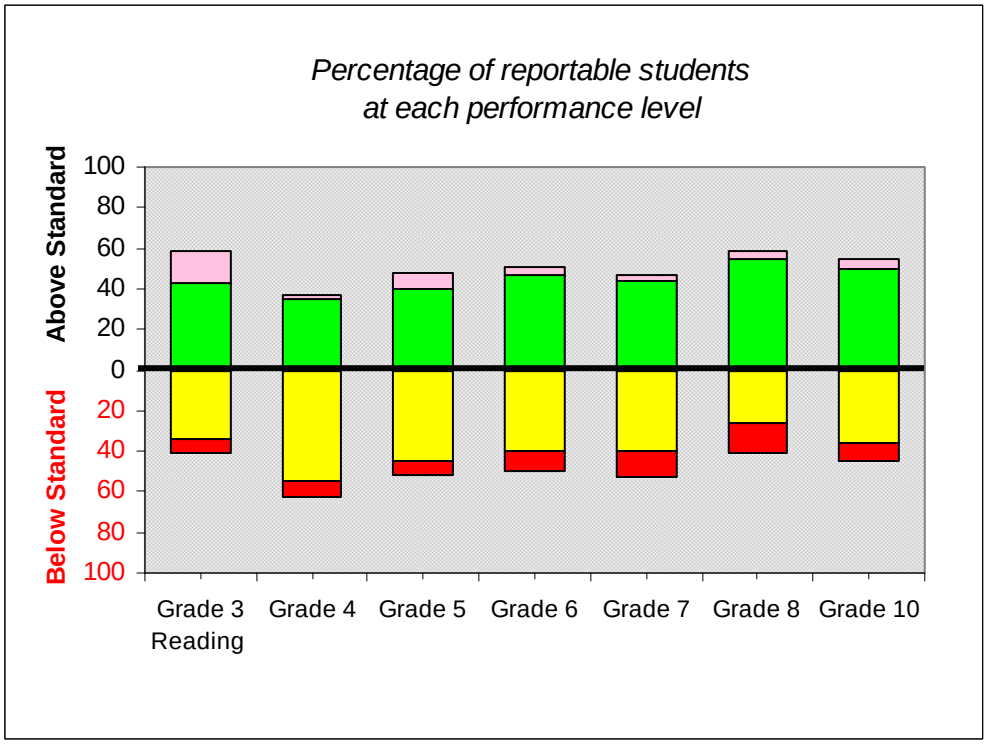
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield
Advanced	13	6	17	9	10	7
Proficient	51	45	30	25	31	22
Needs Improvement	29	39	33	37	42	47
Warning/Failing	7	10	20	29	17	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	51	47	34	41	29
Proficiency Index (PI)	84.3	78.6	72.3	63.9	71.4	63.3

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was lower in Pittsfield than statewide. In Pittsfield, 51 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 64 percent statewide; 34 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 47 percent statewide; and 29 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 41 percent statewide.

Pittsfield students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Pittsfield students in ELA was 79 PI points; in math, it was 64 PI points; and in STE, it was 63 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 84, 72, and 71 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Pittsfield students was 21 PI points in ELA, 36 PI points in math, and 37 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 16, 28, and 29 PI points, respectively. Pittsfield's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of more than two and one-half PI points in ELA and four and one-half PI points in math to meet AYP.

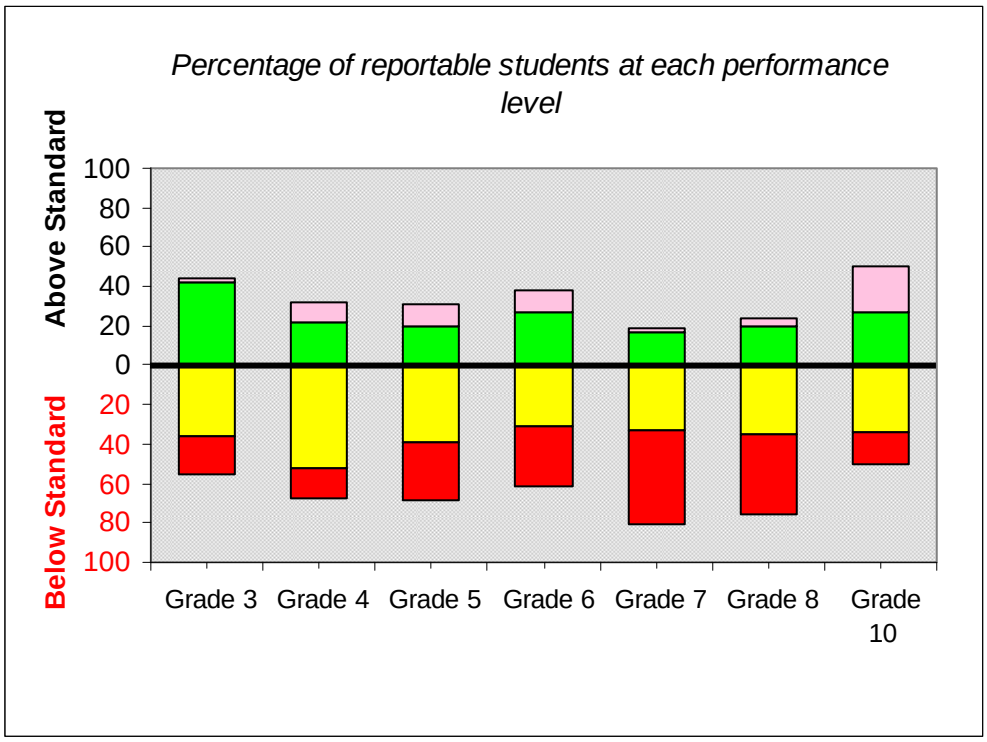
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	16	2	9	4	3	4	5
Proficient	43	35	40	46	44	55	49
Needs Improvement	34	55	45	39	40	26	36
Warning/Failing	7	8	7	10	13	15	9
Percent Attaining Proficiency	59	37	49	50	47	59	54

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 37 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 59 percent of grade 3 and grade 8 students.

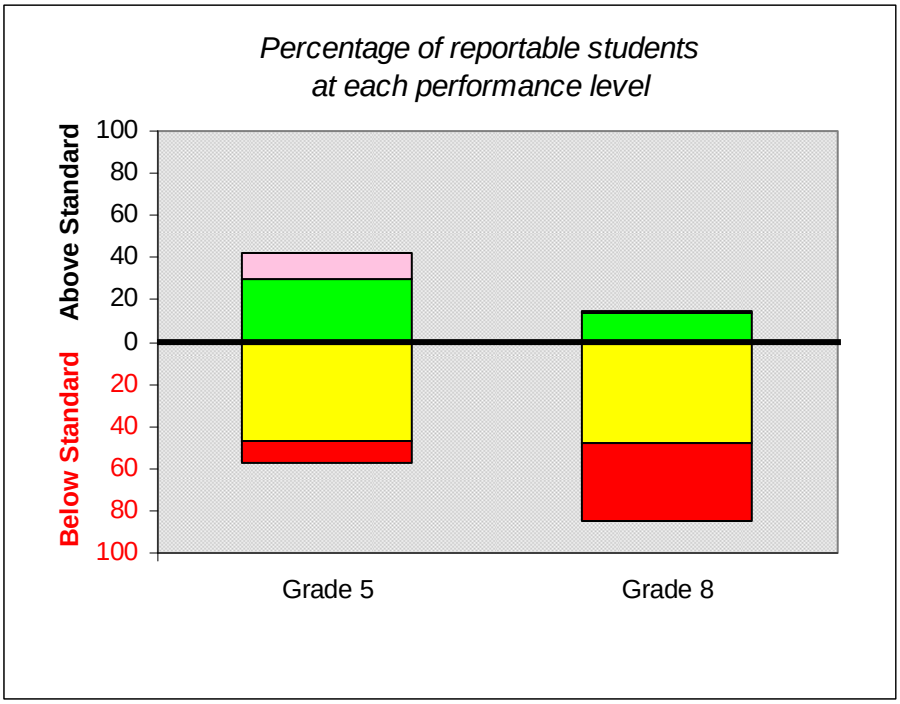
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	3	10	11	12	2	4	24
Proficient	42	22	20	26	17	20	27
Needs Improvement	36	52	39	31	33	35	34
Warning/Failing	19	16	30	31	48	41	16
Percent Attaining Proficiency	45	32	31	38	19	24	51

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math also varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 19 percent of grade 7 students to a high of 51 percent of grade 10 students.

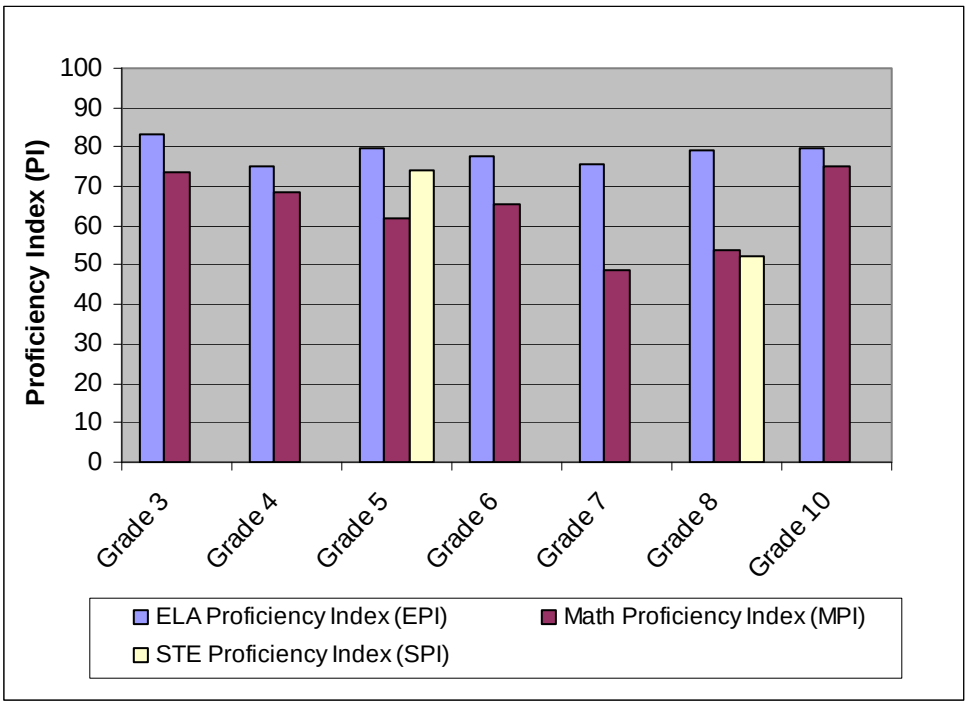
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5	Grade 8
Advanced	12	1
Proficient	30	14
Needs Improvement	47	48
Warning/Failing	11	37
Percent Attaining Proficiency	42	15

In Pittsfield in 2006, 42 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 15 percent of grade 8 students did so.

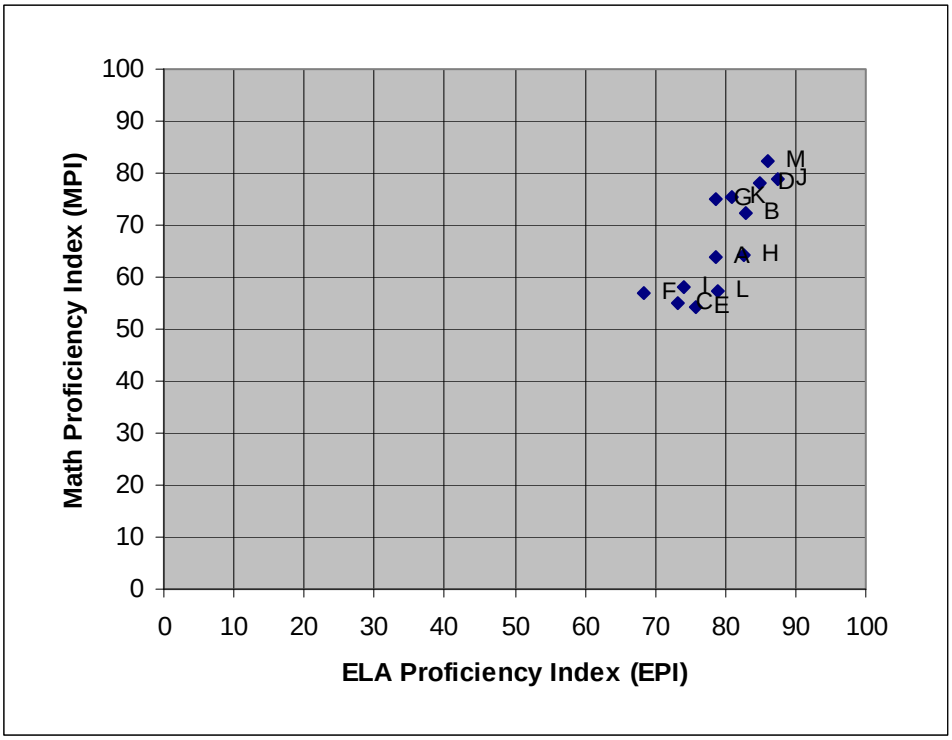
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	83.5	75.2	79.6	77.8	75.5	79.1	79.8
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	73.5	68.6	61.9	65.4	48.9	53.8	75.1
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			74.1			52.5	

By grade, Pittsfield's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 16 PI points at grade 3 to a high of 25 PI points at grade 4. Pittsfield's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 25 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 51 PI points at grade 7. Pittsfield's STE proficiency gap was 26 PI points at grade 5 and 47 PI points at grade 8.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Pittsfield	78.6	63.9	6,656
B	Allendale Elementary	82.8	72.3	314
C	Crosby Elementary	73.1	55.1	361
D	Egremont Elementary	85.0	78.0	480
E	John T. Reid Middle	75.8	54.2	1,313
F	Morningside Comm Elem	68.4	57.0	450
G	Pittsfield High	78.6	75.0	472
H	Robert T. Capeless Elem	82.6	64.1	256
I	Silvio O. Conte Elem	74.0	58.0	359
J	Stearns Elementary	87.4	78.8	234
K	Taconic High	80.9	75.2	513
L	Theodore Herberg Middle	78.9	57.4	1,533
M	Williams Elementary	86.1	82.4	371

Pittsfield's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 13 PI points at Stearns Elementary School to a high of 32 PI points at Morningside Community Elementary School. Pittsfield's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 18 PI points at Williams Elementary School to a high of 46 PI points at John T. Reid Middle School.

Equity of Achievement

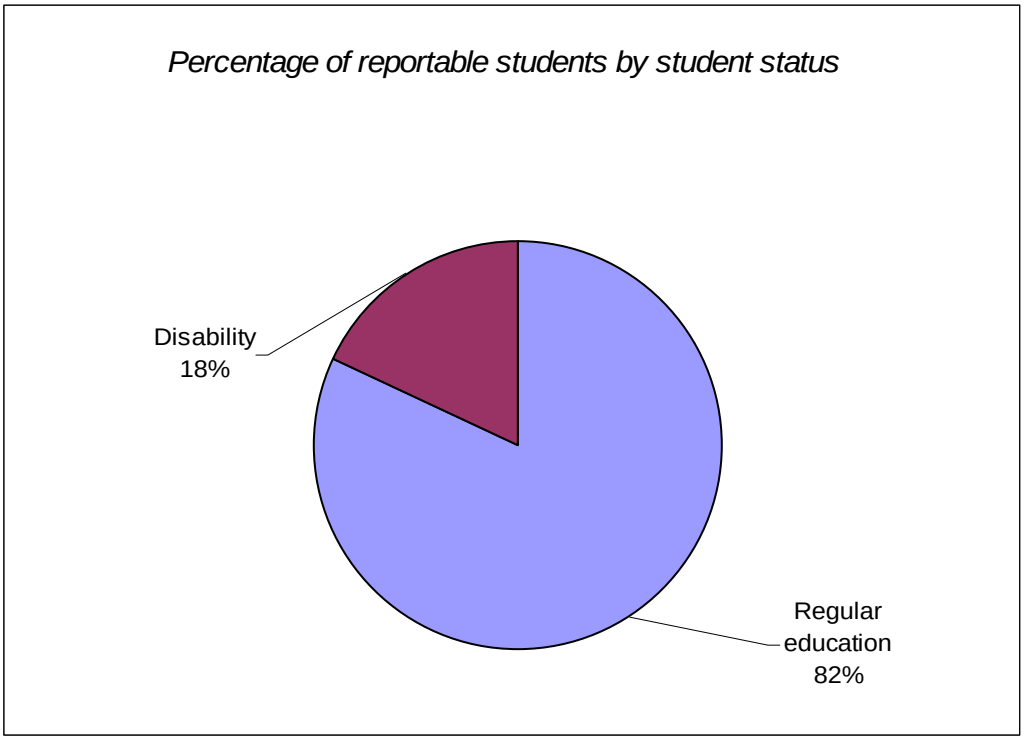
Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

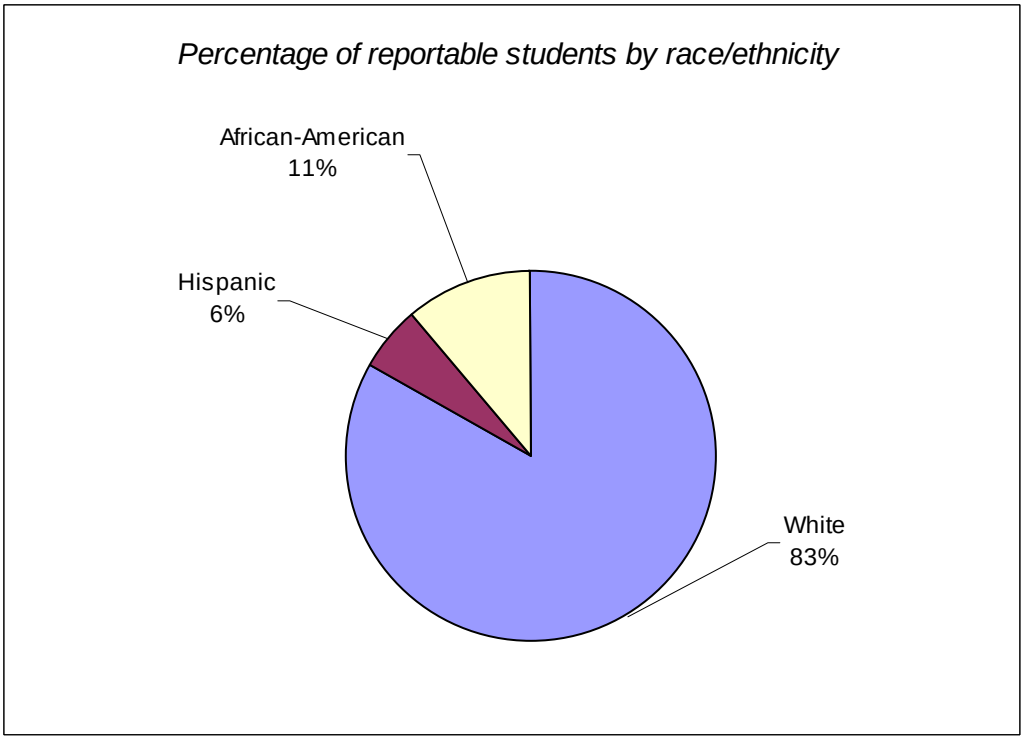
- Of the nine measurable subgroups in Pittsfield in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 30 PI points in ELA and 34 PI points in math (non low-income students, students with disabilities, respectively).
- The proficiency gaps in Pittsfield in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, Hispanic students, African-American students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). Slightly more than one-tenth of students with disabilities, and more than one-fifth of Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students, attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students. For each of these subgroups, approximately half the students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was wider than the district average in math but narrower in ELA. Two-fifths or more of the students in both subgroups attained proficiency.

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

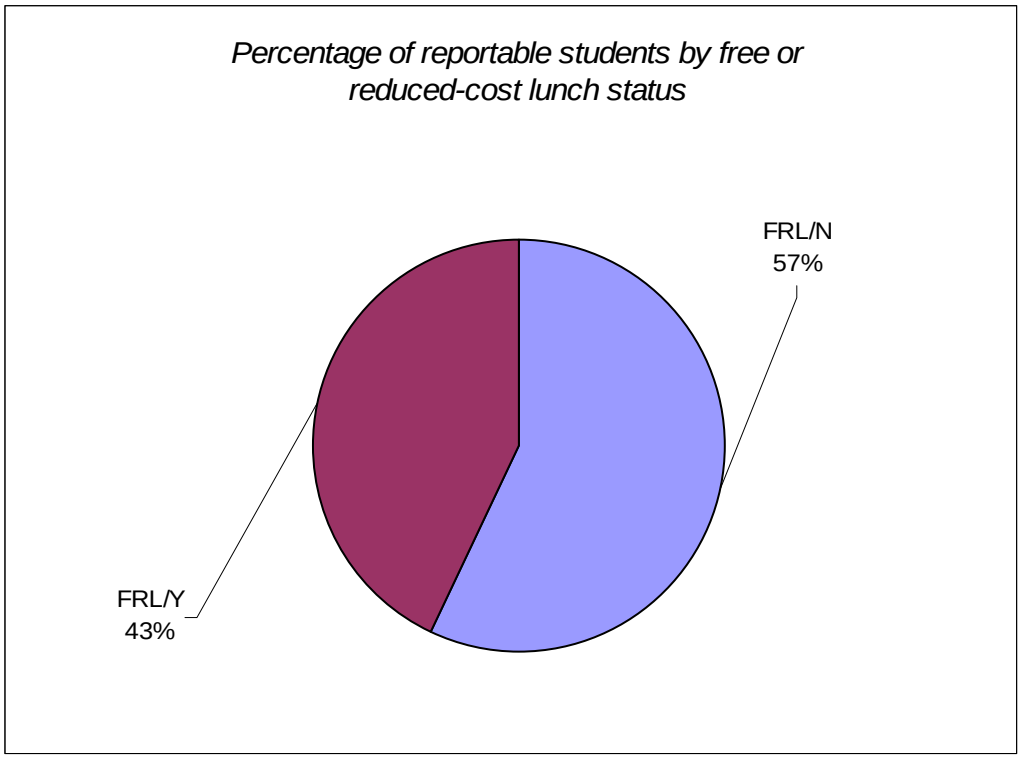
A.



B.



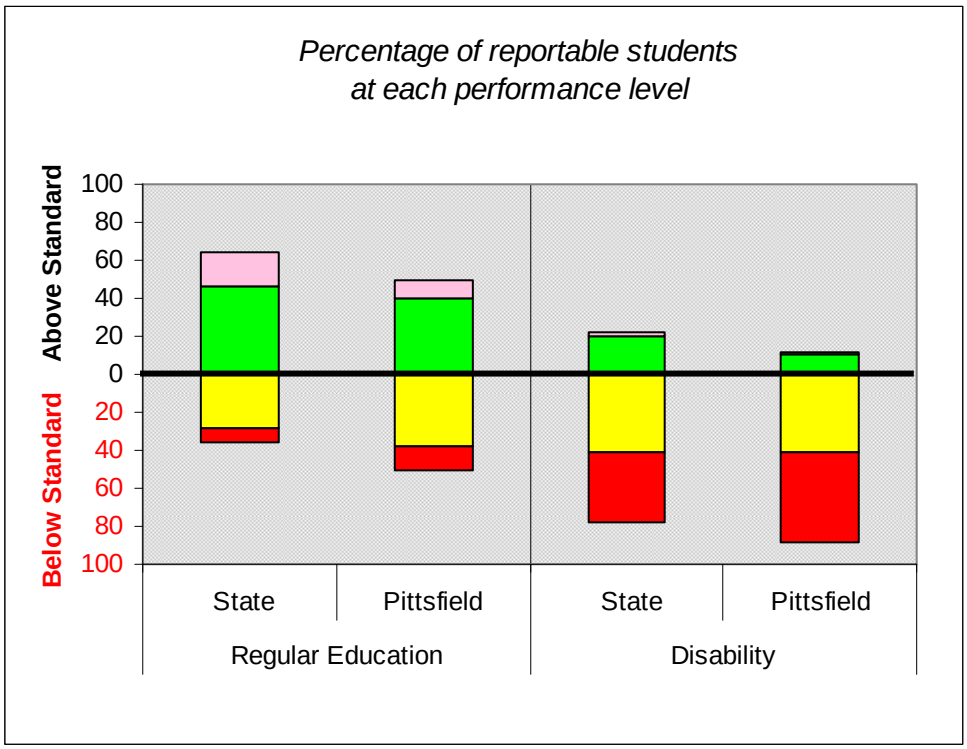
C.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	2,695
	Disability	596
Race/ethnicity	White	2,772
	Hispanic	188
	African-American	372
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,929
	FRL/Y	1,462

In Pittsfield in 2006, 18 percent of the students were students with disabilities, 17 percent were non-White students, and 43 percent were students participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

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

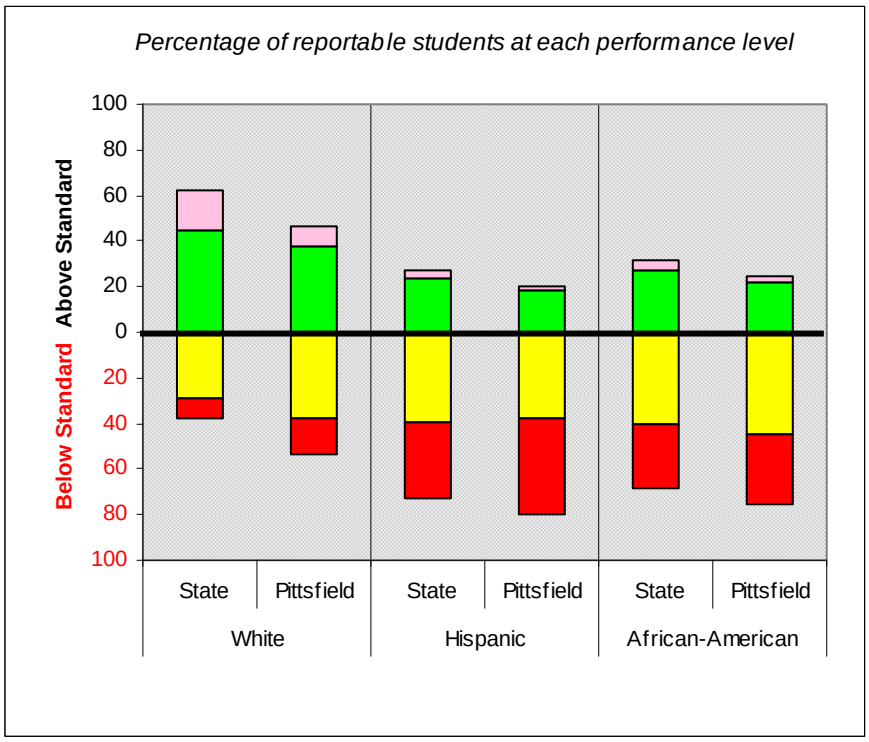


	Regular Education		Disability	
	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield
Advanced	18	9	2	1
Proficient	46	40	20	11
Needs Improvement	28	38	41	41
Warning/Failing	8	13	36	48
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	49	22	12
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.0	77.0	55.9	46.5

In Pittsfield in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than four times greater than that of students with disabilities. Forty-nine percent of regular education students and 12 percent of students with disabilities attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Pittsfield's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 23 PI points for regular education students and 53 PI points for students with disabilities. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 30 PI points.

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

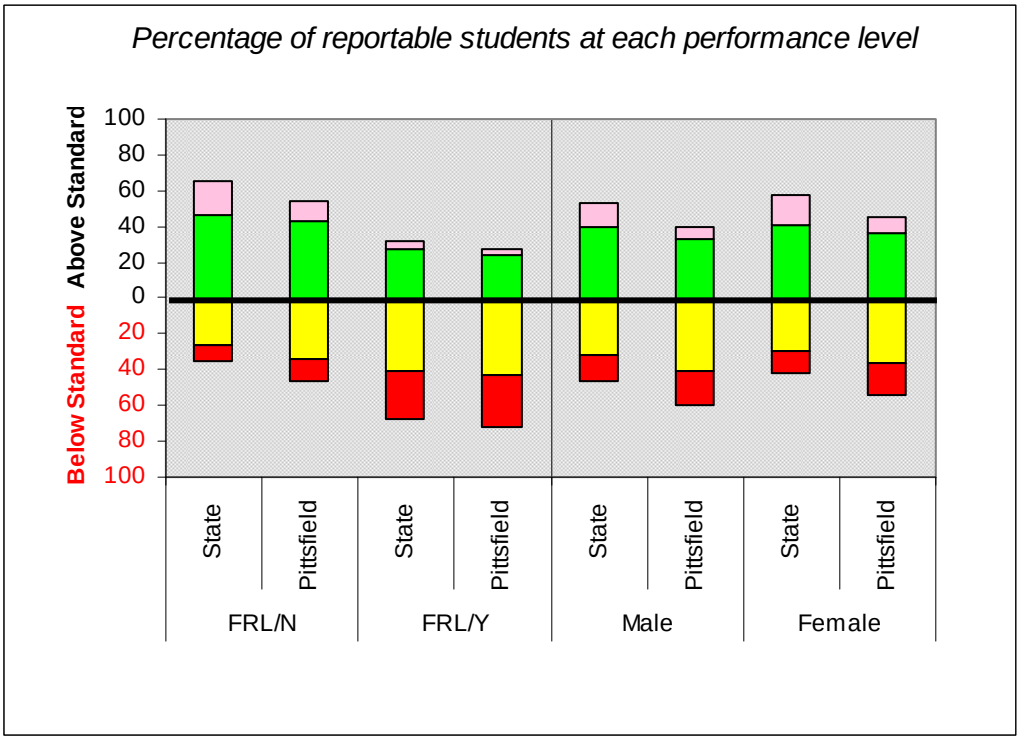


	White		Hispanic		African-American	
	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield
Advanced	17	9	4	2	4	3
Proficient	45	37	23	19	27	22
Needs Improvement	29	38	40	38	40	45
Warning/Failing	9	16	33	42	28	31
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	46	27	21	31	25
Average Proficiency Index (API)	82.9	74.0	59.2	52.6	63.2	58.6

In Pittsfield in 2006, performance on the MCAS tests varied by race/ethnicity, as 46 percent of White students, 21 percent of Hispanic students, and 25 percent of African-American students attained overall proficiency.

Pittsfield's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 26 PI points for White students, and 47 PI points for Hispanic students, and 41 PI points for African-American students. The average performance gap between White and Hispanic students was 21 PI points, and between White and African-American students it was 15 PI points.

Figure/Table 11: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status and Gender Subgroups, 2006

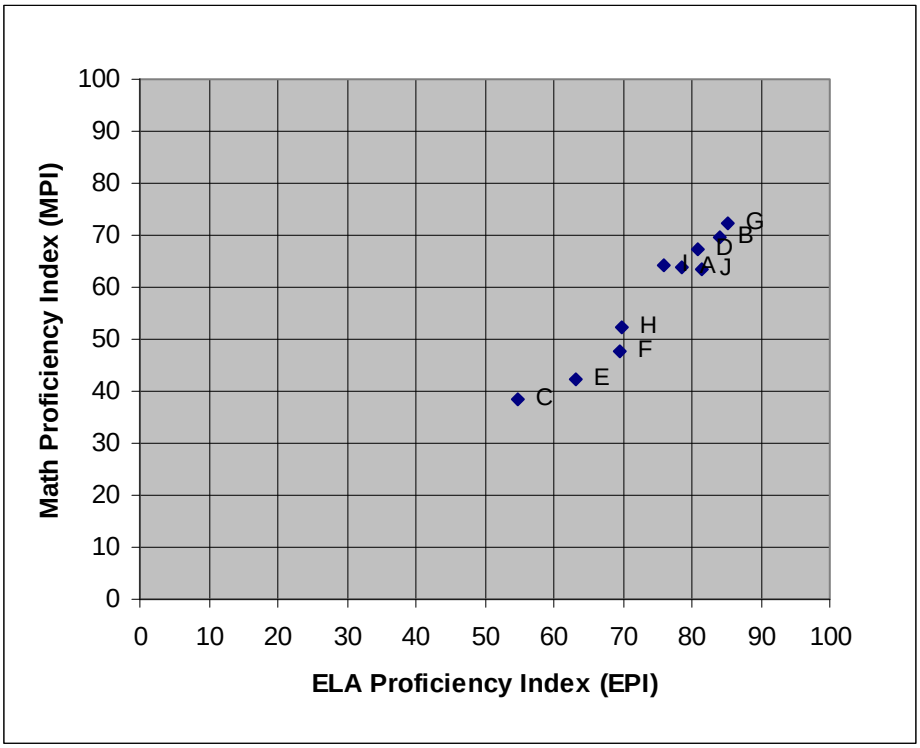


	FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield
Advanced	19	11	5	3	13	7	17	9
Proficient	46	43	27	24	40	33	41	36
Needs Improvement	27	35	40	43	32	41	29	36
Warning/Failing	8	12	27	29	15	20	13	19
Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	54	32	27	53	40	58	45
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.5	78.8	63.5	61.2	77.1	70.1	79.6	72.4

In Pittsfield in 2006, 27 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 54 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 39 PI points for low-income students and 21 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was 18 PI points.

Forty-five percent of female students and 40 percent of male students attained overall proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests. The average proficiency gap was 28 PI points for female students and 30 PI points for male students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was two PI points.

Figure/Table 12: Student MCAS ELA Proficiency Index vs. Math Proficiency Index, by Subgroup, 2006

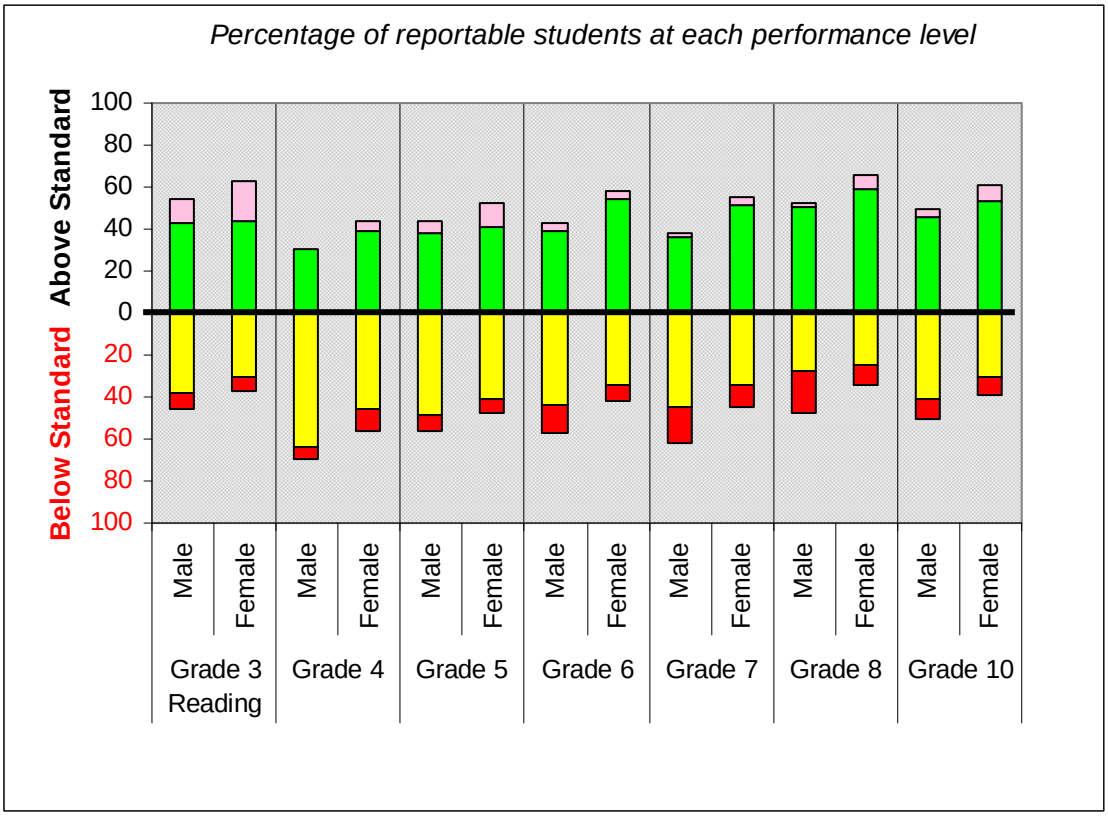


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Pittsfield	78.6	63.9	6,656
B	Regular Education	84.2	69.8	5,385
C	Disability	54.7	38.4	1,069
D	White	80.8	67.2	5,448
E	Hispanic	63.1	42.3	367
F	African-American	69.5	47.7	725
G	FRL/N	85.1	72.4	3,808
H	FRL/Y	69.9	52.5	2,846
I	Male	75.9	64.4	3,386
J	Female	81.4	63.3	3,268

Of the nine measurable subgroups in Pittsfield in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 30 PI points in ELA (non low-income (FRL/N) students, students with disabilities, respectively) and 34 PI points in math (non low-income (FRL/N) students, students with disabilities, respectively).

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

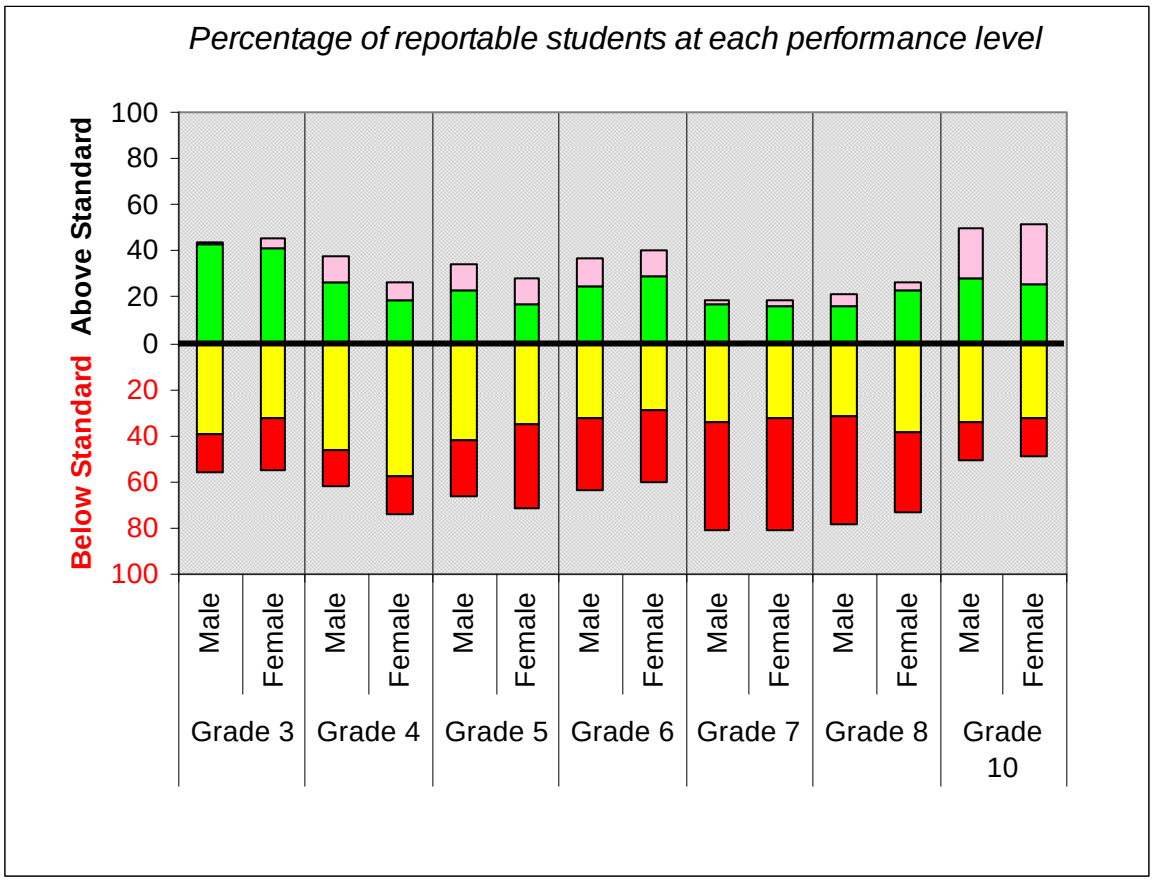
Figure/Table 13: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	12	20	0	5	6	12	4	4	1	4	1	7	4	7
Proficient	43	43	31	39	38	41	39	55	37	51	51	59	46	53
Needs Improvement	38	30	63	46	48	41	44	34	45	35	28	25	41	31
Warning/ Failing	7	6	6	10	8	6	13	7	17	10	20	9	9	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	55	63	31	44	44	53	43	59	38	55	52	66	50	60

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

Figure/Table 14: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	1	4	12	8	11	12	12	11	2	3	5	4	22	26
Proficient	43	41	26	18	23	17	24	29	17	16	16	23	28	25
Needs Improvement	40	33	47	58	42	35	33	29	34	33	32	38	34	33
Warning/ Failing	17	22	16	16	24	37	31	31	47	48	47	35	16	16
Percent Attaining Proficiency	44	45	38	26	34	29	36	40	19	19	21	27	50	51

On the 2006 MCAS tests in math, male students outperformed female students at grades 4 and 5. Female students outperformed male students at grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. Male and female students performed at the same level at grade 7.

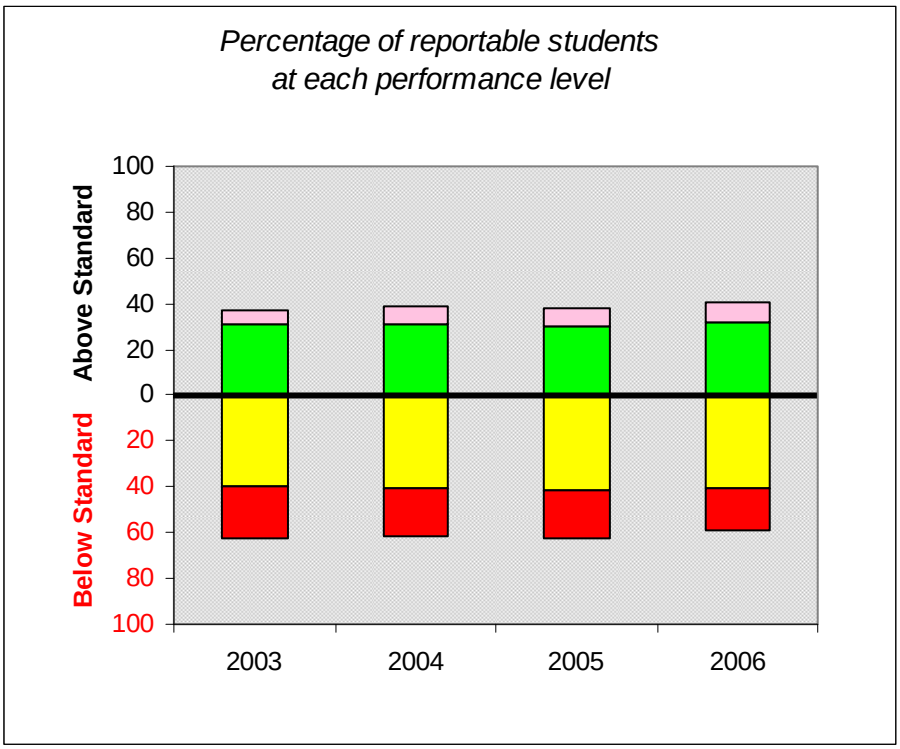
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Pittsfield's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall, some improvement in math, and a slight decline in ELA and STE.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by three percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Pittsfield narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 10 percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Pittsfield showed a slight decline, at an average of approximately one-third PI point annually.
- Math performance in Pittsfield showed improvement, at an average of two PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 16 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Between 2004 and 2006, Pittsfield had a decline in STE performance, decreasing by approximately one and one-half PI points over the two-year period.

Figure 15/Tables 15 A-B: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2003-2006



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	7	8	8	9
Proficient	31	31	30	32
Needs Improvement	40	40	42	40
Warning/Failing	23	21	20	19
Percent Attaining Proficiency	38	39	38	41
Average Proficiency Index (API)	67.5	69.0	68.7	70.6

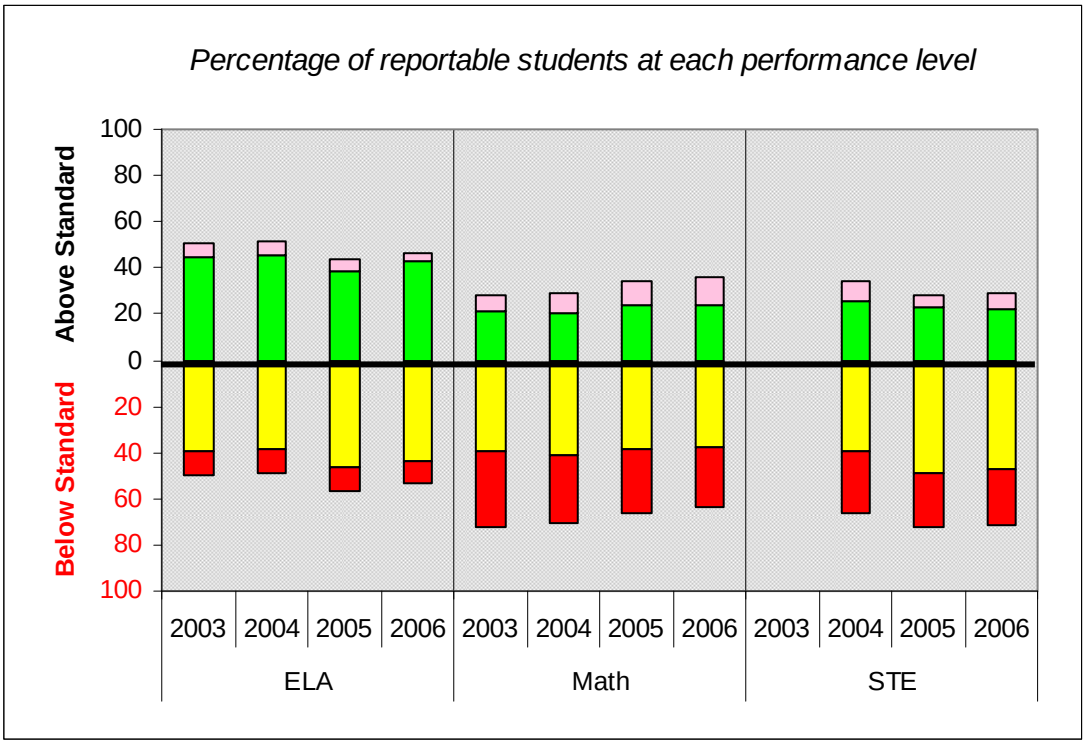
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	228	263	271	291
Proficient	1,073	1,040	978	1,090
Needs Improvement	1,377	1,356	1,373	1,373
Warning/Failing	796	712	670	641
Total	3,474	3,371	3,292	3,395

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

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests increased from 38 percent in 2003 to 41 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 23 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Pittsfield narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 10 percent.

Figure/Table 16: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Subject, 2003-2006



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	6	6	5	3	7	9	10	12		8	5	7
Proficient	44	46	38	43	21	20	23	24		26	23	22
Needs Improvement	40	39	46	44	40	41	38	38		40	49	47
Warning/ Failing	10	10	10	10	33	29	28	26		26	23	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	50	52	43	46	28	29	33	36		34	28	29
Proficiency Index (PI)	77.9	78.8	75.6	76.8	59.6	61.7	63.6	65.9		64.7	64.0	63.3

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

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 50 percent in 2003 to 46 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA widened from 22 PI points in 2003 to 23 PI points in 2006.

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining proficiency in math increased from 28 percent in 2003 to 36 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 40 PI points in 2003 to 34 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 16 percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Pittsfield students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 34 percent in 2004 to 29 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in STE widened from 35 PI points in 2004 to 37 PI points in 2006.

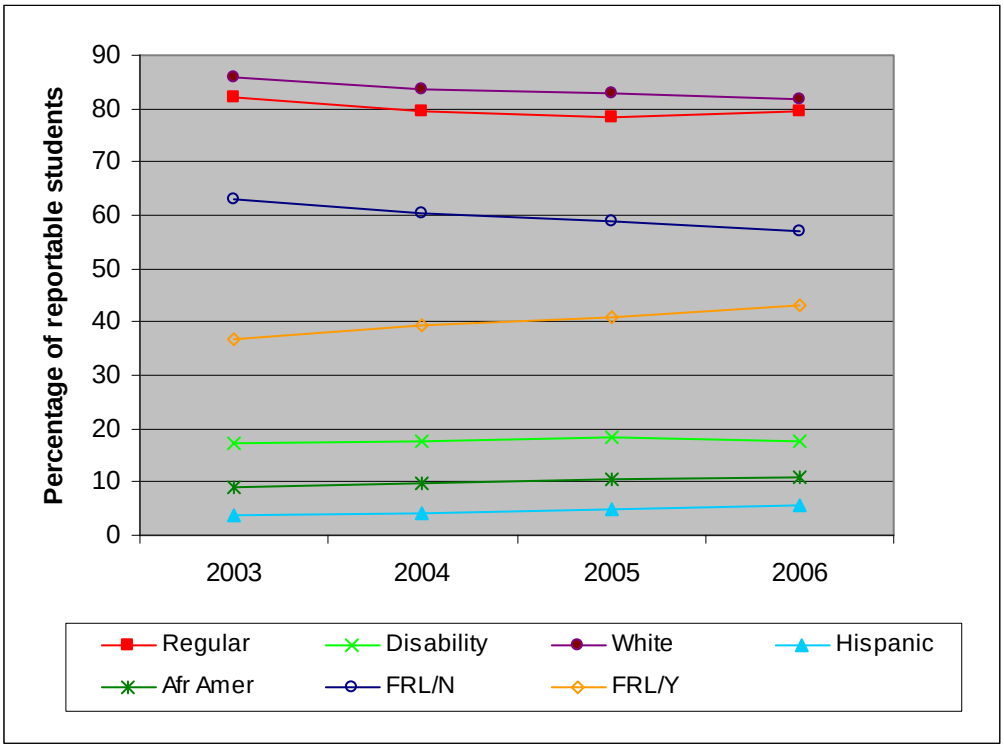
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Pittsfield, only regular education students, non low-income students, and African-American students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in ELA was African-American students.
- In math, all subgroups in Pittsfield showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was non low-income students.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 28 PI points in 2003 to 31 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 32 to 34 PI points during this period.

Figure/Table 17: Student Population by Reportable Subgroups, 2003-2006



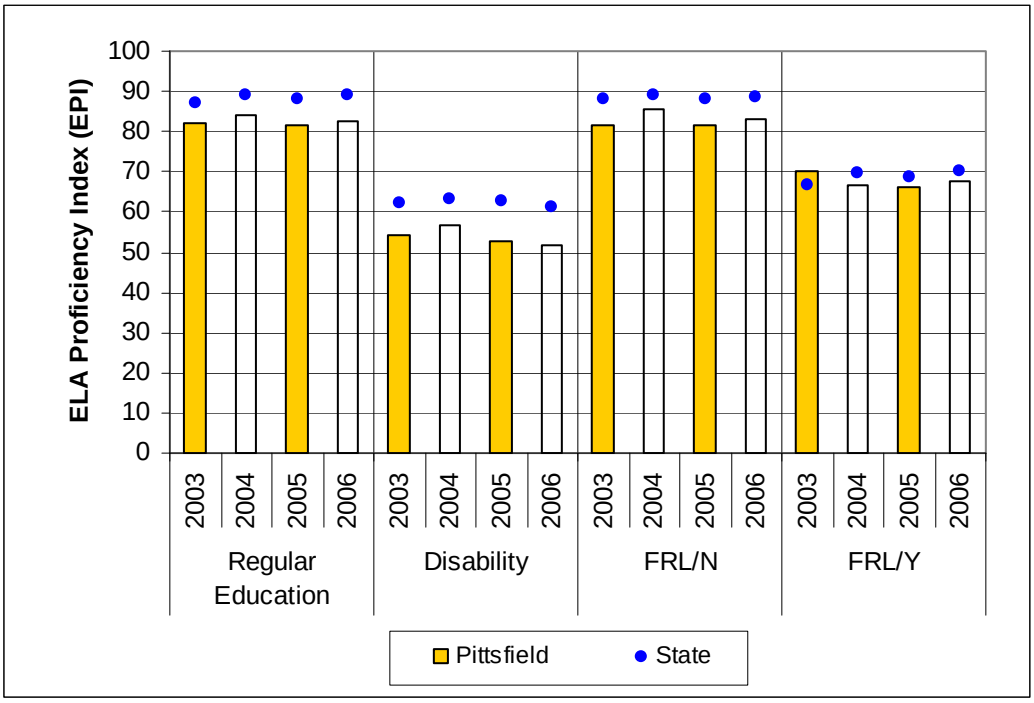
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Pittsfield	2,553	2,885	2,855	3,391	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	2,099	2,291	2,242	2,695	82.2	79.4	78.5	79.5
Disability	438	511	520	596	17.2	17.7	18.2	17.6
White	2,188	2,416	2,365	2,772	85.7	83.7	82.8	81.7
Hispanic	96	122	135	188	3.8	4.2	4.7	5.5
Afr Amer	2,27	282	303	372	8.9	9.8	10.6	11.0
FRL/N	1,610	1,744	1,683	1,929	63.1	60.5	58.9	56.9
FRL/Y	943	1,141	1,172	1,462	36.9	39.5	41.1	43.1

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

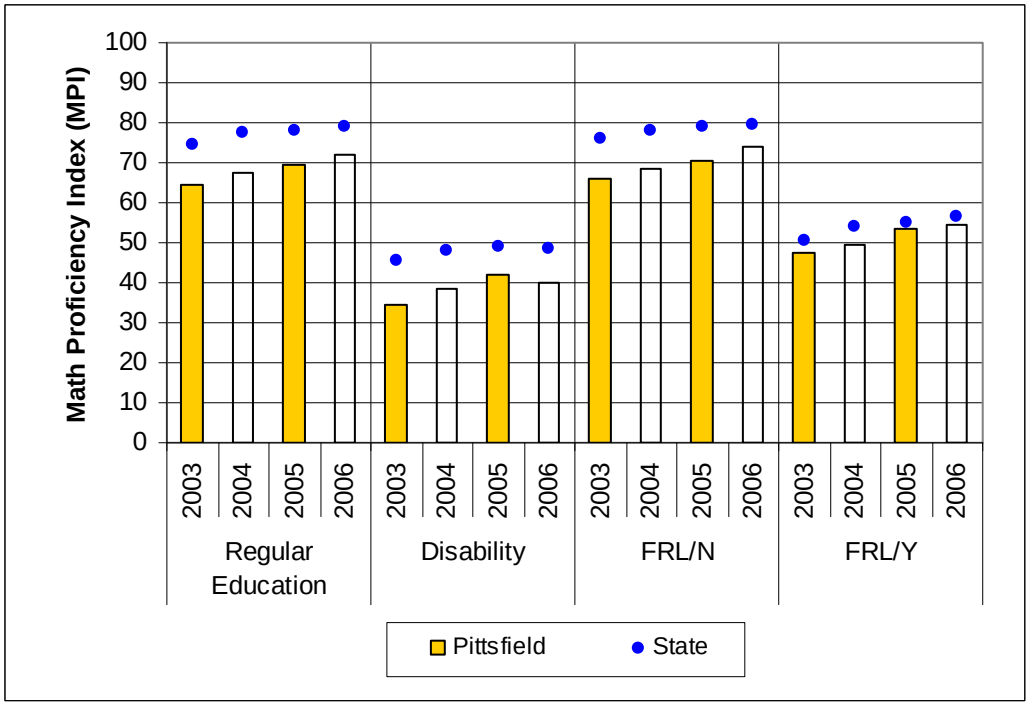
In Pittsfield between 2003 and 2006, the proportion of students with disabilities increased by approximately one-half percentage point, the proportion of non-White students increased by nearly four percentage points, and the proportion of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by more than six percentage points.

Figures 18 A-D/Table 18: MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Subgroup, 2003-2006

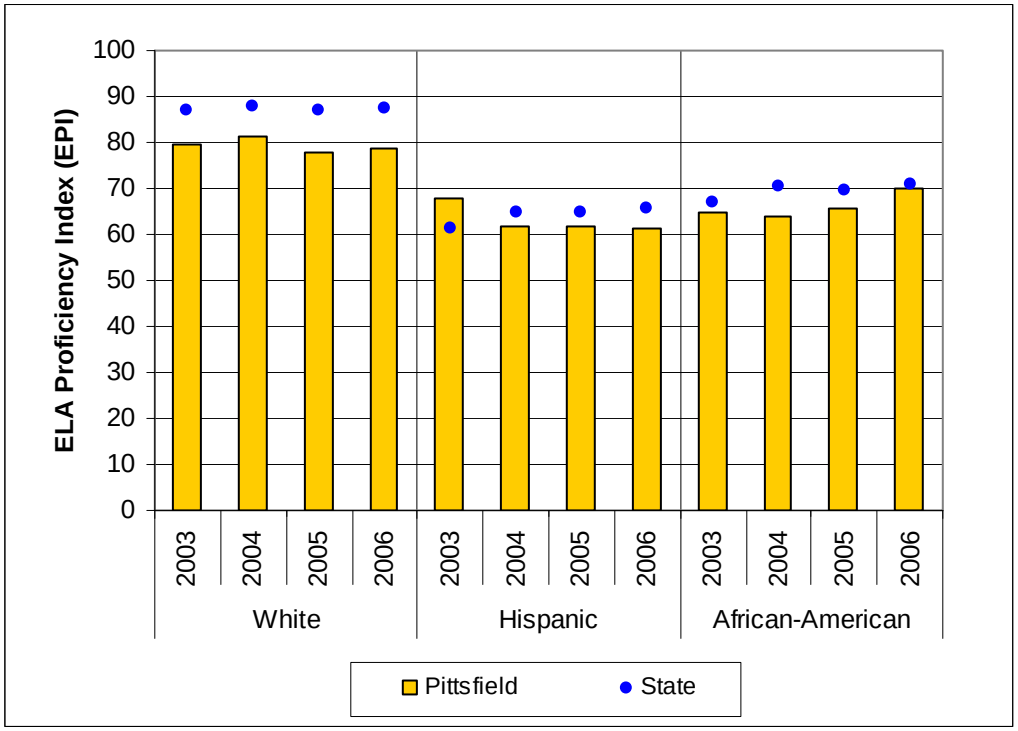
A. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



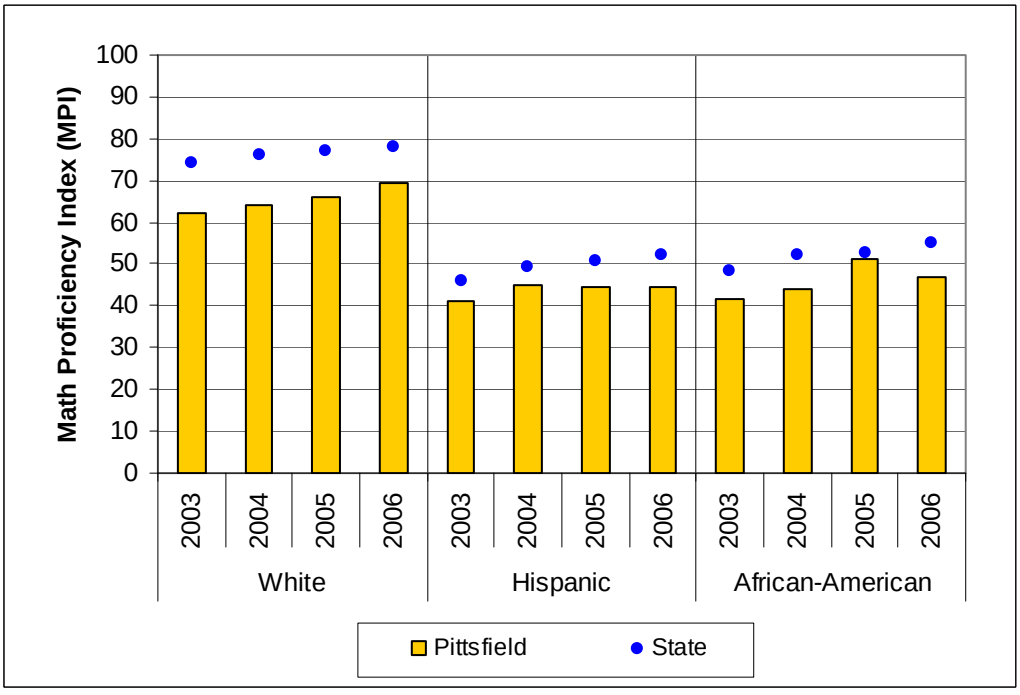
B. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



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



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

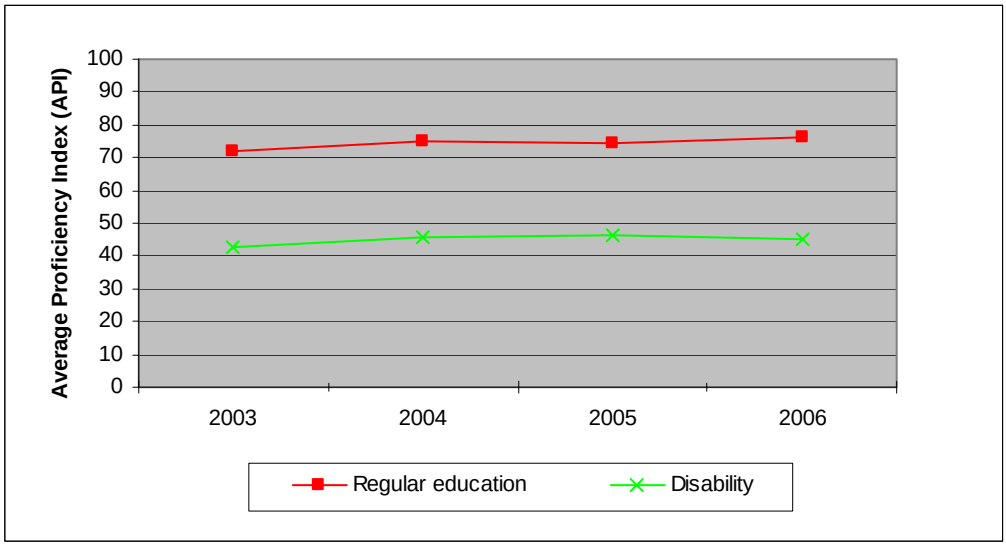


State				Pittsfield			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	82.1	64.7
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	84.1	67.7
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	81.6	69.4
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	82.7	71.8
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	54.1	34.4
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	56.7	38.4
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	52.7	41.9
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	51.9	40.0
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	81.8	66.0
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	85.7	68.7
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	81.6	70.5
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	83.2	73.9
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	70.0	47.6
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	66.8	49.7
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	66.1	53.3
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	67.5	54.3
White	2003	86.9	74.4	White	2003	79.6	62.2
	2004	87.7	76.2		2004	81.2	64.3
	2005	87.1	77.2		2005	77.7	66.1
	2006	87.4	77.8		2006	78.7	69.3
Hispanic	2003	61.4	45.7	Hispanic	2003	67.7	41.3
	2004	64.8	49.3		2004	61.7	45.1
	2005	64.6	50.6		2005	61.6	44.6
	2006	65.8	52.2		2006	61.2	44.7
African-American	2003	67.1	48.4	African-American	2003	64.9	41.7
	2004	70.5	52.3		2004	64.0	44.0
	2005	69.4	52.8		2005	65.5	51.2
	2006	70.9	55.2		2006	69.8	46.8

In Pittsfield, only regular education students, non low-income (FRL/N) students, and African-American students had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in ELA was African-American students. In math, all subgroups in Pittsfield showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was non low-income (FRL/N) students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 28 PI points in 2003 to 31 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 32 to 34 PI points during this period.

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

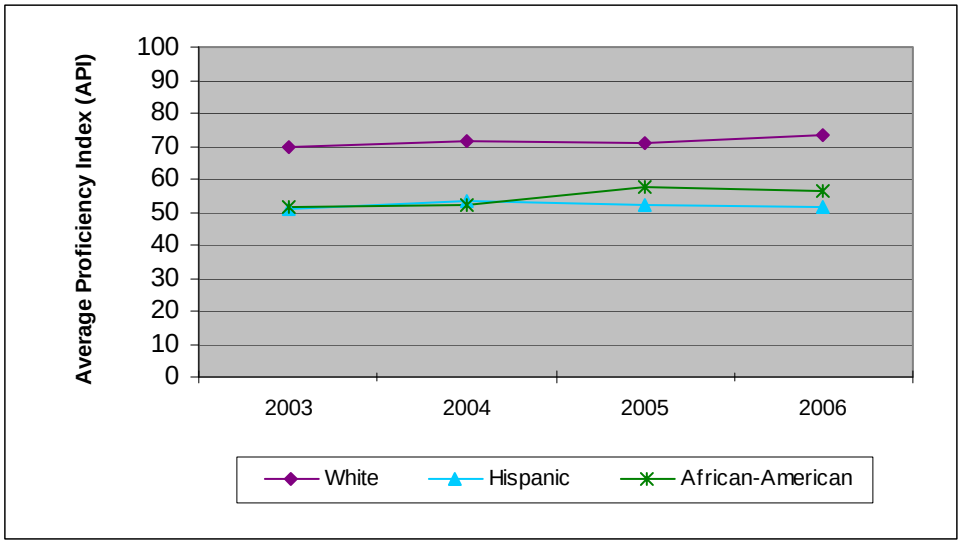


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	72.3	82.1	64.7	56	32
	2004	74.8	84.1	67.7	59	35
	2005	74.6	81.6	69.4	52	40
	2006	76.5	82.7	71.8	55	42
Disability	2003	42.4	54.1	34.4	16	9
	2004	45.7	56.7	38.4	17	7
	2005	46.5	52.7	41.9	11	12
	2006	45.1	51.9	40.0	11	9

Both students with disabilities and regular education students in Pittsfield had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for Pittsfield's regular education students narrowed from 28 to 23 PI points, and for students with disabilities it narrowed from 58 to 55 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 15 percent for regular education students and five percent for students with disabilities.

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

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

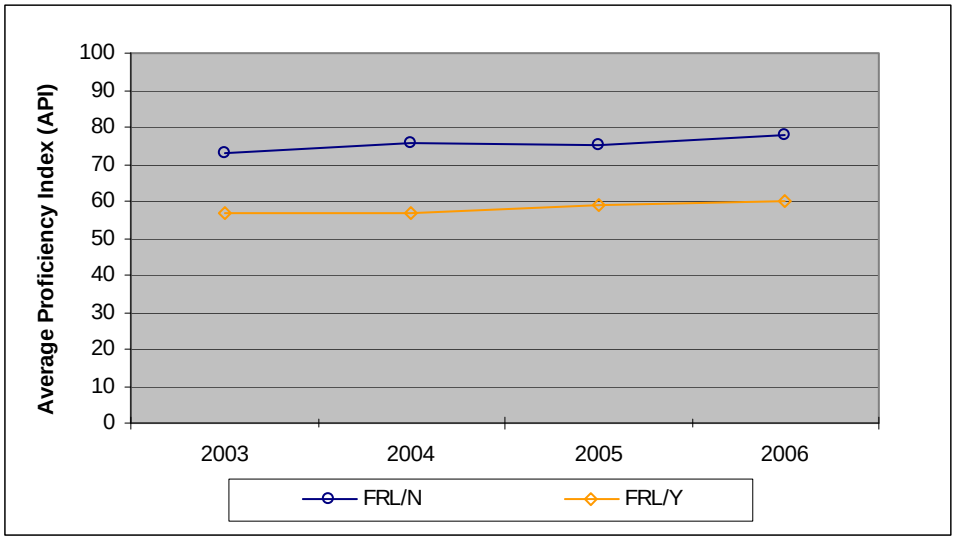


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
White	2003	69.7	79.6	62.2	53	30
	2004	71.5	81.2	64.3	55	33
	2005	71.0	77.7	66.1	47	37
	2006	73.4	78.7	69.3	49	41
Hispanic	2003	51.1	67.7	41.3	34	13
	2004	53.3	61.7	45.1	28	8
	2005	51.9	61.6	44.6	18	14
	2006	51.7	61.2	44.7	25	12
African-American	2003	51.3	64.9	41.7	30	9
	2004	52.0	64.0	44.0	22	8
	2005	57.8	65.5	51.2	26	18
	2006	56.2	69.8	46.8	36	13

All three racial subgroups in Pittsfield had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for White students narrowed from 30 to 27 PI points; for Hispanic students, it narrowed from 49 to 48 PI points; and for African-American students, it narrowed from 49 to 44 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 12 percent for White students, one percent for Hispanic students, and 10 percent for African-American students.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing racial subgroups widened by two PI points.

Figure/Table 21: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Socioeconomic Status Subgroup, 2003-2006

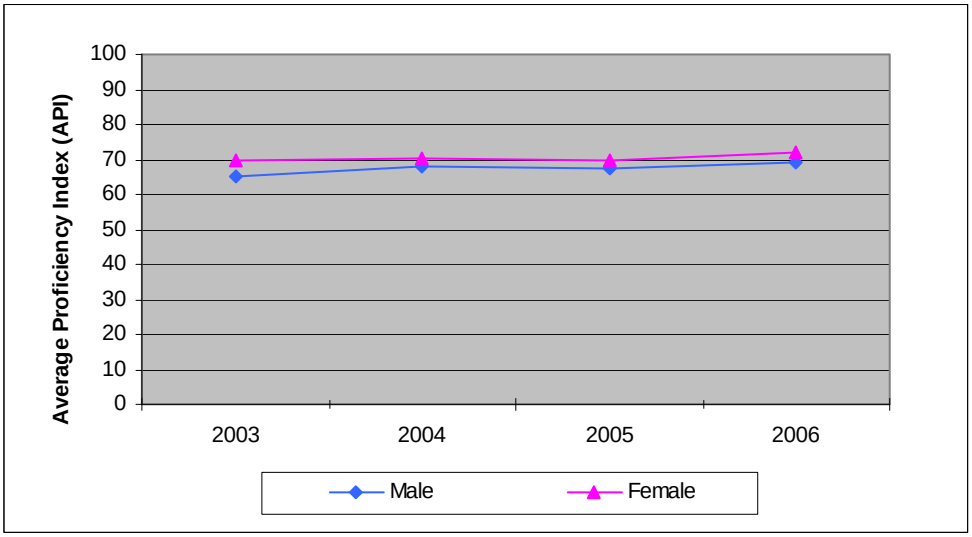


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	72.9	81.8	66.0	57	35
	2004	75.9	85.7	68.7	63	38
	2005	75.3	81.6	70.5	54	43
	2006	77.9	83.2	73.9	57	47
FRL/Y	2003	57.0	70.0	47.6	36	15
	2004	56.9	66.8	49.7	30	15
	2005	58.7	66.1	53.3	27	21
	2006	60.0	67.5	54.3	30	21

Both the low-income (FRL/Y) and non low-income (FRL/N) subgroups in Pittsfield had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 43 to 40 PI points, and for non low-income students it narrowed from 27 to 22 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of seven percent for low-income students and 18 percent for non low-income students.

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

Figure/Table 22: Student MCAS Test Performance, by Gender Subgroup, 2003- 2006



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	65.4	73.5	59.3	42	29
	2004	67.8	75.7	61.9	45	30
	2005	67.7	72.3	64.3	38	36
	2006	69.4	74.4	65.6	40	37
Female	2003	69.5	82.2	60.0	59	27
	2004	70.2	82.2	61.5	58	29
	2005	69.8	79.1	62.9	49	32
	2006	72.0	79.4	66.2	53	36

Both male and female students in Pittsfield had improved performance between 2003 and 2006 on the MCAS tests. The average proficiency gap for male students narrowed from 35 to 31 PI points, and for female students it narrowed from 30 to 28 PI points. These gains resulted in improvement rates of 12 percent for male students and eight percent for female students.

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

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Pittsfield	ALL LEVELS	**3,327**	**3,329**	**933**
	Advanced	200	316	64
	Proficient	1,487	822	204
	Needs Improvement	1,314	1,237	441
	Warning/Failing	326	954	224
Regular Education	Advanced	196	307	62
	Proficient	1,391	776	191
	Needs Improvement	984	1,052	369
	Warning/Failing	122	557	119
Disability	Advanced	4	6	2
	Proficient	80	36	13
	Needs Improvement	280	155	59
	Warning/Failing	170	338	91
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	3	0
	Proficient	16	10	0
	Needs Improvement	50	30	13
	Warning/Failing	34	59	14
White	Advanced	184	292	55
	Proficient	1,291	747	183
	Needs Improvement	1,034	1,015	360
	Warning/Failing	217	668	150
Hispanic	Advanced	1	5	1
	Proficient	54	15	3
	Needs Improvement	76	63	22
	Warning/Failing	50	103	27
African-American	Advanced	12	7	7
	Proficient	113	43	16
	Needs Improvement	183	140	48
	Warning/Failing	54	173	45
Asian	Advanced	3	12	1
	Proficient	28	17	2
	Needs Improvement	17	17	10
	Warning/Failing	4	4	1
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	156	262	51
	Proficient	1,032	593	152
	Needs Improvement	619	698	237
	Warning/Failing	97	351	91
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	44	54	13
	Proficient	455	229	52
	Needs Improvement	695	538	204
	Warning/Failing	229	602	133
Male	Advanced	67	161	29
	Proficient	687	430	112
	Needs Improvement	746	630	218
	Warning/Failing	192	473	119
Female	Advanced	133	155	35
	Proficient	800	392	92
	Needs Improvement	568	606	223
	Warning/Failing	134	480	105

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	504	0	0
	2004	490	0	0
	2005	503	0	0
	2006	454	453	0
Grade 4	2003	489	491	0
	2004	495	495	0
	2005	474	472	0
	2006	493	494	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	478
	2005	0	0	485
	2006	465	466	466
Grade 6	2003	0	507	0
	2004	0	477	0
	2005	0	464	0
	2006	469	472	0
Grade 7	2003	525	0	0
	2004	501	0	0
	2005	478	0	0
	2006	485	486	0
Grade 8	2003	0	506	0
	2004	0	525	525
	2005	0	494	494
	2006	468	466	467
Grade 10	2003	477	479	0
	2004	437	441	0
	2005	457	453	0
	2006	493	492	0
All Grades	2003	1,995	1,983	0
	2004	1,923	1,938	1,003
	2005	1,912	1,883	979
	2006	3,327	3,329	933

Notes

Trend data include grades for which testing was administered for each subject in all four years. The following grades are included in the trend data for 2003-2006 reported in Figures/Tables 15-22 and in the table of n-values by grade and year:
English language arts (ELA): 3, 4, 7, 10
Math: 4, 6, 8, 10
Science and technology/engineering (STE): 5, 8

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

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

Subgroup inclusion is based on the number of students and the number of schools in the district. To be included as reportable, a subgroup must have at least 10 times the number of schools in the district. Subgroup inclusion for all years of the trend data is based on the 2006 data.

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

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

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- In 2006-2007, the district replaced its former DIP with a standards-based plan, focused on student achievement data. The DIP aligned with the SIPs, using the same template and similar goals. The district planned to begin using data to measure progress toward the DIP and SIP goals.
- School committee policy called for an orientation meeting for new members with the superintendent and the chair to prepare them for their roles and responsibilities. They also attended MASC training and conferences.
- The district began to analyze and use data more consistently, and in 2006-2007 the district began to develop new technological tools to gather and analyze data to improve its instructional programs.

- The district has developed several programs and services to promote equity for at-risk students. Some interviewees contended that school and student needs varied widely across the district and that staffing and services were not necessarily proportionate to needs.
- In 2004, after the loss of over 90 positions, the district succeeded in getting a commitment from the city for a level service budget with no layoffs. The district was able to create new and improved programs by reducing services/costs in other areas.
- The district made collaboration with staff members, parents, the community, the municipality, and local businesses a priority.
- Examiners found that the superintendent evaluated only eight of 36 administrators in 2005-2006.
- Each school had an emergency and evacuation plan, which is currently in the process of revision and updating to reflect current MEMA standards.

Summary

Major changes took place in the leadership of the Pittsfield Public Schools in 2005 with the arrival of a new superintendent and deputy superintendent. The district also hired new principals and curriculum coordinators effective August 2006. The new leadership placed strong emphasis on standards-based instruction and planning, accompanied by professional development for administrators and teachers in using data to make instructional and programmatic decisions. The new superintendent prioritized the systemic use of student achievement and attendance data, including analysis of subgroup data, to identify student needs. The district delegated appropriate authority to principals and administrators to hire staff and to manage their respective schools and programs. Student achievement data had not yet been a major factor in assessing their leadership.

School committee members interviewed by the EQA were knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and shared a new commitment to standards-based decision-making. They received reports on dropouts, graduation rates, class size, attendance, and the MCAS test results. School committee interviewees cited recent examples in which they had used data to make budgetary and programmatic decisions, such as the decision to implement remedial programs and alternative programs for at-risk students. Using student achievement data, the district also

decided to maintain half days in September as part of the kindergarten transition plan, allowing teachers to meet with all kindergarten parents and students on an individual basis. School committee policy provided for an orientation for each new member conducted by the superintendent and chair of the committee, and new school committee members participated in Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) training.

Communication and collaboration have been priorities of the district. The school committee, superintendent, and city officials have worked closely together to prepare and approve school budgets over the last two years. Administrators participated in professional development and worked together on teams. Principals formed Whole-Faculty Study Groups (WFSGs) and encouraged grade-level and departmental meetings at which teachers worked together to analyze data and use the data to develop and modify instruction. Communication with parents, community members, and business partners was achieved through websites, newsletters, public meetings, and interaction with parents at after-school and evening programs. The district encouraged the participation of these groups in school programs, which benefited from their funding. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) included goals for parental involvement.

During the period under review, the District Improvement Plan (DIP) was narrative, but new administrators prepared and the school committee adopted a new template and standards-based DIP for 2006-2007. SIPs used the same template and were aligned with the DIP in appropriate district goals. Principals reported on the progress of their SIPs to the school committee. Instructional decisions, such as those pertaining to use of flexible grouping, remediation, and acceleration, have begun to be based on achievement data, especially in elementary ELA and middle school math. Administrators proposed programmatic changes at the secondary level, especially in the areas of instruction and attendance, as a result of data analysis. Budgets for FY 2006 and FY 2007 avoided layoffs and provided level services. Reductions in other areas permitted the implementation of new and improved programs.

Each school developed its own safety and evacuation plan and made it available to staff members during the period under review. The district has begun working with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and fire and police officials to prepare an updated districtwide safety plan.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators and school committee members reported that during the period under review, the DIP had little alignment with the SIPs. The new superintendent made a major commitment to beginning standards-based planning in 2005, and in 2006 created a DIP for 2006-2007 with measurable standards. The new template and plan included goals, such as: provide all students with a standards-based education; provide instruction based on the ELA standards; improve student learning in mathematics by providing a standards-based curriculum and effective instruction for the development of mathematical literacy; provide continued support for high quality, standards-based educational practices; and have a significant and sustained level of parental involvement to improve student achievement. Objectives for the goals were measurable and, where appropriate, based on the MCAS and other student achievement results. Modified educational programs proposed included 90 minutes (or more) for ELA in grades K-8 and 60 minutes or more for math in grades K-5, an extended-day program for the two community schools, and the implementation of districtwide formative and summative assessments, such as Galileo at grades K-12 and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) at grades K-5. A new mission statement, guiding principles, core beliefs, and values were also developed and appeared on the district website and in the budget book.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a policy stating that that new school committee members should meet with the committee chair and superintendent for an orientation. Recently elected members reported to the EQA examiners that they did so and also participated in MASC training sessions. Administrators and elected school committee members alike reported that they knew their roles and responsibilities. Committee members stated that they received reports on dropouts, graduation rates, attendance, and the MCAS results, and have supported initiatives based on such data, including afternoon and remedial programs, attendance officers, a program at the local Juvenile Resource Center (JRC), another alternative program for middle and high school students, and a proposed program for incoming at-risk grade 9 students. Based on reports presented to them and a review of the data, they rejected a proposal to increase the length of the kindergarten day. According to committee members and administrators, they used subcommittees for finance, curriculum, negotiations, and other areas to do much of their work.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators reported a new emphasis on gathering and analyzing student achievement data since 2005. The district's use of data to make decisions began with training administrators to use TestWiz.net for the analysis of the MCAS data. Teachers used item analyses to analyze instruction, and in interviews some teachers indicated more comfort and progress with this skill than others. Administrators and teachers also began to use Galileo in middle school math, the DIBELS in elementary ELA, and other formative assessment tools to analyze and interpret data. Staff members began to use PowerSchool and PowerGrade at the secondary level to chart and report on student achievement.

The administration began developing a sophisticated database of student data, including scores predicted through regression analysis, and the interactive testing of hypotheses regarding the effects of school, gender, a specific math program, and other factors. According to interviewees, a shortage of technical assistance has delayed the completion of the project. Administrators have

also compiled data on attendance, dropouts, retentions, discipline, enrollments, class size, and trends in special education.

Administrators and school committee members reported that they have begun to make decisions on the basis of such data. For example, due to concerns over discipline and dropout data, the district implemented new and revised programs for at-risk students, such as the JRC program, an alternative school for middle and high school students, and a grade 9 academy to begin in 2007-2008. The school committee rejected a proposal to alter the policy for birth date cut-off entrance into kindergarten after reviewing appropriate DIBELS and survey data. Administrators reported that they reduced the number of pullout programs because their effectiveness was not supported by the assessment data. Administrators also used assessments in identifying students for targeted intervention in reading and, according to interviewees, have made plans to extend the process to math.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In 2006-2007 for the first time, the SIPs were aligned and based on the same template as the DIP. According to administrators, all SIPs were required to include goals in math and ELA and to align with the DIP goals in those areas. Almost all SIPs included a parent outreach goal reflecting the same in the DIP. Student achievement goals regarding the MCAS tests and other assessments were common to all SIPs. Some SIP goals for certain schools, but not all, contained standards-based objectives with specific benchmarks, such as increasing the average MCAS ELA score to 80.5. Common SIP themes reflecting DIP objectives were an increase in time on math and ELA, standards-based instruction, and training in the use of data. Administrators reported that the district gave schools the latitude to write goals in other areas, such as behavioral goals and school-specific program goals, and to focus on their particular needs. Because 2006-2007 was the first year of these standards-based SIPs, the use of data to measure progress and the accomplishment of goals had not yet taken place.

School committee members reported that they reviewed and approved the SIPs along with the DIP and principals were available at those meetings to answer their questions. They stated that they received subsequent reports on the achievement of SIP and DIP goals.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The size of subgroup populations and the number of at-risk students varied widely from school to school. The DOE data showed that low-income populations ranged from 18 to 74 percent in different schools. The district provided grant-funded and local services and resources to needy schools, including Title I services, additional reading specialists, Reading First training, and English language learner (ELL) services. Administrators told the EQA that Title I and special education services had declined over the past years.

In meetings with parents from school councils and staff members, a number of issues were brought up about inequities among schools, such as the differences in the amount and quality of computer hardware, the generosity of different business partners and parent teacher organizations, and differences in building renovations (parents expected improvements for their schools when other schools received renovation funding). They also told the EQA examiners that staffing was not equitable or proportionate to respective school needs.

Administrators reported that two schools, called community schools, offered grade-team instruction and after-school enrichment programs. According to interviewees, the school committee was sensitive to class sizes there. These schools reached out to the community by offering evening programs and hosting a neighborhood council, which also served as the school council.

Interviewees described programs for at-risk middle and high school students. For example, the Reid Middle School contained a diverse population, and administrators stated that they had plans to provide Title I assistance through coaches for ELA and math to help the school reach adequate

yearly progress (AYP) expectations. An alternative program for middle and high school students included additional case workers and special education and resource teachers. Some of these students spent part of their day at their home high school or middle school. The district also developed the JRC with the county sheriff for students who had suspensions of three to nine days duration. They received intensive counseling, small group instruction, and assignments from their home school teachers for three to nine days. The high schools instituted credit recovery programs for students who failed classes, especially due to absence, and they could attend evening and summer classes to receive remediation.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Budget documents showed that the district had lost more than 90 positions in the three years prior to FY 2005. School committee members and administrators reported that since then, the school district and municipality have worked together to avoid layoffs in school staffing, and budget guidelines have called for a level service budget. Achievement and attendance data led to some budget initiatives, such as attendance officers at the high school, curriculum leadership personnel, and an allied health program. The district had to offset new initiatives with reductions in other budget areas or by using outside funding.

According to school committee interviewees, during the period under review they usually heard a brief budget presentation from each school and asked the administration to prioritize budget needs. Principals' budget needs also appeared in the budget documents. By the time the superintendent formally presented her budget and the school committee held its hearing, the proposed budget was close to level services guidelines. Over the last two years, the school committee and the city approved the budget with minimal changes. In addition, the communication of school needs and advocacy for improvement has moderated. The district has not improved its attendance or dropout problems, and some district schools have not made AYP goals in tested academic areas.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

School committee members reported they annually received the DIP and SIPs as one package and that the package also included progress reports. Administrators and school committee members reported that at each meeting throughout the year, one school reported on its programs, ongoing progress on its SIP, attendance, other student data, and the MCAS results. Each SIP included an action update column, which highlighted accomplishments to date. The DIP and SIPs presented for approval in 2006-2007 were the first standards-based documents that included specific student achievement goals. At the time of the site visit, accomplishment of annual goals was yet to be reported.

The school committee received a public report on the MCAS results, and each school received detailed reports. School committee members reported they were given monthly reports on class size, attendance, dropouts, school choice numbers, and Galileo and DIBELS assessment data, in addition to the MCAS data. Central office administrators met with the teacher advisory committee (TAC) and the parent advisory committee (PAC) to review reports on attendance and dropouts, the MCAS results, other achievement testing, and other information, such as data relevant to the kindergarten day. According to administrators, principals also gave reports on MCAS and other student data to parents at parent teacher organization meetings, at other parent meetings, and via newsletters and websites.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The use of assessment data to improve instruction was a recent goal of the DIP and most SIPs, and was beginning to be important in the district. Beginning in 2006, administrators began to

develop a sophisticated database to use for analyzing student achievement and other data for a wide variety of subgroups, making comparisons, and incorporating other variables, such as predicted versus actual scores, gender differences, differences in math programs, and differences among school teams. The analysis and use of data have been the focus of in-service at National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training for administrators, including the use of TestWiz.net. Principals reported that their staff members began to use assessments such as the DIBELS and Galileo to adjust instruction and identify students for learning groups and/or remediation. The district effectively implemented a three-tiered process in reading using a Reading First model, and one was under development in math. According to interviewees, staff members used the MCAS results, including item analyses, to adjust pacing and content of instruction. Principals reported that in their WFSGs, they had begun analyzing student achievement and other data during early release and professional days. Examiners found uneven evidence that the district was using subgroup data for analysis and, when asked about it, principals described its use as "in the beginning stage."

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

As cited, the district began a major effort to monitor student achievement data and to use them to improve instruction in 2005-2006. In-service training for administrators on the use of student achievement data began at that time, and WFSGs began to focus on the use of data. The new DIP and SIPs written for 2006-2007 reflected this emphasis, including goals to use data to improve instruction and to achieve measurable improvement on assessments, such as the MCAS tests and the DIBELS. Administrators produced monthly reports on achievement and other student data, including attendance, enrollment, discipline, dropouts, ELLs, free and reduced-cost lunch eligibility, new students, withdrawals, and school choice figures. The new SIPs included an action taken column indicating progress toward each goal and objective, and school leaders included progress on the SIPs in their reports to the school committee.

Teachers reported that they monitored student achievement in their study groups and in faculty meetings, especially through DIBELS at the elementary level. Principals reported that some school staff members used assessment data to regroup, remediate, and accelerate students in ELA and have begun using it in grade 6 math. At all three school levels, teachers used trends, patterns, and item analyses of the MCAS test results to select topics for increased emphasis and to adjust pacing in ELA, math, and science. School committee members and administrators reported that analysis of the data has led to modified and new programs for at-risk students, including students with attendance or behavioral problems.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In 36 personnel folders of administrators, the EQA examiners found only eight administrators who had been evaluated in 2005-2006, all of whom were principals. The principals' contract called for evaluation based on student performance, teacher performance, and mutually agreed upon management objectives. The superintendent's contract called for evaluation by the school committee based on mutually agreed upon criteria.

The AYP report from the MCAS tests for each school was attached to each respective principal's evaluation, but was not referenced in the body of the principal's evaluation. Principals' evaluations did not reflect accomplishment of SIP goals because that had yet to be determined for 2006-2007. The EQA examiners considered the principals' evaluations to be informative about the progress made at each school.

School committee members explained that they had not completed the superintendent's evaluation in 2006 because they had not yet agreed upon the criteria. The evaluation template has since been developed for an evaluation in 2006-2007. Nine new administrators appointed in July 2006 had not finished their first year at the time of the review. Fourteen other administrators had not been evaluated since 2004, and one administrator had last been evaluated in 2005.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In interviews, principals and other administrators indicated that they had appropriate authority to hire personnel and to administer their respective schools and programs, given district priorities and goals. The superintendent delegated principals the authority to run professional development within their buildings, provided they met district goals to analyze and use student data.

Principals' contracts held them accountable for the new goals in their SIPs, which included goals based on student achievement and other pertinent student data. In monthly meetings, central administrators asked principals to describe what they needed to do to improve their schools and what they "have done differently" to get a different result. But there was little evidence presented that the superintendent used student achievement data to evaluate the success of their leadership.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district collaborated with administrators, staff, parents, and the community in numerous ways. In fact, one of the goals of the DIP and most of the SIPs was to involve parents. School committee members stated they have tried to get more parents involved at their meetings, and they rotated the location of their meetings to accommodate parents. Central office administrators reported that they met several times a year with PACs from all the schools, keeping them informed of individual school issues and using the PACs as a sounding board. Staff and parents reported that all schools had school councils with parent representatives, and their meetings were open. Most schools also had parent teacher organizations and held evening meetings for parents

to update them on school activities and programs. Parents reported they felt well informed through school websites and newsletters, and school handbooks advertised opportunities for parent volunteers.

The district also reached out to the community. Administrator interviewees and handbooks described partnerships at each school with local businesses, which assisted financially with various programs and equipment and provided internships for students. Two elementary schools were community schools that were open to the public in the evening and had neighborhood advisory councils. The school committee and administration described efforts to maintain good relations with the mayor and city council, including meetings with a city council liaison. High schools had advisory groups for each vocational area consisting of industry leaders as well as staff, students, and parents. The high schools also participated in a county-wide advisory board focused on support and development of academy programming at both schools.

District staff described several ways in which they and administrators collaborated. Principals included staff members on interview teams for candidates for open positions. The faculty at each school collaborated in WFSGs for professional development. Central administrators stated that they worked together closely as a team and they worked collaboratively with principals on proposed initiatives. Union representatives described regular meetings and good communications with the administration and said they were able to resolve most problems without filing grievances.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Handbooks described school safety plans in varying detail, and, according to administrators, most schools had emergency and evacuation plans posted in each classroom and available to teachers and substitute teachers. They practiced bus evacuations and fire drills and, at some schools, lockdown and building evacuation drills. Administrators reported that the district began working in October 2006 with local police, fire, MEMA, and Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) officials to develop an updated, districtwide emergency and evacuation plan that included lockdowns and the threat of pandemic flu, but this plan was not yet completed.

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

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- During the period under review, the district did not have comprehensive or complete curricula in ELA, math, or science spanning grades preK-12.
- A new deputy superintendent overseeing curriculum development was creating a structure of collaborative and distributive leadership to monitor the alignment, use, and effectiveness of curricula.
- The district had a formalized document for walk-throughs to monitor instruction known as EDI, but it was not being used consistently in all schools.
- Staff members served on curriculum committees and WFSGs, while all principals and directors attended NISL training, which focused on developing a standards-based curriculum.
- The district did not consistently use formative and summative data from all levels to improve instruction and reallocate instructional time in the tested core content areas.
- The availability of educational technology and computers was inequitable at different levels for both teachers and students, according to interviews and observations.
- Instructional practice that reflected highly skilled delivery, frequent student engagement, multiple learning styles, and consistently high expectations varied across the district's schools.

Summary

During the period under review, the district had just begun to lay the structure for creating, documenting, revising, and communicating curricula, guided by the district's strategic plan and SIPs under the leadership of a new superintendent, deputy superintendent, and re-instituted curriculum leaders at the central office. Schools used different instructional programs in the core content areas during the review period, and the district planned to have schools conform in the use of a single program for consistency. Some horizontal and vertical alignment was present, but further work needed to be done to avoid gaps or redundancies in instruction. The district established a framework of curriculum committees, spanning grades preK-12, to work on curriculum and its alignment. By the end of the review period, the district had yet to document curricula that consistently aligned to the state curriculum frameworks and contained all key components: objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, measurable outcomes, and common assessments. Since the district had little completed curricula, a regular cycle of curriculum review and/or revision had yet to be established.

All district administrators were required to attend a two-year NISL training to learn how to implement standards-based instructional systems and to provide instructional leadership in their buildings. The staff received training in the WFSG model of professional development, and principals were expected to be actively involved with them to focus school efforts on using data to improve instruction. Through the reinstitution of central office curriculum leaders, staff members were beginning to work on data analysis, curriculum development, and effective programs grounded in research to improve instruction. They had not looked at disaggregated data thoroughly nor had they allocated extra time consistently to ensure that all students would become proficient. Middle school students who were struggling in math were assigned to two math courses during the school year, one of which was remedial and called Encore math. More staff had been trained in the analysis of data since the district purchased TestWiz.net to organize and analyze the results of local assessments and the MCAS tests. According to data from the Merrimack Education Collaborative (MEC), the percentage of Pittsfield students who attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests was 39 percent in 2004, 38 percent in 2005, and 41 percent in 2006.

Administrators monitored teachers for effective instruction by the using the walk-through protocol in the district. All district leaders were supposed to use the effective daily instruction (EDI) protocol to monitor walk-throughs and assess instruction. According to district interviewees, they did not consistently implement this protocol nor was it necessarily linked to teacher evaluations in practice. Department chairs at the secondary level monitored teachers for effective instruction, and the principal facilitated the summative evaluation with the respective chair and teacher.

The district had recently made the use of technology and common assessments two priorities for effective instruction. The inequitable availability of up-to-date technology at all schools impeded the integration of technology into classroom instruction. Teachers were just beginning to create common exams and had not yet analyzed the results for strengths and weaknesses to determine the quality of the instructional program and student achievement. Although the district used the DIBELS and Galileo to assess student progress in addition to the MCAS tests, these assessments were used inconsistently districtwide and were not used to evaluate staff or school performance.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Evidence from a review of documents and interviews with administrators and teachers indicated that throughout the period under review, the district had encouraged the development of curriculum. But at the time of the site visit, there was no complete and formal curriculum that contained clear objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, articulation maps, measurable outcomes, or assessments.

In the area of math, multiple approaches were used at the elementary level, according to interviews with the EQA examiners. Four of the elementary schools used Scott Foresman Math

and four schools used Everyday Math. Both of these programs employed different philosophies in the teaching and learning of mathematics. However, the district noted no differences in the results of the two approaches, as measured by the MCAS math test results at grade 6. The district planned to use a common standards-based curriculum for the teaching of math in 2007-2008. At the middle school level, teachers gave common quarterly exams and used Galileo software to instruct and generate program assessments from which teachers could create assessment reports. The high schools developed midyear and final exams that were half common for all students in the same course at both high schools and half unique with respect to a specific course. This was confirmed by interviewees and a review of the documents.

In ELA, the district used the DIBELS formative assessment at grades K-3. According to interviews, some teachers used a PDA to instantly track progress students made and could import this to a computer to get an immediate printout. Teachers monitored at-risk students on a biweekly basis. According to interviewees, a new reading coordinator worked full-time and covered grades K-9 and a new part-time ELA coordinator covered grades 6-12. There were also reading coaches to work with teachers at Conte and Morningside Elementary Schools, which were underperforming schools. One person split his time between coaching teachers and serving as a reading specialist to work with students at Crosby Elementary School, and there were reading specialists to remediate students at all elementary schools. Examination of documents and interviews with staff revealed that three of the elementary schools used the Harcourt Trophies and five used the Harcourt Collections materials at grades 1-3. Grades 4-5 at all the elementary schools used the Harcourt series and also used the DIBELS and the AIMSweb website to post results. Morningside School had a Reading First grant, and Conte School had a Bay State Readers grant.

In the past, the middle schools had used different ELA materials at each school site. As of January 2007, the district hired a new ELA coordinator who told the EQA that the middle schools were moving toward using one program. Also, the coordinator said that the leadership was trying to have reading and writing taught in conjunction with one another instead of separately. Since the middle schools were using the Galileo system for math instruction and assessment, the district was planning on purchasing similar modules for ELA assessment. At the high schools, the district was using Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation

(GRADE) to assess and identify the students who were two or more years behind in ELA and to place them into a remedial class. At the high schools, there were midyear and final exams in ELA, as in math, that were half common and half individualized.

The vocational/technology program was split between both high schools and the students spent half their days in academics. According to interviewees, the schools were starting to incorporate more related academics into the vocational classes.

Interviewees stated that no funds were available to buy science texts at the elementary level. Instead, the district had purchased some science kits at some grade levels. At each elementary school, there was a science specialist to work with students, with two of the smaller elementary schools sharing a specialist between them. The science specialists met with all students once per week and left additional science lessons for the classroom teachers to work on. Students also read non-fiction literature with science themes. The middle and high schools also had their own science specialist assigned to them.

The EQA examiners reviewed the middle schools' science pacing guides. The district had adopted the Prentice-Hall science series, which interviewees stated was a "more solid" approach but did not align with the state frameworks by grade level. No common science assessments existed at the middle school level.

At both high schools, there were midyear and final exams in all content areas which contained half common items and half items individualized by each teacher. Most students were taking biology in grade 9, and one grade 9 class was piloting a "physics first" model. The district had plans for grade 9 students to take the corresponding MCAS science test in grade 9. According to the program of studies, all electives were full-year courses. Many vocational classes had a corresponding certificate of occupational proficiency test.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviews conducted and documents reviewed, the curricula had some vertical and horizontal alignment, even though the district did not have complete, written curricula in the core

areas. Interviewees stated that they were taking "initial steps" in alignment. They stated that they had made the most progress in horizontal alignment.

The district scheduled professional development time for 10 half days and two full days that were used to standardize the core curriculum in all disciplines for each grade and course. During the period under review, all elementary schools used various programs in the core content areas, including one school which used three different math programs. In 2006-2007, that school was using only one program, and there was movement in the district toward all schools using the same programs in all the core subjects to better align them horizontally. There had been common training in using the WFSG model, and principals used this to break faculty into smaller groups to work on curriculum and alignment. Interviewees stated that they were working on horizontal alignment at the same grade level and that the ELA, science, and math coordinators were working on vertical alignment between grade levels. Interviewees stated that once curricula were established and horizontally aligned, they would move toward dialogue about vertical alignment.

The middle schools used team time to work on curriculum alignment. The high schools used departmental meeting time for alignment, but interviewees stated that many of their 10 meetings per year were being taken away for other purposes. They told the EQA that they needed summer time to do the alignment work. Previously, interviewees claimed that the district had focused summer pay on the elementary level curricula but that now the secondary level would use subsequent professional development funds.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviewees, each school in the district did not yet have a curriculum leader at the time of the review, but there were plans for all principals to act as curriculum leaders and they were growing into this role, especially through NISL training. Pittsfield once had assistant superintendents for all core curriculum areas but these were eliminated long ago. In 2006-2007,

the district began to restore curriculum positions at the central office. There was currently a deputy superintendent for curriculum; full-time coordinators for reading, science, math, and health/physical education; and part-time coordinators for the arts, foreign languages, and ELA. The district had recently posted for an assistant superintendent for vocational and technology education/informational technology. The position was designed to make sure that more academics were embedded into the vocational education program.

There were also team leaders at each middle school, who were cross-curricular in their duties, and department chairs at the high schools to work on curriculum. At the high school, department heads taught one less period than teachers, received a stipend, and also supervised and evaluated teachers. The teachers interviewed by the EQA examiners liked their support. At the elementary level, reading coaches and specialists assisted teachers and helped remediate students. There were also plans to assign elementary math coaches to schools identified for services under Title I, according to interviewees. In 2007-2008, the district plans to hire reading and math interventionists to support students at the two community schools. There were also plans for an ELA coach and interventionists at the middle schools. Interviewees stated that by having more coaches and interventionists, less pullout for intervention (Tier II and Tier III intervention) could occur and more intervention could be done within the classroom setting (Tier I intervention).

In the latter part of the period under review, the district worked to develop a structure to define curriculum leadership. The superintendent and deputy superintendent were relatively new and many of the specifics about curriculum development still needed to be filled in.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviewees and reviewed documents, the district was just beginning to look at the best strategies and methods grounded in research to help all students achieve at higher levels. The strategies were site-based at the time of the review and lacked consistency across the district. The DIP and SIPs had newly aligned templates with the goal of improving the curriculum. The

plans also expressed the goal of making strategies consistent across the district. All staff had received training in WFSGs to work on curriculum and strategies. Most administrators had common NISL training on the best use of data and research-based strategies. The deputy superintendent had also trained administrators on the use of a common walk-through protocol, but according to interviewees this protocol was not being consistently used.

At the elementary level, the district mandated 90 minutes for ELA instruction and 60 minutes for math, according to documents and interviewees. All students received access to the core curriculum in these subjects and some received additional time with instructional specialists. During the summer of 2006, teachers, with the participation of principals, developed an ELA module for grades 1 and 2 and for kindergarten. During the period under review, the Crosby Elementary School grouped students with similar weaknesses in both ELA and math so that they could receive the same remediation. All district elementary schools used the Reading First model of intervention, regardless of whether each school was a Reading First school. This allowed for a three-tiered model of intervention. The district was planning to use a grant to provide professional development time to incorporate reading across the curriculum. According to interviewees, teachers now used a variety of programs for writing at the elementary level, although the district had provided training and they all had once used the Collins Writing Program. Teachers used checklists aligned with the state standards for ELA, but the district did not have similar ones in math. The district was beginning to use formative assessments such as the DIBELS in ELA, while it used few common formative assessments at the elementary level in mathematics. Special education students at Conte received extra time at the end of the day for remediation, and there was also an after-school remediation program for those children needing more time at the elementary level. There were "open-response Fridays" to help students practice for the MCAS tests and teachers directly taught test-taking skills.

According to interviewees, there was hope that the new middle school schedule would allow for a long block schedule to cover writing and literature as a comprehensive package. The middle schools assessed grade 6 reading levels. According to interviewees, in 2005-2006 the schools focused on vocabulary, while in 2006-2007 they were focusing on fluency. Interviewees stated that they were planning in the summer of 2007 to focus on reading comprehension in the remedial program. At the high schools, according to interviewees, there were few proactive

measures taken to remediate students. The high schools used GRADE and middle school recommendations to place students in remedial reading classes at grade 9. A small number of students were recommended for continuing support in grade 10. At both high schools, reading and English classes were offered in a double block to support ELA remediation.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

As previously indicated, the district was still working on developing an articulated curriculum in all core areas. Without a completed curriculum, it was impossible to conduct a timely review with appropriate revisions. After the rest of the curriculum is written,, interviewees stated that they would be in the planning stage for a cycle of regular and timely review and revision of the curriculum, based on the MCAS results, other assessments, and research-based practices, focused on improvement for all students. Interviewees told the EQA that during the period under review they were trying to change the district perception that the curriculum should be program driven to the belief that the curriculum should be standards based and frameworks driven.

WFSG training and NISL training for administrators helped the staff look objectively at the MCAS data, disaggregate the scores, and focus on improvement for low-performing subgroups. According to interviewees, the district purchased licenses for TestWiz.net to assist with MCAS test item analysis. The district was beginning to use a Scantron unit during the period under review, which would be able to quickly correct assessments and generate reports. It used the Galileo system for generation and reporting of middle school math but was planning to expand its use to other courses and grade levels.

As cited, the staff had been reviewing the ELA curriculum to try to align it both horizontally and vertically. This effort was now spilling over into math. One school was no longer using three programs, and there was a movement to establish one math program across all elementary schools.

Currently at one middle school, ELA was taught as two separate classes, reading and writing, but at Reid Middle School, ELA was taught as a back to back integrated reading and writing course. In 2007-2008, the district planned for ELA to be taught as an integrated course at both middle schools. The high schools used GRADE results to place grade 9 students into reading intervention programs if they needed them but used little formative testing in math.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Staff interviews and documents reviewed by the EQA examiners showed that once the MCAS data arrived in the district, central office and building administrators examined them. Data analyzed by the MEC revealed that subgroups of students in Pittsfield scored lower on the MCAS tests than the majority population. For example, 49 percent of regular education students scored in the 'Proficient' category, while 12 percent of special education students scored in that category. Forty-six percent of White students scored in the 'Proficient' category, while 21 percent of Hispanic students and 25 percent of African-American students did so. Twenty-seven percent of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunch, compared to 54 percent of students not receiving free or reduced-cost lunch, scored at the 'Proficient' level.

According to the DOE, retention rates were highest at grades 6, 9, and 11 in Pittsfield in 2005. According to the district, Galileo will be added in support of grade 9 mathematics instruction in 2007-2008.

Based on the MCAS data and data from other assessments, all students who needed extra help in ELA at the elementary level received the three-tiered Reading First model of remediation and intervention, whether the school was a Reading First school or not. In this way, most remediation could occur within the regular classroom and only students with the most severe needs received pullout remediation. The use of flexible grouping was a feature of this model. While all schools professed to use this three-tiered model, its implementation varied across schools, according to classroom observations. For example, students at Conte and Morningside broke into small groups with students having the same weaknesses placed into like groups.

Special education students at Conte had extra time for remediation at the end of the day, and there was also an after-school program providing extra time for remediation. The elementary level provided 90 minutes for core ELA, and students requiring remediation received extra time with specialists. Although the district had created checklists that were aligned to the state curriculum standards, according to interviewees teachers did not commonly or consistently fill them out for each child documenting progress according to midyear and end of year assessments. All elementary schools devoted 60 minutes to the core math lessons daily.

At the middle school level, all students had two ELA teachers so that they all took double English classes. There were also double math classes for those students requiring them; students took the second math class in lieu of specials or a foreign language. At the middle level, summer school was available for middle school students who had failed one or more subjects.

The high schools offered MCAS tutoring in mathematics and ELA to grade 9 and 10 students who had performed poorly on the grade 8 math test and to grade 11 and 12 students who had not achieved a passing score on either the grade 10 math or ELA test. High school students could make up course credits at summer school. Neither high school offered a formal after-school support program for its at-risk students, but homework help, peer tutoring, and tutoring at the Juvenile Resource Center were available on a voluntary basis.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to interviews with parents and staff, the availability of educational technology was uneven and inconsistent. The district used PowerSchool to collect and manage student data. The district hired two former classroom teachers to serve as the district technology coordinators to allow for more integration of technology into the instructional process. Technology was available to support what teachers were doing, according to interviews conducted by the EQA examiners. The technology coordinators led professional development on creating teacher web pages to post class information, curricula, and homework. Although many teachers used their web pages, it was an optional expectation. According to interviewees, almost all staff members

had their own laptops provided by the district. The district recently purchased 23 licenses for TestWiz.net that provided a better application for the Macintosh platform, which was primarily used by the district, so that administrators could analyze the MCAS test scores. The district also recently purchased a Scantron unit to correct formative and summative exams, analyze data, and generate reports. However, the district was still in the piloting stages with its implementation, according to interviewees.

During the period under review, elementary school teachers used PDAs (personal digital assistants) to help collect and analyze scores from the DIBELS testing in conjunction with AIMSWEB. The PDAs could attach to a desktop computer and the teachers could print an analysis of test data and accompanying reports, according to interviews with administrators. In addition, some teachers at all levels had taken Kurzweil educational training on scaffolded reading, writing, and study skills for struggling learners, including ELL students and students with special needs. It enabled educators to provide differentiated instruction without having to differentiate the curriculum. It also had web-based components made efficient through the use of technology.

The middle school level had the most technology, funded by a grant. All middle school students and teachers used their district-supplied and grant-funded laptops at home and at school in order to more effectively and efficiently improve student achievement. The district also purchased the Galileo system for the middle schools. This software program contained math instruction and assessments for students. Teachers could use it for instruction, practice, remediation, and acceleration. They could also create their own formative and summative assessments from an archive and then have the software correct the items, provide item analysis, and generate a report. According to interviewees, the district was in the planning stage of purchasing the Galileo system for ELA and science at the middle school level, as well as to purchase the system for other grade levels. The interviewees stated that when the grant was exhausted, the district planned to fund the middle school technology project and to enlarge it to other grade levels. The high school had computer labs. The district was starting to use the suggested DOE technology frameworks.

In 136 randomly observed classrooms, the EQA examiners found the overall student-to-computer ratio to be 3.3. However, at the elementary level the ratio was 12.2 students per computer; at the middle school level the ratio was 1.2 students per computer; and at the high school the ratio was 41.5 students per computer in the classrooms. According to interviews with district administrators, assistive technology was also available for students in need, which was written into Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Through interviews and a review of documents, the EQA examiners found that district and school leaders set a tone for higher expectations for both teachers' instruction and student achievement through the latter part of the period under review. However, expectations did not always match practice at the school and classroom levels, according to classroom observations and other sources of data and documentation. For example, the goals of the SIPs were broad and did not specify rates of improvement; therefore, they were not always measurable and concrete. According to interviewees, principals at the secondary level left much of the evaluation process to the department chairs and only got involved with the evaluations of teachers who lacked professional status or were having obvious difficulties. The assistant superintendent had developed the EDI form that principals were to use when doing classroom walk-throughs. The EQA examiners did not find that they were consistently used by administrators to inform teacher practice. The EQA examiners found that most district administrators made little connection between the EDI and instructional comments made on evaluations. Principals did not require lesson plans, and there was little evidence from documents provided and from interviews that showed student performance to be linked to teacher and/or principal evaluations.

A review of the student program of studies for both high schools revealed that 16 Advanced Placement (AP) courses were offered annually. The district strongly recommended that students take the AP exams, but it was not required. In 2004, the city paid for students to take the exams; since then students paid for the exams, but interviewees reported that the number of students

taking the exams was comparable to when the city had paid the fees. In 2006 at Pittsfield High School, 237 students were enrolled in AP classes and 135 exams were taken. On a scale of 1-5, 15 students earned a score of 5, 32 students earned a score of 4, 38 students earned a score of 3, 27 students earned a score of 2, and 23 students earned a score of 1, for an overall average of 2.92. At Taconic High School, 108 students were enrolled in AP classes and 103 students took 161 exams. Of these, two students earned a grade of 5, four students earned a grade of 4, 33 students earned a grade of 3, 49 students earned a grade of 2, and 73 students earned a grade of 1. Taconic High School interviewees stated that their AP results were low (an average of 1.83), and they knew they had a long way to improve.

Principals at the elementary levels stated that they expected the EQA examiners to see students involved in learning, differentiated instruction, "a lot" of Lucy Calkins Writing genre-based writing, guided reading, literacy centers, and much interaction among students. At the middle school level, interviewees expected the examiners to see exemplars and rubrics posted and some student work hanging. At the high school level, a principal expected examiners to see posted objectives that used active verbs, the EDI model in practice, and a linking of the class objectives to the standards.

In EQA classroom observations, high expectations refers to the teacher modeling and expecting good routines and work habits from students, high quality student work displayed, class time focused on challenging academic tasks, and the teacher communicating expectations of high quality work from students. When observing a random sample of 136 classrooms, the EQA examiners noted high expectations in 73 percent of classrooms at the elementary schools, 59 percent at the middle schools, and 42 percent at the high schools.

Effective instructional practice refers to the use of questioning techniques that encourage elaboration, thought, and broad involvement; using time effectively; using a variety of instructional techniques; instruction aligned with the state frameworks; and having clear directions and objectives. The EQA examiners noted effective instructional practice in 78 percent of observed elementary classes, 75 percent of middle school classes, and 56 percent of high school classes.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Formative and summative student assessment data were used inconsistently across all levels of the district to monitor aspects of the educational process, such as the effectiveness of teachers' instruction and resources, professional development, and support to improve and maintain high levels of instruction and delivery, as indicated by a review of documents and interviews. The use of WFSGs was the most consistent practice, and it required administrators and teachers in each school to look at the MCAS data on professional development days, at departmental meetings, and with central office curriculum staff.

During the period under review, all elementary schools administered the DIBELS test a few times per year, and the middle schools used the Galileo assessment system for math. The high schools had started creating some common exams for both schools in which half the test was comprised of common questions. According to documents examined and interviews conducted, the district was just starting to develop or purchase districtwide tests and analyze them. During the period under review, interviewees stated that they had done much work on curriculum and that assessment was the next area on which to focus.

Principals interviewed stated that they looked at assessment data, such as those from the MCAS tests and common assessments such as midterms and finals at the high schools. However, they also stated that the information from the student assessments was not used to monitor staff or school performance. Administrators interviewed said that they knew where the weaknesses were and were beginning a formalized process for analyzing test data in order to improve instruction. For example, they had just implemented the use of elementary reading coaches. With department chairs at the secondary level, they reviewed test data and were working to help teachers improve instruction based on the analyses.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 136 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted at the district's 12 schools as follows: 58 at the elementary schools, 37 at the middle schools, and 41 at the high schools. In total, the EQA examiners observed 59 ELA classrooms, 41 math classrooms, and 36 classrooms of other subjects.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 88 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 97 percent at the elementary level, 87 percent at the middle school level, and 76 percent at the high school level.

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

clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 71 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 78 percent at the elementary level, 75 percent at the middle school level, and 56 percent at the high school level.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 60 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 73 percent at the elementary level, 59 percent at the middle school level, and 42 percent at the high school level.

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 74 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 76 percent at the elementary level, 78 percent at the middle school level, and 66 percent at the high school level.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals,

overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 76 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 85 percent at the elementary school level, 84 percent at the middle school level, and 55 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	31	13	14	58	17.1	0.6	100	81	12.2
Middle	15	11	11	37	19.8	0.1	634	608	1.2
High	13	17	11	41	15.2	0.1	43	15	41.5
Total	59	41	36	136	17.3	0.3	777	704	3.3

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Elementary					
Total observations	224	408	170	266	148
Maximum possible	232	522	232	348	174
Avg. percent of observations	97	78	73	76	85
Middle					
Total observations	129	251	87	173	93
Maximum possible	148	333	148	222	111
Avg. percent of observations	87	75	59	78	84
High					
Total observations	125	207	69	161	68
Maximum possible	164	369	164	245	123
Avg. percent of observations	76	56	42	66	55
Total					
Total observations	478	866	326	600	309
Maximum possible	544	1224	544	815	408
Avg. percent of observations	88	71	60	74	76

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

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district developed and implemented benchmarks and an assessment system only at grades K-5 in ELA and grades 6-8 in mathematics.
- The district was in the process of implementing a system of Tier I, II, and III interventions in both ELA and mathematics, which included more time on learning, and more focused and individualized instruction for those most in need based on formative and quarterly assessments.
- Implementation of the three-tiered interventions was a site-based decision. Elementary, middle, and high schools varied widely on materials used, how personnel were used to provide interventions, and how much time was spent teaching ELA, math, and science.
- Common NISL training for principals and curriculum directors was moving the district toward developing a standards-based curriculum and creating a collaborative culture of leadership across the district.
- All administrators and teachers were involved in professional development through the use of the WFSG model, which was focused on creating curriculum benchmarks and curriculum maps, culminating in a complete K-12 districtwide curriculum.

- All eligible students participated in the MCAS testing at levels that exceeded the state requirement of 95 percent.

Summary

The district was in the process of using formative assessments at the elementary level for reading and at the middle school level for mathematics. The district had mandated the use of the DIBELS and AIMSweb for ongoing assessment at the elementary level in reading and ELA, but had no similar assessment for math at grades K-5. The results of these assessments were used to implement the three-tiered intervention model for ELA. This model allowed for increased time on learning, more individualized attention for those in need, and less pullout intervention for those most in need.

Pittsfield Public Schools also created districtwide quarterly assessments in math at grades 6-8, using Galileo software, but did not have similar assessments at grades 6-8 in ELA or reading. The high schools had created partially common midterms and finals as summative evaluations, but had not yet implemented a system of standardized formative assessments. Benchmarks were not used at any level for science.

The district had yet to develop a written districtwide curriculum at each grade level and, therefore, a common assessment system at grades K-12, in ELA, math, and science based on that curriculum. The district relied primarily on the MCAS test results to determine what types of academic support were needed for students regarding placement and additional time on learning. Principals had the latitude within their buildings to assign staff appropriately to serve students in need.

In 2006, the district purchased 23 site licenses for TestWiz.net in order to manage and analyze the results of local and MCAS assessment data. Each principal and at least one teacher-leader per school was required to attend TestWiz.net training. The deputy superintendent was beginning to use past MCAS performance to predict future performance in the aggregate. This information would be sorted by school and teacher in the future to give feedback on how to modify instructional practices in order to improve student achievement.

The district was just beginning to look at the MCAS and local assessment results to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs at all levels. The district implemented the use of PowerSchool

and PowerGrade as a means to collect student data, including grades, attendance, retentions, and dropouts, and to make the data easier to analyze. In addition, the technology allowed parents who had attended the training to get a password and then monitor their child's progress online. According to the district's technology professional development coordinator, so far 1,024 parents were trained to use PowerSchool. In April 2007, all secondary students received a password and instructions for use of PowerSchool, mailed to their respective homes. The district provided the training by means of in-person workshops to address the issue of scheduling parents to attend a workshop on using PowerSchool before they would receive a password. The district developed a videotape presentation to make it more convenient and accessible to all. In addition, all parents can also access a teacher's website. In 2007-2008, the district hoped to include assignment information in teachers' new PowerTeacher online grade books, which would also be available to parents through PowerSchool. This will make it easier to publish information about upcoming assignments, tests, and projects that parents and students can access at home.

New leadership at the central office created some districtwide initiatives to involve all administrators and teachers to work collaboratively toward the same district goals. All administrators and curriculum directors were required to attend a two-year program of NISL training, use the same EDI protocol for classroom walk-throughs to assess instruction, and use the WFSG model of professional development to focus school efforts on using assessment data to improve instruction. The district engaged only in audits that were mandated by the DOE or a grant funding entity to assess the effectiveness of its programs.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district had made progress on developing practices that encouraged the continuous collection, analysis, and use of student assessment data, but these practices were not consistent across grades K-12 in ELA or math, and were not yet attempted in science.

During the period under review, the district began to use assessment procedures in a few elementary schools, such as those that had received Reading First or similar grants from the DOE. Upon receipt of these grants, these respective schools were required to implement formative assessment systems in ELA that would help teachers make data-driven decisions about reading instruction. Using a similar model, the district put literacy coordinators in each of the eight elementary schools so that by 2006-2007, each elementary school had implemented, at a minimum, the use of the DIBELS and AIMSWEB to collect information on literacy attainment. With this information, all schools developed three-tiered interventions for every student, if required, based on the assessment results. According to interviewees, every six weeks the elementary teachers met by grade level with the literacy coordinator to do "progress monitoring." This allowed teachers to work together to do flexible grouping to accelerate progress of literacy development, as well as to provide additional supports to struggling students.

In order to widen involvement and expertise in using the DIBELS data as a formative assessment tool, the district mandated the use of the WFSG model to focus attention on the goals of every SIP, each of which had improvement of literacy levels as a goal. In some schools, additional forms of assessment were used, such as GRADE, Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE), Clay's running records, and other programmatic or teacher-generated assessments. However, the DIBELS was the only common districtwide assessment mandated. Administrators were considering using a common formative assessment in math at the elementary level. Teachers primarily relied on programmatic assessments from the various math programs in use at the elementary schools.

All grade 5 students took the GMADE test in mathematics at the end of the year to give teachers placement information for middle school math. In 2005-2006, the district gave laptops to each middle school student and installed Galileo software to give teachers the tools to collect ongoing assessment data via district quarterly assessments in math. According to interviewees, the district also implemented PowerSchool with PowerGrade in 2006-2007, so that parents could stay informed about their child's progress and teachers could track the progress of students in all subject areas. In contrast, no formative assessments were used in middle school ELA, with the exception of teacher-generated common writing prompts developed from the matrix questions released and published on the DOE website.

According to interviewees, at the end of grade 8 or at the beginning of grade 9, students took the GRADE in ELA in order to place them in appropriate course levels in grade 9. Interviewees stated that high school teachers were in the process of developing common departmental exams for specific courses and using PowerSchool and PowerGrade to track the test results. Respective departments developed final exams in 2005-2006 and midterms were developed in 2006-2007. According to interviewees, a portion of these exams were common and developed from sample MCAS questions and the rest of each test was specific to the teacher. Each teacher corrected his or her own exams using a similar grading scale for assessments. Principals indicated that they were attempting to develop similar assessments at both high schools.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Pittsfield Public Schools had very little updated policy with respect to assessment. According to policy INS-33, "remedial instructional services are to be provided as necessary in prescribed subject areas to supplement regular classroom learning activities." It states that "all reading instruction must be correlated with the Reading Curriculum Guide K-8, 1990, and the school developmental reading program." With respect to assessment, it states that "The purpose of assessment is the improvement of learning. Assessment is on-going and occurs within the context of teaching and learning. The central focus of any assessment is to determine the instructional needs of the developing reader." It then describes the responsibilities of the reading specialist, which indicates this is an outdated policy, since no school still had a reading specialist fulfilling these responsibilities.

Although the EQA examiners were not able to find specific district policy pertaining to the MCAS tests, interviewees stated that administrators, teachers, students, and parents took the testing very seriously in Pittsfield. On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Pittsfield participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement, according to the DOE.

According to MCAS participation statistics, 97.9 percent of all students participated in ELA testing, 97.8 percent of all students participated in math, and 98.4 percent of all students participated in STE. For students in regular education, 98.4 percent of all students participated in the ELA tests, 98.2 percent participated in the math tests, and 99.1 percent participated in the STE tests. For students in the special education subgroup, 97.9 percent participated in the ELA tests, 98.3 percent participated in the math tests, and 96.9 percent participated in the STE tests.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

As cited in Standard II, the district did not have complete, written K-12 curricula in ELA, math, and science. At the elementary level, grades K-5, the district relied on AIMSWEB or national norms to establish district benchmarks in reading/ELA. When asked how benchmarks from the DIBELS correlated to proficiency on the grade 3 MCAS reading test, interviewees stated that they had not yet examined this issue. Although the district had written benchmarks in K-8 math and ELA, interviewees stated that they no longer used them with any consistency. Interviewees stated that the district primarily used unit tests from the Everyday Math program to benchmark progress in mathematics. Only a rudimentary framework of science content and skills had been created at the elementary and middle school levels, and so benchmarks in science were yet to be determined.

At the middle school level, the district math benchmarks were developed using the Galileo bank of questions. The district also created quarterly exams in grades 6-8 and used them as grade-level benchmarks in math. Benchmarks in ELA had been roughly determined by having teachers look at trends, patterns, and item analyses of past MCAS tests. Teachers used grade-level matrix, or open-response, questions from the DOE as benchmarks. At the high school level, formative testing was not used with the exception of teacher-generated tests; therefore, benchmarks were least developed at that level. In 2006-2007, the district mandated that

midterms and final exams be given in all courses, but according to interviewees they were not the same test within the same course (common exams) or shared by both Pittsfield and Taconic High Schools (districtwide and common).

In addition to the use of traditional progress reports and report cards at the elementary level, the district implemented PowerGrade and PowerSchool at the middle and high school levels in 2006-2007. The teachers used PowerGrade to track attendance and student progress, and through the use of PowerSchool parents could access attendance and grades via the Internet. To do this, parents had to attend a training session and receive a confidential ID number to access their child's records. Although the district technology department continuously ran workshops throughout the school year, some parents told the EQA examiners that since they were not yet able to attend one of these, they could not use it to see their child's grades. Other parents at the parent focus group meeting held by the EQA examiners complained that not all parents had computers at home or work, so they would rather receive report cards sent home with the child. The district was currently in the process of issuing ID numbers to students at the high school so that they could access their own academic records.

Pittsfield's parent focus groups were well attended and consisted of parents elected to school councils. According to parents, the district and school reports cards were sent home and were posted on each school's website. Parents stated that they were aware of each school's MCAS results but were not knowledgeable about parents' rights to attain remedial services in Title I schools that were not making AYP.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

As cited, the district had established benchmarks at grades K-5 in ELA, but not at grades 6-10. In math, the district had formative testing and benchmarks at grades 6-8, but not the other grades. According to interviewees, schools had different amounts of common planning time, faculty meetings, professional development time, and WFSG time to work on the written curriculum.

By 2006-2007, the district had begun to use technology to implement formative assessment in some areas and to integrate the use of technology in order to gather data, get timely results, and analyze those results. All teachers in the district used laptops as a tool in their work, and all middle school students had laptops that were connected through a wireless network.

Beginning in 2005-2006, under the leadership of a new superintendent and deputy superintendent for curriculum, the district began to develop benchmarks in ELA and math. The district also mandated professional development in using TestWiz.net for the principal of each school and at least one other teacher-leader in each school. All school principals and newly appointed curriculum directors were required to attend the NISL training in 2006-2007, which was the second year of such training for the district. The DOE, in conjunction with the Urban Superintendent Network, was sponsoring this program through a DOE grant. NISL is a program of the National Center on Education and the Economy that focuses on using best practices.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district was just beginning to use assessment results and other pertinent data to measure the effectiveness of instructional and support programs. As cited, the district was just beginning to use AIMSWEB and Galileo data at specific grades across the district, which enabled the district to collect information about quarterly and annual growth in K-5 ELA and 6-8 math. The high schools used High Schools That Work (HSTW) technical support audits.

In addition, the district principals had begun to use the same EDI or walk-through checklist when visiting classrooms. The deputy superintendent modeled the use of this checklist for all principals when making classroom visits, and stated that he had done "about of a hundred of them" since the beginning of 2006-2007. Principals and teachers confirmed that he frequently did walk-throughs in their schools. The front of the form divided classroom activity by instructional element and function, and the back of the form listed 20 management and instructional strategies. Principals were instructed to mark whether they had observed the elements or not, and to return the form to the teacher when the walk-through was completed. All

agreed that this information could also be used when writing a non-professional status teacher's annual summative evaluation or a professional status teacher's summative evaluation. The deputy superintendent stated that this was a consistent way to give teachers critical feedback and to help them examine their own classroom practice. Interviews with principals revealed that all of them were not necessarily using these feedback forms consistently, or in the same way, to give feedback to teachers.

The district provided very few after-school support programs. The offerings consisted primarily of two 21st Century grant programs in the community schools and after-school MCAS preparation sessions of short duration at the elementary and middle grades in ELA and math. Although the schools collected information from individual assessments, they were not using them in any organized way to assess overall programs of instruction.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district and school leadership did not regularly engage in internal and external audits or assessments to inform the effectiveness of its program implementation and service delivery systems. The only exceptions were mandatory assessments such as the Coordinated Program Review (CPR), the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process, or those required to renew entitlement and competitive grants such as Title I, Reading First, NISL, or private grants.

However, in 2006-2007 the deputy superintendent began to use the results of individual MCAS scores, collected over time, to predict the likely achievement of individual students on the MCAS tests. In the future, he was confident that individual scores could be further sorted by specific program or classroom teacher to illuminate problem areas. By sharing this with principals, the superintendent perceived that he could show teachers and principals what type of students were doing better than predicted on the MCAS assessments, and what type of students were not doing as well as predicted. This was modeled after methodology used in New York State to predict

attainment levels, and it was part of an assessment system in Pittsfield that could be used to help principals and teachers improve instruction.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district and school leadership annually reviewed student assessment results and other pertinent data to maximize effectiveness in assigning staff and allocating time and resources. This was evident in the decision to use a three-tiered model, based on the K-8 model of intervention developed by J. David Cooper, for ELA. Pittsfield was attempting to implement it for math at the elementary and middle school levels. In this model, the classroom teacher provides core instruction to all students, and, based on assessment data, a Tier I intervention is made in the classroom by the regular teacher or support personnel who go into the classroom to do flexible grouping. The Tier II intervention provides additional small group instruction resulting in more time and focused instruction to remediate or accelerate the pace of specific learning. The Tier III intervention is an individualized intervention that provides additional time on learning. The three tiers extended the time spent on ELA and math at the elementary level, and were a districtwide mandate according to the DIP.

Principals had the authority to work with their respective faculty to develop how they would implement this model in their schools. For example, in schools with an open concept design, the teachers tended to arrange flexible grouping by using all specialists, teachers, and paraprofessionals at each grade level to provide service in literacy and ELA and in math. In other schools, teachers were expected to use more flexible grouping within their own classroom to provide service with the help of specialists and paraprofessionals. Each elementary school had a literacy coordinator, whether or not it was a Title I school. In mathematics, elementary schools used different math programs and the collection of ongoing assessment data varied widely. Most schools used program-based assessments, and in a few schools Study Island

software was used to provide additional time and more focused instruction, based on frequent assessment, to check for mastery.

All students at the middle school level were assigned to two time periods of ELA and were assigned to leveled classes in mathematics. According to central office interviewees, the district was moving toward heterogeneous classes in math at the middle level with all students taking pre-algebra or algebra in grade 8. According to the mathematics pacing guides for 2006-2007, which constituted the bulk of the written curriculum, teachers used a variety of materials such as SpringBoard, the Connected Math Program (CMP), and Larson Math to provide leveled instruction.

In the past few years, the district hired many new teachers. According to principals, they had the authority to assign personnel to teach various sections or provide specific services in an attempt to hire the best teachers to serve the students with the greatest need.

Although the high school principals reported that they were working in collaboration more than ever, there were still many site-based differences in implementation of curriculum and instruction. For example, at Pittsfield High School reading was not a required course, even though students entering grade 9 were reading one or more years below grade level. At Taconic High School, students were required to take a double block of ELA in grade 9. According to interviewees, at Pittsfield High School the principal was aggressively pursuing the creation of a grade 9 academy for 60 to 80 grade 9 students who needed a "safety net" to encourage them to stay in school. The written curriculum at both high schools was inconsistent at best. There was a lack of ongoing assessments given to inform instruction, and newly developed half-common midterms and finals were corrected by individual teachers.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The overarching goal of the district was to focus all administrators and teachers on defining the difference between textbook programs and curriculum, in an effort to begin to create a K-12 written curriculum aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. All principals and curriculum directors were required to participate in the NISL leadership program, which focused on developing a standards-based curriculum, using ongoing student data, and raising the expectations for best practices of instruction in all classes. All principals were required to focus whole-school professional development efforts on using the WFSG model, which focused on analysis of MCAS and local assessment data, and the development of action steps to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs and services aimed at the improvement and the delivery of instruction and raising student achievement. This change in focus was in its beginning stages in 2005-2007 due to the efforts of new central office leadership, the hiring of new principals and teachers, and the restoration of curriculum leadership to organize, direct, and supervise the efforts across the district.

The district leadership looked at the MCAS test results and, based on that analysis, decided to initiate districtwide programs such as the use of EDI, a three-tiered model in ELA and math, and the use of technology to perform ongoing assessment in ELA at the elementary level and math at the middle school level. It also initiated the use of PowerSchool across the district to track attendance, suspensions, retentions, and dropout data. At the middle and high school levels, it initiated the use of PowerGrade to help teachers track student assessment and to help parents stay informed about student attendance and the academic progress of their child. Based on low math achievement, especially at the middle and high school levels, the district was in the process of eliminating leveled instruction in math at the middle school and replacing it with access to the same curriculum with a three-tiered model of instructional support.

In 2006-2007, district efforts were focused on change in critical areas where students were losing ground and not making AYP in ELA and math. It will take time for the district to see if the changes that have already been made ultimately result in higher achievement on the MCAS tests. School leaders were heartened by the gains that students were making according to the DIBELS and Galileo results. Interviewees also repeatedly referenced the positive change in collaboration that had occurred within in the district through NISL training and implementation of WFSGs.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- Employment practices during the period under review were consistent across the district and focused on seeking the best possible candidates.
- Ninety-one percent of the teachers had licensure and taught in their areas of certification.
- Teacher evaluations conformed with M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 38 requiring biennial evaluations for professional status teachers and annual evaluations for non-professional teachers. Teacher evaluations did not hold teachers accountable for student achievement.
- For 2005-2006, the school committee did not evaluate the superintendent of schools, nor did the superintendent evaluate central administrators, as required by statute.
- Based on a districtwide survey, the district focused its professional development on "positive learning environment, effective instruction, and integrated assessment plans."
- The district's implemented the use of a common EDI form for improving student achievement, but administrators did not uniformly use it or give feedback in the same way.
- Under the new superintendent's leadership, the district was beginning to focus on using data to improve student achievement and to focus professional development offerings on DIP and SIP goals through the use of the WFSG model.

Summary

The Pittsfield Public Schools had practices in place that allowed the district to recruit, select, and hire highly qualified professional teaching staff. According to the documentation presented by the district, over 91 percent (513 of 561) of the district's teachers had appropriate Massachusetts licensure for the teaching assignments that they held. Ten licensed teachers were teaching out of field for one of more periods a day. Forty-eight teachers were not licensed at all. During the period under review, the district employed 29 licensed administrators. Twenty of them were licensed for the job they held, and nine administrators were not licensed for the job they currently held.

In those instances in which the district was unable to find highly qualified teachers, it hired non-licensed staff members and monitored their progress toward licensure. The district supported these unlicensed teachers through the district mentoring program and through professional development funds to subsidize the coursework necessary to gain teacher licensure.

The district also had a formal mentoring program in place for new teachers. However, due to a large teacher turnover and the retirement of trained mentors during the period under review, there was an insufficient number of mentors for new teachers in the latter part of the review period. Principals mentored new teachers, several at a time, in order to fill this gap. The district's mentoring program for administrators was informal, and those new administrators interviewed stated that mentoring consisted of the new administrator seeking out experienced administrators for support. Administrators indicated that the district encouraged professional growth and development for principals and coordinators through the NISL training, a grant-funded program designed to strengthen leadership skills in schools to impact student achievement.

Based on a 2005 survey of teachers, the district provided professional development in the areas of effective teaching, assessment, and positive learning environment. The school committee allocated $100,000 a year for professional staff reimbursement of tuition and related fees and expenses related to attending workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Prior to 2005-2006, professional development in the district was unfocused. In 2005-2006, the district began to concentrate on the use of data to improve student achievement. Under the

leadership of the new superintendent, all principals and professional staff received professional development training in using WFSGs, which became the starting point of the analysis of data in the schools. In 2006, the district purchased 23 licenses for TestWiz.net and trained staff members to use the program. This allowed the schools to analyze the MCAS data and to analyze subgroup data using the district's Macintosh operating system. In the WFSGs, faculty and principals analyzed data from the MCAS tests, the DIBELS, the AP tests, program-based assessments, and attendance records to create action plans to address student achievement.

According to a random sample of teacher evaluations reviewed by EQA examiners, the district annually evaluated teachers without professional status and biennially evaluated teachers with professional status, as required under Massachusetts General Laws and school committee policy. All teacher evaluations reviewed were considered to be timely, most were informative, and only some were instructive and considered to be conducive to overall professional growth and effectiveness. This was substantiated by the presence or absence of statements made in the written evaluations.

For 2005-2006, the Pittsfield school committee did not evaluate the superintendent, nor did the superintendent evaluate all central administrators, as required under statute. Neither teacher nor administrator evaluations were specifically linked to student achievement goals.

During the period under review, the district developed the EDI form to monitor classrooms and provide feedback to teachers. The EQA examiners found that not all administrators used the EDI in conducting walk-throughs and that they did not consistently use it to provide feedback to teachers.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the district had policies and practices in place for the employment of both teaching and administrative professional staff. Specifically, policy Per-1, Professional Staff Recruiting, detailed the method and qualifications for individuals hired as administrators, principals, and teachers. School committee policy regulation 2 required advertising of professional positions in efforts to reach the most qualified candidates available. Regulation 2 also required the district to use "all appropriate resources to reach minorities for all positions, and minorities and women for all administrative positions." Additional school committee policy regulations included licensure requirements and minimum grade point averages. Interviewees indicated that the district did not follow all of the school committee regulations when hiring professional staff.

Employment practices were consistent across the district in that the hiring process began with the building principal requesting a posting notice from the office of the assistant superintendent for personnel. School committee policy required the district to post all vacancies in schools and to send a copy of the vacancies to the teachers' union. Posted notices described the vacancy, minimum qualifications, duties, salary range, and application deadline. Additionally, the district placed newspaper advertisements in Springfield's *The Republican*, Albany's *The Times Union*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, and, when appropriate, *The Boston Globe*. The human resources office received and reviewed each application for completeness prior to the principal's review.

According to interviewees, the principal decided who would be on the interviewing team. The team interviewed the candidates, including those professional staff requesting transfer, and gave input to the principal. The principal submitted the name of the finalist to the office of the assistant superintendent for personnel for further review. The assistant superintendent interviewed the finalist, discussed benefits, determined the salary, conducted a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, and made the appointment, acting as the superintendent's designee. Principal interviewees indicted that the district encouraged them to seek the best possible candidate for each position and felt the hiring process resulted in the employment of an effective teaching force, one they perceived as having the likelihood of advancing student achievement.

The hiring process for administrators was similar, but the interviewing team included other principals and teachers. For example, the district stated that a recent interview team for the hire of a principal consisted of central office administrators, a curriculum committee member, teachers, and parents.

2. All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

School committee policy Per-1 stated that the superintendent was responsible for developing and implementing appropriate personnel procedures to "ensure the selection and appointment of the best qualified candidates available to professional staff positions." Additionally, school committee regulations required that "only candidates will be interviewed who are certified or certifiable in Massachusetts or other states with a transferable certification."

According to the documentation presented by the district, 20 administrators held licensure for the positions they held, and nine were not licensed for the position held. An EQA check for updated certifications revealed that six administrators did not have up to date certification. According to the district, the position of dean of students was an administrative position that did not require Massachusetts certification. The district did not provide evidence of any waiver requests for administrators without current certification.

For the period under review, most professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure. According to the documentation presented by the district, over 91 percent, or 513of 561, of the district's teachers had appropriate Massachusetts licensure for the teaching assignments that they held. When asked, the district interviewees indicated that the district sought waivers for non-certified professional staff. Interviewees indicated that the district had difficulty hiring certified professional staff for the middle schools and high schools, especially in the natural sciences and in special education. For example, interviewees stated that, even after advertising in Massachusetts and New York for three years, the district had been unable to hire a teacher for the visually impaired. Interviewees further indicated that the district had some flexibility with regard to offering higher salary step placement to attract candidates in hard to fill areas.

According to the examination of 43 randomly selected personnel files, three professional staff members lacked Massachusetts licensure for the period under review. The district indicated that one professional staff member had Texas certification, one had New York certification, and one certification request was ready for review.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to data presented by the district, nine percent, or 48of 561, of the teachers did not hold licensure for the positions they held and so the district employed them on waiver. The assistant superintendent for personnel told the EQA examiners that his office monitored the waiver process and that he required all professional staff members on waivers to provide evidence that they were pursuing certification.

According to administrator interviews, as per article XV of the teachers' contract section 1b, Professional Development and Educational Improvement, teachers on waiver could access a pool of $75,000 in professional development funds to help offset the cost of coursework needed to gain teacher licensure. Central office interviewees indicated that the district retained non-certified teachers for the following year only if the teachers showed evidence of meeting the Massachusetts Department of Education requirement of substantial progress. Interviewees indicated that for 2005-2006, the district did not renew seven non-professional status teachers for a variety of reasons including not making substantial progress toward licensure.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

School committee policy Per-1 stated that that the school committee held the superintendent responsible to "provide for an annual orientation of all professional staff members." School committee regulation regarding new teacher orientation stated orientation of personnel new to the school system "will provide a broadly based effort to supply information and background details which will improve the new teacher's understanding of the district's framework—including policies of the committee, rules and regulations, and the instructional program."

During the period under review, the district provided most new teachers with mentors. Interviewees indicated that at the time of review the district had 117 trained mentors. The district provided its mentors with formal mentor training in best teaching practices, similar to what Research for Better Teaching provides. In addition to completing the two-day, 12-hour mentor training, mentor qualifications included a minimum of three years teaching experience and the principal's approval. Mentors in the district received stipends of $515 for 2004-2005, $530 for 2005-2006, and $544 for 2006-2007.

Interviewees stated that the district mentor coordinator oversaw the mentoring needs of the district and provided mentors with direction and materials. The mentor coordinator met with mentors four times per year to discuss matters of improving coaching and provided the opportunity for mentors to share experiences and seek assistance from one another about mentoring. The mentor coordinator provided a mentoring program handbook to mentors and new teachers that outlined the goals, roles, and responsibilities of mentors, teachers, and administrators, as well as a timeline for mentoring activities. The mentoring program handbook provided to the EQA examiners indicated that in addition to providing a mentor, the district provided a support team to review the criteria and procedures of evaluation, answer questions and concerns of new teachers, and to schedule mentor observations. Principal interviewees indicated that they provided release time for mentors to observe the new teacher.

However, some administrator and teacher interviewees indicated that as a result of large teacher turnover during the period under review and the loss of mentor teachers through retirement, the district no longer had sufficient numbers of trained mentors available for new teachers. Some principals stated that, as a result, they assumed the mentor role for some teachers who were new

to the district. For example, one high school principal mentioned that due to the lack of sufficiently trained mentors relative to the number of new teachers, he mentored three new teachers. The district required mentors and new teachers to complete a mentor/new teacher learning log that described the dates, length, and topics of meetings. District administrators estimated the number of teacher retirees at 30 to 40 teachers per year for the past five years.

Documents submitted to the EQA examiners indicated that eight administrators were new to the district. Administrator interviewees stated that new administrators looked to veteran administrators for guidance and informal mentoring. The district had no formal mentoring program for new administrators.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Prior to the arrival of the present superintendent, the Pittsfield Public Schools did not have a comprehensive professional development program for the development of data analysis skills or to conduct subgroup analysis. The district had been unable to use TestWiz from the DOE for data analysis across the district since TestWiz was written for running on Microsoft Windows and the district used a Macintosh operating system.

In the latter portion of the period under review, the district began to develop the capacity for school-based professional development data analysis through the WFSG initiative. Interviewees indicated that that the superintendent required all principals and professional staff to receive professional development training in WFSG. Interviewees indicated that in 2005-2006, WFSG became the starting point of the analysis of data.

For example, one elementary school principal interviewee indicated that in analyzing the data, staff found that phonemic awareness and phonic skills were good but saw deficiencies in spelling. As a result, the schools offered a full-day professional development offering in spelling and fluency. One middle school interviewee stated that the WFSG analyzed Galileo data and

found a number of students falling below grade level. Interviewees stated that teachers "drilled down" to identify the particular students in need and offered small group and individual support.

With regard to districtwide professional development, interviewees indicated that in 2005-2006 the deputy superintendent provided data analysis training at all levels during school faculty meetings. Additionally, in 2006 the district purchased 23 subscriptions for TestWiz.net and trained staff to use the program. This allowed the schools for the first time to analyze MCAS data and to analyze subgroup data using the district's Macintosh operating system. TestWiz.net training for administrators began in 2006-2007.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to documentation and district interviewees, the district had policies and practices that encouraged professional growth and recognition. For example, the school committee policy Recognition for Accomplishment stated that the committee will recognize outstanding service or accomplishments by students, staff members, or other citizens. Interviewees indicated that the school committee recognized teachers' and students' accomplishments at the beginning of school committee meetings. A review of posted school committee minutes indicated that school committee members acknowledged this. Additionally, under the school committee agenda, Report of the Superintendent, the superintendent regularly recognized the accomplishments of students, teachers, and principals. The district also recognized teachers through school newsletters. For example, the Reid Middle School newsletter recognized a teacher as a semifinalist for Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. At Morningside Elementary School, the school newsletter featured students and the teachers acknowledging the Morningside Music Awards.

Section 21 of the teachers' contract provided $5,000 per year, payable as salary, for teachers who received National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification. The

teachers' contract also provided salary adjustments for advanced coursework beyond a bachelor's degree.

Interviewees indicated that most teacher recognition initiatives came from their peers within buildings. For example, "Teacher Talk" at Taconic High School and the "Faculty Lounge" at Pittsfield provided a virtual forum where members of the staff recognized each other's accomplishments.

School committee policy regarding professional staff promotion indicated that the committee expected that "due consideration be given to applicants employed by the district" who have demonstrated exemplary performance when selecting candidates for promotional positions. As examples, interviewees indicated that some principals and curriculum coordinators came from within the district from teaching positions.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

For the latter part of the period under review, the district's professional development program was primarily informed by the results of the MCAS tests and input from staff surveys. In EQA interviews with administrators, some interviewees indicated that prior to the arrival of the present superintendent, the districtwide professional development program was unfocused and disjointed. As an example, one interviewee stated that under the previous professional development program, math teachers were able to choose professional development activities related to social studies curriculum and recertification.

Interviewees indicated that in the 2005-2006 school year, under the leadership of the new superintendent and deputy superintendent, the district began to focus on using data to improve student achievement. Documentation submitted to the EQA indicated that in 2005 the district surveyed teachers to determine those areas of professional development that would most likely

enhance student achievement. The survey results indicated that professional development training in effective teaching, assessments, and positive environment were likely to enhance student achievement.

The schools used these categories as the parameters for offering specific site-based professional development during the 10 half-day professional development days. Principals indicated that site-based WFSGs were aligned with the three districtwide initiatives. For example, a review of one elementary school's WFSG log and an interview with the principal revealed that the school analyzed the MCAS data, the DIBELS data, assessments from Everyday Math, and discipline data. One high school principal indicated that the WFSG used a portion of the 10 half days of professional development time to analyze the MCAS, AP, attendance, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. Further review of WFSG logs indicated that teachers at another elementary school received professional development training on the DIBELS, differentiated instruction, and testing procedures. At one middle school, teachers devoted professional development time to the MCAS items and "unpacking the standards." At Pittsfield High School, the teacher WFSG logs indicated that professional development on data analysis, school climate, and technology had been provided.

According to the current teachers' contract, the school year for Pittsfield teachers was 183 days. Interviewees indicated that during the three days prior to the start of the school year, the district conducted both system-wide professional development and some school-based professional development. Additionally, the current teachers' contract provided 10 half days of in-service training in order to meet the needs of teachers in timely pursuing their professional recertification by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Some teachers from one of the teacher focus groups held in the district told the EQA that the district did not provide, in their opinion, appropriate content and subject-based professional development for recertification.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees stated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the building and district administrators began using an EDI form as a districtwide tool to regularly monitor classroom management and instructional strategies in all schools. The EDI form included ratings on classroom structure, behavioral expectations, classroom routines, teacher interaction with students, use of classroom time, and checking for understanding. Some interviewees indicated that after the walk-through, the administrator used the EDI tool to give feedback to the teacher, and, when appropriate, used the EDI information in evaluations, but this was not consistently implemented across all schools.

However, the EQA examiners found that not all administrators used the EDI form during walk-throughs, or gave specific feedback to the teachers on improving instruction, to the degree that the central office thought or intended. A review of teacher evaluations revealed that they were not necessarily linked to what was cited in EDI forms and/or connected to choices for professional development and/or the goals in the respective school's SIP.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Pittsfield's evaluation procedures for administrators' performance was not aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act and generally did not meet the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38, which prescribed that all administrators be evaluated annually. Further, the school committee policy Per-1, Evaluation of the Superintendent, stated that the school committee's policy was to evaluate the abilities and services of the superintendent through a formal procedure "at least once annually."

For the 2005-2006 school year, the school committee did not evaluate the superintendent. In interviews, some school committee members stated they believed the superintendent understood

the school committee's desire to improve district MCAS scores. A review of the superintendent's contract did not specifically link compensation and continued employment to effectiveness or improvement in student achievement.

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38 requires that "the superintendent shall require the evaluation of administrators and teachers without professional status every year and shall require the evaluation of teachers with professional teacher status at least once every two years." A review of the district administrators' personnel records revealed that for 2005-2006 the superintendent did not evaluate central office administrators.

The district's evaluations for the performance of principals also did not comply with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38 in the requirement of annual evaluations. In a review of nine principals' personnel files, the EQA examiners found only eight evaluations on file for 2005-2006. For 2004-2005, the EQA examiners found one principal evaluation document in the files.

A component of the principals' contract indicated that the superintendent would hold principals accountable through performance-based evaluations and "shall include consideration of both student academic performance and fulfillment of teacher performance standards." Although the 2006 AYP data were attached to the evaluation document, the EQA examiners found no specific accountability goals referenced in the evaluation document of principals. Additionally, the principals' contract referenced merit pay, based on special circumstances of establishing a performance "that result[s] in a particularly noteworthy accomplishment for the employee's school, or a major contribution to system-wide progress." Interviewees indicated that since the arrival of the new superintendent, no principal had received merit pay.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the district's evaluation practices for teachers complied with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38, which requires biennial evaluations for professional status teachers and annual evaluations for non-professional status teachers. A review of 48 randomly selected personnel files indicated that 13 percent, or six of 48 teachers, were newly hired teachers for 2006-2007 and so supervisors had not yet evaluated them. Of the remaining 42 teacher personnel files, all had evaluations on file.

Of the 42 evaluations reviewed, all evaluations were timely, contained signatures of both the teacher and the evaluator, and contained components of education reform. Of the 42, the EQA examiners considered 95 percent, or 40 of 42, to be informative, but only seven percent, or three of 42, to be instructive. The EQA also considered only seven percent, or three of 42, to be conducive to the professional growth or overall effectiveness of that teacher.

Interviewees indicated that at the high school, department heads conducted observations and also wrote summative evaluations. The teachers' evaluations were not necessarily connected to student achievement. Interviews with district administrators indicated that the 1997-approved teachers' evaluation template was in need of revision to better reflect the Principles of Effective Teaching. However, interviews with union representatives indicated that the evaluation document was well written.

Section 21 of the teachers' contract required that a committee of representatives of the United Educators of Pittsfield (UEP) and the district committee be formed and meet on a regular basis "to consider revisions of the teachers without professional status and teachers with professional status rating forms or to develop new rating forms." The status of this joint committee in 2006-2007 was unclear.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the latter part of the period under review, the district attempted to implement a common system of supervision for improving student achievement. The district developed the EDI form to be able to monitor classroom management routines, behavioral expectations, and use of classroom time; to provide feedback to classroom teachers; and to use the results as a component for professional staff evaluations. However, the EQA examiners found that not all administrators regularly used the EDI during walk-through visits and not all administrators gave immediate and critical feedback to teachers or were monitoring them.

Interviewees also told the EQA that in 2005, the district surveyed professional staff members to better focus districtwide as well as site-based professional development offerings. The district survey results indicated that of the numerous professional development offerings, teachers perceived that professional development in effective teaching, assessments, and a positive environment would have the largest impact on student achievement. Subsequently, the district categorized proposed professional development into these three broad areas.

The district also required all schools to develop WFSGs that matched SIP goals. Interviewees indicated that all professional staff received the book *Whole-Faculty Study Groups: Creating Professional Learning Communities That Target Student Learning* by Carlene U. Murphy and Dale W. Lick. Principals and curriculum leaders used this model for professional development in which they addressed goals in the SIPs, the MCAS test results, and other sources of assessment data. The groups helped to develop action plans within each study group to further the goals in the SIPs. Interviewees stated that all teachers participated in WFSGs during professional in-service time.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

District administrators and principals described the hiring process as rigorous and focused on seeking the best possible candidates for positions without regard to cost. During the period under review, the district supported and linked the employment, supervision, and professional

development processes and supported them with appropriate levels of funding. The district had policies in place for the employment of the superintendent, district administrators, principals, teachers, and support staff. The district also had policies in place regarding professional staff licensure requirements; grade point averages; the requirement that the superintendent form interview committees for all administrative and teaching positions to guard against nepotism; and a rigorous evaluation policy. The school committee also had a district professional development policy that recognized the value of staff development as a means of improving instruction.

In article XV of the teachers' contract, the school committee agreed to appropriate $100,000 for each year of the agreement for the purpose of providing professional development and educational improvement to teachers. Of this total amount, $75,000 was allocated for professional staff for expenditures such as tuition, registration, library fees, and laboratory fees, and $25,000 was allocated for expenses incurred by teachers who attended workshops, seminars, and conferences. Interviewees from UEP indicated that the district provided adequate professional development funding.

13. <u>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.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

School committee policy indicated that the district would hold principals responsible for the supervision of a safety program for their schools. Some elementary principal interviewees indicated that each classroom had an emergency binder that contained evacuation plans, class lists, and maps. One middle school interviewee indicated that the staff had emergency training from the MEMA. One high school interviewee indicated the staff received safety and hygiene training and that the faculty handbook contained a safety component. It was not evident how each school specifically informed daily substitutes and volunteers of school safety procedures.

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

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- During the period under review, the district had a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) and identified at-risk students, providing them with additional programs and academic support.
- The district offered after-school and/or summer programs on a very limited basis.
- Early intervention programs were available to primary grade students, and the district offered an integrated pre-school program for special education children needing services.
- The district had numerous programs and practices in place for easing transitions as students moved from one grade to another or transferred into the district.
- The district had a full complement of policies and procedures related to discipline referrals, suspensions, and retentions; however, the implementation of these policies and practices varied from one school to another.
- The dropout rate for the district was more than twice the state average, which administrators and principals perceived as problematic and requiring attention.

- Students in the district identified as homeless numbered only in the single digits and the district made every effort to properly place these students and allow them access to all programs.
- The district student attendance rate was below the state average throughout the period under review, but a high number of students were chronically absent starting at middle school and continuing into high school.

Summary

Pittsfield Public Schools had early intervention literacy programs at the primary level, and the district used Early Reading Intervention for all its students along with several other reading support programs for its at-risk students. Thirty-six percent of the students reached the proficiency level or higher on the grade 4 MCAS test in ELA in 2006.

The district used aggregate achievement data, especially the MCAS test results, to identify the student needs at each grade level and determine the scope and sequence of the academic assistance. The district mandated that all grade K-5 teachers schedule 90-minute ELA instruction blocks each day, and that the teachers assess students at least three times per year using the DIBELS. When teachers noted deficiencies in student performance, they provided additional ELA services (Tier II and/or Tier III interventions) through a combination of reading specialists, Title I teachers, and paraprofessionals. In contrast, no common, ongoing math assessment was in place at the elementary schools, and although the district was planning a three-tiered intervention program for math, it was just in the planning stages.

At the district's two middle schools, the district assigned all grade 6-8 students to a double period of ELA and assigned students who had done poorly on their previous MCAS math test to an additional daily math class. There were few formal, academic, after-school support programs at the middle level, but summer programs were offered to middle school students if they had failed one or more courses. The high schools offered MCAS tutoring in mathematics and ELA to grade 9 and 10 students who had performed poorly on the grade 8 math test and to grade 11 and 12 students who had not achieved a passing score on either the grade 10 math or ELA test. High school students could make up course credits at summer school. Neither high school

offered a formal after-school support program for its at-risk students, but homework help, peer tutoring, and tutoring at the Juvenile Resource Center were available on a voluntary basis.

The district had discipline policies in place at each level and published the discipline code in each school's handbook. According to interviewees, implementation of these policies and practices varied from school to school. The district's two middle schools used in-school suspension as their main disciplinary tool, but teachers also used team leaders as the first point of referral. The two high schools, conversely, used out-of-school suspension as their main disciplinary tool and also used the services of the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office through its Juvenile Resource Center (JRC) for habitual offenders and excessive truants. The percentage of students disciplined with in-school or out-of-school suspension at the secondary level was well above the state average in each category.

The high schools' reported dropout rate was more than twice the state average, and the cohort group dropout rate in 2006 approached 33 percent. The district used several dropout prevention methods including the JRC and a five-year graduation plan. Several programs were available for those students who did drop out; they could return to school or continue their education in a General Educational Development (GED) certificate program or the Adult Diploma Program.

The district's overall attendance rate in 2005-2006 was 93.8 percent, which was below the state and NCLB targets of 95 percent. Overall, the rate of chronic absenteeism, defined as absent more than 10 percent of the school year, was very high. This rate jumped to 14.1 percent in grade 5 and peaked at 29.5 percent in grade 9. The district employed one full-time attendance officer, two attendance coordinators at each high school, and each of the secondary schools had a Pittsfield police officer (DARE) stationed at the school. All of these individuals worked with school administrators on dealing with students who had attendance problems. They frequently visited the homes of truant students and filed Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions, especially for grade 8 and 9 students.

The annual number of days that teachers were absent in the district was less than 10 days per teacher. Interviewees did not perceive teacher attendance to be a problematic issue. The district employed 20 permanent substitutes across the district to help provide consistent substitute coverage when the regular classroom teacher was absent.

Pittsfield Public Schools' access policies stated clearly that the district would allow all students to participate in all course offerings, including the accelerated and/or AP courses offered at the two high schools. The district routinely honored parental requests, and, according to interviewees, the percentages of minority students in those classes closely resembled the percentages of minority students in the total school population. The district took pride in the fact that it offered as many as 16 AP courses at each high school; however, the average score, out of a maximum score of 5, for those students who chose to take the AP exams was 2.92 at Pittsfield High School and 1.83 at Taconic High School.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district used aggregate data and looked at trends, patterns, and item analyses to adjust instruction and policies for at-risk students. The district had not used disaggregated student achievement data, such as for low-income students in math, special education students in ELA, or students at a particular grade or grades, to adjust instruction, policies, or program supports for subgroup students. The district was just beginning to disaggregate student achievement data by gender, ethnic, or programmatic subgroups in order to make changes.

Pittsfield's DCAP specified that the district would provide academic assistance to all regular education students who had not performed up to expectations and that assistance would take into account the diverse learning styles of the individuals involved. The DCAP also stated that the district would provide at-risk students with appropriate services and supports that would include direct and systemic instruction, address the needs of behavioral students, and address the needs of special education students in regular education programs.

In interviews, the district's administrators and teachers in focus groups stated that analysis of student achievement data, especially aggregate MCAS data, took place during the period under

review. They also told the EQA that the analysis of disaggregated student achievement data was essentially absent from 2003 to 2006.

Central office administrators, including the curriculum directors; principals; and the ELA, math, and science department heads at the two high schools analyzed aggregate student data. After administrators completed the analysis, they shared the information with classroom teachers at grade-level and/or departmental meetings. The analysis of assessment results led to the identification of particular student needs at each grade level and the planning of services to support students who were not meeting academic expectations.

At the elementary level, building assistance teams met regularly to monitor the progress of their at-risk populations and made adjustments according to the needs of the individual student. At the middle schools, all students in grades 6-8 whose MCAS math scores fell below the midpoint of the 'Needs Improvement' category were automatically assigned an additional math class called Math Encore. At the high school, all grade 10 students who had done poorly on the math portion of the grade 8 MCAS test, and any upperclassmen preparing to retake the test, were assigned to MCAS math tutoring for the full semester prior to the administration of the test.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In interviews, central administrators and building principals stated that the district regularly used formative assessments and summative achievement data, particularly the MCAS test results, to identify the students at each grade level who had not met academic expectations and were in need of supplemental and/or remedial services. At the elementary level, teachers used the DIBELS assessment three times per year to regularly track the progress of students in reaching certain ELA benchmarks on AIMSweb. There was no similar assessment in math or science.

The middle and high school teachers used their unit tests and quarterly subject-specific grades, as well as the results of the summative MCAS tests, to determine the specific needs of each student. The only formative testing used at the middle school level was Galileo in math.

The district employed an array of individuals whose primary task involved supporting students with learning and/or behavioral difficulties. At the elementary level, the district employed reading specialists at each of the eight elementary schools The Morningside and Conte Community Elementary Schools had an additional reading coach who worked with the classroom teachers in preparing lessons to best fit the needs of at-risk students. A total of 11 Title I teachers provided remedial instruction at three elementary schools, Morningside, Crosby, and Conte. Their responsibilities included supporting students in all elementary grades in both ELA and math; however, interviewees stated that the vast majority of the Title I support instruction involved grade 1-3 students in ELA.

In addition to the aforementioned individuals, the district also employed a large number of paraprofessionals who worked hand in hand with the reading specialists and/or Title I teachers. All elementary schools mandated a 90-minute block each day dedicated to "core ELA instruction" for all students that included reading anthology, guided reading, and writing. The district designated this instruction as Tier I Intervention, and classroom teachers, often with assistance from the reading specialist and paraprofessionals, had the responsibility to lead the instruction. The reading specialists led the Tier II Intervention that took place in small groups for an additional 30 to 60 minutes daily for those students identified through data analysis as having ELA deficiencies. The district also offered more intensive diagnostic support or Tier III Intervention on a one-to-one basis to its most needy students. This emphasis on ELA assessment was not matched in the district's elementary schools in mathematics, for which consistent formative assessment was absent.

The Conte Community Elementary School was able to secure a 21st Century grant for an extended school day or after-school program, which offered both academic support and enrichment activities to more than 400 students in each of the last two years. Additionally, the Morningside Elementary School had a federal Reading First grant for the last four years,

enabling it to purchase academic support materials to assist its teachers. The Conte Community Elementary School's teachers had the ability to use funds from a similar Bay State Readers grant.

Although the make-up of the teams in each middle school varied, the district placed high emphasis on instruction in ELA by having the middle school administration assign every student to a double block of ELA for the entire year. Students had these two classes in addition to classes in math, science, and social studies. However, the schools had no specific benchmarks in reading to measure the progress that individual students attained. As cited, if a student had not performed well on the MCAS math test or tested as in need of support through the Galileo assessment, he/she would be assigned an additional math class daily for the full year. The district used the pullout model to give specific academic support to identified special education students during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years; however, in the fall of 2006 both middle schools changed to a full inclusion model. Interviewees stated that two special education teachers and two paraprofessionals supported each team and that they did not work exclusively with special education students. Middle school administrators stated that there had been very few after-school academic support programs, but summer school was offered to middle school students who had failed one or more courses.

The high school's guidance staff, in collaboration with its middle school colleagues, each identified a number of at-risk students prior to their entering grade 9, and, after receiving parental permission, enrolled 20 to 30 students each year in a special "5-Year" program of studies. This DOE-approved program consisted of intensive instruction in math, reading, and ELA for these students for the first two years (grades 9A and 9B), before the student was allowed to progress to grade 10. Interviewees stated that the program has had moderate success in improving the graduation rate of those students since its inception several years ago.

The two high schools also offered MCAS tutoring that was mandatory for any student who had done poorly on the grade 8 tests and/or any student who was preparing to retake the competency tests. This semester-long course, taken the semester prior to the administration of the next MCAS tests, emphasized test-taking skills and analyzed questions used on prior MCAS exams. Neither high school offered a formal after-school support program for its at-risk students, but

homework help, peer tutoring, and tutoring at the Juvenile Resource Center were available on a voluntary basis. High school students could make up course credits at summer school.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district used the Early Reading Intervention program for its all its kindergarten students. Primary teachers at all elementary schools maintained a comprehensive reading log on every student that monitored the progress of the student in reaching specific benchmarks. If the results of the assessments administered by the classroom teachers and/or the reading specialists indicated a need for intervention, then a plan would be written and the steps taken to support the learning of that particular student. Examples of other support programs employed by the district for its at-risk population in the primary grades were Wilson Fundations for grade 1 and 2 children, Read Naturally for grade 1-3 students, and Scholastic Reading Assessment (SRA). However, each elementary school used a different combination of materials to test the reading capabilities of its students.

During the period under review, the district established its commitment to ensure that all students were reading at the 'Proficient' level by the end of grade 4 by implementing early intervention programs. The parents of the kindergarteners in some district schools had the opportunity to choose to take advantage of a full-day session that was offered prior to the 2006-2007 school year. The district's integrated special education preschool program had been in existence for the last four years. After screening all pre-K eligible students, the district established five half-day integrated classes at three elementary schools (three at Crosby, one at Capeless, and one at Conte) to meet the academic deficiencies of the district's most needy students. In the fall of 2006, the district made all-day kindergarten available to all students.

Interviewees stated that the preschool teachers worked closely with the kindergarten teachers, who worked closely with their grade 1 colleagues, to ensure proper placement as the children progressed through their primary grades. Elementary classroom teachers, assisted by the reading

specialists, administered the DIBELS assessment to all grade K-5 students three times per year, and they monitored the progress of each student through a "literacy framework model" that included a minimum of 90 minutes of daily instruction, with classroom teachers providing Tier I Intervention. According to teachers, the DIBELS would be administered to at-risk children more than three times in any given year. Additional Tier II Intervention usually came in the form of small-group instruction by the building's reading specialist, and Tier III Intervention became more individualized and diagnostic in nature.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

District administrators and teachers in focus groups stated in interviews that the district used practices and procedures throughout the period under review that supported students in transition. All interviewees agreed that the process used to transition students moving from one grade level to the next within the district, and those students new to the district, had been implemented successfully and smoothly by the district's professional personnel.

At the elementary schools, pre-school and/or kindergarten students, accompanied by their parents, met their prospective teachers and reviewed the procedural aspects of the school before they began their official first day of class. As students moved from one grade to the next, teachers from each grade level met with the teachers from the next grade to discuss each student's academic and behavioral characteristics before they finalized class lists. Students promoted to the next grade then met the teachers of that grade during a late spring Move-up day.

The district offered several opportunities for grade 5 students being promoted to the middle schools to become better acclimated to their new school prior to starting grade 6. These opportunities included an orientation program for all incoming students and their parents in the spring of each year in which the students and parents would attend the respective middle school classes for half a day, meeting the teachers and learning the middle school routines. Tours of the schools and explanations of the differences that students would encounter when they arrived in

the fall would also occur regularly throughout the year. The district offered a special Step Ahead program for especially vulnerable at-risk students in which approximately 20 students at each of the two middle schools participated in 10 half days of orientation during the course of the year. These activities included going over individual schedules, touring the building one-on-one, and having question and answer sessions with middle school personnel.

The district had a grade 8 to 9 transition program for both high schools. The program entitled Bridge to High School included an open house held in January for both prospective students and their parents. The high schools also held parent-specific informational evenings, visits by high school student leaders to grade 8 classrooms to answer any questions students may have, and a presentation of the co-curricular opportunities available to high school students. Each spring the district brought grade 8 students to their respective high schools and had them spend a day discussing high school academic expectations and career pathways. During the day, high school guidance counselors met with the students to explain the course selection process and to answer questions that students might have concerning the high school program of studies.

Similar to the middle school program, the district also offered a special program to 20 to 25 students identified as at-risk at each school that included an intensive five-week, half-day summer program instructed by high school teachers. Additionally, the district allowed the grade 9 students to attend the first day of school in September without the upperclassmen present in the building, to attempt to make the transition to their new school as smooth as possible.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the Pittsfield Public Schools had fair and equitable policies, procedures, and practices in place that addressed discipline referrals, grade retentions, suspensions, and exclusions, the implementation of these policies and practices varied from one school to the next. The respective school's student-parent handbook listed these policies and the district made the handbooks easily accessible to all parents and students. The discipline code in each handbook

listed the offences that would result in disciplinary action and provided a list of procedures to be followed in order to guarantee that all students received due process.

The district's middle schools used in-school suspension as the primary disciplinary tool for most offenses during the period under review, and the district's high schools used out-of-school suspension as their main disciplinary tool. Both rates were well above the state averages. In-school suspension rates for the district at the middle school level were 6.6 percent and 7.0 percent for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, respectively, compared with the state average of 3.4 percent in 2005-2006. The out-of-school suspension rate, primarily at the high schools, was 11.5 percent for the 2004-2005 school year and 11.6 percent for the 2005-2006 school year, compared with the state average of 5.8 percent for 2005-2006. The percentage of suspensions of the district's minority students was 10 percent for African-American students and five percent for Hispanic students, which indicated that the rates of suspensions were close to the percentages the minority subgroups represented in the total student population.

At the middle schools, interviewees stated that grade-level team leaders had some disciplinary responsibilities regarding students who committed minor offences. Such students would be sent to the team leader's classroom, rather than to building administrators, in an attempt to decrease the number of students assigned an in-school suspension. Additionally, the EQA team members visiting middle schools observed that several teachers from both schools removed students from their classes and had them stand or sit in the corridor outside their classroom doors, rather than send them to a school administrator.

Both the middle school and high school administrators told the EQA that they have been fortunate to be able to use the services of the JRC, provided by the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office. Any student who was suspended for three days or more, who was a habitual truant, or who was excluded from school was assigned to the JRC for a given number of days. There the student was expected to arrive with academic work, would be tutored by sheriff department personnel, and would perform work details for the county. All agreed that the program has been successful and plans were in place for it to continue into the future.

The district also used the services of one full-time attendance officer and four full-time DARE officers whose main responsibility was to make sure that students who were truant from school

had been visited at home, and that every effort, with the cooperation of the parents, was made for them to attend school on a regular basis. Each high school also has its own attendance coordinator.

Retention rates within the district of 2.5 percent in 2003-2004 and 3.7 percent in 2004-2005 averaged close to the state figure of 2.6 percent, with most of the retained students concentrated at grades 9 and 10. When asked about this situation, the high school administrators stated that the main reason for the retentions was that the students had not accrued enough credits to be promoted to the next grade level. Both high schools offered credit recovery programs, both after school and during the summer, to assist students who had fallen behind with their credit requirements.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the Pittsfield Public Schools' dropout rate, based on DOE numbers, was consistently more than double the state average of 3.4 percent. The district reported its dropout rate as 8.6 percent in 2003, 8.0 percent in 2004, and 8.1 percent in 2005, for a three-year average of 8.2 percent. Figures provided by the DOE indicated that the total number of students who had dropped out of Pittsfield's two high schools was 167 during the 2003-2004 school year and 156 during the 2004-2005 school year. In 2004-2005, the dropout rates were 6.7 percent in grade 9, 8.7 percent in grade 10, 8.9 percent in grade 11, and 4.8 percent in grade 12. The dropout rate was 8.5 percent for males, compared to 6.0 percent for females. With respect to subgroup populations, the dropout rates were 3.6 percent for Asian students, 11.3 percent for African-American students, 7.7 percent for Hispanic students, and 7.0 percent for White students. When asked about the high dropout rate, administrators stated that it definitely was a concern across the school district and that many discussions had taken place concerning methods that could be used to reduce the number of dropouts.

The high school administrators both stated that when a student had been identified as a potential dropout, "no stone was left uncovered" to make sure that that the student had every opportunity

to continue his/her education. Counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents were all called into the process and the results were that many students were persuaded to remain in school or attend the off-campus Hibbard Alternative School program operated by the district. According to interviewees, the district's policy of "the school door is always open" had contributed to welcoming back students who had dropped out and returned to school the following year. High school administrators stated that when all else failed, students were often assisted in procuring apprenticeships and/or internships with area artisans or local business establishments.

Administrators stated that the city's successful Adult Learning Center (ALC) offered a comprehensive GED program to any district student if it was inevitable that he/she was dropping out of school. Interviewees reported that high school guidance personnel continued to track students who had dropped out and encouraged them to attend the GED program at the ALC or return to school. The director of the ALC reported that a new DOE regulation as of 2006 specified that all students studying to pass the GED must pass the MCAS retest competency test before they would be allowed to take the GED test. He also reported that approximately one-fourth of his students in the GED program had already passed the grade 10 MCAS competency test. The ALC has consistently enrolled over 100 former dropouts or adults who had not received their high school diploma in its special Adult Diploma Program. Students in that program could also accrue credits by taking courses at Berkshire Community College (BCC) and eventually earn a high school diploma.

District policy stated that the school district was to operate an alternative setting for late term pregnant teens to prevent their dropping out of school. During the period under review, the district operated a Teen Pregnancy Center for young girls in their third trimester of pregnancy. Interviewees stated that the district operated the center for several years and many of the girls who attended returned to their high school after giving birth and eventually graduated.

When asked how they reported dropout rates, high school administrators stated that they annually used the DOE formula, but they had not kept dropout data on cohort classes during the period under review.

The cohort enrollment figures furnished by the DOE for the Pittsfield Public Schools showed a significant annual increase of approximately 100 students in the number of students enrolled for

each class between grades 8 and 9. When asked about this phenomenon, district administrators stated that typically each year a number of students from neighboring Richmond entered Pittsfield Public Schools at grade 9, as did a number of students from the local parochial school. Additionally, administrators stated the grade 9 enrollment figures would be exceptionally high because grade 9 had the district's highest retention figures. Grade 9 students not accruing enough credits to be promoted to grade 10 were reported as grade 9 students again.

The district's enrollment figures reported on the DOE website for the four graduating classes listed in the table below indicate that the number of students entering grade 9 for a given class decreased by approximately one-third by the time they were scheduled to graduate four years later. According to these numbers, the cohort dropout rate was approximately 33 percent.

High School Enrollment Figures

Class	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
2003	554	476	430	358
2004	617	492	442	381
2005	625	552	500	414
2006	600	468	485	411

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a policy to address the needs of homeless children and designated a part-time program liaison. The district also had a policy manual specifying its provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. The program liaison informed the EQA team that six students had been identified as homeless in the past two years and that only three students had been identified as homeless so far during the 2006-2007 school year. When the liaison received information that a particular student was homeless, he immediately took steps to ensure that the student had been properly placed academically with the appropriate support programs, and that the child maintained access to all programs offered in the district.

During the interview process, several administrators indicated that they believed the issue of transiency within the student body was problematic in the district and they believed that the occurrence was more frequent than the data demonstrated. Numbers furnished to the EQA team by the district indicated that approximately 11 percent of the students registering in September 2006, or 701 students out of 6,420 students, were new to the district, and that four percent, or a total of 256 students, of the total student body had entered the district's schools during 2006-2007 by the date of the EQA visit in April. Other administrators felt that the transiency rates varied from school to school and that, overall, Pittsfield did not have a transient population of students like other cities. In all cases, however, when a new student enrolled in the Pittsfield Public School or changed schools within the district, the professional staff, particularly the respective guidance counselor, made every effort to appropriately screen the academic capabilities of the child and place him/her in the correct academic setting with the proper academic supports.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district attendance report from the DOE for 2005-2006 indicated that the attendance rate for K-12 students in the district ranged from a high of 95.7 percent in grades 3 and 4 to a low of 90.3 percent in grade 9. The district's average attendance rate was 93.8 percent, compared to the state target rate of 95 percent.

Although the process varied slightly among the elementary schools and the middle and high schools, each school had a clear management system in place to deal with students who were absent on a given day. Parental contact by telephone was an essential part of the system and absence notes from parents detailing the reason(s) for the absence were required at all schools. The high schools instituted an attendance policy in 2006 that resulted in the loss of credit if an individual exceeded six absences per term in any given course. Although interviewees regarded the process as "a work in progress," and there were credit recovery plans in place, both high

school principals felt that the new system had cut down the number of absences for the group of students who had been habitually absent in the past.

Both principals stated that the work of the attendance officers and the members of the sheriff's department working with truants in the JRC program had helped the absenteeism situation across the school district to a significant degree. All the district's schools used the software PowerSchool to keep track of daily attendance and the high schools used the same program to keep track of attendance period by period. The secondary schools' administrators and guidance counselors worked closely and regularly with the attendance officers to generate a "hit list" of truant students whom the officers could visit at home. The officers informed the EQA team that, when all else failed, they would and had issued a CHINS petition with the courts. These petitions had numbered 25 during the 2005-2006 school year and 12 at the time of the review in 2006-2007, and usually involved students in grade 8 or 9.

The rate of district students categorized as chronically absent during the 2005-2006 school year was 17.8 percent, which was well above the state average. The percentage of students who were chronically absent students ranged as high as 29.5 percent. When asked to explain this situation, the high school administrators stated that traditionally the grade 9 students have been the most vulnerable to failure because of the non-retention policy of the middle schools. In response, the administrators have proposed an "academy" structure for all grade 9 students, in which students would be placed on academic teams and whose supervision for success would be assigned and monitored.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the interview process, all district administrators told the EQA that their expectations concerning teacher attendance were that all professional staff members would be present to perform their duties as much as possible. Neither the district's principals nor the central administrators perceived teacher absenteeism as problematic. The statistics provided by the

district to the EQA on Attachment C indicated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the average number of teacher absences was 8.2 days excluding professional development days, and 9.3 days including professional development days. In other words, teachers were present 95.6 percent of the time.

Administrators indicated that the figures could have been even better if it had not been for the relatively young average age of the faculty, who, on occasion, had to remain home to care for their children when sick. An administrator also indicated that another factor that annually affected teacher absenteeism was the fact that all teachers were contractually awarded two personal days that could not be accrued and so "most were used up."

All district principals stated that they had not experienced problems finding substitute teachers, partly because the district employed 20 permanent substitutes, one each in all eight elementary schools and three each in the four secondary schools, all of whom had at least a bachelor's degree. All administrators felt that because of the procedures and practices in place concerning the availability and quality of the substitute teachers, ensuring the continuity of the instructional program had not been a problem.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to the high school program of studies, the high schools offered courses at three levels of difficulty, and an AP level. There were guidelines for admission into courses at each level, primarily consisting of prerequisites, a minimum grade point average, and teacher recommendations.

According to interviewees, all students were eligible to enroll in all the courses, including the AP courses, and the district honored parental requests if parents wanted their child to be given the opportunity to take a higher-level course, even if one of the guidelines had not been met. Administrators stated that the percentage of minority students enrolled in the advanced and/or

accelerated courses varied from year to year, but proportionally the enrollment of subgroups of students in the courses corresponded to the population size of the subgroups in the student body.

The number of AP courses offered each year varied by the number of students requesting to take them. The average number of AP courses offered at both high schools during the period under review was 16, which was a source of pride for the Pittsfield Public Schools. The offerings varied from English Composition and BC Calculus to Psychology and Biology.

A significant change took place during the 2004-2005 school year with respect to students taking AP courses and AP exams. Prior to that year, the city had paid for the exams and students were encouraged, but not required, to take them. Approximately 55 percent of the students who enrolled in the AP courses took the end-of-year exams. In 2005, because of the financial constraints in the district and town, the high school principals informed students that they would have to pay to take their AP exams and the principals feared that fewer students would take the exams. However, principals found that the percentage of students taking the exams during the last two years did not decrease and the results of the tests had even improved a little, although both principals recognized that there was wide room for improvement in scores.

In 2006 at Pittsfield High School, 237 students were enrolled in AP classes and 135 exams were taken. On a scale of 1-5, 15 students earned a score of 5, 32 students earned a score of 4, 38 students earned a score of 3, 27 students earned a score of 2, and 23 students earned a score of 1, for an overall average of 2.92. At Taconic High School, 108 students were enrolled in AP classes and 103 students took 161 exams. Of these, two students earned a grade of 5, four students earned a grade of 4, 33 students earned a grade of 3, 49 students earned a grade of 2, and 73 students earned a grade of 1, for an average of 1.83.

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	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	**9**
Needs Improvement		✓	✓								✓	✓		**4**
Unsatisfactory														

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** for management and budget development
Needs Improvement for resources and use of data

Findings:

- The district budget development process focused on maintaining level services with adjustments made within this amount.
- Equity of resources was an issue among schools; with differing degrees of success, parent teacher organizations and individual school business partnerships helped to raise additional funds.
- The school district's internal control structure was adequate to ensure sound business practices for purchasing and processing of payroll expenditures.
- The city and school district had a written agreement that detailed the expenditures paid for the district by the city.
- Buildings varied in condition and availability of technology, yet had safety features such as locked doors with bells needed for entry.

Summary

The Pittsfield Public Schools' budget process was open and participatory. All administrators with budget authority solicited input from their staffs. The administrative team reviewed all requests to develop a superintendent's budget that was presented to the school committee's finance subcommittee, and then to the committee as a whole. The school district was in the beginning stages of analyzing and using data in its decision-making process, including budget development. At the time of the review, aggregate data, but little disaggregated data, were used. The main focus in developing the budget was on maintaining small class sizes. In addition, the district offered more AP courses at the high schools in an attempt to address school choice outflow.

The school district did not have adequate resources to address all perceived needs. However, there was a much better relationship with the city than seen in the prior EQA review in March 2003, and there was a much better understanding on the part of the mayor and city officials regarding what the school department needed to make improvements. The district relied on business partnerships and parent teacher organizations for routine operational expenses, including the salaries for two positions in the vocational program. The district budget booklet was easily readable and included detailed information regarding historical expenditures, revenues, personnel, grants, and other pertinent information to make the budget deliberations easily understood by all stakeholders. The district reviewed its programs and activities for cost effectiveness and provided several examples of its decisions to allocate resources more efficiently. These included providing in-district professional development, serving as a center for NISL training for other school districts, and partnering with the sheriff's office in the JRC program.

The city, under the new mayoral administration, focused its budget and resources for the school district on "no layoffs," which demonstrated a marked improvement in the financial picture than that seen in the prior EQA review. The city contributed above the minimum required local contribution each year under review. The school district did not request funding above the amount needed for level services and relied on outside sources of funding to supplement the city-provided budget.

The district's financial management practices were sound. It had systems in place to ensure that the budget was spent within its limits, purchasing regulations were followed, and proper procedures were in place to process payroll.

The district's facilities varied regarding their condition. Schools had individual, building-based safety plans. Some schools had doors locked with a doorbell or buzzer, and some had to have a staff member physically let people enter. The district addressed preventative maintenance primarily through contractual arrangements with vendors and through a work-order system. The city maintenance department provided the maintenance plan for the schools and the district's capital plan. Therefore, the district did not have a formal, long-term capital plan, but needs were addressed on a yearly basis through the city.

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

According to school administrators, the district business office prepared budget development packets for the administrators to compile their respective budget requests. The administrators discussed how to allocate the existing funds. District administrators stated that the mayor made it a priority for the city to fund the schools at level services, with no loss of positions. The building administrators developed the budget with input from their staffs. For example, the high school department chairs discussed and proposed budget requests for textbooks, furniture, and maintenance. The business manager developed the maintenance budget in conjunction with school maintenance staff and with the city maintenance director. The vocational director presented the needs for the vocational program to the business office as well.

The school administrators deliberated on all budget requests to develop a superintendent's recommended budget. The administration presented the budget to the school committee's finance subcommittee. The subcommittee reviewed the proposals and staffing requests. The full school committee reviewed the proposed budget. The committee had the ability to propose

changes and advocate for different programs. Once it reviewed the proposal, it presented a budget to the mayor and the city council.

The district's Fiscal Year 2006 Proposed Budget Booklet includes the following information: *Section One: FY2006, Calendars, Budget & School:* This section presents the budget review and adoption cycle as well as the school year calendar.

Section Two: Mission Statement and Superintendent's Goals: This section includes the district mission statement, the former superintendent's goals, the district's educational philosophy, and the Pittsfield Public Schools' 2003-2004 annual report. This report reiterates the 2003-2004 goals and objectives: 1) improve student performance; 2) student support programs and services; 3) improve teacher quality; 4) expand the district's new PowerSchool database system; 5) leadership and governance; 6) school safety; 7) evaluation; and 8) business and financial management.

Section Three: Glossary: This section has a list of commonly used words and phrases in education with definitions. For example, it defines foundation budget, foundation enrollment, and other terms used in budget development in the commonwealth.

Section Four: Budget Overview: This section includes an overview of the school committee's 2006 operating budget's major component funding sources of 64 percent from the state, 35 percent from the city, and one percent from school choice and tuition. It also includes an annual budget process – School Committee's Operating Budget – Fiscal Year Calendar: July 1-June 30. This is a 12-month calendar highlighting the month-by-month development process. It includes a fiscal year 2006 proposed budget with three possible scenarios: level service, Governor Romney's proposal, and FY 2005 level service plus principals and administrators' "perceived needs." It describes the budget variables for revenues and expenses. "Staff data by Major Program Area Instructional Programs FY2005 Budget" presented the staff by instructional programs. The Excel chart "Fiscal Years 2002, 2003, 2004, & 2005 Staff Cuts by Position" presents the staffing at each level and discipline, and administrator and custodial position from FY 2002 to FY 2005 summarizing the fact that the district lost 94.4 full-time equivalent positions in the last four years. The next section, "Comparative Analysis of Pittsfield Public Schools' Operating Budgets," is an Excel chart comparing the FY 1993 to FY 2005 operating budget and

funding sources and actual municipal contribution and a history of school committee budgets, school committee, and city, plus what the district reported to the DOE. The next section is "Status of Contractual Settlement for All Bargaining Units – fiscal year 2000 to fiscal year 2008," and the status. It presents the salary amounts for non-bargaining individual contracts from FY 2004 to FY 2005 and the Massachusetts DOE average teacher salaries for Berkshire County public schools, from FY 1998 to FY 2003. It presents the organizational chart for the administration and organizational charts for each school and department.

Section Five: Budget Commentary: This sections describes by DOE function code including highlights. For example, in the business and finance section it states "one secretarial position eliminated in FY2002."

Section Six: Individual Schools'/Departments' Budget Requests: This section describes each school and each program budget request.

Section Seven: Detail of Specific Accounts: This section presents information on athletics, cafeteria, Medicaid reimbursements, special education 10-year expenses chart, DOE circuit breaker webpage, Pittsfield Public Schools' technology, curriculum integration, a curriculum renewal cycle, custodial information, bus information including vehicle list and preventative maintenance, and a list of temporary and permanent hazardous streets.

Section Eight: Grant Information: This section lists the state, federal, and private grants for FY 2005. It lists the amounts in addition to a description of each grant's purpose and a funding summary.

Section Nine: State Aid: This section presents Massachusetts DOE FY 2006 preliminary net school spending and state aid information.

Section Ten: Per Pupil Expenditures: This section contains graphs from the DOE, comparing Pittsfield with the state.

Section Eleven: School Choice Tuition Home Schooling: This section includes enrollment of in and out numbers, vocational revolving, Richmond revolving, and home schooling.

Section Twelve: Projected Enrollments and Data: This section includes class size distribution and information on summer enrollment and the JRC.

Section Thirteen: Capital/Vehicle Building Improvements: This section presents information from FY 2005 for the buildings and vehicles with a note that FY 2006 information will be forthcoming.

Section Fourteen: Budget Priorities: This section includes notation that the district would have this information at a later date.

Section Fifteen: Line Item Adopted Budget: This section has a note that the information is forthcoming.

The district provided the budget booklet to the administration, school committee, city council, and legislators, and a copy to the city library. A total of 75 copies of the booklet were distributed.

2. <u>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.</u>

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Although the district used aggregate student data, it used very little disaggregated data to assure the budget's effectiveness in supporting achievement for all student populations. According to district administrators, the mayor directed the school district to build its budget with the goal of level services and to not reduce any positions. The primary focus of the budget development process was the maintenance of small class sizes. The district administrators with budget authority had the flexibility to allocate resources provided that the adjustments worked within the level service figures. For example, the Pittsfield High School principal reallocated the budget to include two attendance officers to attempt to reduce the absenteeism rates at the high school. According to the superintendent, for the FY 2007 budget the district administration presented a budget based on its perceived needs. The school district's data analysis mechanisms were in their infancy in 2006.

In the FY 2006 budget booklet, each school listed its requests that included some specific requests that may have addressed student needs. For example, the Allendale and Egremont Elementary Schools each requested a reading specialist. The Morningside Community School asked for one resource room teacher for grades K-2. The Herberg Middle School requested an additional math and a peer mediation coordinator. The Reid Middle School requested an additional math and peer mediation coordinator. Pittsfield High School requested one math teacher, one ELA teacher, a community placement position, an attendance/in-school suspension position, a 0.5 FTE technical specialist, one physical education/health/dance teacher, and a 0.8 special education position. The Taconic High School requested a 0.5 technical specialist, one attendance/ISS position, a 0.6 English teacher, a 0.6 math teacher, a 0.25 chemistry teacher, a 0.25 biology teacher, a 0.6 social studies teacher, a 0.4 business teacher, 0.2 Spanish teacher, a 0.25 physics teacher, a 0.4 art teacher, and a 0.2 physical education teacher. The district curriculum department requested one math, one reading, and one ELA coordinator. It also requested $400,000 for the curriculum renewal cycle for social studies. The special education department requested a 0.6 speech teacher, one psychologist, one school adjustment counselor, and one occupational therapist.

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: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to district administration, the FY 2006 budget and resources were not adequate. The district schools relied on parent teacher organizations and business partners to support their school budgets. The district used grants and school choice funds to provide for budget requests as well. District administrators stated that the process for funding items such as new textbooks was to wait until the end of the fiscal year to determine if there were any funds left over to purchase these items. District administrators stated that technology was not adequate across the

district. The EQA examiners verified this statement while conducting on-site classroom observations.

District administrators told the EQA examiners that the city provided the district with funds to provide level services with no layoffs. The district had the flexibility to adjust spending accordingly as long as it stayed within the level funding amount. When reductions occurred, the district reduced budgets equally across the district.

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

According to the administration, the district reviewed programs and activities for cost effectiveness. The district trained staff to provide internal professional development offerings. It reviewed the school transportation system to determine if it was more cost effective to operate the transportation itself or to contract out to a private vendor. An independent auditor reviewed the transportation system and determined that it was more cost effective for the district to operate the buses.

The district participated in the NISL training, which was grant funded. The district acted as a center to provide the NISL training to other school districts. The district used study groups for professional development, rather than hire outside consultants.

District administrators cited examples of cost effectiveness at the middle school where officials used paraprofessionals to do attendance work rather than full-time attendance or school resource officers. The district collaborated with the sheriff's department regarding the JRC. Two vocational programs partnered with local businesses that provided funds and resources to the programs. The district created adolescent support programs in conjunction with the Department of Mental Health to provide services in a more cost effective manner.

The administrators cited other examples of cost effectiveness during the past fiscal year, such as restoring a health technology and cosmetology teacher. Regarding school choice, the district

conducted a survey of students and families leaving the district to determine the reasons for leaving. To make the district more attractive, Pittsfield's high schools offered a wide range of AP classes.

The 2003-2004 annual report listed the following goals in the business and financial management section: "the district will continue to explore & expand upon collaborative purchasing arrangements for utilities, supplies, & equipment. The district will work with the Mayor & Treasurer to work out a written Qualifying Cost Agreement as required by DOE & DOR. They agreed on a final draft in June and it is ready for all parties to sign. The district will continue to work on a plan to update the buses and maintain a safe student transportation service."

The business manager prepared two financial plans for the replacement or partial replacement of the district's aging bus fleet.

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: Satisfactory

Evidence

The city and school department had a formal written agreement for FY 2005, dated and signed on June 3, 2004, which continued into FY 2006. The city finance department provided backup to the schools regarding the charges paid by the city on the school district's behalf.

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

For the period from FY 2004 to FY 2006, according to data from the DOE, the Pittsfield Public Schools exceeded net school spending requirements by $2,987,918; $4,154,805; and $4,412,420, respectively.

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

According to the district administrators, they provided the school committee with monthly reports regarding the status of the budget, grants, and school choice revenues after six months of the fiscal year. The school administration discussed these reports with the finance subcommittee. If issues occurred, they convened a special meeting as needed. Administrators with budget authority received account balances electronically and processed purchase orders electronically, on the same schedule as the school committee or on an "as-needed" basis. Regarding accuracy, the school business office reconciled with administrators with budget authority only if issues arose.

The school district submitted its End of Year Pupil and Financial Report within the allowed extension period granted by the DOE. The district submitted its final financial report for each grant program within the time allotted. The city's FY 2005 audit was timely.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used Unifund software for its financial accounting system. The city used MUNIS software for its financial accounting system. According to interviewees, the district and city reconciled their accounts on a regular basis. The district had the ability to allocate financial information by school and by program. For example, the district allocated building-based grants appropriately. The district accounting system allowed it to accurately complete its End of Year Pupil and Financial Report Schedule 3 Individual School Expenditures.

Regarding the forecasting of expenditures, the school business manager forecast electricity usage, special education expenditures, and heating by reviewing current costs, consumption, and degree days. The school committee received and voted to accept reports, from the six-month time period to the end of the fiscal year, at the six-month, nine-month, and 12-month intervals.

The control procedures used by the district included having the accounting system set up so that no requisition could be entered if it resulted in the line item being over-expended. The school committee had a policy to vote on transfers if the account was going to be over-expended. The business manager provided the school committee with a spreadsheet listing the transfers and detailing the accounts involved in the transfer. If needed, the school district froze the budget. In the past three years the school district did not have to freeze the budget. The district did not formally encumber its payroll with the use of purchase orders. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the school district manually encumbered the salary accounts.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a system in place to acquire, monitor, and coordinate all grants in the district. The deputy superintendent had the responsibility of applying for or designating individuals to apply for grants in the district. The district's special education director managed the district's special education grants. The district had a Title I director who managed the Title I grant. The business office had a designated person to manage the grant accounting, including the preparation of reports to the DOE.

District practice required the deputy superintendent to approve all grant applications prior to their submission. The district assessed grants with an evaluative component for effectiveness and stated how the grant related to the educational programs in the district.

The district monitored its special revenue funds on the financial accounting system. The district charged athletic fees of $100 per sport with no family cap and made considerations for hardship cases. The district charged bus fees for those students outside the allowable mileage.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district had a system in place to ensure that it followed state procurement laws. The business manager had MCPPO certification, which needed to be renewed. The city purchasing department reviewed all bids. The city purchasing department and city legal department reviewed all the school district's bids to ensure that the district followed procurement laws. The mayor and city solicitor signed off on all bids. The internal operations of the school district ensured that the district followed purchasing regulations. The district had systems in place to ensure it used financial quotes whenever required.

The auditor for the city and school was Thomas J. Scanlon, CPA and Associates. This firm had been the auditor for at least three years. Prior to this firm, Melanson, Heath and Company was used. The school district's 2005 end of year pupil and financial compliance review, the 2005 city management letter, and the 2005 single audit had no findings or school-related findings. The school district also had the auditors review the student activity accounts. There were no findings in this review either.

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: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The city maintenance department had a preventative maintenance plan for the school areas for which it had maintenance responsibility. The school district did not have a formal written plan. The school district developed maintenance projects through the use of work orders. The school district submitted work orders to the director of custodial services, a school employee, and to the city's director of maintenance as needed.

According to the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability Attachment E, Facilities Inventory submitted by the Pittsfield Public Schools, the Allendale Elementary School, grades K-5, was built in 1951 renovated in 1999, and was listed in "Good" condition. It had an enrollment of 308. The Capeless Elementary School, grades preK-5, was built in 1951, renovated in 2001, and was listed in "Good" condition. It had an enrollment of 261. The Conte Community School, grade pre-K, built in 1974, was listed in "Poor" condition, and had an enrollment of 449. The Crosby Elementary School, grades preK-5, built in 1962, was listed in "Poor" condition, and had an enrollment of 438. The Egremont Elementary School, grades K-5, was built in 1951 and renovated in 1999. It was listed in "Good" condition and had an enrollment of 498. The Morningside Community School, grades preK-5, was built in 1975 and listed in "Poor" condition. It had an enrollment of 432. The Stearns Elementary School, grades K-5, was built in 1961, and renovated in 2001. It was listed in "Good" condition and had an enrollment of 231. The Williams Elementary School, grades K-5, was built in 1957, renovated in 2001, and was listed in "Good" condition. It had an enrollment of 332. The Herberg Middle School, grades 6-8, was built in 1953, renovated in 2000, and listed in "Good" condition. It had an enrollment of 753. The Reid Middle School, grades 6-8, was built in 1953, and renovated in 2000. It was listed in "Good" condition and had an enrollment of 680. The Hibbard Alternative Program, grades 6-12, was constructed in 1924, and listed in "Poor" condition. The Pittsfield High School, grades 9-12, was built in 1931 and renovated in 1975. It was listed in "Poor"

condition and had an enrollment of 988. The Taconic High School, grades 9-12, was built in 1969 and listed in "Poor" condition. It had an enrollment of 969.

Based on the EQA facility walk-throughs, the examiners noted the following. The Reid Middle School had a locked main entrance with a bell required for entry. The building was clean, well lit, and well maintained. Each staff member had a safety plan in the teacher handbook. The Crosby Elementary School was clean, safe, well lit, and well maintained. The EQA examiner found it to be in good condition. The front door was locked with a bell required for entry. The Pittsfield High School was showing its age. The floors were old but clean. Two corridors had worn carpet. Taconic High School was clean but also was showing its age. The building was well lit and well maintained. The Capeless Elementary School was clean and well lit. It did not have a sprinkler system. The EQA examiner found the Herberg Middle School to be in good condition. The Morningside Community School was clean and well lit. The roof was being replaced in 2006-2007. Walls were added to its open concept design to reduce noise. The Allendale Elementary School, located next to a current General Electric dumping site, was closely monitored by school, city, state, and federal authorities.

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: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school district administration did not have a formal, long-term capital plan. The district did capital planning through the city's maintenance department. The school had a list of capital needs that the maintenance director for the city addressed through either bonding or through the operating budget.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school district did not have an updated, formal districtwide crisis management plan. The schools had building-based plans that each staff had in the teacher/staff handbooks. The Crosby Elementary School's main entrance was locked. A visitor needed to ring a buzzer to enter. The EQA examiners had to identify themselves before entering. Someone came to the door to open it, and it was capable of being unlocked remotely. It did have a security camera. The examiner had to sign in and out in the office. The EQA examiner noticed that all staff had identification. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each staff member had a copy of the plan and prominently displayed it in the classroom. The school practiced fire and bus drills but not a lockdown drill. According to interviewees, staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school had a staff person in the building assigned for safety and/or security.

An EQA examiner observed the following in the Conte Community School. The main entrance was locked. The examiner had to ring the doorbell to enter and she had to identify herself. Someone opened the door for her. The door was not unlocked remotely but it had the capability. There was a camera at the main entrance. The school office had a sign-in/sign-out option. The examiner did not receive a visitor pass since she already had on an EQA badge identifying herself. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each classroom had the plan prominently displayed. The school practiced bus, fire, and lockdown drills. Staff members who were new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school did not have a staff member specifically assigned for safety and/or security.

An EQA examiner observed the following regarding Pittsfield High School. The main entrance was locked. She did not have to ring a bell; however, she did have to identify herself and someone opened the door for her. Although the door was not unlocked remotely, the main entrance did have a security camera. The office had a sign-in/sign-out option and the school provided a visitor pass. She observed all staff wearing identification. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Teachers did not prominently display the plan but the path to follow for evacuation was displayed in most rooms. The school

practiced fire and bus drills. It provided professional development to new staff and substitute teachers.

At Taconic High School, the main entrance was open and a visitor did not have to ring a bell to enter. Two examiners visited at different times during the site visit and had two very different experiences. Upon entering, one examiner did not have to identify himself during his visit and the other did. No one opened the door for either of the EQA examiners. The door was not unlocked remotely but it did have a camera. One examiner did not have to sign in and the other was asked to do so. One examiner observed staff wearing badges while the other did not on his visit. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. One examiner did not see it prominently displayed in some classrooms and the other examiner saw it displayed in some locations. The school practiced bus, fire, and lockdown drills. The school had a staff member assigned for security.

An EQA examiner observed the following about the Egremont Elementary School. The main entrance was open and he did not have to ring a doorbell. The examiner did not have to identify himself and no one opened the door for him. The door was not unlocked remotely and the examiner did not have to sign in at the office. Not all staff within view had identification badges displayed. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each staff member had a copy of the plan. The examiners saw the plan displayed in classrooms. The school practiced bus and fire drills and has done various lockdown drills. The school had a DARE officer.

The EQA examiner observed the following at the Capeless Elementary School. The main entrance was not locked but the examiner arrived during the student arrival time. People in the principal's office could clearly see people entering the building. The examiner had to identify herself. The door was unlocked remotely. It did not have a camera due to the location of the office. The examiner had to sign in upon entering. She was not provided a visitor pass; however, she had an EQA badge. Not all staff who were encountered during the visit were wearing school identification. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each staff member had a copy of the plan, which was prominently displayed. The school practiced fire, bus, and lockdown drills and the school had a crisis team.

An EQA examiner observed the following in the Herberg Middle School. The main entrance was locked and the examiner had to ring the doorbell to enter and had to identify herself. Someone opened the door for her, although the door was capable of being unlocked remotely. There was no camera at the main entrance. The school office had a sign-in/sign-out option. The examiner was not given a visitor pass; however, the examiner had an EQA badge identifying herself. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each classroom had the plan prominently displayed. The school practiced bus and fire drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school did have a staff member specifically assigned for safety/security.

An EQA examiner observed the following at the Morningside Community School. The main entrance was locked and the examiner had to ring the doorbell to enter and had to identify herself. Someone opened the door for her. The door was not unlocked remotely. There was a camera at the main entrance. The school office had a sign-in/sign-out procedure. The examiner was given a visitor pass. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each classroom did not have the plan prominently displayed but had fire drill routes displayed. The school practiced bus and fire drills. Staff new to the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school did not have a staff member specifically assigned for safety and/or security.

An EQA examiner observed the following in the Williams Elementary School. The main entrance was locked. The examiner had to ring the doorbell to enter and she had to identify herself. Someone opened the door for her. There is no camera but the door can be unlocked remotely. The school office had a sign-in/sign-out procedure. The examiner was given a visitor pass and staff were wearing identification badges. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each classroom did not have the plan prominently displayed except for the fire drill routes. The school practiced fire and lockdown drills. New staff members in the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school did not have a staff member specifically assigned for safety and/or security.

An EQA examiner observed the following in the Stearns Elementary School. The main entrance was locked. The examiner had to ring the doorbell to enter and she had to identify herself.

Someone opened the door for her, although the door was capable of being unlocked remotely. There was a camera at the main entrance. The school office had a sign-in/sign-out option. The examiner did not receive a visitor pass. Not all staff had identification badges. Public safety personnel reviewed the school safety plan and each member had a copy. Each classroom did not have the plan prominently displayed except for the fire drill routes. The school practiced fire drills. New staff members in the school received professional development regarding the plan. The school did not have a staff member specifically assigned for safety and/or security.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

The proficiency index is a metric used to measure and compare all schools and school districts regarding their performance on the MCAS tests. The proficiency index is a measure of the level of achievement a district, school, grade, or subgroup has made in relation to the 'Proficient' achievement level on the MCAS tests. There are four indices: the Average Proficiency Index (API), the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI), the Math Proficiency Index (MPI), and the Science and Technology/Engineering Index (SPI). The API currently is a weighted average of the EPI and MPI; the SPI will be included beginning in 2007, when passing the STE test becomes a graduation requirement.

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

Example: The Anywhere High School had the following results on the 2006 MCAS tests:

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY1997 – FY2006

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY97	6,943	-0.6	42,198,648	0.5	17,027,518	22,061,574	6.4	39,089,092	5.2	39,527,181	5.3	438,089	1.1
FY98	6,923	-0.3	42,961,845	1.8	17,792,054	23,191,595	5.1	40,983,649	4.8	42,086,619	6.5	1,102,970	2.7
FY99	6,988	0.9	45,724,745	6.4	18,491,282	26,045,981	12.3	44,537,263	8.7	44,617,676	6.0	80,413	0.2
FY00	6,916	-1.0	45,551,898	-0.4	19,489,811	27,083,381	4.0	46,573,192	4.6	47,253,865	5.9	680,673	1.5
FY01	6,891	-0.4	47,052,067	3.3	20,056,965	28,289,306	4.5	48,346,271	3.8	53,591,998	13.4	5,245,727	10.9
FY02	6,912	0.3	48,790,599	3.7	21,162,104	28,941,235	2.3	50,103,339	3.6	52,649,789	-1.8	2,546,450	5.1
FY03	6,677	-3.4	48,672,992	-0.2	20,559,460	28,941,235	0.0	49,500,695	-1.2	50,890,779	-3.3	1,390,084	2.8
FY04	6,641	-0.5	48,721,476	0.1	22,057,033	26,664,443	-7.9	48,721,476	-1.6	51,709,394	1.6	2,987,918	6.1
FY05	6,565	-1.1	50,305,845	3.3	23,012,103	27,293,742	2.4	50,305,845	3.3	54,460,650	5.3	4,154,805	8.3
FY06	6,516	-0.7	52,725,657	4.8	24,611,444	28,114,213	3.0	52,725,657	4.8	57,138,077	4.9	4,412,420	8.4

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY97	6,078	3,178	5,693	52.3	92.6	93.7	55.8
FY98	6,206	3,350	6,079	54.0	95.4	98.0	55.1
FY99	6,543	3,727	6,385	57.0	97.4	97.6	58.4
FY00	6,586	3,916	6,833	59.5	102.2	103.7	57.3
FY01	6,828	4,105	7,777	60.1	102.8	113.9	52.8
FY02	7,059	4,187	7,617	59.3	102.7	107.9	55.0
FY03	7,290	4,334	7,622	59.5	101.7	104.6	56.9
FY04	7,336	4,015	7,786	54.7	100.0	106.1	51.6
FY05	7,663	4,157	8,296	54.3	100.0	108.3	50.1
FY06	8,092	4,315	8,769	53.3	100.0	108.4	49.2

Foundation enrollment is reported in October of the prior fiscal year (e.g. FY06 enrollment = Oct 1, 2004 headcount).
Foundation budget is the state's estimate of the minimum amount needed in each district to provide an adequate educational program.
Required Net School Spending is the annual minimum that must be spent on schools, including carryovers from prior years.
Net School Spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures and transportation.