



Pittsfield Public Schools

Level 3 District Review

Review of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of English Language Learners

January 2011



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members

Ms. Maura Banta, Chair, Melrose
Dr. Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Milton
Ms. Harneen Chernow, Jamaica Plain
Mr. Gerald Chertavian, Cambridge
Mr. Michael D'Ortenzio, Jr., Chair, Student Advisory Council, Wellesley
Ms. Beverly Holmes, Springfield
Dr. Jeff Howard, Reading
Ms. Ruth Kaplan, Brookline
Dr. James E. McDermott, Eastham
Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, Bridgewater
Mr. Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Worcester

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public.

We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Inquiries regarding the Department's compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148 781-338-6105.

© 2011 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the "Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education."

This document printed on recycled paper

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370
www.doe.mass.edu



Table of Contents

Overview of Level 3 Reviews	1
Purpose	1
Methodology	1
Overview of LEP Reviews.....	2
Purpose	2
Selection of Districts	2
Methodology	3
Pittsfield Public Schools	4
District Profile	4
Student Performance.....	6
Level 3 Findings	13
Leadership and Governance.....	13
Curriculum and Instruction	17
Assessment.....	21
Human Resources and Professional Development	23
Student Support	25
Financial and Asset Management.....	28
ELL Findings.....	31
Leadership and Governance.....	31
Curriculum and Instruction	32
Assessment.....	37
Human Resources and Professional Development	38
Student Support	40
Level 3 Recommendations	45
Leadership and Governance.....	45
Curriculum and Instruction	45
Assessment.....	47
Human Resources and Professional Development	47
Student Support	48
Financial and Asset Management.....	48
ELL Recommendations	50
Appendix A: Review Team Members.....	53
Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule.....	54

Overview of Level 3 Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (DSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. This review is focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2009-2010 school year were districts in Level 3 of ESE’s framework for district accountability and assistance¹ in each of the state’s six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The eight districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six standards: Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. Team members previewed selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. The teams consist of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

¹ In other words, as Level 3 was defined at the time of district selection, districts with schools in corrective action or restructuring.

Overview of LEP Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking a series of reviews of school districts to determine how well district systems and practices support groups of students for whom an achievement gap exists. The reviews will focus, in turn, on how district systems and practices affect each of four groups of students: students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students, and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2010 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to relatively high growth for limited English proficient (LEP) student performance in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the growth in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirements of Chapter 15, Section 55A, to conduct district audits in districts whose students achieve at high levels, relative to districts that educate similar student populations. The review is part of ESE's program to recognize schools as distinguished schools under section 1117(b) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which allows states to use Title I funds to reward schools that significantly closed the achievement gap. Districts and schools with exemplary practices identified through review may serve as models for, and provide support to, other districts and schools.

Selection of Districts

ESE identified 36 Title I schools in 14 districts where the performance of students with limited English proficiency (LEP students) exceeds expectations. All Massachusetts schools receiving Title I funds were eligible for identification, with the exception of reconfigured schools or schools that did not serve tested grades for the years under review. ESE staff analyzed MCAS data from 2008 and 2009 to identify schools that narrowed performance gaps between LEP students and all students statewide. The methodology compared the MCAS raw scores of LEP students enrolled in the schools with the predicted MCAS raw scores of LEP students statewide. The methodology also incorporated whether LEP students improved their performance from 2008 to 2009. "Gap closers" did not have to meet AYP performance or improvement targets, but did have to meet 2009 AYP targets for participation, attendance and high school graduation, as applicable. Districts with gap closers were invited to participate in a comprehensive district review to identify district and school practices associated with stronger performance for LEP students, as part of ESE's distinguished schools program (described above), "Impact of District Programs and Support on School Improvement: Identifying and Sharing Promising School and District Practices for Limited English Proficient Students."

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews explore five areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Student Support**. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that most likely contribute to positive results, as well as those that may impede rapid improvement. Systems and practices that are likely to contribute to positive results were identified from the ESE's District Standards and Indicators and from a draft report of the English Language Learners Subcommittee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Committee on the Proficiency Gap². Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. Four-to-eight team members preview selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. To collect evidence across all areas, the team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the five areas listed above, as well as English language learner education.

² *Halting the Race to the Bottom: Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts*, December 2009

Pittsfield Public Schools

The site visit to the Pittsfield Public Schools was conducted from April 13-16, 2010. The site visit included visits to the following district schools: Robert T. Capeless Elementary School, pre-K through grade 5; John C. Crosby Elementary School, pre-K through grade 5; Morningside Community School, pre-K through grade 5; Stearns Elementary School, pre-K through grade 5; Williams Elementary School, pre-K through grade 5; Theodore Herberg Middle School, grades 6-8; Pittsfield High School, grades 9-12; and Taconic High School, grades 9-12. In addition, the John T. Reid Middle School, which was identified as a “gap closer” for its limited English proficient students, as described above, was visited as part of the ELL portion of the review. Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile³

The Pittsfield public school district is composed of 12 schools including 8 elementary schools (4 pre-K through grade 5 and 4 kindergarten through grade 5); 2 grade 6 through 8 middle schools; and 2 grade 9 through 12 high schools. The district enrolled 6,072 students in 2009-2010. District enrollment declined by 280 students from 2006-2007 to 2009-2010. The superintendent was in his second year at the time of the review team’s site visit, having served previously in the district as a teacher, high school principal, and deputy superintendent. He has been welcomed by the staff and community and has established a productive relationship with the school committee. The city places a high priority on education, and this support has resulted in funding above required net school spending for a number of years. The strength of this relationship has enabled Pittsfield to maintain programs during the current recession.

The local appropriation to the Pittsfield Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2010 was \$48,829,434, down slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2009 of \$49,312,888. School-related expenditures by the city were estimated at \$23,744,024 for fiscal year 2010, up slightly from the estimate for fiscal year 2009 of \$23,219,032. In fiscal year 2009, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district of \$45,552,537, expenditures by the city of \$23,861,429, and expenditures from other sources such as grants of \$17,105,801, was \$86,519,767. The district has many challenges, but a major one concerns the school choice program. The number of students who opt out of the district has resulted in the loss of in excess of \$2 million in Chapter 70 funds. All the stakeholders are responding to this situation by attempting to find ways to reduce the number of students who leave the district to attend school in nearby communities.

³ Student demographic data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

Table 1 below describes student enrollment by race and ethnicity and selected populations for the 2009-2010 school year.

**Table 1: Pittsfield Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations
2009-2010**

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Percent of Total
African-American	10.5	First Language not English	5.6
Asian	1.5	Limited English Proficient	3.8
Hispanic or Latino	7.9	Low-income	49.7
Native American	0.3	Special Education	16.3
White	76.3	Free Lunch	39.4
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	10.3
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	3.5		
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website			

Student Performance⁴

Table 2 below shows 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), accountability status, and CPI scores for Pittsfield and its schools. As shown in Table 2, in 2009 Pittsfield made AYP both in the aggregate and for all subgroups in both English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. This was the first time that Pittsfield had accomplished this. Pittsfield has a 2009 No Child Left Behind accountability status of Corrective Action-Subgroups in both ELA and mathematics because of district subgroup performance at certain grade-spans in 2009 and 2008.

- In ELA in grades 3 through 5, the district did not make AYP in the aggregate or for the special education subgroup in 2009 or 2008.
- In grades 6 through 8, the district made AYP in ELA in the aggregate and for all subgroups in 2009; this was an improvement from 2008, when the district did not make AYP in ELA either in the aggregate or for all subgroups in these grades.
- In 2008 and 2009, the district made AYP in ELA in the aggregate in grades 9 through 12; the district's low-income subgroup did not make AYP in ELA in these grades in either year.
- In mathematics, the district made AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups in grades 3 through 5 and grades 6 through 8 in 2009; this was an improvement from 2008, when it did not make AYP in the aggregate or for all subgroups in either grade span.
- In grades 9-12, the district did not make AYP in mathematics in the aggregate or for the African-American, white, special education or low-income subgroups in 2009. In 2008 the district made AYP in mathematics in grades 9 through 12 in the aggregate, but not for all subgroups.

⁴ Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

Table 2: 2009 District and School AYP Status

	ELA					Mathematics				
District/School	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub
Pittsfield	CA-S	84.1	0.6	Yes	Yes	CA-S	77.5	4.3	Yes	Yes
Allendale K-5	II1 -S	81.3	-5.3	No	No	None	80.2	-6.7	No	No
Robert T. Capeless PK-5	None	86.3	4.1	Yes	Yes	None	85.5	9.8	Yes	Yes
Crosby PK-5	CA-S	75.5	-2.9	No	No	None	73.7	1.2	No	No
Silvio O Conte Community PK-5	II2-A	78.4	6.5	Yes	Yes	None	73.2	7.7	Yes	Yes
Egremont K-5	None	90.6	5.5	Yes	Yes	None	90.7	8.9	Yes	Yes
Morningside Community PK-5	CA-A	65.1	-1.1	No	No	CA-S	68.2	6.7	Yes	Yes
Stearns K-5	None	91.4	7.6	Yes	Yes	None	90.7	6.2	Yes	Yes
Williams K-5	None	89.6	1.3	Yes	Yes	None	91.4	4.5	Yes	Yes
John T Reid MS 06-08	RST1-S	86.7	5.1	Yes	Yes	RST1-S	74.7	8.7	Yes	Yes
Theodore Herberg MS 06-08	RST2+S	86.3	1.7	Yes	No	RST2+S	73.9	1.9	No	No
Pittsfield HS 09-12	CA-S	86.0	3.9	Yes	No	II2-S	80.3	3.3	Yes	No
Taconic High 09-12	None	87.5	1.2	Yes	No	None	83.7	-2.6	No	No
Note: A or Agg = Aggregate; CA = Corrective Action; CPI = Composite Performance Index; II1 = Identified for Improvement year 1; II2 = Identified for Improvement year 2; RST1 = Restructuring year 1; RST2 = Restructuring year 2; S or Sub = Subgroup Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website										

Table 3 below shows the percentages of Pittsfield students achieving proficiency on the MCAS ELA and mathematics tests over the three test administrations from 2007 to 2009. As shown by

the table, student proficiency in both ELA and mathematics increased in Pittsfield over the period from 2007 to 2009, except in ELA in grades 3, 4, 5, and 6. The percentages of students achieving proficiency in ELA decreased slightly in grades 3 and 5, and were stable in grades 4 and 6. Student proficiency in all grades increased by 1 percentage point in ELA and 7 percentage points in mathematics between 2007 and 2009.

Table 3: Percentages of All Pittsfield Students Achieving Proficiency on the MCAS tests in ELA and Mathematics from 2007-2009

Assessment	2007	2008	2009	Difference 2007-2009
All Grades ELA	58	54	59	+1
All Grades Mathematics	44	46	51	+7
Grade 10 ELA	60	58	64	+4
Grade 10 Mathematics	55	57	60	+5
Grade 8 ELA	66	65	73	+7
Grade 8 Mathematics	36	37	40	+4
Grade 7 ELA	59	55	66	+7
Grade 7 Mathematics	38	38	45	+7
Grade 6 ELA	57	60	57	0
Grade 6 Mathematics	40	47	50	+10
Grade 5 ELA	59	55	57	-2
Grade 5 Mathematics	44	42	53	+9
Grade 4 ELA	44	46	44	0
Grade 4 Mathematics	35	44	46	+9
Grade 3 ELA	59	51	56	-3
Grade 3 Mathematics	61	60	63	+2
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website; for 2007 rates for all grades, District Analysis and Review Tool on ESE website				

Table 4 below shows the percentages of limited English proficient (LEP)/formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students at John T. Reid Middle School and in Pittsfield achieving proficiency on the MCAS tests in ELA and mathematics in 2009 as compared with LEP/FLEP students statewide.

Pittsfield LEP/FLEP students exceeded the performance of LEP/FLEP students statewide in grade 4 ELA and mathematics; grades 6 and 7 mathematics; and grade 8 ELA. However, Pittsfield LEP/FLEP students performed 10 or more points below the statewide percentages for LEP/FLEP students achieving proficiency in grades 5, 6, and 7 ELA, and in grade 10 mathematics. Specifically, in ELA, 15 percent of Pittsfield LEP/FLEP students were proficient in grade 5, as compared with 29 percent statewide; 18 percent were proficient in grade 6, as compared with 33 percent statewide; and 18 percent were proficient in grade 7 as compared with 30 percent statewide. In mathematics, 20 percent of Pittsfield LEP/FLEP students were proficient in grade 10 as compared with 38 percent statewide. There were five other assessments—grade 3 reading, grade 3, 5, and 8 mathematics, and grade 10 ELA—on which state LEP/FLEP proficiency rates were higher than district ones.

At the Reid Middle School, on the other hand, LEP/FLEP students matched or outperformed their state LEP/FLEP peers in all of the four tests for which data is available and were outperformed by district LEP/FLEP students on only one test (grade 8 ELA).

**Table 4: Percentage of John T. Reid Middle School and Pittsfield LEP/FLEP Students
Proficient in 2009
Compared with State LEP/FLEP Students**

Assessment	John T. Reid Middle	District	State	Difference School/State	Difference District/State
Grade 3 Reading	---	21(14)	29	---	-8
Grade 3 Mathematics	---	34(15)	36	---	-2
Grade 4 ELA	---	33(27)	25	---	+8
Grade 4 Mathematics	---	31(26)	26	---	+5
Grade 5 ELA	---	15(20)	29	---	-14
Grade 5 Mathematics	---	20(20)	29	---	-9
Grade 6 ELA	36(11)	18(22)	33	+3	-15
Grade 6 Mathematics	63(11)	32(22)	30	+33	+2
Grade 7 ELA	** (8)	18(11)	30	**	-12
Grade 7 Mathematics	** (8)	27(11)	20	**	+7
Grade 8 ELA	36(11)	42(24)	36	0	+6
Grade 8 Mathematics	18(11)	12(24)	13	+5	-1
Grade 10 ELA	---	27(22)	31	---	-4
Grade 10 Mathematics	---	20(21)	38	---	-18
Numbers of LEP/FLEP students (n) taking the test given in parentheses for Reid Middle School and Pittsfield. ---School does not include this grade. **Data not available. Performance level percentages are not calculated if student group less than 10. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website					

Table 5 below shows the substantial progress that LEP students at the Reid Middle School have made in both ELA and mathematics over the past few years and that LEP students in the district as a whole have made in mathematics. The increase in CPI scores during the three years from 2006 to 2009 was 15.8 points in ELA and 32.0 points in mathematics for Reid LEP students, and 15.3 points in mathematics for Pittsfield LEP students. As of 2009 the CPI scores in both subjects of both Reid LEP students and district LEP students were higher than those of LEP students statewide.

**Table 5: CPI Scores for LEP Students in Reid Middle School, Pittsfield, and the State:
2006-2009**

Subject	2006	2007	2008	2009	Difference 2006-2009
ELA—Reid	50.9	53.0	51.9	66.7	+15.8
ELA—Pittsfield	54.4	55.0	55.4	58.8	+4.4
ELA—State	52.8	54.6	54.1	57.2	+4.4
Math—Reid	35.7	35.0	36.1	67.7	+32.0
Math—Pittsfield	41.9	48.7	46.3	57.2	+15.3
Math—State	47.0	50.4	51.9	53.1	+6.1
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website					

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) has developed a student growth model, which uses student growth percentiles (SGP) to compare the changes from year-to-year in a student's MCAS test scores to changes in the MCAS test scores of other students statewide with similar score histories. The most appropriate measure to report growth for a group is the median SGP, or the middle score for a group when the individual student growth percentiles are arranged from highest to lowest. Moderate school or district growth is represented by a median SGP between 40 and 60.

According to 2009 ESE data, median SGPs in Pittsfield for all students in all the grades subject to the MCAS test in ELA were within the moderate range (i.e., grades 5 (50), 6 (41), 7 (47), 8 (55), and 10 (40)) with the exception of the median SGP for grade 4 (38), which was relatively low. District LEP/FLEP students demonstrated a median SGP of 56 in ELA aggregate for all grades.

Median SGPs for all students in all grades subject to the MCAS test in mathematics were within the moderate range for grades 4 (49), 5 (50), 6 (59), 7 (57) and 8 (56); the median SGP was relatively low in grade 10 (39). District LEP/FLEP students achieved a relatively high median SGP of 61.5 for all grades in mathematics.

Level 3 Findings

Leadership and Governance

The school committee, superintendent, administrative team and city officials collaborate to promote the importance of academic achievement for all students.

The seven-member school committee includes the mayor as a voting member. The remaining six members are elected every two years, and the committee currently includes two new members. The review team found that the school committee is well-informed about its policy-making role. All of the committee members interviewed stated that they communicate with each other regularly, and the superintendent told the review team that there are no surprises, because he makes the committee aware of all issues of importance. In interviews, school committee members agreed that open communication is critical and that the superintendent and his cabinet are always available to discuss whatever needs to be addressed. Community members are encouraged to attend school committee meetings, and the meetings are broadcast live and replayed many times on the local cable channel. School committee members and the superintendent said in interviews that they believe in the importance of transparency throughout the educational system. There are separate unions for staff, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, and bus drivers. Because of the economic problems facing the district, all contracts for the past two years have been one-year agreements. The financial subcommittee takes an active part in the development of the budget and works with the superintendent and his staff throughout the process. Several updates are given to the entire committee during open session meetings prior to a final vote.

The superintendent received a three-year contract upon his arrival, and annual raises were built in without reference to the accomplishment of goals or advancement of the district, review of the contract showed. However, accomplishment of goals and advancement of the district are part of the annual performance evaluation of the superintendent by the school committee, and this information would have an impact on future renewal of the superintendent's contract. In the 2009-2010 school year, the superintendent and other members of the administrative team stated in interviews, they declined their raises to provide more services to students. A review of his personnel file showed that the school committee evaluated the superintendent during his first year. Each member evaluated the superintendent individually, and the results were discussed during an open meeting. The committee commended the superintendent for community involvement, setting goals for the district, establishing a realistic vision, and building a sound budget.

Interviewees often told the review team that the mayor is a great advocate for the students of the city, that the schools are his number one priority, and that he has continually supported the requests of the school district for program expansion and funding. In interviews with the review team, city officials stated that the level of cooperation between the schools and the city is outstanding, that the relationships are trusting, and that the city supports the pro-active approach

of the school committee and superintendent. They went on to say that when the final school budget is submitted to the city council there is very little discussion before the vote to accept. The city owns and maintains the school facilities. Interviewees added that both financial and maintenance matters are addressed in a timely fashion. They also stated that school committee members and the superintendent are “highly visible,” and regularly attend many school and community events and activities.

The ability of the entire educational community to work cohesively has been of great benefit to the student body, as staff and programs have been sustained during the current recession. The district has been able to promote the importance of academic excellence and provide meaningful programs for the entire student body.

The district’s participation in the school choice program results in a financial loss to the city because there is an imbalance, with more district students leaving the Pittsfield district than out-of-district students entering.

In its annual evaluation of the superintendent, the school committee stated the “need of an attack plan for the school choice numbers, the number of students who opt out of the district.” An increasing number of district students participate in the school choice program. In 2006, the district engaged a consultant to conduct a study. As part of the process, the district sent questionnaires to parents and interviewed them to determine their satisfaction with its educational programs. A summary of the responses was compiled to identify the reasons for leaving or entering the district under the school choice program. The report stated that the highest ranking reasons for entering the district included academics and other programs (22.5 percent); availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses (14.4 percent); and school proximity (12.8 percent). The highest ranking reasons for leaving the district were quality of classroom instruction (18.8 percent), academics and other programs (15.1 percent), and class size (13.9 percent).

According to district data for the 2008-2009 school year, while 109 regular education students entered the district, 317 district students enrolled in another district, and 61 enrolled in the grade 6 through 12 charter school. The net loss of 269 students resulted in a financial loss of \$2 million to the City of Pittsfield. The data for 2009-2010 shows that 109 students also entered the district that year, while 337 students left. In 2003-2004, on the other hand, more students (126) entered the district while fewer students (173) left. Although according to data supplied by the district the percentage of school-aged Pittsfield residents who attend other choices than the Pittsfield Public Schools has decreased slightly since 2005 (12.4 percent in 2010 versus 13.4 percent in 2005), the imbalance between leaving and entering students where those choices involve the shifting of public monies has increased over seven years with 164 more students leaving in 2009-2010 as compared with 2003-2004, and 17 fewer students entering.⁵

The superintendent and the deputy superintendent told the review team that addressing this critical issue is a high priority in the district. Sometime after the consultant’s 2006 study, the

⁵ Public monies shift when students change districts through the school choice program or enrollment in a charter school, but not when they leave a district for private or parochial school or homeschooling,

superintendent and administrative team decided to interview Pittsfield parents who had opted for the school choice program. According to the superintendent and deputy superintendent, when district parents were interviewed about their reasons for sending their children to another school district under school choice, the most common reasons were transportation, work location, living on the boundary of another town, and child care arrangements. Interviewees told the review team that while some parents residing in communities with a later kindergarten entrance age than Pittsfield enroll their children in kindergarten in Pittsfield under the choice program, in many instances they opt to return to their home districts once their children have completed kindergarten. Interviewees also told the review team that some parents have negative perceptions of certain schools and that avoidance of these schools may be the real motivation for choosing other communities.

The loss of money resulting from the loss of students takes a continuing toll in resources available in the district. It has reduced the ability of the system to create, sustain, and expand requisite programs and services, and will continue to do so unless measures are taken to curtail the departure of students to other school districts under the school choice program and to charter schools.

While there are still issues that must be addressed, the recently appointed superintendent has brought a high level of energy to the district, introduced a number of new initiatives, developed a District Improvement Plan (DIP), and reached out to the community to share information about school programs and initiatives.

The superintendent, in his second year at the time of the site visit, told the review team that he served as a teacher, high school principal, and deputy superintendent in Pittsfield prior to his appointment. He has hired administrators who share his vision for educational excellence and understand the importance of moving the district to a higher level of academic success. The cabinet, made up of the superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent for career, vocational, and technical education, and the assistant superintendent for business and finance meets weekly at a designated time to discuss all issues concerning the district. It also meets as needed throughout the week. Other staff members are invited to join the cabinet meetings as needed. For example, the curriculum coordinators attend the meetings devoted to curricular concerns.

According to district administrators, there is no pre-set agenda, and everyone has the opportunity to discuss the topics under consideration as a team. The topics include school committee agendas, budget, and departmental, school, and personnel concerns. Interviewees told the review team that the cabinet had two standing meetings a week in 2008-2009 and one in 2009-2010, as well as additional ad hoc and strategic meetings, to discuss needed changes and the future direction of the district. The principals meet regularly as a group and monthly with the deputy superintendent. Principals told the review team that they have ready access to the superintendent and converse with each other frequently between formal meetings. City officials, school committee members, the superintendent, and administrators all told the review team that the entire school community is very focused on sharing information with the larger community.

They said that the district uses flyers, television, radio, and newspapers to promote education, and email and Connect-Ed among other modes of communication; in their view, the district has been successful in its quest to share school programs and initiatives with the community. In addition, the superintendent has created a quarterly document entitled *PPS Post* describing the achievements and the programs of the district. This was readily available during the site visit at individual schools, the superintendent's office, and city hall. While many positive steps have been taken, there are still issues about curriculum, assessment, professional development, and evaluation that must be addressed.

The superintendent told the review team that he and other administrators created and the school committee approved the 2009-2011 DIP during the 2009-2010 school year. The DIP was developed by the administrators based primarily on writings by Douglas Reeves. The superintendent invited the parent advisory council and the school committee to participate in the formulation of the final document. Interviewees told the review team that the DIP is a work in progress and that adjustments will be made regularly as "a shifting culture begins to look at outcomes, and not just putting new programs in place or addressing things to do."

According to the superintendent and members of the school committee, the district intends to review the DIP indicators after reviewing AYP data in coming years. The main areas covered in the DIP are literacy, curriculum/instruction/assessment, school climate, safety and emergency planning, and parents/schools/community. The DIP includes goals, activities, and indicators of success. The superintendent told the review team that more work is needed to refine the document, make it more concise, and include definite timelines and individuals responsible. Each school has a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that has the same format as the DIP and addresses the DIP's five major areas. Interviewees told the review team that the SIPs are developed by committees composed of staff, school council members, parents, and the principal. While all SIPs cover the same areas, each school's SIP addresses academic and social needs individually. Both the DIP and the SIPs have as focal points use of data, tiered instruction, and standards-based curricula. According to principals interviewed, each principal reports to the school committee annually, during a regular school committee meeting, on the status and accomplishments of the school. This was confirmed by a review of school committee agendas and minutes.

Representatives of the teachers' union, United Educators of Pittsfield (UEP) and district administrators stated that while relationships have improved since the entry of the new superintendent, there is still some lack of clarity among principals and teachers on the teacher evaluation policy and process, learning walks, professional days, and the mentoring program. Union officials stated there are open lines of communication through telephone, email and face-to-face meetings. Interviewees stated that issues are addressed professionally and immediately and solutions arrived at cooperatively. They went on to say that during the tenure of the current superintendent two grievances have reached the school committee. It was also stated that under difficult financial circumstances, in 2009-2010 teachers on the top step of the salary schedule were given a one percent raise, and the other teachers were granted only their step raises.

Although the superintendent has made significant strides in improving communication and visibility, there are many unresolved issues with respect to curriculum, assessment, professional development, and evaluation that need to be addressed to move the system forward. The district cannot make united progress in these areas without a common understanding.

Curriculum and Instruction

In the absence of coordinated central office leadership for curriculum, the district's curricula in English language arts, mathematics, and science are not complete or aligned.

The organization of leadership for curriculum and instruction at the central office is not conducive to the development of a complete, aligned, and implemented curriculum. District administrators reported the following organization: A deputy superintendent with responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and supervision of principals provides overall leadership. Beyond that overall leadership, no one person is responsible for ELA across the grades. Instead, the Title I reading coordinator assumes responsibility for elementary ELA, a retiree who serves as part-time English coordinator has middle school responsibility, and English department heads coordinate curriculum at their individual high schools. Elementary ELA coaches reported that they meet regularly with the reading coordinator and then provide curriculum coordination within their own schools. According to middle school personnel, a retired individual with English expertise works part-time with ELA middle school coaches, and they then bring curriculum coherence to their own schools. According to high school personnel, English department heads, who teach four classes each day and also support the principal in the observation of teachers, provide curriculum direction in their own high schools. This combined leadership of one full-time district leader, a Title I coordinator, a part-time retiree, and department heads who have little available time and who do not coordinate with one another does not lead to a coherent aligned curriculum.

Although there is a central office coordinator for mathematics, she reported that her responsibilities also extend to science, health, and physical education. In addition, she seems to have little direct connection to mathematics curriculum leadership at the high school. Again, that rests with department heads with numerous other duties and little available time. This same coordinator is responsible for the science curriculum, and has been introducing a districtwide elementary science curriculum this year, something that has not existed up to this point.

Review of the documentation provided by the district revealed that the curriculum documents available to principals, coaches, and teachers vary in completeness and alignment. Interviewees said that curriculum work in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 has resulted in what district leaders refer to as pacing guides for elementary and middle school mathematics and ELA. Examination showed that these four documents do not have a standard format, but that they do have in common inclusion of the relevant state standards at each grade level, resources, and references to topics to be covered with a time allocation. The mathematics pacing guides are quite spare, consisting mainly of standards, topics, and timelines, while the ELA pacing guides are more detailed, including areas such as literature choices and instructional strategies. The prominent

inclusion of state standards in each pacing guide, along with the absence of other key elements such as objectives and assessments, might lead to the conclusion that the state standards are the district curriculum. However, the state standards alone cannot constitute a curriculum: a curriculum is a local document based on district goals and needs that at the same time addresses state standards. The review team learned from interviewing central office administration that the district does not have a curriculum that addresses writing. The deputy superintendent reported that she is working to select a writing program; it is not clear, though, how this new program will be implemented effectively if implementation of curriculum in schools continues to be uncoordinated. The two high schools have separate curricula in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies, and at the time of the site visit each high school was working independently to develop pacing guides. Department heads reported that alignment of the high schools' curricula with state standards is a recent initiative.

The incompleteness of curriculum documents results in problems with horizontal alignment. Only in 2009-2010 with the adoption of a single elementary mathematics program has horizontal and vertical alignment in kindergarten through grade 5 been a possibility. Up to that point, as an administrator pointed out, the district had been using two separate mathematics programs at the elementary level, which meant that mathematics instruction varied across the district and that the middle schools received students in grade 6 with different understandings of and orientations to learning the subject. The detailed but still incomplete elementary and middle school ELA curriculum documents allow for substantial curriculum variations across classes and schools. Review of documents and interviews with teachers and coaches revealed that vertical alignment, particularly at the transitions from grade 5 to 6 and grade 8 to 9, is also an issue in the district. Although teachers and coaches described recent meetings involving teachers from each side of these divides, such meetings have happened infrequently in the past. An individual school cannot be responsible for addressing issues of vertical alignment such as these. Vertical alignment across schools has to be facilitated from the central office. The absence of central coordination of curriculum at the district level has led to curriculum documents that do not have such common elements as objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. Varied and incomplete curriculum documents result in the delivery of a curriculum not necessarily closely aligned to state standards or internally aligned horizontally and vertically. The curriculum delivered is then not standards-based and so will not lead all students to proficiency. The district lacks the organizational structure to coordinate the development of a complete, aligned curriculum.

The two high schools develop curriculum independently of one another, with little direction from the central office and limited reference to the state standards.

Department heads reported that each high school develops its own curriculum separately from the other high school, and that they direct this work within each content area. With the exception of mathematics, each high school's department heads operate independently from the other high school's. As mentioned previously, each high school has been working independently to develop pacing guides. This means that a student transferring from one high school to the other could encounter a substantially different curriculum. It also means that curriculum efforts at the high

school level are being conducted inefficiently, with duplication of efforts between the two high schools requiring more staff and staff time than would otherwise be needed. In documentation on the district website, what is described as the Taconic and Pittsfield High School curriculum in English, mathematics, science, and social studies consists for the most part of syllabi for the courses taught. These documents include typical syllabus elements such as objectives, topics to be covered, student expectations, and grading criteria. In accordance with department heads' report that the alignment of the curricula with state standards is a recent effort, most do not refer to the state standards, although some list specific standards by number.

Interviews with high school staff showed that the high schools receive little direction and support from the central office. (Administrators recalled efforts in the past to coordinate the two high schools' midterm and final examinations. These efforts had no effect since there was no one centrally with the authority and responsibility to coordinate them.) This occurs because the defined roles of central office staff apparently do not involve responsibility for curriculum at the high schools. The coordinator for mathematics, science, health, and physical education works with the elementary and middle schools. The Title I reading coordinator and the part-time English coordinator work at the elementary level and the middle school level, respectively. This leaves it up to the principals and department heads at the high schools to develop curriculum on their own, and for the most part the result has been syllabi rather than curriculum. The Taconic principal has initiated some curriculum work this year, evidence of which the review team saw on the district website.

The high school syllabi show very little evidence that what occurs in a course is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. In addition, there is little vertical alignment between what is taught at the middle and high school levels, both as a result of the absence of curriculum leadership from the central office and because, as reported by middle school and high school staff, communication between the middle schools and high schools is infrequent. The district practice of expecting the high schools to develop curriculum independently of one another and of the central office has led to the substitution of syllabi for curriculum, to the absence of alignment with state standards, and to a lack of horizontal alignment between high schools and vertical alignment with middle schools.

Coaches play a key role in curriculum and instruction at the elementary and middle school levels.

Although district curriculum documents are incomplete and schools rather than the district have responsibility for instruction, coaches at the elementary and middle school levels ensure some consistency in the delivery of curriculum and model and monitor effective instruction. According to high school staff, there are no coaches in the high schools, which may in part explain the lack of coordination and alignment at the high school level.

The district has in place a system for coordinating the activities of its ELA and mathematics coaches, which they described to the review team. District administrators, one of whom is only part-time, meet with the coaches regularly through the year to review curriculum expectations and relevant state standards. Coaches bring the understanding they gain from these meetings

back to their schools, where they meet regularly with ELA and mathematics teachers as groups, and with grade level teams. They also visit individual teachers' classrooms, sometimes to model, often to observe and support the teacher. Important, too, is their role as data specialists in the schools. In this role, they meet at their schools with district administrators to discuss data and instructional adjustments and meet individually with teachers to review results from recent assessments and plan appropriate instruction.

The leadership of coaches provides teachers with the knowledge and guidance to implement the limited curriculum the district has. Teachers in focus groups indicated that they accept them as non-evaluators with significant expertise and follow their lead. Coaches provide teachers with data that elucidates their students' achievement levels and areas that need to be addressed; they help teachers to deliver instruction that will lead to higher student achievement. Coaches play an invaluable role in ensuring the delivery of curriculum through effective instruction.

Classroom observations showed a high percentage of solid evidence of some instructional characteristics in district classes, and less evidence of others related to increasing rigor, challenge, and students' cognitive growth.

Observers found solid evidence in a high percentage of the 40 classes observed during the site visit of three instructional characteristics. The review team found solid evidence of a positive classroom climate in 88 percent of the classrooms visited; it found solid evidence that presentation of content was within students' English proficiency and developmental level in 82.5 percent; and solid evidence of the pacing of lessons to ensure active student engagement was observed in 72.5 percent.

Observers found little solid evidence of higher order student thinking and active student participation in the classrooms visited. The review team found solid evidence of instruction including a range of techniques in 30 percent of the classrooms visited. It observed solid evidence of questioning requiring students to engage in higher order thinking in 37.5 percent of classrooms visited: solid evidence of students frequently articulating their thinking and reasoning in 40 percent, working together in pairs or small groups in 22.5 percent, and applying new knowledge in 30 percent.

It is important for teachers to create a positive classroom climate and engage their students. These characteristics were solidly evident in the review team's observations of district classes. At the same time, there was partial evidence or no evidence in most classrooms visited of opportunities for students to work together, apply new knowledge, and explain their reasoning, opportunities that are necessary if instruction is to be rigorous and the level of student learning is to be increased.

Assessment

Although data collection and dissemination take place in each school, the use of the data varies from school to school in the district.

The Pittsfield Public Schools do not have one person who is responsible for data collection and analysis for the district. According to an administrator, a technician compiles data using the Education Data Warehouse (EDW) and has trained some staff to use the EDW and to administer and interpret the results of the Galileo mathematics assessment used in grades 3 through 8. According to interviewees, the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and Title I reading curriculum coordinator analyze assessment data, and data is discussed in cabinet and leadership meetings, and in conversations with principals.

Interviewees told the review team that although every school has a data team as well as mathematics and reading coaches who meet regularly with teachers, some schools are more proficient than others in using data. According to district leaders, all principals and staff are trained to work with data, but the scope of the training they have had varies: not all teachers have been trained to use the Education Data Warehouse. As a result, facility in data analysis and use also varies in the district. The review team was told by an administrator that both high schools established data teams in the 2009-2010 year, but that the implementation has just begun. According to a wide range of interviewees, all elementary and middle schools have mathematics and reading coaches who are extremely proficient in analyzing data and in helping teachers use it to improve instruction. Department heads fulfill this responsibility at the high school.

District leaders, principals, and teachers stated that the two middle schools differ in their approaches to data. While both schools use data proficiently, one has a more active approach. At the Reid Middle School, staff's proficiency in data analysis is enhanced by the fact that teams have common planning time at least four times each week during which data from formative assessments is examined and specific instructional activities are developed in order to meet the needs of students. Attendees at these meetings include not only classroom teachers but also staff representatives from subgroups such as ELL and special education. Further, at this middle school the ELA coach also functions as the data team leader and has established systematic procedures for the collection of data for all subgroups. The coaches have learned about this approach, discussed it at their monthly meetings, and are disseminating it to other district schools.

Staff in each school collect and analyze data and disseminate it to teachers. According to interviews, principals share data reports with their mathematics and reading coaches, and also receive analyses from them and the school data team. District and school leaders told the review team that data is generated from a variety of common assessments. These include Galileo in grades 3 through 8; the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in kindergarten through grade 5; AIMSweb at the elementary level; midterm and final examinations at the high schools; and writing prompts at all levels.

Many interviewees told the review team that since the appointment of the current superintendent, there has been greater emphasis in the district on data and results. The district engaged consultants to work with the schools on a project entitled Focus for Results. Principals explained that while there had been attention to data and its implications for instruction, data was not always used to make instructional changes. With ongoing support from the consultants, the schools are now examining data and choosing specific areas on which to concentrate. Principals and coaches told the review team that some schools are focusing on mathematics skills and others on reading skills or word problems and basic skills.

Although it is evident that much work has been done in the district to increase the use of data, it is also clear that not all schools are equally proficient in using data. In some cases, this has resulted in a significant gap in the use of data, a gap which has significant implications for student achievement.

The Pittsfield Public Schools' formative assessments do not constitute a fully developed, balanced system.

Although several formative assessments are used in other content areas, the review team found a heavy emphasis on mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels. Pittsfield has established the Galileo web-based assessment program in grades 3 through 8. Aligned with state and local standards, Galileo is administered three times during the school year in September, January, and May. According to principals, some schools also have weekly benchmarking through another component of the program. Schools have used the Galileo assessment program for varying lengths of time. Some schools had been using it for five years, while others were just beginning to use it in 2009-2010. Mathematics coaches told the review team that they collect data from the assessment and share the results with classroom teachers to determine student needs.

The elementary schools also administer the DIBELS in kindergarten through grade 5. The results for grades 2 and 3 are used to determine skill and fluency levels and to form instructional groups. The DIBELS is administered three times during the year to typical students, and more often to students at risk. In interviews, principals and teachers told the review team that the DIBELS assesses fluency at grades four and five, but not comprehension. Although Title I elementary and middle schools use the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) to assess comprehension in these grades, the GRADE is not used throughout the district and GRADE scores cannot be accessed online. The elementary schools use AimsWeb at intervals throughout the year for benchmarking. The results are used for progress monitoring. Like DIBELS, AimsWeb is more a measure of fluency than comprehension. A variety of end-of-unit tests are used as comprehension assessments in grades 4 through 8, but these assessments are not immediate enough to inform instruction.

The two high schools use a common assessment of mathematics, but there are no other common assessments used by both schools. Interviewees told the team that work had begun on developing common examinations for the high schools, but because there was no one to oversee the work,

the project was not completed. At the present time, midterm and final examinations are the primary means of assessing the proficiency of high school students.

Because the district does not have a balanced formative assessment program, some content areas are more completely assessed than others. This has implications for professional development and curriculum and instruction and for student achievement. In the areas with less systematic formative assessment to identify students' strengths and needs, the district does not have the data it needs to make corrections to professional development and to curriculum and is less able to oversee, direct, and support teachers in developing instructional strategies to respond to students' needs. District staff are thus less able to improve student achievement in these areas.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Administrators and the teachers' union do not have a common understanding about making recommendations for professional growth in teachers' evaluations.

From a review of 49 randomly selected teacher personnel files, the review team determined that all but one of the teachers held current and appropriate certification. In interviews, administrators stated that this teacher had been denied a waiver and would not be re-employed without appropriate certification. While most of the teacher evaluations reviewed were timely, signed by both the evaluator and the teacher, and informative, the review team found that only slightly more than half (27 of 49) were instructive, that is, provided specific recommendations for professional growth. In contrast, most of the evaluations of administrators examined by the review team were both informative and instructive. The teacher personnel files reviewed contained the summative teacher performance evaluation, but not the post-observation summary. The review team confirmed through interviews with district administrators that the post-observation summaries are more likely to contain specific recommendations for professional growth, but are not treated as a formal component of the personnel file. Rather, they are kept separately in the district office.

In interviews, administrators were unclear about the legitimacy of making a recommendation for professional growth if the standard is rated "satisfactory." Interviewees stated that while there are specific instructions that "any category checked as a Growth Area must be documented in the Recommendation for Professional Growth box," and that "one Unsatisfactory means that the teacher does not meet that Standard and requires an Assistance Plan," there are no specific instructions about recommendations when the rating is "Satisfactory," creating hesitancy among administrators to include recommendations for professional growth on areas rated as "Satisfactory." An administrator added that the summative instrument does not include parent/student/teacher communication as an area of evaluation.

Representatives of the teachers' union, United Educators of Pittsfield (UEP), told the review team that the evaluation procedure is comprehensive and gives teachers the opportunity to set their own goals. UEP representatives expressed disappointment over the lack of suggestions for professional growth in teacher evaluations, and told review team members that they wanted

administrators to provide recommendations for professional growth. In focus groups, teachers also voiced a desire for these recommendations. Because administrators are unclear about the legitimacy of making of recommendations in teacher evaluations, teachers are not receiving adequate suggestions for professional growth, which hinders the improvement of instruction and limits student progress.

Most professional development is conducted at the school rather than the district level.

According to documentation provided by the district, the mandatory professional development program includes three full days and ten half-days. Teachers are also afforded two additional, optional days to attend external professional development sessions on topics of individual interest, with the prior approval of the superintendent. The three full days include a district convocation at the beginning of the year, consisting of a morning address to the whole staff by the superintendent and afternoon compliance training. Administrators reported that the second full day is for school-based professional development to launch the school year. They further indicated that teachers meet with principals and review recent data, revise or develop instructional foci, and collaboratively develop school plans for improvement. Time is usually provided for classroom preparation. In each school, the third full day is devoted to the development of individual student intervention plans at the classroom level based on analysis of MCAS data.

Two of the ten half-days for professional development are set aside for district initiatives, conducted at individual schools by either district staff or school staff trained to provide them. The purposes for the remaining eight half-days are determined at each school. According to several principals, interviewed separately, the recent districtwide professional development program entitled “Focus on Results” is having a positive impact on the schools. The intent of the program is to seek improvement in student performance through looking at specific needs as determined at each individual school rather than through a districtwide set of need determinations. Through this focus across the district on results, professional development has evolved over the 2009-2010 school year to become more dynamic and predominantly site-based. Administrators told the review team that this approach best targets differing needs at different schools. In addition, efforts are being made at each school to address districtwide priorities by blending them with individual school initiatives.

The professional development activities for the 2009-2010 school year included continued implementation of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework for data analysis and informing instruction at higher levels of expectation; focused implementation of learning objectives and engagement activities in the Effective Daily Instruction (EDI) model based on work by Madeline Hunter; ongoing implementation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) for schoolwide and classroom implementation; academic coaching for job-embedded professional development; ongoing support of district initiatives and improving content instruction in mathematics and literacy; Wilson training; MCAS data analysis in both ELA and mathematics; a cultural competence workshop; differentiated instruction; mathematics literacy; Collins Writing; Galileo training by coaches at the school level; “Autism Spectrum”; “EDI Technology” in the classroom;

category training for teachers of ELL students; trainings for reading coaches in AIMSweb; bullying prevention; and “Focus on Results.” In the schools, professional development is planned primarily by leadership teams. In interviews and focus groups, district administrators and teachers told the review team that district professional development opportunities are aligned with both district and school initiatives and are readily accessible.

Student Support

The district has placed a priority on supports and safety nets for at-risk students, and has created a variety of interventions for students with academic, behavioral, and attendance problems.

Teachers and administrators told the review team that there is careful monitoring of academic progress beginning at the pre-kindergarten level. The district has tutors, reading specialists, special education teachers, guidance and school adjustment counselors, psychologists, nurses, a homeless coordinator, and attendance officers. As noted in the assessment findings above, elementary and middle school teachers review ELA and mathematics assessment data for their students regularly, usually with a coach. On the basis of this data, students may be regrouped or referred for small group or individualized instruction with a tutor, coach, or reading specialist, and may be assigned additional instructional time as needed. Some schools offer Saturday, after-school, and summer programs with a remediation component. Speech and language services provided to Head Start, preschool, and day care centers continue through the elementary schools, and interpretation services are provided to ELL families. Every school has access to the district’s psychologists and school adjustment counselors.

Administrators described a dropout prevention committee which continually monitors the success of interventions and programs and designs appropriate safety nets as needed. According to administrators and to documentation, each school has a building assistance meeting (BAM) or similar group, and students with academic, attendance, or behavioral problems may be referred to the BAM. The BAM typically consists of guidance and adjustment counselors, special and regular education teachers, the school psychologist, and the principal. The BAM uses a three-tiered approach to coordinate appropriate interventions to support students, monitoring the students regularly. The BAM may implement academic, behavioral, and attendance interventions and strategies, such as instructional modifications and regrouping, after-school and Saturday school, Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Behavior Education Programs (BEPs), peer mediation, and the Truancy Intervention Program (TIP).

According to the DIP and to interviewees, each school must establish PBS goals and implementation plans for behavior management, and BEPs provide systematic, routine, and progressive interventions for targeted at-risk students. The in-school PBS systems include early parent contact when tardiness, attendance, or behavior issues become evident. One school described its PBS goals as ROAR, an acronym for Respect, On time, Accountable, Resolve.

According to counselors and other school personnel, the district attendance committee chaired by the district's attendance coordinator, including TIP counselors, meets monthly to address student attendance issues, and all schools are accounted for at these sessions. A districtwide mentor program pairs a truant student with a volunteer mentor who may be a staff member, paraprofessional, custodian, or community member. This program is intended to prevent truancy and dropouts. Truancy officers come to each school every week and meet with any student who has missed school. They also visit homes, pick up truant students and bring them to school, and refer some cases to juvenile court. The school support teams or BAMs and attendance officers meet with parents to offer support and strategies to ensure school attendance. Students whose absences exceed 3 in a quarter, 6 in a semester, or 12 in a year are encouraged to participate in Attendance School to recover credit. This is a four-day after-school and Saturday morning program which allows students to make up lost time and credits. The elementary level tardy policy states that after five tardies the parent is requested to meet with school officials. At the middle schools, the assistant principals and the deans address attendance and have a progressive system in place, consisting of after-school detention, office detention, and Saturday detention.

According to interviewees, tier three interventions include special education services and out-of-school programs. Out-of-school programs include work and community service opportunities; the Juvenile Resource Center (JRC) in partnership with the sheriff's department; Positive Options at Berkshire Community College (BCC); an off-site teen parenting program; an adolescent support program (ASP) in partnership with the Department of Mental Health; and the Adult Learning Center (ALC). The JRC students receive their academics in a small group setting. There are teachers, tutors, and a case manager to monitor the progress of each student. Students either report back to their high school for additional course work or receive job credit. At the JRC there is a component of the Educational Options for Success (EOS) program that operates at both high schools: EOS provides tiered support, including academic support, school adjustment counseling, and case management, to both regular and special education students with significant behavioral difficulties. The Positive Options program at Berkshire Community College is for twelve at-risk juniors and seniors who are offered the opportunity to engage in college life and to enroll in college courses. The adolescent support program, in conjunction with DMH, is for middle and high school students who have a diagnosis of an emotional disability. The Adult Learning Center, a joint program of the district and ESE, provides classes for adult learners, including Pittsfield Public Schools high school diploma classes, General Educational Development (GED) classes, and English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. The district has both four- and five-year graduation programs; the five-year program helps students who struggle by having lower course requirements for each year and by allowing them to participate in vocational courses, art-related courses, and work experiences. These programs include attendance monitoring and credit recovery opportunities for students in danger of not graduating, as well as individualized learning and behavioral intervention strategies. Such programs often include family involvement and home visits as well.

Administrators also described prevention programs, including evidence-based substance abuse prevention programs in grades 6, 9, and 10, a violence prevention program in kindergarten

through grade 6, the Olweus antibullying program, and pregnancy and STD prevention. The district has created incentives for good attendance and behavior, such as certificates, hallway postings, awards, and gift certificates at the elementary level; a breakfast for homerooms with perfect attendance at the middle school level; and a \$25 bond donated by a local bank to every student who has perfect attendance for the school year.

The district facilitates the transitions to grades 6 and 9 for at-risk students through summer programs, described in district documentation and by interviewees. Camp Connect and Step Ahead are summer programs for entering grade 6 students who have behavioral issues or feel socially isolated. The BRIDGE program is a summer program for 8th graders who have failed two or more courses. It is located at the high school and includes academic support while addressing social and behavior issues. Ninth grade programs include the PHS Achievement Academy and grade 9 teams at Taconic High. Administrators also described partnerships with local businesses and agencies to provide on-the-job and community service opportunities.

The impact of district supports for at-risk students on attendance, dropout, and graduation rates is clear. ESE data shows that the Pittsfield dropout rate declined from 7.3 percent in 2005 to 3.9 percent in 2009, and the proportion of students absent fewer than ten days increased from 59 percent in 2005 to 68 percent in 2009, exceeding the statewide proportion. Graduation rates have also improved, four-year rates from 67.6 percent in 2006 to 72.8 percent in 2009, and five-year rates from 72.5 percent in 2006 to 79.6 percent in 2008. In interviews with the review team many staff cited these improvements with justifiable pride. Most district intervention programs are dependent on external funding, especially the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) federal grant, which ends in 2010. Some of the psychologists and school adjustment counselors to whom every school has access are funded by grants. Interviewees expressed concern about the district's ability to continue some of these interventions without major financial support, and the review team shares their hope that funding can be provided to continue and improve them.

The district has taken some steps to improve achievement of subgroups, especially ELL, special education, and low-income students.

Interviewees described their reviews of MCAS test and formative assessment data disaggregated for subgroups. ELL students receive additional academic support from ESL teachers and ELL tutors, as described in the ELL section of this report, and a broad spectrum of special education services is provided for students with special needs. In both cases, disaggregated data is used to design and monitor the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Some students are placed on a five-year graduation plan. Interviewees stated that ELL students placed in neighborhood schools with appropriate support, along with special education students in middle school co-taught classes, are particularly successful.

The district has a large low-income student population (49.7 percent), and it has implemented several practices to ensure that these students have full access to school programs. Interviewees told the review team that all high school juniors are encouraged to take the PSATs and to apply to and attend college. The district underwrites the test fees to ensure that all students can participate. Project Link at Berkshire Community College prepares GED and ELL students to

enter degree and certificate programs at no cost. AP and honors courses are open to all high school students. Over the period from 2006-2007 to 2009-2010, ESE data shows an increase from 26 percent to 34 percent of grade 11 and 12 students enrolled in an AP course. Interviewees told the team that if needed, support from a counselor, tutor, or liaison is available to special education or ELL students in AP courses. The district has a homeless coordinator who works with homeless families to ensure that their children attend school faithfully, and adjustment counselors work with the families of children residing in affordable housing.

The district's efforts to improve the achievement of subgroups have been successful. The district achieved AYP for subgroups in both ELA and mathematics for the first time in 2009. ELL students in the district have made progress in mathematics in recent years, as shown by Table 5 above. Pittsfield's low-income students' CPI score for all grades on the 2009 MCAS tests exceeded low-income students' CPI score statewide in both ELA and mathematics, and Pittsfield special education students' CPI score likewise exceeded the statewide CPI score for special education students in both subjects. The supports and provisions for district ELL, special education, and low-income students have produced success.

Financial and Asset Management

The city and the district have effectively managed the limited funds available in a manner that has prevented major losses of programs for students.

The city has placed a high priority on education. According to ESE data, the city supported its schools at a level above the Net School Spending (NSS) requirement by \$3,474,567 for fiscal year 2009 and by over \$4 million for fiscal year 2010. The district lost some Chapter 70 aid in fiscal year 2009, and its Net School Spending (NSS) also declined; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding of \$3,760,289 offset these losses. The fiscal year 2010 budget showed an increase in NSS of 5.9 percent over expenditures for the previous year, although the End of Year Report showed the school budget for those two fiscal years declined from \$49.3 million to \$48.8 million. Per pupil expenditures for fiscal year 2009 (\$12,200) were below the state average. Grants, especially the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grant of \$2,999,151, have enabled the district to fund and expand special programs for at-risk and other students.

Funding for the district has not been sufficient to fund salary raises and to maintain all its staffing and services at previous levels. District funding has been adversely affected by school choice and charter school charges (\$1,964,252 for fiscal year 2009, adjusted for incoming school choice students, based on the End of Year Report). According to administrators, the district was able to fund only step raises for most employees in fiscal year 2010 and a one percent raise for the few teachers ineligible for step increases. In fiscal year 2010, the district closed the alternative school and cut 15.75 full time equivalent positions, including five teachers (two high school teachers, an elementary teacher, and elementary specialists in physical education and art) and 3.75 administrators (including curriculum directors in ELA/social studies and the arts). Administrators, school committee members, and the mayor all expressed major concerns during

the site visit about potential fiscal year 2011 reductions in state aid, which could reduce aid by \$4 million, and the loss of the \$3 million SS/HS grant. The superintendent cited funding to continue and expand safety net programs for at-risk students as a top priority, and principals added funding for furniture and to preserve high school course offerings.

The city and the district have managed the limited funding for education effectively, ensuring that programs for students are not adversely affected. The mayor and other city officials told the review team that the schools are their top priority, and that they work together with school officials to provide as much support as possible to maintain the facilities and funding. The district has been aggressive in pursuing state, federal, and private grants, reporting \$9,501,967 for fiscal year 2009 in addition to \$3,760,289 in ARRA funding. Administrators said that they have managed budget constraints to avoid adverse impacts on class size, staffing, and support programs. For example, in 2009 teacher and classroom reductions were in line with enrollment declines, the union agreed to postpone layoff notification requirements, and the loss of the alternative education program was compensated for by an in-school support system for at-risk students. And they have pursued opportunities for cost savings by collaborating on programs for at-risk students with other agencies, such as Berkshire Community College, the sheriff's department, and the Department of Mental Health, collaborating with other communities and districts on bidding for supplies and utilities, working with local utility companies to implement energy savings measures, and investigating a public day program to reduce out-of-district special education tuitions. Administrators stated that end-of-year surpluses were available in 2008 to purchase materials for a new elementary program.

Effective financial management has resulted in increased confidence in the schools on the part of city officials and the public, contributing in turn to the financial support the city has provided. It has also provided funds at the end of the year for new initiatives, such as the elementary mathematics program. The funding for the schools has been tight, resulting in some layoffs, but adequate to prevent the elimination of programs or the overcrowding of classrooms.

Several of the schools need major renovation work to correct building deficiencies and to make the schools better suited to their educational programs.

The school committee commissioned a report by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) on the condition of its buildings that was issued in April 2010. The report detailed the physical condition of each school and took into account long-range planning for the district's facilities based on enrollment patterns and program requirements. Needs and deficiencies of the buildings included American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, roof and plumbing leaks, boiler and heating ventilating and air conditioning deficiencies, and furnishings. Many schools have inadequate spaces for specialists, small groups, therapists, and early childhood classes. The New England Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reports for Taconic and Pittsfield high schools were also critical of the high school buildings' condition. Some principals said that school PTOs have contributed funds for furniture, playgrounds, and classroom white boards. The review team visited most district schools and found them to be secure and safe, with locked doors and communication systems. The city and district have a five- year capital plan to

perform major maintenance projects for school buildings, totaling approximately \$1 million for fiscal year 2010, but city administrators told the review team that funding has been adequate to do only some of the needed capital projects, such as the Pittsfield High School roof repairs, but not others, such as boiler and window replacements.

Administrators stated that the district has submitted five schools (Conte Elementary, Crosby Elementary, Morningside Elementary, Pittsfield High, and Taconic High) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for funding, and that the MSBA has approved Taconic High School for a pre-feasibility study. Administrators and school committee members told the review team they hope to include limited renovations for Pittsfield High School as well. They added that they welcomed forthcoming discussions of options proposed in the NESDEC report for long range use, renovations, and reconfiguration of school buildings. Funding for building renovations will, of course, be a major issue, and contributions from the state and city will be essential to progress in improving facilities and making instructional and office spaces appropriate.

The renovations are necessary in order to bring the schools into compliance with ADA and other codes. Improved instructional spaces, including those for small groups and individual remediation, will enable the district to continue to improve instruction and to provide the supports needed by many students.

ELL Findings

Leadership and Governance

The Reid Middle School integrates whole-school and ELL improvement in its School Improvement Plan, which has specific references to the ELL program, ELL curriculum, and ELL students. The District Improvement Plan does not, raising the question whether ELL issues have sufficient prominence districtwide.

The Reid Middle School SIP contains goals to increase ELL personnel, integrate the ELL and general curricula, use disaggregated data to understand the needs of ELL students, and form teaching teams composed of content teachers and the ESL teacher and tutor. This focus helps to explain Reid's successful efforts to integrate ELL students, improve academic outcomes, and welcome ELL parents. The DIP does not contain references to the ELL program, staff, students, or parents.

Although the review team received evidence of improvements being made to the ELL program through the ELL coordinator and of consideration of ELL needs at the school level, for instance through the data team that has been established in each school, some parents and school personnel expressed the view in interviews that improving the ELL program has not been made a high priority in districtwide planning. Without goals and expectations for the ELL program, the DIP is less effective as a guiding instrument for Pittsfield's schools. The omission raises questions about whether ELL issues receive sufficient attention at the district's highest levels and across all schools. From interviews with district administrators and documentation of administrative meetings it was not clear that issues concerning the ELL program, ELL students, and ELL families are considered and discussed by the superintendent and other top-level district administrators frequently and deeply enough to improve the performance of ELL students across the district, not just in individual schools.

Without sufficient attention to ELL issues across the district and without the presence in the DIP of districtwide ELL goals and associated components such as the naming of persons responsible for reaching those goals, progress in ELL education cannot be made uniformly across schools. The district will be left in the position where, for instance, not all schools are equally proficient in using data to identify the needs of ELL students. See the first Level 3 Assessment finding above. The ELL coordinator is almost solely responsible for overseeing ELL programs and services, curriculum, instruction, compliance, assessment of ELL students, translations, and the hiring and supervision of ELL staff. She supervises and evaluates ESL teachers who teach in more than one school and works closely with principals, community groups, and families. The review team notes that she carries out these responsibilities without clerical assistance, which makes fulfilling them more difficult. Especially given this range of responsibilities, consistent districtwide improvement of the ELL program will be a challenging task without support from the District Improvement Plan and district leadership—in other words, without an integrated districtwide approach.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district is moving away from a center school model for ELL instruction as more teachers have received category training.

According to interviews and a review of documents, the district uses standards-based pacing guides developed during the summers of 2008 and 2009 as its curriculum in ELA and mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels. Although these pacing guides incorporate the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards, they are not a full curriculum since they do not contain such components as objectives or assessments. At the time of the site visit each high school was working independently to develop pacing guides. (Please see the first Level 3 finding under Curriculum & Instruction, above.) The review team found that supplementary text resources for ELL students include *Edge* for high school students at proficiency levels 1 and 2 and *Inside* for middle school students at all proficiency levels. At the elementary level, *Avenues* is used. *Avenues*, *Inside*, and *Edge* are all connected, providing a natural progression for the students as they move from the elementary to the middle school to the high school level, and they all contain components for writing, language, literacy content, and grammar. Additional materials are used in the summer program for beginning ELL students, English Language Instruction Through Enrichment (ELITE).

According to the ELL coordinator, the district's ELL program has two components: English Language Development (ELD) through a pull-out model with ESL resources and texts, and sheltered content instruction through category-trained content area teachers and ELL tutors. The sheltered content component follows the district pacing guides, and ELL staff work with content area teachers to integrate English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Objectives (ELPBO) into the content areas. Sheltered content is delivered by a classroom teacher trained in at least one of the categories or a team of teachers including a licensed ESL teacher or a tutor trained in the categories. The ESL teacher brings the ELPBO objectives to the content area curriculum planning meeting, and this blending benefits all students. Each school has either an ESL teacher or a tutor, or both, depending upon the size of its ELL population. Schools with a larger ELL population—including Pittsfield High School, Reid and Herberg middle schools, and Conte, Crosby, and Morningside elementary schools—have a licensed ESL teacher to help deliver the content instruction, while those with a smaller population—including Taconic High School and Allendale, Capeless, Egremont, Stearns, and Williams elementary schools—have an ELL tutor with a bachelor's degree and experience with the ELL population who assists the teacher in delivering the instruction. According to the ELL coordinator, all of the schools meet or exceed ESE guidelines for ESL instruction for all five levels of English language proficiency.

According to the school committee policy on ELL services and support, students whose first language is not English must take the Language Assessment Scale (LAS). The ELL coordinator told the review team that up until the 2009-2010 school year, all students scoring in Level 1 or Level 2 had the option of attending a center school (Conte Elementary School, Reid Middle School, and Pittsfield High School). Center schools were schools that previously had bilingual programs. When the law changed, they changed to a structured English immersion model. The

center model was discontinued for the elementary level in 2009-2010 as the district has built capacity for sheltered content instruction in several elementary schools through training staff in the categories of SEI professional development required for content teachers of ELL students. Elementary level newcomers, like other ELL students, are now placed with ELL trained teachers in ELD and SEI classrooms in their schools of enrollment, and grouped according to their language proficiency levels. When the regular education teacher has not had category training, ELL staff push-in classroom support for ELL students.

At the time of the site visit Reid Middle School was a center school for middle school ELL students; however, district and school administrators told the review team that beginning in 2010-2011 both middle schools, Reid and Herberg, were to provide the range of ELL services. Parents can choose the SEI class or may ask for a waiver to be placed in a mainstream class. To exit the ELL program, ELL students must meet state English language proficiency criteria and general local criteria for the grade level. The Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) and the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) assessments are administered at appropriate times in the district and at the Reid Middle School.

According to district and school administrators, most of the high school level ELL students attend Pittsfield High School rather than Taconic High School. For newcomers (numbering 12 during 2009-2010), the ELD classroom is a pull-out program where the ESL teacher also serves as their ELA teacher, with an ELD curriculum that is connected to the ELA curriculum. There are also 37 ELL students at the high school who are in sheltered classrooms for ELA, as well as other subjects, and also receive ELD instruction.

Reid Middle School, until 2010-2011 one of the “center schools” for beginning English language learners, has recently had greater success than the rest of the district or the state in educating its ELL students (see Tables 4 and 5 above). Increasing the capacity for delivery of high quality ELL services and resources throughout the district would allow students to receive services at their local school and could lead to greater parent and community involvement with ELL services. It will take effort, however, as the district moves away from placing beginning ELL students in one “center school” at each level and resources have to be more spread out, to ensure that there are high quality programs and services for ELL students at every school where they are placed.

Changes at the Reid Middle School in recent years have created an environment conducive to learning and improved student achievement.

Through classroom observations and interviews with Reid Middle School staff, the review team found strong and innovative programs and instruction at Reid that have contributed to growth in student achievement, including the achievement of ELL students. These initiatives were begun by the present principal, who came to Reid in the 2007-2008 school year from another school in the district.

According to interviewees, team members work collaboratively in professional learning communities to determine common grade level priorities, which results in increased ownership of the learning needs of all students on the team. Several communication structures exist to

support and strengthen instruction and increase accountability at all levels. Teams meet four times weekly for common planning and by content area across grade levels once each week. Team leaders share their agendas and meeting notes on an intranet conference board allowing others in the school to see strategies that might also benefit their students. There are two coaches at Reid, one for ELA and one for mathematics. Coaches meet districtwide for professional development monthly and bring information back to the schools. As an administrator pointed out, “People are accountable to each other, learn from each other, and there is a lot of peer-to-peer work.”

According to interviews with teachers, Reid demonstrates flexibility in such ways as using permanent substitutes to support classrooms and programs on days that they are not substituting. Reid teachers noted that the following improvements in administration and climate occurred over a few years at the school: adoption of the house model; assignment of an administrator to each floor; creation of two person teams at grade 6; tighter transitions in the corridors; and better overall school tone. They went on to cite some major improvements in teaching and learning brought about by the present principal, such as unpacking the standards in order to understand them more completely; aligning the curriculum with the standards and identifying power standards; and increasing the rigor and expectations for student learning with Depth of Knowledge (DOK).

According to Reid administrators and staff, the principal encourages and supports staff training in data analysis and use of data to inform and improve instruction. Administrators and teachers told the review team that an analysis of MCAS test and Galileo assessment data identified the need to increase the time allotted for mathematics instruction in grade 6. At the beginning of 2008-2009, the teaching teams and guidance counselors developed a schedule that included 100 minutes of mathematics instruction daily, consisting of 50 minutes of core instruction and an additional 50 minutes of enrichment in the math lab. The five math lab groups were monitored for progress using data from Galileo assessment and teacher developed open response type questions. In 2009, ELL and formerly limited English proficient students in grade six at the Reid School earned a Composite Performance Index score (CPI) of 88.6 on the MCAS test in mathematics, compared with a CPI of 41.7 for 2008. The leadership implemented a similar model in 2008-2009 in grades 7 and 8 for ELA, increasing instructional time for those students, including ELL students, not taking a foreign language. The CPI for all Reid students on the MCAS test in ELA increased in grade 7 from 80.3 in 2008 to 87.6 in 2009, and in grade 8 from 82.9 in 2008 to 89.0 in 2009.

According to interviews and observations, the district and Reid Middle School aggressively seek out grants to support programs. One grant provided technology, a Key Note program with Apple computers contained on a cart. The students use the computers to create podcasts. The review team observed the use of the technology in an ESL classroom with students at multiple performance levels. After reading a selection, students wrote a summary, recorded it on the computer, illustrated it, and added sounds or music. When the class was finished, they listened to each other’s podcasts and evaluated them using a rubric.

According to interviewees, Reid Middle School has “evolved from chaos to instructional focus” over the last few years. A coach told the review team that the school leadership “changed it, they set the tone clearly, and put data in place.” The coach added that the “tipping point comes when enough people say, ‘this is great’. The culture now is, ‘This is what we do.’”

The school leadership has created an environment for learning that can continue to serve as the basis for improving the achievement of all students, including ELL students.

Although Pittsfield does not have a comprehensive written district curriculum or written ESL curriculum and therefore does not have a document integrating the curricula, regular education and ELL staff at the Reid Middle School collaborate to shelter instruction and integrate ELPBO objectives into the content.

As described under Curriculum and Instruction in the Level 3 portion of this report, the Pittsfield Public Schools do not have a complete aligned curriculum, but use standards-based pacing guides at the elementary and middle school levels in ELA and mathematics. From a review of documents and interviews with administrators, the review team found that the district also does not have a written ESL curriculum.

The review team learned from the principal and from classroom observations that the Reid Middle School has a pull-out ELD class; an inclusion class where the ESL teacher co-teaches ELA and mathematics with the regular education teacher twice weekly; and sheltered content area classes supported by a tutor. The ELD pull-out program offers tiered instruction for students based on their proficiency levels. This instruction contains both content area and ELPBO goals and objectives. The ESL teacher and tutor at Reid Middle School work closely with the teaching teams at all three grade levels. The teams have common planning time four times weekly during which they analyze subgroup data to inform curriculum and instruction and improve student achievement. The ESL teacher frequently reviews the data and plans with the teams to shelter instruction and integrate ELPBO objectives into the content. The language objectives for the ELL students are clearly defined by the ESL teacher, and the content area objectives are sheltered for them based on their language learning needs, to provide access for them to the general curriculum. ELPBO objectives are posted in sheltered content classrooms along with unit objectives.

Participants in a focus group of teachers who teach ELL students at Reid said that they have high expectations for all students and that they are responsible for and held accountable for the achievement of their ELL students. Teachers told the review team that the DOK model they use has increased the level of rigor in the classroom, and that all ELL students are challenged to reach higher levels of proficiency. By way of support, ELL students at Reid have opportunities to participate in MCAS test preparation and the enrichment labs described in the previous finding. According to interviewees, the Reid Middle School offers ELA and mathematics enrichment labs to support struggling students. Targeted students for these labs are those with borderline performance on the MCAS tests. ELL students who fall into this category benefit from the targeted instruction the enrichment labs offer. The team observed a math lab class that had seven ELL students who work on identified standards each quarter.

In the absence of more complete documents, the ESL teacher and regular education teachers work closely to integrate the curriculum outlined in the pacing guides with ELPBO objectives. According to administrators, the curriculum cycle once revolved around purchasing texts, but is now data-driven. One administrator told the review team, “Deep data analysis identifies what our curriculum needs are, and creates an understanding that standards drive your curriculum, not resources.” The work to develop complete curricula and continuing category training will create a more tightly integrated, complete, cohesive curriculum that will advance the current efforts of teachers and teacher teams to improve achievement for all students.

In a small sample of eight classes with ELL students at the Reid Middle School, the review team found mixed evidence of effective instructional design and delivery.

During the site visit, the review team observed eight classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of characteristics of teaching and learning grouped into two categories: organization of the classroom and instructional design and delivery.⁶ During the classroom visits, observers noted whether evidence related to each characteristic was solid, partial, or not observed. The eight classes visited, all of which had ELL students in them, included ESL, co-taught mathematics, sheltered ELA, mathematics, and math enrichment lab classes. The observations were for approximately 20 minutes at the beginning, middle, or end of a lesson.

Review team members found a high percentage of evidence of the three characteristics related to the organization of the classroom. In 100 percent of the classes visited, there was partial or solid evidence of a classroom climate characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. In 75 percent of classes there was partial or solid evidence of references to learning objectives or goals. And in 88 percent of the classes, there was partial or solid evidence that available classroom time was maximized for learning.

What review team members found for the 12 characteristics in the instructional design and delivery category was mixed. They found partial or solid evidence in 100 percent of classes visited both of the depth of the teacher’s content knowledge and of the use of on-the-spot formative assessments to check for understanding. They found partial or solid evidence of questioning requiring students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in 88 percent of classrooms. On the other hand, observers found partial or solid evidence that instruction links academic concepts to students’ prior knowledge or experience in only 38 percent of classes and that instruction includes a range of techniques such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling, in only 25 percent. They found partial or solid evidence that supplemental materials are aligned with students’ developmental level and level of English proficiency in only 38 percent. And, again, only in 38 percent of the classes they visited did they find partial or solid evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning or of students inquiring, exploring, or problem solving together in pairs, or in small groups. According to evidence from the small sample of classes including ELL students observed by the review team,

⁶ The instructional inventory record used in these classroom observations may be found at p. 39 of the Level 3 Review Protocol with LEP Addendum at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/review09-10.html>.

teachers at the Reid School are doing well in some areas of instructional design and delivery and in others need further training as well as supervision as they put that training into practice.

Assessment

The Reid Middle School has developed systems for collecting, analyzing, and disaggregating data and has trained teacher teams to use them to improve teaching and learning for all students at the school, including ELL students.

At the Reid Middle School, the data team leader has developed systems for collecting, analyzing, and disaggregating data in support of a continuous improvement model of instruction. The ELA coach serves as the data team leader. This model has contributed to achievement gains made by students at the Reid School in general and by the school's ELL students specifically.

According to a teacher focus group and the review team's observation, Reid Middle School has focused on improving student performance on open response type questions in both ELA and mathematics. Teachers are required to assess student proficiency on open response type questions monthly using both released MCAS test open response type questions and teacher-developed questions. Teachers use the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework to increase the rigor of the open response type questions they develop. Mathematics teachers lead the collaborative scoring of student responses to open response type questions, and use the school data system to analyze the results. The data from the open response type questions is collected and analyzed during common planning time.

The review team observed a team meeting during common planning time devoted to examining the results of a team-generated open response type question. The Reid team had created its own spreadsheet to analyze the data, and could sort the data by team, classroom, subgroup and individual student in order to track progress. Such a database can be used for individual student reports. The team uses the data to identify strengths, as well as weaknesses to address. This information is also used to develop a team improvement plan that informs instruction.

One Reid team member stated, "Data is driving instruction." One team adopted templates to help students "turn the question around" as they begin to answer it and is working on templates to assist students with finding detailed evidence. Reid team preliminary findings indicate that this work is improving students' ability to answer these questions. Seventh grade students' scores on open response type questions in 2009 improved by .45 points out of a possible 4 points on the grade 7 MCAS test in ELA, from 1.9 points in 2008 to 2.35 in 2009.

District administrators and school coaches told the review team that ELL students at the elementary and middle school levels are closely monitored as they transition through the performance levels. Interviewees said and ESE data confirmed that Pittsfield ELL students have met Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in each of the last two years (2008 and 2009). In 2009, 67 percent of 119 district ELL students in grades 3-12 showed progress from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 on the MEPA, a greater percentage than the district target of 60

percent. Of 188 ELL students in K-12, 36 percent scored in the upper half of Level 4 or in Level 5 on the spring 2009 MEPA, greater than the district target of 31 percent.

Teachers of ELL students in the focus group at Reid told review team members that they receive data at the beginning of the year enabling them to prioritize support for their ELL students and others that may be at risk. The teachers also receive the results of the MCAS test, MEPA, and formative assessments administered throughout the year. According to the teachers, they use the data to monitor students as they transition from one performance level to the next and are flexible in providing additional support or returning an ELL student to a previous performance level if necessary. According to several different interviews with staff at Reid, teachers at the school have access to data on the whole school and for grades, subgroups, classrooms, and individual students. Staff are trained to analyze and use the data; in the course of this training they learn to compute the Composite Performance Index (CPI) score for their own students. During this process, the ESL teacher collaborates with teams when called upon to assist in sheltering content for ELL students. Through these professional learning communities, teams use a continuous improvement cycle that boosts achievement for all learners at the school.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district has recently hired a number of licensed ESL teachers to teach English language development and support sheltered content instruction by assisting in classrooms. At some schools, the district uses ELL tutors who have experience with ELL students and some category training, but are not licensed in ESL.

Since 2008 the district has made a significant effort to hire certified staff for its ELL programs to ensure that ELL students are receiving appropriate instruction. The ELL coordinator advises on personnel needs in the schools and staff recruitment. When the ELL coordinator was hired in 2007, the review team learned in interviews, two ESL teachers did not have appropriate licensure; also, the report of ESE's 2006 Coordinated Program Review had recently noted the need for native language clarification from paraprofessionals or teachers, as well as the lack of sufficient SEI training for teachers at schools other than Conte Elementary and Pittsfield High School. According to the coordinator, in the past the district advertised for ESL teachers in Albany, New York, because of its proximity to Pittsfield; however, the teachers hired with New York State ELL licensure had difficulty passing the Massachusetts licensure examinations. Consequently, the district stopped advertising in the Albany area and concentrated on hiring candidates with Massachusetts licensure. The interviewing team for ESL teachers may include the principal, ELL coordinator, an ESL teacher or a tutor, a parent, and/or a content teacher. In addition to credentials, the team looks for a good fit for each school. The district now has seven licensed ESL teachers that provide direct language development instruction to all of the district's ELL students. Schools with lower-incidence ELL populations have ELL tutors. According to the ELL coordinator, the 9.5 ELL tutors all have a bachelor's degree and experience with ELL students at various levels of English language proficiency. All tutors have had training in at least one category.

When placing or assigning students, the review team learned in interviews, the ELL coordinator works with the principals, guidance counselors, and ELL and special education staff. They consider teaching styles in placing students with category-trained teachers, and attempt to match ELL students with teachers able to meet their emotional as well as their academic needs. The ELL coordinator told the review team that in order to reach the most vulnerable ELL students—those in MEPA levels 1 and 2 and those in the higher levels struggling with content because of language issues—the district would be using Title III funds to reimburse content teachers for prep courses for the ELL Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) if they then pass the ELL MTEL and become dually licensed.

The district's focus on hiring certified teachers and experienced tutors has increased its capacity to provide the two components of a sheltered English immersion program, ELD instruction and sheltered content instruction, to its ELL students.

Although the district provides all four levels of category training and has greatly increased the number of category-trained staff since 2007-2008, more training is needed.

At the time of this review in spring 2010, according to interviews with administrators, approximately 50 percent of the faculty had been trained in at least one category, and many were trained in several; this was up from fewer than one percent with training in 2007-2008. According to the ELL coordinator, the district offers category training during the school year and in the summer for elementary teachers, middle and secondary content teachers, interventionists, coaches, and special education staff. The district has in-house trainers. The ELL coordinator and the ESL teacher at the Reid Middle School are category trainers. A trainer located at the Conte School provides Category 3 training for district teachers. The Adult Learning Center also offers category training.

Teachers in a focus group at the Reid Middle School told the review team that not all of them had had category training. Six out of the nine teachers had not had category training, but they said that they were planning to attend Category 2 training in the summer. The teachers who did not have category training told the team that an ELL tutor assists students in their classrooms or the ESL teacher co-teaches with them. They added that the ESL teacher or ELL tutor attends team meetings to discuss data, goals, and effective instructional strategies for ELL students.

As stated previously, until the 2009-2010 school year, ELL students scoring at Level 1 or Level 2 on the Language Assessment Scale (LAS) had the option of placement in a center school program. At the time of this review, the Reid Middle School was a center school for middle school ELL students. Beginning in 2010-2011 both middle schools were to provide services for all levels of ELL students, with the Herberg Middle School's program mirroring the one at Reid. The ELL coordinator told the review team that Category 2 training for the Reid Middle School and Herberg Middle School staff was scheduled for the summer of 2010; twenty teachers from each school were to participate in the training.

According to district and school administrators, the ELL coordinator met with principals on use of a sheltered instruction observation protocol that guides what to look for in an ELD or sheltered content classroom. The formal walkthrough protocol, however, does not incorporate

this sheltered instruction observation protocol. When one principal used this protocol, the teachers' union filed a grievance, and its use has been discontinued. However, the ELL coordinator reported to the review team that the district's category trainers work closely with staff after their category training to ensure fidelity of implementation. They coteach with newly trained staff, model lessons, and offer feedback throughout the course of the year. A designated ESL teacher adds another layer of support for each training group as they implement the strategies learned.

While the district offers category training and has made rapid progress in training its staff, increasing the number of staff trained is still a work in progress. With some classroom teachers who teach ELL students not trained in the categories (including six of the nine teachers in the focus group held during the site visit at the Reid School), and with the ELL tutors not necessarily trained in more than one category, the district is not educating its ELL students as well as it could be. The need for more category-trained staff may increase as the district moves away from the center school model.

Student Support

The district and individual schools have after-school and summer programming to support learning for ELL students.

The district has several programs with which to meet the needs of ELL students. The ELL coordinator is responsible for coordinating the district's programs. Interviewees told the team that in the summer the district offers a program for beginning ELL students at the elementary level, English Language Instruction Through Enrichment (ELITE). ELL students from each of the elementary schools are eligible to attend. The focus of the program is on English language development through the content areas. It runs for five weeks and is leveled according to grade and English language proficiency.

According to interviews with school administrators, the Morningside Elementary provides an after-school program entitled Project Intecambio in grades 3 through 5 where ELL students whose first language is Spanish are paired with Spanish 4 and AP Spanish students from Pittsfield High School. They meet for one hour each week to build a mentoring relationship based on friendship, language, and a cultural exchange. The program is part of the high school's community service learning program. Interviewees added that two of the high school mentors are ELL students.

The Reid Middle School offers effective after-school programming for ELL students. According to district and school staff, it offers an after-school program for ELL students in English language development (ELD), ELA, and mathematics. A licensed ESL teacher, the mathematics coach, and the ELA coach teach the program, which meets three times a week for one hour. There is also an after-school mathematics program on Mondays for ELL students in grades 6 through 8. Interviewees said that students faithfully attend the program.

As stated previously in this report, the majority of high school age ELL students attend Pittsfield High School. The high school does not have an after-school program; however, the ELL coordinator told the review team that there would be additional funding for an additional ESL teacher and an after-school program for the 2010-2011 school year.

There are a number of district and school programs that support ELL students. Given the fact that some of those programs are at particular schools, however, including Reid Middle School, and given the discrepancy between the academic improvement of Reid ELL students and ELL students in the district as a whole (see Tables 4 and 5 above), it appears that all ELL students in the district do not receive the same amount of support. This may be of more concern as the district moves away from a center school model, for instance as the number of ELL students increases at the Herberg Middle School. Plans were being made at the time of the onsite visit to institute an after-school program at Herberg in the 2010-2011 school year and to mirror at Herberg other of Reid's supports for ELL students, such as its team teaching approach. The effort to spread these supports to other schools is commendable and merits continued attention.

The district assures that all students have access to special education and accelerated programs, including ELL students.

The district has systems in place to assure that ELL students have access to special education services as well as challenging academic programs. District administrators stated that before ELL students are referred to special education, a series of interventions are attempted. The building assistance meeting (BAM), which may consist of but is not limited to the principal, ESL teacher, content teacher, guidance counselor, and ELL coordinator, reviews the student's test scores, attendance, and other relevant data. The team then determines whether the student's lack of satisfactory progress results from a language or a learning problem. If it is determined to be a learning problem, the student is referred for assessment under the special education law conducted in the student's native language. For example, the school psychologist for Morningside, Allendale, and Reid Middle School is ESL-certified and speaks Spanish. Furthermore, the psychologist has attended workshops and trainings on the assessment of bilingual students. Interpreters are present for ELL families at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and the IEP is translated into the native language of the parent. According to interviews with school staff, an advocate always attends the IEP meetings for ELL students.

According to interviewees at the Reid Middle School, the availability and use of aggregated and disaggregated data has made a considerable difference in the performance of all students, as well as ELL students. The team and ESL teacher use the data to assure that ELL students with the capability have the opportunity to be in high-level placements and have equal access to all school programming. Teachers said, for instance, that if they divide a class into five groupings they place ELL students who are capable with other students in the higher ability groupings.

At the high school level, interviewees stated that Advanced Placement (AP) courses are open to all students, including special education and ELL students. Interviewees told the review team that if needed a counselor, tutor, or liaison provides support for special education or ELL

students in these courses. According to the superintendent and ELL coordinator, however, special education and ELL students are underrepresented in AP courses and the district recognizes the need to try to increase their representation. In 2008-2009, according to data on the ESE website, only four special education students took an AP test (data was not available for LEP students).⁷

The district has procedures in place so that ELL students have access to challenging coursework as well as supportive services, though more work is needed to increase participation in challenging courses.

The district monitors the progress of ELL students who exit the program and has developed extensive interventions and safety nets for all of its students; however, the graduation rates for ELL students lag considerably behind overall graduation rates.

According to interviews with district and school staff, district schools monitor student attendance and academic performance for all students, including students who have transitioned from the ELL program into mainstream classes. Former ELL students, usually called “formerly limited English proficient” or “FLEP” students, are monitored for two years after exiting the program, as required under federal law, in order to support them in continued academic growth. According to the ELL coordinator, the district provides services to or monitors approximately 300 ELL and FLEP students. At the elementary level, the classroom teacher completes a four-page form at quarterly intervals and returns it to the ELL coordinator for review. The form includes the names of the student’s teachers, the student’s MELA-O and MCAS test results and the year, any special education services the student is receiving, the student’s report card results for each quarter, and ratings of the student’s classroom performance. If a student is struggling, the ESL teacher or the tutor describes the strategies provided to the classroom teacher to help the student succeed. Teachers may recommend reclassifying the student as ELL, and parents are involved in any reclassification process.

At the middle and secondary levels, the forms are similar. Every quarter the content teachers complete a four-page form for each student, and the ELL coordinator reviews them. Content teachers enter report card results for language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Teachers describe the strategies they use to support students. They too may recommend reclassification as an ELL if the student is not progressing.

As detailed in the Level 3 section of this report, Pittsfield has extensive safety net programs intended to improve attendance and graduation rates, prevent dropping out, and address problem behavior. Also, the ELL coordinator is notified when ELL students at any level are exhibiting at-

⁷ See the Advanced Placement Participation Report at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/ap_part.aspx; searches for subgroup data may be made at the top right. The four special education students who took an AP test in 2009 were 1.5 percent of the 273 test takers that year, although special education students made up about 19 percent of the student population at both high schools (see Selected Populations under the Students tab in ESE’s Profiles for Pittsfield and Taconic High Schools for 2008-2009, which may be accessed by clicking on the drop-down menu on the right at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/general.aspx?topNavId=1&orgcode=02360000&orgtypecode=5&&dropDownOrgCode=2>).

risk behaviors. The district has systems and structures in place to provide support to students, including ELL students. However, over the last four years, when overall four-year graduation rates for Pittsfield students have risen, graduation rates for ELL students have fallen (see Table 6 below). Though the numbers of ELL students are small, this is another indicator that all students in Pittsfield are not receiving the support they need.

Table 6: Four-Year Graduation Rates for Pittsfield ELL Students Compared with All Pittsfield Students: 2006-2009

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Pittsfield LEP Students	58.3(12)	57.1(14)	54.5(22)	45.8(24)
All Pittsfield Students	67.6(527)	66.3(514)	74.0(558)	72.8(552)
Note 1: Numbers of students in cohort are given in italics in parentheses. Note 2: Pittsfield LEP students in this table include any student who has been LEP for at least one year during the four years since entering high school. Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website				

The district does not have adequate bilingual and bicultural outreach staff to provide linguistically appropriate services, linguistically clear information, and support for parents. As a result few ELL parents participate in school councils, attend school functions, or feel comfortable negotiating the system.

It became apparent from telephone interviews with parents, the parent focus group conducted at the Reid school, and review of translated materials, as well as interviews with school and district staff, that the Pittsfield Public Schools do not meet all of the needs of the families of English Language learners. The district provides oral interpreting services; the ELL coordinator has a request form that staff can fill out for interpreting services as needed. According to an administrator and teachers, interpreters are present for teacher meetings, IEP meetings, or other meetings as the need dictates. A three-day notice is required. Written translations, however, are challenging for the district. The review team did not find evidence of a functioning structure or regular procedures to support the dissemination of attractive and clear, linguistically correct materials to ELL families: what translations the team saw contained grammatical errors and were not written in a style or format likely to engage parents with the schools.

Furthermore, the team learned in interviews that the district does not have a PAC (Parent Advisory Council) for ELL families, a centralized registration process, or one location where ELL families can receive information and communicate their needs. When interviewed (in

Spanish, the first language of the majority of ELL families in Pittsfield), parents expressed confusion about how to register their children when they came to Pittsfield. They said they depend on social workers from the Elizabeth Freeman Center and the Immigration Center to guide them to the right school. Often, they did not find anyone who spoke their language once they got there. Dedicated staff, several of whom speak Spanish, meet registration needs on a largely ad hoc basis.

The district does not have established bilingual outreach staff to reach out to parents, assist in visits to school without three days' notice, and keep parents informed of meetings and events. It has not put in place overall structures for outreach to ELL parents, and interviewees told the team that there are not enough Spanish-speaking staff. In the ELL parent focus group, the parents told the team that they felt left out and not respected. Interviews with staff and parents made it clear to the review team that the system relies on already very busy staff members to meet the needs of ELL families both in the home and at school. This comes at a significant cost in time and effort for these individuals, and often takes them away from primary duties, such as teaching and counseling. In interviews with the review team, the superintendent indicated that he clearly recognizes the need to give higher priority to increasing the involvement of the ELL community in the school system.

At the Reid Middle School, students and parents were complimentary about the school. There was universal respect for the ELL and other staff, although one of the mothers commented that she doesn't feel "respect" for her community in the school system. The ESL teacher organizes events that welcome students and parents to the Reid. Parents said that they feel welcome and often consult the Spanish-speaking staff members. An administrator told the review team that occasionally there may be a conflict among the students. ELL students sometimes do not report problems right away. When they do, they use the mediation process to resolve conflicts. Students at the Reid said they were comfortable with and liked their school.

The ELL coordinator informed the review team that the district was aware of the need for greater ELL family involvement at the high school level and was planning several new family involvement initiatives at Pittsfield High School for the 2010-2011 school year. But the district does not yet have a formal districtwide outreach program for the vulnerable population of ELL families. Without sufficient bilingual outreach personnel specifically responsible for working with parents, without a central location for families to register, receive information, and communicate their needs, and without a PAC for non-English-speaking parents, the district will continue to be deprived of the perspective of ELL families, and the efforts being made by the Pittsfield Public Schools to develop an exemplary ELL program will be slowed.

Level 3 Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The district should review the issues concerning the school choice program and make a concerted effort to reduce the number of students leaving the district to enroll in other schools.

While the district is certainly aware of the increasing number of students who opt to attend other schools under the school choice program, the review team found little evidence of a sustained effort to address this costly problem. Although the district had a study done in 2006 of reasons for leaving or entering the district through school choice, it has not taken any action to stem the loss of students and revenue. According to district data presented to the review team, Pittsfield was assessed \$2.3 million in school choice and charter school tuition for the 2008-2009 school year, of which \$1.7 million was for school choice tuition. Given the current economic situation for all cities and towns, this expense has a major impact on the total district budget.

The district might consider revising the protocol of the 2006 parent questionnaire, making it less global and more specific as it attempts to identify the underlying reasons for students leaving the district. According to the 2006 study, the three highest ranking reasons for leaving the district were quality of classroom instruction, academics and other programs, and class size. The review team heard in many interviews, however, about some negative perceptions of certain schools. According to interviewees, avoidance of these schools may have been the real motivation for some parents to have their children attend school in another community. By uncovering the real reasons for the loss of students to other schools, the district will be able to address the concerns, keep more students in the district, and reduce this expense.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district, through central office leadership, should systematically develop and implement aligned and internally consistent curricula in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Only with strong central leadership over curriculum at all levels will the district arrive at a curriculum which addresses the state's requirements for student learning. Currently responsibility for curriculum development in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies rests with the deputy superintendent, department heads at each high school, a central office coordinator with responsibility for four content areas, the Title I reading coordinator with elementary reading responsibilities, and a part-time, retired English coordinator. With the exception of mathematics, the department heads at each high school operate independently of one another; the mathematics, science, health and physical education coordinator has little direct connection to mathematics curriculum leadership at the high school; the Title I director has responsibility for elementary ELA only; and a retired former English coordinator works with middle school ELA coaches.

The curriculum does not have a common format and does not always reflect alignment with state standards or internal horizontal and vertical alignment. This means that students are not always being taught under a standards-based curriculum, and as a result may not be moving toward the attainment of proficiency as measured by state standards. Central curriculum leadership and a common curriculum format will help the district to develop, revise, and align the curriculum to ensure that students are consistently receiving instruction based on the standards and demonstrating mastery.

Leadership at the central office should direct the development of a single curriculum in each content area for the high schools that is aligned with state standards and vertically aligned with the middle school curriculum.

Allowing the high schools to develop curriculum on their own has resulted in the production of course syllabi rather than complete curricula. Although such alignment has long been required under state law, the syllabi are for the most part not aligned with the state frameworks. In addition, the curriculum work done at the high schools is not vertically aligned with the middle school curriculum. These issues cannot be resolved by individual schools. Rather, leadership from the central office must direct the development of a single high school curriculum for both high schools. And that curriculum should be vertically aligned with curriculum at the middle schools. A single curriculum will ensure consistency and alignment at the high school level, and vertical alignment will facilitate the transition from the middle school level.

The district should continue to provide and support English language arts and mathematics coaches at the elementary and middle school levels.

The elementary and middle school coaches play a key role in supporting classroom teachers. Coaches provide direction and guidance to teachers in group meetings, through classroom observations and modeling, and during individual discussions concerning classroom data. This direct support is important individualized professional development for teachers. Also, guidance from coaches is critical both to ensuring curriculum alignment with state standards and to improving the currently limited internal horizontal and vertical alignment. As district curriculum development continues, the coaches will be central to overseeing the curriculum's use.

The central office should promote instructional strategies that include a range of teaching techniques and that require more active student participation and greater depth of student understanding. The district should monitor implementation of these strategies.

Classroom observations revealed a significantly low incidence of instruction that required students to interact with one another, communicate their thoughts and ideas, and pursue deeper understandings. Teachers also showed little variety in their instructional techniques and only infrequently communicated the expectation to their students that they apply new knowledge. Teachers need more professional development to acquire more rigorous instructional strategies that lead to expanded and deepened student learning. And they will benefit from regular monitoring of their progress in implementing these new instructional strategies effectively. Leadership in this effort must come from the central office and be reinforced in the schools.

Assessment

District leaders should review the existing assessments and develop and implement a plan that will provide for ample and appropriate formative assessments at all levels.

The district administers assessments to address the instructional needs of students in mathematics in grades 2 through 8. However, there are too few assessments of reading comprehension in grades 4 through 8. A variety of end-of-unit tests are used as comprehension assessments, but these assessments are not immediate enough to inform instruction. Although the high schools began to develop common assessments for all subjects, this effort faltered because it did not have leadership in the central office. The high schools have a common formative assessment in mathematics, and should develop assessments to inform instruction in the other core subjects. According to interviewees, the district uses assessment primarily to determine students' progress rather than to address students' instructional needs. Through the systematic use of formative assessment to inform instruction at all grade levels, the district will be able to identify and address students' learning needs and improve their performance.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should provide administrators with clarification and direction on making recommendations for professional growth in evaluations of teachers.

District administrators expressed doubt about whether recommendations for professional growth could be made in a teacher's evaluation when the professional standard had been rated "Satisfactory." Interviewees told the review team that while there are specific instructions on the evaluation protocol that "any category checked as a Growth Area must be documented in the Recommendation for Professional Growth box," and that "one Unsatisfactory means that the teacher does not meet that Standard and requires an Assistance Plan," the protocol is silent about making recommendations when the rating is "Satisfactory." This has created confusion. Perhaps as a result, only slightly more than half of the teachers' evaluations reviewed were found to be instructive, that is, providing specific recommendations for professional growth. In interviews and focus groups, both teachers and representatives from their union said that they want administrators to provide these recommendations.

The district should make clear that it is appropriate to include recommendations for professional growth in a summative evaluation even for a standard rated "Satisfactory," and should provide direction and training for administrators on writing recommendations for professional growth. The purpose of evaluation is to promote teacher growth and improve instruction. The current evaluation procedure, as implemented, does not fully serve these purposes; it should be refined to become a more powerful tool.

The district should include the completed post-observation reports in teacher personnel files together with the summative evaluations in order to have a more complete record of teacher performance.

The district's practice of including only the summative evaluation in teachers' personnel files results in a limited portrayal of teacher performance. The inclusion of teacher post-observation reports with the summative evaluation would provide a more comprehensive and detailed overview of teacher performance, particularly because the summative evaluations often have few recommendations for professional growth. Inclusion of the post-observation records would increase the richness and clarity of the evaluations and create greater understanding of a teacher's performance. It would therefore also increase the instrumental value of the district's teacher evaluation procedure.

Student Support

The district should continue to refine and expand its supports for at-risk students and seek new sources of funding for these programs.

The district has a strong support staff of psychologists and guidance and school adjustment counselors, as well as strong special programs for transitioning and supporting at-risk students. Data shows that they have been effective in improving the district graduation, attendance, and dropout rates. Partnerships with the sheriff's department, Berkshire Community College, the Department of Mental Health, and local employers and agencies have created programs to help students with behavioral and academic problems to finish school. In-school academic support staff, including reading specialists, coaches, and counselors, help students achieve their potential, and after-school and summer programs provide remedial and support opportunities. The attendance committee, dropout prevention committee, and the district's administrators should continue to monitor and assess the effectiveness of these programs, and refine, improve, or replace them as needed. The expected loss of grant funding for some of these programs is of concern to the district; every effort should continue to fund, maintain, and improve support programs for at-risk students.

Financial and Asset Management

The district and the city should continue to take advantage of state funding for high school renovations and to explore options for renovating and reconfiguring the other schools. This should culminate in a long-range building plan.

The city and the district have already received Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) approval for a pre-feasibility study for Taconic High School renovations. MSBA funding for schools in the district is generous enough to make the high school projects viable and attractive to taxpayers. The review team commends the district on its success so far, and recommends that the planning continue and construction follow. The Conte, Crosby, and

Morningside elementary schools and Pittsfield High School are also in need of major renovation and have been proposed to the MSBA for funding.

Although city maintenance of the schools and long-range capital planning for them have taken care of the most pressing problems, funding has not been sufficient for all of the needed capital projects. The April 2010 New England School Development Council (NESDEC) study described building needs at all the schools and presented long-range options for making effective use of the buildings in light of enrollment patterns and program requirements. The school committee should prepare a long-range plan for all the school buildings based on the NESDEC and other studies. This long-range plan will provide a blueprint for the future, guiding facilities renovation and use in the district.

ELL Recommendations

The district should include long-term planning and goals for the ELL program in the District Improvement Plan. To ensure regular in-depth discussion of ELL needs and planning for ELL program improvement at its highest levels, it should also establish appropriate meeting structures.

Pittsfield's population of ELL students has grown over the last decade. While it has improved its ELL program and the program at the Reid School is particularly supportive of ELL students, districtwide scores and the graduation rate for ELL students show that that improvement needs to be continued and made consistent across the district. Also, the district has not to date been as successful as it would like to be in involving ELL families in the schools and securing their participation on the school councils.

The DIP, however, does not contain references to the ELL program, staff, students, or parents, and it was unclear to the review team that issues concerning the ELL program, ELL students, and ELL families are considered and discussed by the superintendent and other top-level district administrators as often as they should be and in the depth necessary. To make the improvement of the ELL program a districtwide priority, the district should ensure that it has meeting structures in place at its highest levels that allow for regular in-depth discussion and decision-making with respect to issues involving the ELL program, ELL students, and ELL families, and these issues should be made part of future District Improvement Plans. These steps would accelerate the district's progress in improving its ELL programs and raising the academic achievement of its ELL students, and would also facilitate the development of a long-term strategy for involving ELL families more fully in all aspects of school life.

In developing the aligned and internally consistent curricula in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies recommended in the Level 3 part of this report, the district should ensure that ELPBO objectives are incorporated into them. The district should also develop a written ESL curriculum based on the ELPBO.

Although the district uses pacing guides that incorporate Massachusetts curriculum frameworks standards, it has neither a complete aligned regular education curriculum nor a written ESL curriculum based on the ELPBO. In their absence, the ESL teacher at the Reid school works with regular education staff in an effective collaboration to incorporate ELPBO objectives in lesson plans when sheltering content. Not only should the district develop a written ESL curriculum based on the ELPBO, but also the ELPBO should be incorporated into the complete, aligned district curriculum. Integration of the ELPBO into the district curriculum will assist students in learning the content of the curriculum and help them learn English simultaneously.

The district should continue to replicate the successful model for educating ELL students developed at the Reid Middle School.

The Reid Middle School has organized teachers into teams that use the common planning time they have four times weekly to analyze data and modify curriculum. The ELA coach functions as the data team leader and has established systematic procedures for the collection of data for all

subgroups. The ESL teacher participates on these teams and gives special attention to disaggregated data about ELL students, working together with the regular education teachers to shelter content and integrate ELPBO objectives into the content. The ESL teacher and the ELL tutor engage in co-teaching with mathematics and ELA teachers. ELL students have a variety of supports including MCAS test preparation, mathematics and ELA labs, and two after-school programs. Students said that they feel comfortable at the school and like it. Parents feel welcome and often consult the Spanish-speaking staff members. Assessment scores at the school have improved markedly. This still-developing structure is a model which bears continued scrutiny and should be applied to other schools with significant ELL populations, as the district has begun to do at Herberg Middle School and Pittsfield High School, so as to meet the needs and boost the achievement of ELL students across the district as the district moves away from a center school model.

The district should continue to provide category training and make sure that all staff teaching ELL students have received it. Also, it should reach agreement with the teachers' union on a method for supervisors to use to ensure that all ELL students receive high-quality instruction tailored to their needs.

The district has several in-house category trainers, and large numbers of the district's teachers have received category training since 2007-2008. However, there are some regular education teachers who teach ELL students who have not received any category training, including, at the time of the review, six of the nine teachers in the Reid ELL focus group. The ESL teachers or the tutors push-in with the content teacher to support ELL students in the regular classroom when the teacher is not category trained. The tutors themselves are not necessarily trained in more than one category. Furthermore, the use of a sheltered instruction observation protocol has been discontinued in the district after one principal used it and the teachers' union filed a grievance. Making sure that there are no teachers teaching ELL students without category training and increasing the amount of category training all teachers and tutors who teach ELL students have had will continue the gains in achievement district ELL students have made (see Table 5 above) and help them to reach state levels of proficiency at every grade (see Table 4 above). The district will have greater flexibility and more options in placing students and teachers, which may be especially necessary as the district moves away from the center school model. And arriving at agreement with the teachers' union on a method for monitoring the instruction of ELL students will allow instruction for this population to be monitored by principals as closely as instruction for other students.

The district should consider the establishment of a central location with bilingual staff to enroll and assess ELL students and place them in appropriate programs, and to provide outreach to their families.

The district does not have a central location with bilingual outreach staff to help register ELL students and to welcome, assist, and advocate for ELL parents. Unless an interpreter is requested three days before, parents have to rely for help on on-the-spot interpreters who may be at the schools, which takes staff away from their other, primary responsibilities. Bilingual and

bicultural outreach staff centrally located can provide clear information for parents, and in their own languages. They can also help parents make informed choices for their children should there be behavioral problems, low academic achievement, disabilities, or any other needs. The district would benefit by having a centralized and coordinated approach to meeting the needs of its non-English-speaking parents and by providing a voice for them through such a center.

The district should establish a districtwide ELL Parent Advisory Council.

According to the review team's evidence, ELL parents are not represented on school improvement councils. In interviews, parents said that they sometimes felt left out and not respected in the Pittsfield Public Schools. The creation of a districtwide Parent Advisory Council would provide a venue for parents to meet regularly and discuss issues of concern, hear presentations by school department officials, and take a more active role in their children's education and the life of the district. A bilingual outreach worker could help organize and facilitate the meetings in conjunction with the ELL coordinator.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Pittsfield Schools was conducted from April 13-April 16, 2010, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Level 3 Review was conducted by:

Rena Shea, Leadership and Governance

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction

Dolores Fitzgerald, Assessment

Dr. William Contreras, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. George Gearhart, Joanne Grenier and Helen Apostolides, Student Support

Dr. George Gearhart, Financial and Asset Management

Dolores Fitzgerald also served as Level 3 review team coordinator.

The ELL review was conducted by:

Dr. Arnold Clayton, Leadership and Governance

Joanne Grenier: Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment

Helen Apostolides, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support

Dr. Arnold Clayton also served as ELL review team coordinator.

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

The review team conducted interviews with the following: Pittsfield finance director and maintenance director.

The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Pittsfield school committee: school committee chair, the mayor and four other school committee members.

The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the United Educators of Pittsfield: president, vice president, grievance chairperson, grievance committee member and community outreach person.

The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Pittsfield Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent for career/vocational technical education, assistant business manager, human resource director, early childhood curriculum director, ELL curriculum coordinator. Focus groups were conducted with 11 elementary school teachers, 4 middle school teachers, and 5 high school teachers. A focus group was also conducted with 7 members of school improvement councils.

- The review team visited the following schools in the Pittsfield Public Schools as part of the Level 3 review: Robert T. Capeless (pre-K through grade 5), John C. Crosby (pre-K -grade 5), Morningside Community School (pre-K- grade 5, Stearns Elementary (K-grade 5), Williams Elementary School (K - grade 5), Theodore Herberg Middle School (grades 6-8), Pittsfield High School (grades 9-12) and Taconic High School (grades 9-12)..
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals.
 - The review team conducted 40 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the eight schools visited.

The review team visited the following school in the Pittsfield Public Schools as part of the ELL review: the John T. Reid Middle School (grades 6-8)

- During this school visit, the review team conducted interviews with the school principal, dean of students, ELA coach/data team leader, and the district ELL coordinator.
- The review team conducted a focus group with teachers of ELL students and a separate focus group, as well as telephone interviews, with parents of ELL students.
- The review team conducted eight classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects.

The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:

- District profile data
- Comprehensive Annual District and School Data Review
- Latest Coordinated Program Review Report or follow-up Mid-cycle Report
- 2007 EQA Technical Report
- Staff contracts
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2009
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile

The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):

- Organization chart
- District Improvement Plan
- School Improvement Plans
- School committee policy manual
- Curriculum guide
- High school program of studies
- Calendar of formative and summative assessments
- Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
- Descriptions of student support programs
- Program evaluations
- Student and Family Handbooks
- Faculty Handbook
- Professional Development Plan and program/schedule/courses
- Teacher planning time/meeting schedules
- Teacher evaluation tool
- Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools
- Job descriptions (for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
- Principal evaluations

- Randomly selected personnel files
- District procedures and assessments to identify ELL students and assess their level of English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Agreement Between the Pittsfield School Committee and The United Educators of Pittsfield, August 25 through August 24, 2009
- New England School Development Council (NESDEC) Pittsfield, MA, Capacity and Facility Study

The review team reviewed the following documents at the John T. Reid Middle School visited in connection with the ELL part of the review:

- School Improvement Plan
- Calendar of formative and summative assessments for the school
- Copies of data analyses/reports used in the school
- Descriptions of student support programs at the school
- Student and Family Handbooks for the school
- Teacher planning time/meeting schedules at the school
- Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools used at the school

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 3/ELL review of the Pittsfield Public Schools, conducted from April 13-16, 2010.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>April 13</p> <p>8:15-9:15</p> <p>Introductory meeting with district leaders</p> <p>9:30-11:00</p> <p>Interview with: superintendent</p> <p>Interview curriculum leaders.</p> <p>11:00-11:30 Team Meeting</p> <p>11:30-12:15</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>12:15-1:45</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>human resource Staff</p> <p>professional development staff</p> <p>1:45-2:15</p> <p>Team Meeting</p> <p>Review Documents</p> <p>2:15-3:30</p> <p>Interviews with</p>	<p>April 14</p> <p>8:00-8:30</p> <p>Team Meeting</p> <p>8:30-10:00</p> <p>Interview with Superintendent</p> <p>Interview with Financial and Asset Management leaders</p> <p>10:00-10:30</p> <p>Team Meeting</p> <p>10:30-12:00</p> <p>Interview with curriculum leaders</p> <p>Interview with student support staff</p> <p>12:00-12:30</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p>12:30-1:00</p> <p>Team Meeting</p> <p>1:00-2:30</p> <p>Interview with HR and PD</p>	<p>April 15</p> <p>8:00-3:00</p> <p>ELL Team visits</p> <p>The Reid MS</p> <p>Interview Principal</p> <p>Classroom Visits</p> <p>3:00 -4:00</p> <p>Reid Teacher Focus Group</p> <p>4:00-5:00</p> <p>ELL Parent Focus Group at Reid</p> <p>8:00-3:00</p> <p>Level Three Team</p> <p>Principal Interview and Classroom Visits to :</p> <p>Taconic HS</p> <p>Pittsfield HS</p> <p>Herberg MS</p> <p>Morningside Community School</p> <p>1:00-2:30</p> <p>Interview with central office and school curriculum</p>	<p>April 16</p> <p>Level 3 review school visits</p> <p>8:00-11:30</p> <p>Morningside Community School</p> <p>Capeless</p> <p>Crosby</p> <p>Stearns</p> <p>Williams 1</p> <p>.</p> <p>ELL review school visit</p> <p>Reid</p> <p>11:45-2:00</p> <p>Working Lunch and Team Meeting</p> <p>2:00-2:45</p> <p>Meeting with Superintendent</p> <p>3:00-4:00</p> <p>Exit Meeting with District and School Leaders</p>

assessment and data staff	staff	leaders	
student support staff	Interview with financial and asset management staff	3:00 -4:00	
3:30-4:30	2:30-3:00	Elementary teacher focus group	
Team Meeting	Team Meeting		
Review of Documents	3:00-4:00	Middle school teacher focus group	
	Interview with teachers' association members		
	Parent focus group	High school teacher focus group	
		4:30-5:30	
		School committee interview	