



Randolph Public Schools Level 4 District Review

March 2011



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Commissioner

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Overview of Level 4 District Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. CDSA will periodically review districts placed in Level 4 under 603 CMR 2.05(1)¹ or previously declared “underperforming” by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) and placed on turnaround plans. The purpose of this review of Level 4 districts is to provide the Department and the Board with information allowing them to assess the extent to which the district has strengthened its systems since its placement in Level 4 or the implementation of its turnaround plan, in order to determine future ESE assistance and intervention.

Key Questions

Four overarching key questions guide the work of the review team in these reviews.

1. How has the district addressed the issues that placed it in Level 4?
2. Is student achievement on the rise?
3. Do the district and schools have strong systems and practices in place?
4. Has the district built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own, without continued assistance from ESE targeted to the district?

Methodology

The 2010-2011 reviews use former district review reports, the district’s turnaround plan, an analysis of the district’s current systems and practices, and district and student data in order to assess the district’s progress and its capacity to sustain improvements. To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the Key Questions and for each of the six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.** Team members preview selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit to the district and schools. The team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

¹ Approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in April 2010.

Randolph Public Schools

The site visit to the Randolph Public Schools was conducted from October 25 - October 28, 2010. The site visit included visits to the following district schools: Elizabeth G. Lyons Elementary School (K-6), John F. Kennedy Elementary School (PK-6), Margaret L. Donovan Elementary School (K-6), Martin E. Young Elementary School (K-6), Randolph Community Middle School (7-8) and Randolph High School (9-12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile²

The public school system of the town of Randolph, Massachusetts was declared underperforming by the Board of Education³ on November 27, 2007. Among the reasons cited for that decision were reports by the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and the Department of Education⁴ that focused on a negative perception of the district leadership on the part of both the public and town officials. A recent change in the community governance structure of the town has combined with a number of other circumstances, including increased funding and new district leadership, to exert a positive effect on its school system. Beginning in 2010, the town shifted from a board of selectmen-town meeting to a town manager-town council form of government. One member of the nine-member town council is now annually chosen by the council to serve as a voting member of the seven-member school committee. Meetings are held between the town council and the school committee monthly. In 2008, voters approved a large operational tax override of \$5.5 million for the Randolph Public Schools.

In 2010 a new superintendent of schools assumed the leadership of the district where turnaround work had been diligently pursued by his predecessor. The district leadership team at the central office includes the superintendent, an assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, an executive director of administration and finance, a director of human resources, a director of student services, a director of grants and special projects, and a director of English language learners and world languages. There are six directors in place supervising mathematics, English language arts, science, social studies, alternative programs, and Title I. The district has one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools.

The school population decreased steadily for several years, declining from 3,450 students in 2007 to 2,851 students in 2010; it has risen to 2,876 in 2011. Over that same period the percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, thus meeting the state criteria for low-income, has increased from 40.8 percent to 53.6 percent, considerably higher than the 2011 state rate of 34.2 percent. The student population continues to be diverse, as

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

³ As the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education was then called.

⁴ As the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was then called.

shown in Table 1 below, with higher percentages of African-American and Asian students and lower percentages of white and Hispanic students than statewide.

Table 1: 2009-10 Randolph Public Schools Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

| Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity | Number | Percent of Total | Selected Populations | Number | Percent of Total |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------------|--------|------------------|
| African-American | 1,469 | 51.5 | First Language not English | 1,150 | 40.3 |
| Asian | 470 | 16.5 | Limited English Proficient | 184 | 6.5 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 243 | 8.5 | Low-income | 1,468 | 51.5 |
| Native American | 13 | 0.5 | Special Education | 601 | 20.5 |
| White | 573 | 20 | Free Lunch | 1,118 | 39.2 |
| Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander | 11 | 0.4 | Reduced-price lunch | 350 | 12.3 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic | 71 | 2.5 | Total enrollment | 2,851 | 100.0 |

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The local appropriation to the Randolph Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was \$35,850,116, up slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of \$35,350,116. School-related expenditures by the town were estimated at \$5,377,942 for fiscal year 2011, up slightly from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of \$5,052,184. In fiscal year 2010, the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district (\$35,350,073), expenditures by the town (\$13,710,396), and expenditures from other sources such as grants (\$5,526,770), was \$54,587,239. Actual net school spending⁵ in fiscal year 2010 was \$40,723,714.

Student Performance⁶

As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3 below, in 2010 Randolph's Composite Performance Index (CPI)⁷ was somewhat below the CPI for students statewide. The subgroups in Randolph whose

⁵ Net school spending includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures, transportation, grants, and revolving funds.

⁶ Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

⁷ The Composite Performance Index is a measure, based on MCAS results or, for some students with disabilities, MCAS-Alt results, of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency (a CPI of 100). For more information about the Composite Performance Index see the "2010 Glossary of AYP Reporting Terms" or the more detailed "School Leader's Guide to the 2010 Accountability Reports," both available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ayp/2010/>.

CPIs were more than one or two CPI points below the CPI of the same subgroup statewide were the white; multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino; English language learner (ELL); and special education subgroups for ELA and the white; multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino; and special education subgroups for mathematics.

In ELA, the median student growth percentile (SGP)⁸ for all students was very close to the median SGP statewide (49.0 versus 50.0); all subgroups had median SGPs showing moderate growth except for Asian students, who had a median SGP slightly above the moderate range (61.0), and special education students, who had a notably low median SGP (33.0). In mathematics, on the other hand, the median SGP for all students (62.0) was above the moderate range, and the Asian, Hispanic/Latino, white, formerly limited English proficient, and low-income subgroups all also had median SGPs that showed better than moderate growth. For both ELA and mathematics, the multi-race, non-Hispanic/Latino subgroup, made up of 35 students in 2010, had median SGPs below the moderate range (39.0 in ELA and 34.0 in mathematics).

⁸ “Student growth percentiles” are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student’s MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see “MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide” and other resources available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>.

**Table 2: 2010 Randolph and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
by Selected Subgroups
ELA**

| | Randolph | | State | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | CPI | <i>Median SGP</i> | CPI | <i>Median SGP</i> |
| All Students | 79.4 | 49.0 | 86.9 | 50.0 |
| Asian (243) | 90.1 | 61.0 | 89.8 | 59.0 |
| African American/Black (833) | 75.2 | 47.0 | 76.6 | 46.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino (132) | 74.4 | 42.0 | 73.6 | 47.0 |
| White (354) | 84.3 | 51.0 | 90.5 | 50.0 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino (35) | 77.1 | 39.0 | 86.3 | 49.0 |
| ELL (80) | 56.3 | 58.0 | 59.8 | 50.0 |
| FLEP (119) | 81.9 | 57.0 | 80.1 | 55.0 |
| Special Education (359) | 57.9 | 33.0 | 67.3 | 41.0 |
| Low Income (896) | 76.7 | 48.0 | 76.5 | 46.0 |

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.

2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table 3: 2010 Randolph and State
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)
by Selected Subgroups
Mathematics**

| | Randolph | | State | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | CPI | <i>Median SGP</i> | CPI | <i>Median SGP</i> |
| All Students | 71.3 | 62.0 | 79.5 | 50.0 |
| Asian (242) | 88.8 | 73.0 | 89.0 | 62.0 |
| African American/Black (835) | 64.6 | 57.0 | 65.1 | 48.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino (134) | 65.1 | 67.0 | 63.9 | 47.0 |
| White (354) | 77.8 | 65.0 | 84.1 | 50.0 |
| Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino (35) | 65.0 | 34.0 | 78.6 | 48.0 |
| ELL (82) | 55.5 | 59.5 | 56.2 | 53.0 |
| FLEP (120) | 74.2 | 66.0 | 73.3 | 55.0 |
| Special Education (359) | 50.8 | 40.5 | 57.5 | 43.0 |
| Low Income (900) | 68.1 | 62.0 | 67.1 | 47.0 |

Note: 1. Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.

2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Tables 4 and 5 below show that the percentage of district students scoring in the Proficient or Advanced category has increased between 2008 and 2010 both in ELA (from 49 to 52 percent) and in mathematics (from 37 to 43 percent). In ELA, this increase was slightly smaller than the increase in the proficiency rate statewide over these years (3 percentage points to 4); in mathematics, it was slightly greater (6 percentage points to 4). In both subjects the difference between the district proficiency rate and the state rate was 16 percentage points in 2010. The median student growth percentile for the district has also increased over those years, from 44.0 to 49.0 in ELA and from 48.0 to 62.0 in mathematics (median SGP for 2008 and 2009 not shown in the tables). In grade 6 in ELA and grade 4 in math, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or above decreased in 2010 as compared with 2008, by 5 and 4 percentage points respectively; in all other grades, the 2010 percentage scoring Proficient or above showed an increase over 2008, the average increase being over 5 percentage points for ELA and nearly 8 percentage points for math.

**Table 4: 2008-2010 Randolph Proficiency Rates,
with 2010 Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
ELA**

| Grade | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | <i>Median SGPs 2010</i> |
|----------------------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| Grade 3—District | 37 | 40 | 47 | <i>N/A</i> |
| Grade 3—State | 56 | 57 | 63 | <i>N/A</i> |
| Grade 4—District | 27 | 27 | 30 | <i>34.0</i> |
| Grade 4—State | 49 | 53 | 54 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 5—District | 41 | 39 | 48 | <i>49.0</i> |
| Grade 5—State | 61 | 63 | 63 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 6—District | 59 | 50 | 54 | <i>55.0</i> |
| Grade 6—State | 67 | 66 | 69 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 7— District | 51 | 53 | 55 | <i>43.0</i> |
| Grade 7— State | 69 | 70 | 72 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 8— District | 66 | 71 | 68 | <i>56.0</i> |
| Grade 8— State | 75 | 78 | 78 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 10— District | 62 | 68 | 68 | <i>63.5</i> |
| Grade 10— State | 74 | 81 | 78 | <i>50.0</i> |
| All Grades— District | 49 | 49 | 52 | <i>49.0</i> |
| All Grades—State | 64 | 67 | 68 | <i>50.0</i> |

Note: Proficiency rate refers to the percentage scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table 5: 2008-2010 Randolph Proficiency Rates,
with 2010 Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), compared to State:
by Grade
Mathematics**

| Grade | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | <i>Median SGPs 2010</i> |
|----------------------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| Grade 3—District | 45 | 39 | 48 | <i>N/A</i> |
| Grade 3—State | 61 | 60 | 65 | <i>N/A</i> |
| Grade 4—District | 30 | 21 | 26 | <i>38.0</i> |
| Grade 4—State | 49 | 48 | 48 | <i>49.0</i> |
| Grade 5—District | 26 | 36 | 44 | <i>65.5</i> |
| Grade 5—State | 52 | 54 | 55 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 6—District | 36 | 36 | 37 | <i>57.0</i> |
| Grade 6—State | 56 | 57 | 59 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 7— District | 30 | 34 | 37 | <i>61.0</i> |
| Grade 7— State | 47 | 49 | 53 | <i>50.0</i> |
| Grade 8— District | 39 | 41 | 44 | <i>73.0</i> |
| Grade 8— State | 49 | 48 | 51 | <i>51.0</i> |
| Grade 10— District | 60 | 62 | 73 | <i>77.0</i> |
| Grade 10— State | 72 | 75 | 75 | <i>50.0</i> |
| All Grades— District | 37 | 38 | 43 | <i>62.0</i> |
| All Grades—State | 55 | 55 | 59 | <i>50.0</i> |

Note: Proficiency rate refers to the percentage scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Between 2006-2007 and 2008-2009,⁹ students attended school at a fairly consistent rate of from 94.7 percent to 95.0 percent, reflecting an average of 8.7 days absent or fewer. The district's chronic absence rate decreased from 15.9 percent in 2007-2008 and 16.1 percent in 2008-2009 to 14.9 percent in 2009-2010 (as compared to the statewide chronic absence rate of 13.0 percent); however, the chronic absence rate for grade 9 students reached 35.7 percent in 2009-2010 (as compared to the statewide chronic absence rate for grade 9 of 20.0 percent).¹⁰ From 2006-2007

⁹ 2009-2010 attendance (94.9 percent) and days absent rates (8.5 percent), which became available just before the publication of this report, were again consistent, improving slightly from 2008-2009.

¹⁰ The chronic absence rate is defined as the percentage of students who are absent for more than 10 percent of the days that they are enrolled in the district.

to 2009-2010, the retention in grade rate has declined steadily, from 4.6 percent to 3.3 percent; however, in grade 9, which has had the greatest number of retentions over these years, the retention rate was 20 percent in 2009-2010. In-school suspensions were 7.2, 18.1 and 14.1 percent over the years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009, and out-of-school suspensions were reported as 5.5, 11.3 and 10.0 percent over the same period.¹¹ The district continues to struggle with a graduation rate that is lower than the statewide rate and fell from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009 (from 77.5 percent in 2006-2007 to 73.9 percent in 2007-2008 and then 64.4 percent in 2008-2009) and with an annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 that has been higher than the statewide rate every year since 2003-2004 and that reached 7.2 percent (as compared to the state's 2.9 percent) in 2008-2009.¹²

¹¹ Data for 2009-2010, made available just before the publication of this report, shows an increase in in-school suspensions, to 16.9 percent, and a decrease in out-of-school suspensions, to 9.2 percent.

¹² Data for 2009-2010 shows a slight improvement in the graduation rate (66.7 percent compared to a state rate of 82.1 percent) and a marked improvement in the dropout rate (4.4 percent compared to 2.9 percent statewide). Randolph's 2009-2010 dropout rate was the lowest it has been since 2003-2004.

Findings

Key Question 1: How has the district addressed the issues that placed it in Level 4?

The Randolph Public Schools have made a concerted and largely successful effort to address the issues that placed them in Level 4.

The Randolph School Committee and the Randolph Board of Selectmen both unanimously adopted the Randolph Public Schools District Turnaround Plan on May 19, 2008. The plan was submitted to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on May 24, 2008, and accepted by the Board on June 25, 2008. Subsequently, the district completed an August 2009 progress report and another progress report in June 2010.

In addition to interviewing central office personnel, school committee members, and town officials, the review team examined the Randolph Public Schools' "Strategic Direction 2008–2012" plan, dated October 18, 2007, and the "Randolph Public Schools District Turnaround Plan," dated May 24, 2008. Team members also reviewed the Turnaround Plan Progress Report dated June 2010 and the list of accomplishments under Goal III of the turnaround plan, put together by joint committee meetings of the town council and school committee, dated July 1, 2010. The three goals of the turnaround plan, the first and third of which mirror the first and third goals of the Strategic Direction plan¹³, are:

GOAL I –Develop, implement and support standards-based curricula and instruction in order to improve achievement by all students in all areas, with particular attention to achievement in mathematics

GOAL II - Improve performance for all special education students

Goal III – Build a high achieving school system for all children with involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community. Working together we will build confidence in and ownership of our schools by all children and their families.

Each of the three goals has a series of action steps. Specific references to each action step, and the determination of the review team about the state of completion for each step, are included in appendix C. Many of the steps have been completed, and all have been at least begun. Several of the steps represent continuing efforts that are underway and projected to continue over the next several years.

The school committee, superintendent, and assistant superintendent identified the turnaround plan as having been the driving force for district daily operations during the past two years. The joint committee of town and school leaders has focused on Goal III of the plan.

¹³ The second goal of the Strategic Direction plan, "The percentage of parents who actively participate in their child's education will increase in excess of 20% per year for the next five years," is reflected in the action steps under Goal III of the turnaround plan. Goal II of the turnaround plan is new to it—it was not included as a goal in the Strategic Direction plan.

Fundamental to identifying and implementing programs and practices that would result in the requisite changes to achieve the three goals was the need to provide the necessary fiscal resources. That provision was largely achieved with the April 2008 passage of the Proposition 2-1/2 operational override of \$5.5 million for the schools. Later on, the town forwarded an additional appropriation of \$500,000 for fiscal year 2011 to further bolster the improvement effort. Beyond financial support, elected officials for both the town and the school district, along with the town manager and the superintendent of schools, have heavily invested, in a significant collaboration, in building understanding, trust, and support for the schools. Joint meetings between the parties are held monthly to focus on Goal III of the Turnaround Plan of involving the entire Randolph community in improving the district's schools. Administrators, elected officials, teachers, and parents acknowledged in interviews the complexity of the task, and the work yet to done, particularly in developing a shared vision of improvement among the diverse constituency. But the progress that has been made is substantial. A positive relationship between the school committee and administration and the teachers' association has been created which is conducive to problem identification, dispute resolution, and productive collective bargaining. Progress has also been made by the district in increasing the confidence and engagement of families in the school system: according to anecdotal evidence received from both administrators and parents, Randolph residents are returning to the public schools—according to administrators, particularly to Randolph High School.¹⁴

Based on the review of district documents and interviews with the superintendent and assistant superintendent, which dealt in detail with the action steps under Goal III, the review team has determined that the Randolph school district is achieving success in addressing the major components of Goal III and has the capacity to address unanticipated obstacles not covered in the turnaround plan. As a result of the focus that has been placed on it, the district moving in the right direction with respect to Goal III.

To address Goal I, the district has introduced most of the elements that constitute a system of curriculum and instruction. This report will describe the elements that have been introduced, as well as identifying areas in which the district recognizes that continuing work is needed. Achievement as measured by trends in MCAS results--by the percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level--is improving, although these percentages remained in each case 16 percentage points below the percentages of state students achieving proficiency in ELA and mathematics in 2010. Not only did district scores in the aggregate for both ELA and mathematics improve over the period between 2008 and 2010, median student growth percentiles also demonstrated improvement during that period, especially in mathematics. In 2010, the

¹⁴ According to figures available in the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) on the ESE web site, the percentage of school-aged residents enrolled in the Randolph Public Schools fell every year from 2006 to 2009 (84 percent in 2006, 83 percent in 2007, 81 percent in 2008, and 78 percent in 2009). In 2010, it held steady at 78 percent. According to the School/District Profiles on the ESE website, the district's student population increased in 2011 (by 25 students) for the first time since 2006. Also according to Profiles, the student population at Randolph High School increased by 18 in 2011, after decreasing every year from 2006 to 2010, including decreases of 77 students and 76 students in 2009 and 2010.

district nearly matched the state median SGP in ELA (49.0 versus 50.0) and exceeded it in mathematics (62.0 versus 50.0).

Progress toward achieving Goal II was clear, but not as well reflected by MCAS data. Student performance in the special education subgroup between 2008 and 2010, as measured by the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level or above, actually decreased in both subjects, falling from 15 to 13 percent in ELA and from 12 to 11 percent in mathematics. Median student growth percentiles for students in the subgroup remained constant at 33.0 in ELA in 2010 as compared to 2008, after a jump to 38.5 in 2009, but showed steady progress over this period in mathematics, rising from 35.0 to 38.0 to 40.5.

The district did, however, report progress at the elementary level and in some grades at the high school in moving toward inclusion of most special education students; it was commended by the Program Quality Assurance Services unit of ESE in its 2010 Coordinated Program Review Report (based on a 2009 site visit) for its comprehensive approach to bringing inclusion practices into the school district. See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2010/0244.doc>. Since 2007, in addition, it has added or improved numerous programs designed to assist all students, from which special education students benefit along with other subgroups. Thus, although Randolph special education students are not yet achieving progress on MCAS, the review team believes that the district's concentration on designing and improving delivery systems will bring about this improvement in the future.

The district has taken many steps that address both Goal I and Goal II of the Turnaround Plan--to use standards-based curricula and instruction to improve student achievement and to improve the performance of special education students. According to the superintendent, administrators with helpful expertise in curriculum, instructional methodologies, assessment, data analysis, and special education have been hired. Also, significant professional development has been undertaken in the past two years on such topics as standards-based instruction, special education inclusion, instruction of ELL students (category training), and the use of data to inform instruction. While more sheltered English immersion training and training in the areas of inclusion and data analysis for instructional decision-making are needed, as well as implementation of the skills learned in these trainings, a firm foundation has been created for continuing improvement in teaching and learning.

Based on a review of the turnaround plan and the two progress reports, as well as a review of other documents and information received from interviews during the site visit, the district review team concludes that the district has addressed all of the issues that placed it in Level 4 and has made substantial progress toward the three goals of the turnaround plan, though much remains to be accomplished.

Key Question 2: Is student achievement on the rise?

The district has increased achievement in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate but not in all subgroups.

An examination of MCAS data shows that Randolph has, in the aggregate, increased the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA and math between 2008 and 2010, that those percentages increased at most grade levels, and that the district's median student growth percentile in both subjects has increased. (See the Student Performance section above.) The high school achieved an accountability designation of "No Status" as it made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for subgroups for two cycles in a row. (In addition, as of the time of the onsite review the high school had been removed with respect to one standard from the probation imposed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) following its report of 2007.)¹⁵

However, achievement in Randolph has not increased for all subgroups, with decreasing proficiency in 2010 as compared with 2008 among special education and LEP¹⁶ students. See Table 6 below.

¹⁵ While this report was being prepared, in a letter dated February 10, 2011, the NEASC notified the school that it has been removed from probation for the standards for accreditation on curriculum, instruction, and community resources for learning. It stated that it would review the school's accreditation status when it reviews its Five-year Progress Report, due March 1, 2012.

¹⁶ In this report the terms "limited English proficient" and "LEP" are used interchangeably with "English language learner" and "ELL."

**Table 6: Percentages of Selected Randolph Subgroups Achieving Proficiency on MCAS
2008-2010,
Compared to Percentages of All Randolph Students and All State Students—All Grades**

| | ELA | | | Mathematics | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| African-American | 41 (883) | 41 (849) | 43 (833) | 26 (884) | 27 (862) | 32 (835) |
| Asian | 69 (250) | 69 (236) | 73 (243) | 66 (249) | 69 (237) | 72 (242) |
| Hispanic or Latino | 43 (140) | 38 (120) | 44 (132) | 31 (139) | 27 (118) | 39 (134) |
| White | 59 (437) | 61 (392) | 63 (354) | 45 (439) | 47 (391) | 51 (354) |
| Limited English Proficient (LEP) | 29 (93) | 22 (77) | 20 (80) | 29 (94) | 28 (91) | 23 (82) |
| Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP) | 31 (73) | 45 (106) | 53 (119) | 29 (72) | 34 (106) | 47 (120) |
| LEP/FLEP | 30 (166) | 35 (183) | 40 (199) | 29 (166) | 32 (197) | 37 (202) |
| Special Education | 15 (382) | 17 (353) | 13 (359) | 12 (378) | 10 (352) | 11 (359) |
| Low-Income | 40 (820) | 41 (840) | 47 (896) | 31 (816) | 30 (850) | 39 (900) |
| All District Students | 49 (1,736) | 49 (1,635) | 52 (1,608) | 37 (1,737) | 38 (1,643) | 43 (1,611) |
| All State Students | 64 (501,261) | 67 (499,025) | 68 (498,668) | 55 (501,976) | 55 (499,717) | 59 (498,632) |

Notes: 1. Numbers in italics in parentheses are the numbers of students tested.

2. Percent achieving proficiency refers to percent scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

While the proficiency rates of LEP students declined from 2008 to 2009 and 2009 to 2010, the proficiency rates of both formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students and the combined group of LEP and FLEP students have risen steadily since 2008. It may be that as LEP students improve their academic achievement, they are also improving their proficiency in English, and

so they become reclassified as FLEP students. (An influx of new students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may also have contributed to the fall in scores; see the section on ELL students in the first Student Support finding below.) Nevertheless, the review team notes that ESE's Coordinated Program Review Report dated August 19, 2010, and describing an onsite review of November-December 2009, found many instances of noncompliance with respect to LEP students, including inappropriate early exit from the ELL program, insufficient ESL instruction, lack of appropriate licensure for some ESL teachers, insufficient training of content teachers (category training), lack of access to the appropriate grade-level general education curriculum, and lack of an ESL curriculum.¹⁷

Although one of the goals in the turnaround plan was to improve performance for all special education students, their proficiency rates were slightly lower in 2010 than in 2008, when they were already very low.¹⁸ As seen in Tables 2 and 3 above, the achievement of Randolph special education students as measured by CPI is considerably lower than the achievement of special education students statewide in both ELA and mathematics.

While increases in proficiency rates for all Randolph students from 2008 to 2010 are not much different from the increases in statewide rates¹⁹, and proficiency rates for LEP and special education students are now lower than in 2008, in the judgment of the review team the district's new curriculum; new curriculum directors, coaches, and common planning time; new inclusive approach to special education and multiple new support programs; its development of an ESL curriculum and emphasis on ELL category training; and the progress its staff has made in learning to analyze data and use it to improve instruction mean that student achievement in Randolph is likely to continue improving.

¹⁷ See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/review/cpr/reports/2010/0244.doc>

¹⁸ The CPI for special education students was also lower in 2010 than in 2008 in ELA (57.9 in 2010 compared with 63.4 in 2008), though in mathematics their CPI was slightly higher in 2010 (50.8 versus 49.6 in 2008).

¹⁹ As reported in the Student Performance section above, in ELA the increase in the proficiency rate for Randolph students was slightly smaller than the increase in the proficiency rate statewide over these years (3 percentage points to 4); in mathematics, it was slightly greater (6 percentage points to 4).

Key Question 3: Do the district and schools have strong systems and practices in place?

Leadership and Governance

School district and town officials have established a significant collaboration in support of the public schools; they have the view that unified support of the schools will result in higher performing schools and improve the quality of the community.

The Technical Report of its 2006 review by the state's Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (page 3) and the District Leadership Evaluation Report prepared for the Massachusetts Department of Education²⁰ in 2007 (page 15) cite the relationship between the school district and community as a major deterrent to improving the Randolph Public Schools. District leaders had lost the trust of the municipal leadership, and information provided by the district was not considered credible. Inadequate budget funding levels from 2003 to 2008, failed attempts at Proposition 2-1/2 operational overrides, and continued decline in the public schools were not addressed because of this dysfunctional relationship.

In interviews, school committee members, town officials, and school and union personnel cited a change in the relationship between the school district and the town beginning with the development in 2007 of the Randolph Public Schools' "Strategic Direction 2008–2012" plan. After a period of two years from 2004–2006 when according to the 2006 EQA Technical Report (p. 7) the district did not have a District Improvement Plan, the prior superintendent initiated a 2006–2008 strategic planning process, entitled "Excellence in Education: One Diverse Community Working for Randolph's Future." This process involved approximately two hundred and fifty community representatives. The document describes the mission: "The Randolph Public Schools, together with families and the community, will inspire, challenge and empower each student to acquire the knowledge, skills and values to become a responsible and caring citizen in a diverse society." To some, the public discussion of the school system deterioration was a "painful process"; however, it was necessary to bring about change. The goals established in the plan included improvement in student learning and academic achievement, increase of parents' participation in their child's education, and community support and investment in the Randolph schools. The April 2008 passage of the Proposition 2-1/2 operational override of \$5.5 million to restore previously eliminated programs and services in the schools is a significant indication that a change had occurred in the relationship between the school district and the community. A school committee member emphasized the fact that the \$5.5 million override in Randolph was a very large one. An administrator expressed the view that the district is in the midst of developing a "We are in this together" culture.

In November 2007 the Board of Education²¹ voted to declare the Randolph Public Schools underperforming in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws c. 69, s. 1K. The "Randolph Public Schools District Turnaround Plan," required by the Board of Education to address this

²⁰ As the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was then called.

²¹ As the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education was then called.

underperformance of the Randolph public schools, was approved unanimously by the Randolph School Committee and the Randolph Board of Selectmen in May 2008 and submitted to the Board the same month. The consistency between the turnaround plan and the previously developed strategic direction plan was substantiated in interviews with school committee members, town officials, and school personnel and also from a review of the documents. The first and third goals, improvement in student learning and academic achievement, and community support and investment in the Randolph schools, are virtually the same in both documents. Goal II in the turnaround plan focuses on improved performance for all special education students instead of increase in parent participation, which is now included in Goal III of the turnaround plan.

During interviews with town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators it was learned that before the development of the turnaround plan regularly scheduled open meetings began to take place every six weeks between the board of selectmen and the school committee. These joint meetings began to address the separation that existed between town officials and the school system by putting into practice a collaborative effort to build the involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community in the schools. This partnership has been formalized in the turnaround plan under Goal III, with meetings now scheduled monthly to focus on developing strategies to bring about confidence in and ownership of the Randolph educational system by all stakeholders. Since the town changed its charter at the beginning of 2010 to be a town manager-town council form of government, the joint meetings are attended by the town manager, town council members, school committee members, the school superintendent, and the ESE facilitator. Their focus is guided by Goal III of the turnaround plan, which deals primarily with student enrollment, community pride, media relations, and partnerships.

The change in town governance and greater school-town collaboration has resulted in a town councilor being selected by the town council annually to serve as a full voting member of the school committee; this town councilor acts as a liaison between the two bodies, providing immediate feedback between them by attending the meetings of both. The town manager cited a \$500,000 fiscal year 2011 supplementary appropriation for the school department for continued educational improvements as a result of better collaboration and trust. School officials cited community financial contributions to support high school participation in the WGBH-TV academic quiz show and the robotics club. Also cited was the presence of community leaders at school events such as the back-to-school celebration, the school open house, and athletic competitions.

Town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators expressed the belief that the level of collaboration and trust between the district and the town is higher than for many years and that “when the schools do better, the town does better.” There is a belief among the town and school leadership that Randolph is moving in a better direction; this belief is shared by the review team.

The new school superintendent is developing an educational plan to drive the school system, merging the current strategic plan and the turnaround plan into a District Improvement Plan using a grass roots approach and putting a focus on quality teaching and learning.

According to the school committee members who were interviewed, the turnaround plan and the strategic direction plan are driving the school district. Committee business is centered on issues identified in these two plans. A direct link between the district plans and the School Improvement Plans is required by the school committee. Special school committee meetings are held to review School Improvement Plans presented by principals and school council members along with the accomplishments of the previous year. A review of all the School Improvement Plans by the review team revealed direct reference to either the turnaround plan or the strategic direction plan and in most cases both. Principals cited in interviews the linking of their School Improvement Plans with the district plans and also referred to the participation of their school councils. However, principals as well as school committee members and the superintendent, in separate interviews, acknowledged some concerns regarding the under-use of the school councils during a full year of planning and review of school improvement. The parent focus group included no currently active school council members, perhaps indicating under-use of school councils; however, two parents had been elected to different school councils that had yet to begin activities.

As mentioned previously, the superintendent and assistant superintendent identified the turnaround plan and its three goals as having been the driving force of daily operations during the past two years. They indicated, as a result of the focus on the plan, that they think all goals have been addressed, if not attained, and that they believe the district is moving in the right direction.

The superintendent said in interviews that he has reviewed both the strategic direction plan and the turnaround plan. A review of the superintendent's entry plan indicates a review and analysis of the two district plans as well as over twenty-three other documents. In addition, meetings and discussions were held with key stakeholders including the school committee; administrative, instructional, and support personnel; students, parents, and community members; and representatives of unions. Also, the superintendent has met with town officials, community organizations and groups, representatives of ESE, and other state officials. He has begun the process of merging the two current district plans into an improvement plan entitled, "One Randolph-One Purpose." The stated purpose is "Quality Teaching and Learning Everyday in Every Classroom for Every Student." The superintendent has had initial meetings on developing this plan with the school committee, principals, instructional support personnel, and teacher union representatives. He has declared this process to be a "grass roots" approach and not to be "top down." A review of the draft plan finds six "oars" to support reaching the "purpose." They include quality teaching and learning for all; student-centered learning experiences; respect for human differences; no more subgroups—all means all; growth mindset/opportunity to learn for all; and resources. A review of the agendas and minutes of regularly scheduled meetings held in September and October 2010 for central office and school-based administrators and teacher

union representatives showed that a participatory planning process has been initiated. The instructional staff was to be provided an opportunity for ownership in the development of the district "purpose" and the supporting "oars" during the November 2, 2010 professional development day.

For an educational plan to be successful in driving the district toward quality teaching and learning, commitment is required from the school committee, central office administrators, principals, support personnel, and teachers. Commitment is derived from knowledge and ownership of the plan and a belief in the district leadership provided by the superintendent. Opportunities for participation in the District Improvement Plan development process are being provided, thus laying the groundwork for knowledge and ownership of the plan.

A sense of confidence in the leadership of the new superintendent was expressed by school committee members in different meetings. Descriptive comments by school committee members about the superintendent included "great new ideas," "good communications," and "a breath of fresh air." Central office administrators expressed in separate interviews a sense of optimism with regard to improvements to the school system. Separate interviews with all principals signaled notes of caution and concern regarding the extent of two-way communications with the superintendent. Also, some uncertainty was expressed regarding how much site-based authority the principals will have. Teacher union representatives in an interview cited the superintendent's commitment to being open and desire for building trust: the union is looking for a superintendent who listens and participates in shared decision-making. Interviews with teachers presented an unfinished picture of the superintendent's leadership skills since the exposure of the instructional staff to the district improvement planning process is just beginning. The building of an educational team capable of providing quality teaching and learning in every classroom and to every student in Randolph remains unfinished and dependent upon the leadership skills of the superintendent.

Curriculum and Instruction

Since 2008 the district has taken significant steps toward Goal I of the Randolph turnaround plan through development and implementation of a standards-based curriculum in many areas. Work continues, as the district does not yet have a comprehensive document that includes all subjects, is aligned horizontally and vertically, and is accessible to all staff and the public.

A review of curriculum documents and interviews with administrators and staff showed that since the summer of 2008 the district has focused on creating a standards-based curriculum aligned to the state frameworks and the core (national) standards. As a result of the \$5.5 million override for the schools in 2008, the district was able to put in place K-12 curriculum directors and instructional coaches and to restore many positions that had been eliminated during an extended period of lowered community support. The work of curriculum development began with English language arts and mathematics in the summer of 2008.

As curriculum development work began, the curriculum directors worked with staff to develop an understanding of the frameworks and standards as the basis for their work. The work of developing English language arts (ELA) and mathematics curricula K-6 was most pressing, as administrators in interviews indicated that no ELA or mathematics curriculum had been in place for those grades previous to that time. The directors met with staff for six weeks in the summer developing a philosophy, guidelines, and a template for curriculum, and they completed the ELA and math curricula K-6 for the fall of 2008. In conversations with administrators and staff, review team members learned that in the fall of 2007, the district had adopted Macmillan McGraw-Hill's *Treasures* as their K-6 elementary reading program. As the district began ELA curriculum development in the summer of 2008, they began with the Massachusetts frameworks and the core standards, aligning the *Treasures* program with them. Directors stressed in interviews that it is the standards that drive instruction, not the program. According to the turnaround plan progress report of June 2010 and interviews with administrators and staff, all elementary teachers have binders that contain comprehensive curriculum maps, an assessment protocol, rubrics, benchmarks, lesson plans, and teacher resources. Examination of these binders confirmed this. However, the unit overview template only contains the lesson number, an indication as to whether the lesson is optional or required, and the standard; it is not a comprehensive template such as the secondary level has. The binders are used during common planning times.

At the secondary level, curriculum directors, principals, and staff pointed to the secondary curriculum template they developed as the format for all curriculum and course work. The template for secondary curriculum contains the following items: Unit Title and expected number of teaching days; Big Ideas/Essential Questions/Mastery Objectives/State Standards addressed; Key Vocabulary Terms; Instructional Strategies and Formative Assessment Strategies; Resources; Assessments. At the middle and high school levels, the ELA curriculum is based on a study of novels, with all strands of the ELA frameworks being embedded in the courses. This can be seen in the course curriculum documents for these novels.

A review of district programs found that Houghton-Mifflin's *Expressions* is in place for K-5 mathematics. As the program only goes through grade 5, the 6th grade uses the Connected Mathematics Project's *Bits and Pieces* even though the 6th grade is included within the elementary schools. According to the mathematics director, coaches, and teachers, an examination of data found *Bits and Pieces* to be lacking in pre-algebra content, and curriculum pieces were developed to supplement it. Grades 7 and 8 continue with the Connected Mathematics Project (CMP). Additionally, grade 8 offers an Algebra I class.

Interviews with staff and a review of curriculum documents indicated that the district is continuing to work on curriculum each summer as well as during the school year. "A Curriculum Development Progress Report," dated May 28, 2010, documented progress for several areas of curriculum. Science had completed curriculum maps in grades K-12. Shared lesson plans for science for kindergarten through 8th grade were in revision, and similar documents were in progress for the high school. A section labeled "Comments" described what was planned to be done on science curriculum in the summer of 2010. The progress report for

ELA curriculum development at the high school listed novels for each grade, indicated that all curriculum maps would be completed by the summer of 2011, and showed that shared lesson plans and assessments were all at least in progress toward a first draft. For mathematics grades 7-12, curriculum maps were mostly in first draft form with shared lesson plans at various stages. Common assessments were likewise at various stages of progress, with the first drafts of many at the revision stage.

According to the ESL director and the curriculum progress report, the district's Office of English Language Learners was organizing a task force of English language learner (ELL) teachers from different grade spans to create an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum. The ESL curriculum was to be used by both the ESL teachers and the SEI (structured English immersion) teachers at each school site to design language objectives and lesson plans. The progress report estimated that curriculum mapping for ESL would be complete by December 2010 and shared lesson plans and common assessments by the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. The district is in the process of buying supplementary materials to support both English language learners and special education students.

The progress report also contained information on the progress on curricula in history and world languages and such other subjects as art, music, and physical education.

All curriculum documents are contained in grade-level, content-specific binders given to the appropriate teachers. The only comprehensive view and collection of curriculum documents is found in the curriculum directors' office, where a review team member examined it. According to the assistant superintendent and the curriculum directors, the district plans to complete development during the 2010-2011 year of an interactive website where curriculum documents will be accessible on an intranet; its beginnings could be seen at the time of the review. This will provide continuity for staff and allow the district to continue the process of horizontal alignment across schools and begin the process of vertical alignment through the grades.

According to administrators, the turnaround plan drives their everyday operations. Curriculum development has been continuous since the summer of 2008, when the curricula for elementary ELA and math were developed. In the judgment of the review team, the work on developing curriculum has progressed steadily since the summer of 2008, with work still remaining, for instance on developing a formal protocol for curriculum revision. Curriculum work has laid the foundation for instructional initiatives and improvement of instruction. When the development and implementation of a comprehensive curriculum is complete, the district will have the documents necessary to support and guide both supervision and instruction.

The reduction of the number of coaches at the middle and high school levels reduces support for implementing curriculum, improving instructional strategies, and analyzing data to inform instruction.

The review team learned in interviews with administrators, principals, and coaches that the district added a coaching structure to the schools as a result of the successful override in 2008. This included the addition of coaches for mathematics, ELA, and science at the secondary level and two literacy and two math coaches at the elementary level. In 2009, social studies coaching

was added at the secondary level. Coaches have functioned to support staff in implementing new curriculum, in learning new instructional strategies, and in using data. Coaches have taught model lessons, led data meetings during common planning time, and fostered teacher collaboration and the implementation of such structures as flexible cross-grade small groups at the elementary level. According to interviews with teachers, principals, and directors, coaches have been instrumental in implementing a new curriculum and new materials at all levels, but particularly at the elementary level, where there are new literacy and mathematics programs. The district established common planning time during which principals, coaches, and teachers can review assessments, analyze data, examine strengths and weaknesses, and create action plans to inform instruction. In the turnaround plan progress report of June 2010, the district reported that "...instructional coaches follow up with each teacher after each data meeting to model specific strategies to support the learning of identified content." This was repeated by curriculum directors in interviews with the review team.

In interviews, administrators and staff outlined the role of the coaches with respect to data and common planning time. The coaches lead the data meetings after bringing the results to the meeting, e.g., results from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS), Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), Achievement Network (ANET) (grade 7/8), MCAS, unit tests, or common assessments. Principals indicated that the common planning time meetings are used by coaches and principals to train teachers in the analysis and use of data. Many teachers, interviews indicated, had been previously unfamiliar with the Composite Performance Index (CPI), yet expressed a desire to learn and to use such data. Directors and principals described the role of the coaches as leading the analysis of the data (at the elementary level), looking for strengths and weaknesses, formulating an action plan, and using data to create interventions, inform instruction, and monitor progress. At the high school, coaches and staff looked more at trends in data.

Administrators reported that because of budget cuts, coaches have been eliminated at the secondary level for the current school year (2010-2011). Currently there are four elementary coaches—two for mathematics and two for literacy, each pair serving two of the four elementary schools. In the review team's judgment, coaches had been an integral part of implementation of the goals of the turnaround plan since 2008, accustoming teachers to data-driven instruction, formulating action plans for intervention and re-teaching, implementing new curriculum, supporting new teaching strategies, and generally providing continuity in the endeavors across the district. The loss of the secondary coaches removes a tool from teachers' and principals' hands to use in continuous improvement of curriculum, instructional strategies, and data-driven decision making.

In classroom observations, the review team found substantial evidence of several characteristics of effective classroom management and instructional practice, but less evidence of instruction that fosters higher-order thinking skills.

The review team observed instruction in 42 elementary and secondary classrooms in Randolph, looking for 14 characteristics of effective instruction organized into three categories. For the first

category, organization of the classroom, there was solid evidence in 81 percent of classrooms and partial evidence in the other 19 percent that the tone of the classroom was respectful; there was solid evidence in 43 percent of classrooms and partial evidence in 36 percent that learning objectives were evident; and there was solid evidence in 63 percent of classes and partial evidence in 33 percent that classroom time was maximized for learning.

In the second category, general instructional design and delivery, there were many characteristics solid evidence of which was observed in a substantial percentage of classrooms observed. Team members observed solid evidence of instruction that linked concepts to students' prior knowledge in 60 percent of classes, partial evidence in 36 percent; they observed solid evidence of presentation of content that was appropriate for students' English proficiency and developmental level in 60 percent of classes, and partial evidence in 19 percent. There was solid evidence for the depth of the teacher's content knowledge in 62 percent of lessons observed (partial evidence in 26 percent), and solid evidence in 65 percent (partial evidence in 30 percent) of lessons of the employment of a range of instructional strategies such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling. Finally, observers noted solid evidence of pacing of the lesson to ensure active student engagement in 62 percent of the classes observed, and partial evidence in 36 percent. There was not as much solid evidence of the characteristics in the third category, instructional design and delivery related to higher-order thinking. Solid evidence of questions requiring students to engage in a process of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation was observed in only 33 percent of classrooms, though partial evidence was observed in 56 percent. Solid evidence of students articulating their thinking and reasoning was observed in only 27 percent of lessons, although partial evidence was observed in 51 percent. Team members observed solid evidence of students working with one another in pairs or in small groups in only 33 percent of classes, partial evidence in 38 percent; they observed no evidence of this characteristic in 29 percent of classes. Finally, there was solid evidence of opportunities embedded in the lesson for students to apply new knowledge and content in 37 percent of classes, and partial evidence in another 46 percent.

This last group of indicators involves instruction that involves students in using such higher-order thinking skills as articulating their reasoning, applying knowledge, and solving problems through interaction with others. This kind of instruction requires active engagement of learners in more complex and demanding ways. It allows students to grow as learners and increases their proficiency levels. Instruction in Randolph is not yet at a level, however, where these higher-order thinking skills are consistently fostered.

Assessment

The district has developed a substantial system of formative and summative assessments, creating a culture among teachers and administrators where assessment is central.

The narrative expanding on Goal I²² of the turnaround plan includes the statement, “To an increasing extent, assessment will drive instruction at all levels.” The district has moved and is moving steadily to create the system of assessments necessary to give assessment the central position envisioned by this statement.

The review team learned in interviews that the district uses the summer months to continue to develop student assessments. Teachers are invited to engage in planning efforts and are paid stipends for doing so. A curriculum director reported that the district had assembled a summer task force, led by the math director, with the objective of creating assessments in math aligned to the common core and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. There are common math assessments for all elementary schools. Scan stations to score assessments are used in the elementary schools. Interim assessments for kindergarten through grade 6 are created in-house with pre and post tests. Students in the middle school are assessed five times per year via formative assessments created by Achievement Network (ANet). High school assessments are created in-house. Scantron, new this past spring, is used by teachers to quickly scan tests and obtain test results in order to make informed educational decisions about what students need to enhance their learning.

The documented schedule for math assessments in the Randolph Public Schools gives the following information:

High School Students (grades 9-12):

- Formal pre-assessments are given to all 9th and 10th graders in early September.
- 10th graders are given a December assessment and a mock MCAS in April.
- Common course mid-year exams are given in January.
- Common course final exams are given in May/June.
- AP students are given practice AP math exams in April.
- Common unit tests are given monthly in algebra and geometry.
- 11th graders take the PSATs (paid for by a grant).

Middle School Students (grades 7 & 8):

- ANet assessments are administered in October, December, January, March, and April.

Elementary School Students (kindergarten-grade 6):

- Pre-assessments in September

²² “Develop, implement and support standards-based curricula and instruction in order to improve achievement by all students in all areas, with particular attention to achievement in mathematics”

- 1st math RCAS (Randolph's version of the MCAS) in December
- Mock MCAS in January
- 2nd math RCAS in March
- 3rd math RCAS in May
- Post assessment in June

In addition, in middle and high school ELL students are given a mathematics proficiency test.

All assessments are given to both general and special education students. A director reported that there is no “their students and our students”: all students are “everybody’s students.” There is an intake process for students whose first language is not English to determine whether they are limited English proficient (Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey). ELL students are given the same assessments as other students in addition to the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) and the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). Students who speak Haitian Creole are given a native language literacy test.

An administrator reported that the assessment predictions based upon locally developed math assessment tools were accurate (less than 3 percent off) once all MCAS 2010 data had been disaggregated. A principal reported that teacher assignments are based on data. For example, a teacher in an elementary school whose students had the highest math scores became the math teacher.

A task force led by the ELA director was created by the district during the summer of 2009 to work on standards and assessments. Thirty staff members were involved. Though the basic K-6 reading program is *Treasures* (MacMillan), state standards and common core are the basis for curriculum; not the *Treasures* program. The next task force will work on weekly assessments.

The documented ELA assessment schedule includes monthly assessments for all elementary school students. They include DIBELS, GRADE, listening comprehension for kindergarten, long composition for 4th graders, and mock MCAS. Lexia is used in K-1 as an ongoing formative assessment. There is a Bay State Readers Initiative in the Kennedy school. Literacy coaches act as data managers and bring reports to meetings. The ELA department is working on unit assessments to be given every six weeks, with a multi-draft process. In the middle and high schools, a strategic interactive reading course has been developed. Teachers score open response questions. Struggling students in math and ELA have access to web-based programs such as Study Island and Plato. A principal reports that students need additional opportunities to work on authentic writing. Also, the number of coaches was greatly reduced due to budgetary decisions for the 2010-2011 school year. The reduction in math and literacy coaches has created a “shaky infrastructure,” one leader reported.

Students in other subject areas—science, social studies, world languages—are regularly assessed through chapter and unit tests. As mentioned previously, the district is in the process of creating an English as a Second Language Curriculum, to be completed by August 2011.

Regularly scheduled student assessments, based on a standardized curriculum, will assist in the turnaround efforts for the Randolph Public Schools because the results of these assessments will highlight what students know and are able to do and keep staff focused on improvement strategies. The results of these assessments can be used to keep parents and the community informed about student achievement as they continue to collaborate around improved performance for all students.

Teachers are routinely engaged in data review and analysis during district-scheduled common planning time, examining student work and collaborating on the refinement of instructional and assessment strategies. This use of common planning time is part of an overall emphasis on data in the district that as yet has not been advanced by the creation of a district data team.

Although there is no specified data team in the district, teachers have district-scheduled, union-approved common planning time dedicated to receiving and analyzing data, identifying gaps among subgroups, and strategically planning next instructional steps. One administrator spoke about the amount of time that has been invested in teaching teachers how to effectively use data to drive instruction. One principal talked about how frequently ESE's Education Data Warehouse is now used as a tool for accessing and disseminating data. Several years ago, according to interviews with district and school staff, teachers were resistant to examining test results. They were not invested in the data. It was a slow process to get them to own student test results. The review team was told during the course of interviews that the district has "bailed enough water out of the boat so that the boat is now floating."

During an interview, administrators spoke about how the district is beginning to get teachers to focus on standards and curriculum frameworks. According to the administrators, teachers are gaining a better understanding of using rubrics to move students "from good to great" through continuing professional development delivered in staff meetings. They are also realizing the importance of benchmarking progress through varied assessments. Administrators also reported that teacher talk in the teachers' work room has become conversation about student work, wait time, flexible grouping, and after-school tutoring. The administrators welcomed this paradigm shift for teachers. A principal indicated the importance of professional development sessions to teach teachers about what data to collect and how to use it to make it work for them. The principal stated the belief that this work must be done by teachers in collaboration with administrators. When teachers look at student work and analyze MCAS results and other assessments, they are better equipped to develop action plans for re-teaching, re-integrating, and other interventions to ensure learning.

The pattern of data collection by staff and administrators for analysis of student, school, and district progress is being seen as the backbone of change in the Randolph Public Schools. One administrator informed the review team that "almost every decision made in the district involves data." A school committee member told the review team that budget allocations and policy decisions made by the school committee are based on data about student needs. During interviews, teachers and administrators in the district demonstrated a substantial understanding of

the importance of measurement and data analysis. Almost no interview was conducted without an interviewee referring to an analysis of data having been the driving force for a new program or a modification in an existing one or for teachers' improvement of instruction. Interviews conducted with counselors revealed that they are quite proficient in analyzing MCAS performance data to help them counsel students and recommend support services for them. Staff in each school reported having a data team that department heads consistently consult when planning changes in curriculum or instruction.

Yet despite substantial use of data, the district lacks a centralized data team that could provide needed data to teachers and administrators who have now developed the capacity to use it to develop and assess programs as well as to inform instruction. In interviews, teachers and administrators indicated that they would be able to use additional data if it were available. Without a centralized data team, staff in the district are not receiving data that could be made available to them, without additional testing, to use to improve programs and services as well as instruction.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The human resources department conducts a comprehensive teacher recruitment program aimed at employing highly qualified, experienced teachers while simultaneously expanding the diversity of the teaching staff. Beyond recruitment, the district successfully strives to create the conditions for retaining newly appointed teachers.

From a review of documents submitted by the human resources department, the review team discovered that the district regularly attends job fairs, including those of the New England Association for Employment in Education and the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education. Additionally, the department attends job fairs held at five colleges and universities. Advertisements of job vacancies are placed in five newspapers and periodicals, including publications with an African-American, Latino, and Asian-American readership. Finally, the Randolph school district enhances its employment outreach with 22 online postings, including postings with nine institutions of higher learning.

In interviews with administrators, all affirmed that how high a salary a prospective hire would need to be paid based on education and experience is never a bar to employing him or her. The interview protocol, in fact, advises the interviewer: "Please do not quote any salary or step placement. The recommended salary will be decided by the Superintendent or the HR Director." The director of human resources reported that the amount budgeted for each vacancy is \$58,154 (master's degree, step 5) which exceeds the potential salary of an inexperienced teacher with a bachelor's degree by \$11,853. One principal stated that the starting salary of \$46,301 (as of September 1, 2010) was one of the highest in the state, and was itself an attractive incentive for teaching in Randolph.²³

²³ That Randolph's starting teacher's salary is one of the highest in the state is confirmed by ESE's database of starting salaries drawn from about 300 teachers' contracts.

Administrators agreed that both the quality and quantity of applicants had increased markedly in the past few years. One principal said that it was not uncommon to receive between 200 and 300 applications for a vacancy at the elementary level. A concrete illustration of the success of the district in generating responses to vacancies was available in documents supplied by the human resources department: although vacancies for three Spanish teaching positions (two at the high school and one at the middle school) occurred very late in the hiring cycle (the last week in August, 2010), the district received 40 applications for one of the high school vacancies, 37 for the middle school opening, and 28 for the other high school position. The three vacancies were successfully filled.

The district has an expansive definition of diversity. Administrators consistently told the review team that the district seeks to employ applicants of different races, languages (e.g. Kreyol), economic backgrounds, and life experiences. This emphasis on diversity begins at the highest level, with a member of the school committee pointing out that the three finalists for the superintendency were an African-American, a Hispanic, and a female. Documents supplied by human resources confirmed the success of the emphasis on diversity in hiring. For the 2010-2011 school year, of the 32 newly hired non-administrative professional employees, 28 percent are of color, and of the 6 newly hired administrators, 50 percent are of color.

Most newly-hired teachers and administrators (including the superintendent of schools) have an individual mentor. The mentors are trained to guide the employees in becoming familiar with the procedures and requirements of the district as well as to offer professional guidance in meeting the requirements of each assignment. The teacher mentor program is now operated by the teachers themselves, beginning this school year, thus giving the teachers more ownership in the program.

According to ESE's District Analysis and Review Tool, the teacher turnover rate in Randolph fell from 18 percent (39 teachers) in 2008-2009 (compared to the state teacher turnover rate of 12 percent) to 13 percent (32 teachers) in 2009-2010 (compared to the state rate of 11 percent).²⁴ In addition, according to documentation supplied by the human resources department, although the district hired 47²⁵ teachers for the 2009-2010 school year, it hired only 22 for the 2010-2011 year. While this is a short-term experience, it bodes well for teacher stability in the longer term. In interviews, administrators attributed the positive trend in teacher turnover to better hiring practices defined by an increase in the quality and quantity of the applicant pool; a favorable salary structure; and an increase in recognition and celebration of teacher success.

When asked how many teachers were on waivers, the director of human resources instantly responded, "3.7 percent", a percentage confirmed by ESE data (8 out of 217.7 teachers). The

²⁴ The teacher turnover rate at the district level is the percentage of teachers who did not remain a teacher in the selected district from one year to the next. The figure for a particular school year is arrived at by comparing the October Education Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS) data with EPIMS data from October of the year before.

²⁵ The number 47 was arrived at after subtracting such personnel as counselors, social workers, librarians, and coaches.

teachers on waivers are primarily special education teachers at the middle and high school levels and ELL and reading teachers.²⁶

In her third year of employment with the Randolph Public Schools, the director of human resources has secured the admiration and respect of a variety of constituents including two with potentially diverse perspectives, namely, the school committee and the Randolph Education Association. A school committee member noted that she was pleased with the performance of the human resources department; equally important, the members of the teachers' association affirmed that human resources, "has vastly improved." Proactive recruitment with an eye to diversity, comprehensive data analysis, highly organized and secure personnel files, and responsiveness to employee inquiries are all hallmarks of this office. This positive atmosphere redounds to the benefit of the central office, serving as a barometer of the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.

The school committee and the administration, particularly the superintendent of schools, have created a labor relations climate with the teachers' association which is conducive to problem identification, dispute resolution, and productive collective bargaining.

The current collective bargaining agreement is scheduled to expire in 2011; at the time of the review in October 2010, negotiations were to begin soon. Representatives of the Randolph Education Association noted in interviews that in the past three years the relationship between the association and the school committee has been much more amicable. In four separate interviews with five members of the school committee, the review team consistently heard expressions of optimism that the negotiations would go well, and that no major problems were anticipated in coming to an agreement with the association.

Beyond the immediacy of collective bargaining, the members of the school committee noted that, in general, there was now a better working relationship with the association. The school committee attributed this positive development to the efforts of the new superintendent of schools.

One member of the school committee asserted that the association wants the superintendent to take it seriously, and that he has—beginning with a retreat that he held with the association shortly after becoming the superintendent. In an interview with the association, the review team discovered that the association holds a very positive view of the new superintendent—beginning with their initial meeting at the retreat, but extending into the current school year. The association expressed a belief that the superintendent is engaging in more than an overture to the association: that he is deeply committed to changing the relationship between the administration and the association. As evidence of this belief they cited the monthly meetings that now occur among representatives of the association, the superintendent of schools, and the principals, and in fact one of these meetings was scheduled to occur while the team was conducting its review. Representatives from the association attributed a decline in the number of grievances to these

²⁶ Again supported by ESE data: 5 out of the 8 teachers on waivers are special education, ELL, or reading teachers.

monthly meetings. Historically, the number of grievances filed annually has stood at 12 to 15. During the current school year only one grievance had been filed as of the end of October.

Finally, the association expressed a great deal of patience, saying that it would take about five years to turn things around but that they were confident that in the end they would have an active voice in shared decision-making.

The district review team concludes that the positive working relationship between the administration and the teachers' representatives which is now underway and continuing will create a mutually beneficial foundation to achieve all the goals associated with improved student achievement.

The evaluation and supervision process is focused on timeliness, consistency, and improved methodology. Not all teacher or administrator evaluations include comments aimed at improving instruction or recommendations for professional growth.

Interviews with administrators and a review of the Evaluation Program Handbook demonstrated a commitment to improving the evaluation process. All administrators (except for those newly hired) have taken the year-long Research for Better Teaching (RBT) training, and teachers have been trained in RBT, too. This training should translate into a common focus when teacher observations are performed and correspondingly create a common language for making recommendations for improvement.

In the past, examination of personnel files showed, teacher evaluations varied in frequency, with some teachers not being evaluated for as long as ten years. In interviews, administrators attributed the variation in frequency to a shortage of administrators or to administrative turnover (two of the six principals were newly hired in summer 2010, and two other principals were beginning their second year as principals in Randolph in fall 2010).

A review of teacher personnel files was conducted to determine the quality of the evaluative process. Most (83 percent) of the randomly selected files had timely evaluations, and 87 percent were viewed by review team members as aligned with the Principles of Effective Instruction. The utility of the evaluations as a tool in improving instruction begins to diminish with a lower percentage—70 percent—being seen as “Informative,” in that the evaluation was factual and cited instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. A slightly lower percentage of the evaluations—65 percent—were deemed to be “Instructive,” because they included comments intended to improve instruction. Only 23 percent of the evaluations reviewed had a recommendation for particular professional development.

A similar random file review was undertaken of the district's administrative personnel files, which were found to be of markedly higher quality than those for the teachers. The district review team concluded that 100 percent of these evaluations were timely, aligned with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, and informative. However, only 67 percent were considered “Instructive,” while 78 percent were determined to “Promote Professional Growth.”

The district has placed an emphasis on walkthroughs as a method of improving instruction. A review of summaries of walkthroughs conducted at one of the elementary schools during the 2009-2010 school year showed that they were effective in summarizing positive aspects of instruction as well as outlining areas to work on. An initiative is also underway at the high school to engage in peer reviews, and that effort has the support of the Randolph Education Association based on the trust that has developed between it and the administration, as testified to in the interview with the association representatives described in the previous finding.

The RBT training for administrators and teachers, the emphasis on walkthroughs, and the union-supported peer reviews at the high school show that the district has made substantial progress in arriving at a common understanding of effective instruction and finding ways to improve instruction based on that understanding. Evaluations are now more consistently completed on time than in the past; however, teacher evaluations especially do not yet consistently include comments intended to improve the teacher's instruction or recommendations for professional development.

The district engages in a substantial number of professional development activities largely dictated by the three goals of the turnaround plan. Not surprisingly, given the general lack of recommendations for individual professional growth in teacher evaluations, there are areas where more professional development is needed.

The Randolph School Committee engages in professional development activities for both veteran and newly elected committee members, conducted by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

A comprehensive plan for professional development is a recent activity in Randolph. The central office administration presents a plan to the district's Professional Development Committee, and the committee works cooperatively with the administration to plan an annual calendar of professional development activities. A voluntary committee, without compensation and also without representation from all schools each year, the committee strives to be responsive to all teachers by means of an annual or semi-annual survey of the teaching staff. Indeed, one interviewee saw service on the Professional Development Committee as the most viable way of influencing the selection of professional development activities. However, since, as shown by examination of the district's School Improvement Plans, the SIPs do not address professional development for the school staff to any great degree, and since, as described in the previous finding, evaluations of teachers mostly do not contain recommendations for particular professional development, teachers' needs for professional development are not being adequately reflected in professional development offerings.

The district has one professional day before the start of the school year and one during the year, as well as regular early release days. In 2009-2010, the required systemwide professional development initiatives, scheduled during these times and during elementary curriculum meetings, faculty meetings, secondary department meetings, and common planning times, included training in standards-based instruction and category training. Common planning time, established at all levels in 2008-2009, was used at the elementary level for training on the use of

data to inform instruction, for co-planning for inclusion, and for training on ELA and math instruction; at the middle school mostly for curriculum development and data review; and at the high school for curriculum work, looking at student work, and reviewing data. Secondary department meetings were also used for curriculum development and examining data and student work to improve instruction. Numerous other, optional professional development activities were offered outside of school hours, most of them free.

Although the turnaround plan significantly influences professional development activities, there was a general consensus among teachers, administrators, and, to some degree, parents, that more professional development is needed in the following areas:

- Inclusion
- Cultural competency
- Data analysis for instructional decision-making
- ELL category training

Finally, administrators in several interviews identified a broader, more general need, namely, a “cultural change” in the definition of professional development. They saw a need to move beyond a view of professional development as exclusively external training sessions or after-school workshops, to a recognition that professional development can also be embedded in common planning time, informal classroom visitations, and faculty meetings. Adopting this perspective has the potential to broaden the satisfaction of all staff as they continue to grow professionally.

Student Support

Randolph has numerous student support programs at all levels, many of which have been instituted since the district was declared underperforming in 2007. In some cases, these programs are new, while in others they represent reconstituted programs lost during the years before the override.

Evidence obtained from district documents such as the Turnaround Plan Progress Report of June 2010, as well as corroborating interviews with counselors, teachers and administrators, parents, and community representatives, indicated that since the declaration of underperformance in 2007—and the passage of the override in 2008—a variety of programs have been added to Randolph’s existing programs to cut the dropout rate, improve promotion and graduation rates, offer support to at-risk students, and improve student achievement.

The district’s 2006 four-year graduation rate was 70.9 percent, while the state had a rate of 79.9 percent. The district’s 2007 rate of 77.5 percent showed improvement and a gain on the state rate of 80.9 percent. But in 2008 and 2009 the district’s four-year graduation rate fell, to 73.9 and 64.4 percent, while the state rates continued to climb slowly, to 81.2 and 81.5 percent. Over these years the district’s annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 increased, going from 4.9 percent in 2006 to 5.6 percent in 2007, then dipping down in 2008 to 5.3 percent, but rising again to 7.2 percent in 2009.

Gold Team and 100 Hallway programs

In 2009-2010 the district instituted the “Gold Team” at the high school with the intent of cutting the dropout rate by providing additional support to at-risk students. The program combines additional counseling and monitoring services, as well as academic tutoring, with a reward system in hopes of engaging students who are experiencing difficulties with issues of academic achievement, attendance, behavior or socialization. Despite the lack of data at this early stage of implementation, teachers and administrators reported in interviews that they are hopeful that such a program will ultimately have a positive impact on the graduation rate.²⁷ At the middle school, in order to alleviate the stigma of “alternative education” for students considered likely to drop out, the 100 Hallway program was begun within the school during the 2009-2010 school year. Like the Gold Team program at the high school, 100 Hallway provides increased monitoring and counseling and also includes an incentive system.

Counseling and credit recovery

All schools have counseling services on site. At the high school there are four guidance counselors for the 744 students, counting the guidance department chair. The middle school has one guidance counselor for its 470 students. All of the schools have at least one school adjustment counselor, whose function is somewhat different from the guidance counselor’s, although according to interviewees there is inevitably some mingling of duties. Interviewees reported that there were 16 school adjustment counselors on staff at the time of the review; the district later stated this figure as 13.8. In general, guidance counselors deal with academic issues while adjustment counselors primarily assist in psychosocial issues. In interviews, both guidance and school adjustment counselors reported conducting group counseling sessions on such topics as bullying, anger management, sex education, social skills, and staying safe. The high school provides a peer mediation program, where students are trained to intercede in interpersonal conflicts between other students. A peer mediation trainer is situated nearby whenever a peer mediation session is conducted.

Guidance counselors described programs intended to increase the services offered to students considering dropping out of school, including the Gateway program with the local community college. In addition, efforts will reportedly be increased to provide outreach to previous dropouts to persuade them to return to school. The PLATO software system has been instituted by the district at both the middle and high schools within the past two years for student tutoring; the system has the recognized potential to provide a vehicle for students needing to recover lost credit. This potential would be useful both to returning dropouts and to those students considering leaving school because of credit deficiencies complicated by their advancing age.

²⁷ As stated in footnote 12 above, data for 2009-2010, which became available just before the publication of this report, shows a slight improvement in the graduation rate (66.7 percent compared to a state rate of 82.1 percent) and a marked improvement in the grade 9-12 dropout rate (4.4 percent compared to 2.9 percent statewide). This 2009-2010 dropout rate was the lowest it has been since 2003-2004.

Student Success Teams

All schools whether elementary or secondary use the Student Success Team (SST) approach to monitor and support students who are facing academic challenges or experiencing disciplinary or attendance issues, or who are otherwise distracted from learning. At the high school, the guidance department chair facilitates the weekly SST meetings. At the elementary level, the principal usually chairs the meeting. Other participants at all levels may include teachers, reading specialists, social workers, the school psychologist, and others as required. Parents are consulted before the actual SST meeting during the information gathering phase. Meetings at all levels are frequent, and regular updates are presented on previously referred students.

Tutoring and other academic support programs

All schools have tutoring programs in place. One, the Young Readers program, is an example of a longstanding literacy program for students in the early primary grades that was lost during the level-funding period and renewed following the successful override vote in 2008. It serves 26 students in kindergarten through grade 2. Other programs include Title I services at all four elementary schools. Although the middle and high school are also Title I eligible, lack of funds resulted in the district decision to focus services at the elementary level, with the hope of improving performance before the student reached the secondary level. In the last few years, Title I funds have been used to provide elementary reading specialists who offers literacy support to any student in need; in addition, Lexia labs have been introduced into all elementary school buildings. Interviewees reported that the district also provides Supplementary Educational Services (SES) as an additional program that offers tutoring to some students who are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program.

In the period since the override all schools have implemented Response to Intervention models within the general education curriculum. Full-time paraprofessionals were added to each kindergarten class to support Early Reading interventions, and math paraprofessionals were assigned to each K-6 school to remediate class size issues and support small group and center work. An extra semester of ELA and math were added to the curriculum at the middle school to allow for remediation or enrichment for students needing them in either the general or special education setting. Remedial reading and math instruction was provided to students in grades 7-10 identified as being in danger of failing the ELA or mathematics portion of the MCAS. Academic mentors were also provided at the middle school to work with small groups of 4 to 5 students, 2 or more times per week.

School year 2009 saw the addition of a free summer program for some students, in both special education and regular education. A free breakfast and lunch was provided during the summer program for all participating students. For those in grades 1 and 2, a Young Readers at Risk program was provided. Grade 3 and 4 students identified as at-risk had access to a summer math program. At-risk students matriculating into middle school and high school were provided with transition programs, and summer enrichment and support programs were available for at-risk high school students. Some low-income students were able to attend day camp at a local facility

operated by a community agency partnering with the district. Young Readers instruction was provided through the day camp to students who need it.

Programs are also provided through community agencies that have partnered with the district. South Shore STARS, Inc. is a program provider for Randolph and other communities, offering before- and after-school care, Headstart programming, and family daycare, as well as academic tutoring that is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and coordinated with the classroom teachers. According to interviewees, the STARS program began in the middle school, but has now expanded to the elementary level and grades nine and ten at the high school.

Services for ELL students

Services for ELL students are provided at all of the schools; ESL instructors are assigned to each school where there are ELL students, assisting those who are receiving special education services as well as those who are not. According to information gathered from interviewees, students are tested in the spring using the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), and students who did not take it during the previous spring are tested in the fall. The Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) is administered in both spring and fall. Newcomers to the program are assessed using the Woodcock-Munoz assessment to determine placement. Services for the ELLs include subject and MCAS support at the high school and middle school and special field trips. Teachers are trained to provide ELL support in the general and special education classrooms by the district; during 2009-2010, mandatory category training was provided during a professional day and early release days. According to interviewees, approximately one-quarter of the staff has received Category 1 training (Second Language Learning and Teaching: 10-15 hours of professional development), another one-quarter have received Category 4 training (Reading and Writing in the Sheltered Content Classroom: 15-20 hours of professional development), and the district has arranged for training for both category 2 (Sheltering Content Instruction: 30-40 hours of professional development) and category 3 (Assessing Speaking and Listening: 10 hours of professional development), in order to have qualified teachers to offer needed support to the ELL population attending school in the district.

As described under Key Question 2 above, the proficiency rates of ELL students fell between 2008 and 2010, from 29 to 22 to 20 percent in ELA and from 29 to 28 to 23 percent in mathematics. In two interviews in the district this decrease in proficiency rates was attributed to an influx of Haitian immigrants since the earthquake in Haiti. As the earthquake was in January 2010, immigration from Haiti since the earthquake cannot have influenced the decrease in scores between 2008 and 2009. Data available on Profiles does show that the number of ELL students in Randolph increased from 184 (6.5 percent of students) to 265 (9.2 percent of students) between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. In addition, MEPA data shows that the number of ELL students in Randolph who had been in Massachusetts schools for one year (the shortest time) rose from 74 in 2009 to 87 in 2010. The review team has not had access to data on the places these new Massachusetts students moved from or the number of Haitian immigrants in Randolph. In any case, it should be noted again, as stated above in the finding on professional development, that there was a general consensus among Randolph teachers, administrators, and,

to some degree, parents, that more ELL category training is needed. Most importantly, it should again be noted (see Key Question 2 above) that ESE's Coordinated Program Review report of a November-December 2009 review found multiple instances of noncompliance with legal requirements for the education of ELL students.

Many of the district's support programs have not yet been evaluated for effectiveness or cost-efficiency because of their relative newness. Title I programs are, of course, assessed using pre- and post-test results as required by federal guidelines; plans were mentioned for assessing the mathematics and special education programs. The review team believes that its support programs are a valuable part of the district's efforts to attain Goal III of its turnaround plan:

Build a high achieving school system for all children with involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community. Working together we will build confidence in and ownership of our schools by all children and their families.

They will also assist on many fronts in improving district performance. While it is too soon for many of the recently-instituted programs to demonstrate successful results in terms of achievement data and other quantitative indicators, the team believes that the district is moving in a positive direction that will, if continued, ultimately prove beneficial to its students and their families.

Efforts to improve the performance of special education students have not yet resulted in improved results on statewide assessments. The addition of new programs and accompanying training, along with the district's strengthened support programs for all students, should foster such improvement in the future.

District efforts towards implementing Goal II of the turnaround plan, to improve performance for all special education students, have not yet resulted in measurable success. As previously described and as shown by Table 7 below, the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient has in fact declined since 2008 from 15 to 13 percent in ELA and from 12 to 10 percent in math; these percentages are significantly below the percentages of state special education students scoring at or above proficient, which in 2010 were 28 and 21 percent respectively. Similarly, Table 7 shows that between 2008 and 2010 the CPI in ELA for Randolph special education students fell, by more than 5 CPI points, although the CPI for the subgroup in math rose slightly.

**Table 7: 2008-1010 Proficiency Rates, CPIs, and Median Student Growth Percentiles
for Randolph Special Education Students,
as compared to State Special Education Students**

| | 2008 | | | 2009 | | | 2010 | | |
|--|---------------------|------|-------------|---------------------|------|-------------|---------------------|------|-------------|
| | % Adv./ Prof. | CPI | Med. SGP | % Adv./ Prof. | CPI | Med. SGP | % Adv./ Prof. | CPI | Med. SGP |
| ELA | | | | | | | | | |
| Randolph Special Education Students | 15 | 63.4 | 33.0 | 17 | 62.6 | 38.5 | 13 | 57.9 | 33.0 |
| State Special Education Students | 27 | 65.9 | 39.0 | 28 | 67.8 | 40.0 | 28 | 67.3 | 41.0 |
| Mathematics | | | | | | | | | |
| Randolph Special Education Students | 12 | 49.6 | 35.0 | 10 | 47.7 | 38.0 | 11 | 50.8 | 40.5 |
| State Special Education Students | 19 | 55.4 | 40.0 | 20 | 56.9 | 43.0 | 21 | 57.5 | 43.0 |

Note: Proficiency rate refers to the percentage scoring Advanced or Proficient on MCAS.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The achievement gap between district special education students and the state subgroup, as measured by CPIs, has widened over this period from 2.5 to 9.4 CPI points in ELA, and from 5.8 to 6.7 CPI points in math. As previously mentioned, the median student growth percentile for 2010 for the Randolph special education subgroup was only 33.0 (for 222 students), no higher than in 2008, though the median SGP in mathematics for the district subgroup has risen steadily since then. Examination of data for individual schools (not included in table) shows that median SGPs for special education students in 2010 at the middle school were in the moderate range, with a median SGP in mathematics of 59.0 at the high end of that range; median SGPs for this subgroup at the elementary schools were mostly below the moderate range.

The most notable change in support for special education students in the last few years has been the movement from limited to widespread inclusion of special education students in the general

education classrooms, carried out in annual increments since 2007 and commended by ESE in its 2010 Coordinated Program Review Report. Many of the action steps under Goal II of the turnaround plan have related to instituting inclusion. Inclusion began at the middle school during the 2006-2007 school year, progressed to the high school beginning in 2007-2008, and finally was implemented in the elementary schools in 2009-2010. Previously, special education students were placed for content area instruction in substantially separate resource rooms, where they were not instructed by highly qualified teachers or, in many cases, given access to a curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. According to interviewees, as well as progress reports and a description of special education programs provided to the Department by the district the model includes instruction by special education and general education licensed teachers, consultation by special education teachers with general education teachers, common planning between special education teachers and general education teacher partners, and liaison services for each student; the special education teachers provide pull-out or individualized instruction for short periods to those requiring it.

Developmental Learning Centers have been created at the Young Elementary School to provide services to students from all over the district in kindergarten through grade 6 who require specialized instructional methodologies due to intellectual impairments. The Lyons school houses the Therapeutic Learning Center, where students receive small group instruction from teachers, paraprofessionals, and a social worker/adjustment counselor trained to provide support for students experiencing a variety of behavioral, social, therapeutic and academic issues. The Kennedy school has the Communication & Social Skills Learning Center for K-6 students with autism or other pervasive developmental disorders (PDD). In the middle school, the Individualized Learning Center continues providing needed services. At the high school, a pre-vocational/transition class provides services for high school students through age 22 whose individualized education programs prescribe services to help them transition to adult services provided by the Department of Developmental Services, the Commission for the Blind, or other agencies. Extended school year programs are also provided to the students in this population who require them. For students in grades 7 through 10 who are included in mainstream classes, inclusion teams consisting of general and special education teachers jointly plan and co-teach classes in ELA and mathematics; the special education teachers provide support for classes in history and science. In grades 11 and 12, special education teachers co-teach in ELA and math and consult with teachers of history and science classes; in these classes, paraprofessionals are also assigned to support students.

The district accompanied the movement to an inclusive special education environment with inclusion training for both teachers and administrators by an outside consultant. Although teachers reported in interviews that in their view they need additional professional development in inclusion, both school and central office administrators viewed the initial training as helpful. Administrators said that the initial training would continue as other trainings are added.

In addition to benefiting from the recent changes to special education programs and services, students with disabilities in Randolph have benefited from some of the recently added support programs for all students, described earlier. For instance, the implementation of Response to

Intervention models within the general education curriculum has helped to ensure that special education resources are kept for those students really needing them. The extra semester of ELA and math added to the curriculum at the middle school to allow for remediation or enrichment benefits both general and special education students. And the free summer program initiated in 2009 was for special education students as well as their general education peers.

The transition to an inclusion model for special education requires more training for teachers, as they themselves recognize, and adjustment of the part of teachers, students, and families. While the MCAS results for special education students do not yet show the effect of the move to inclusion classrooms with highly qualified teachers and a curriculum based on the curriculum frameworks, the review team believes that its effect will become apparent.

The district has increased the involvement of parents in district affairs, thus building a stronger group of interested and active stakeholders committed to supporting its efforts to improve the schools.

According to figures available in the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) on the ESE web site, during the past five years the percentage of school-aged residents enrolled in the Randolph Public Schools has fallen: it was 84 percent in 2006, 83 percent in 2007, 81 percent in 2008, and 78 percent in 2009; in 2010, the percentage held steady at 78 percent. During every year of the same period, the statewide percentage of students attending their public school district was either 90 or 91 percent.

The district has taken many steps toward attaining Goal II of the Strategic Direction 2008-2012 plan²⁸ and Goal III of the turnaround plan²⁹: its initiatives to engage families are extensive. The district reported to ESE in its Turnaround Plan Progress Report of June 2010 that a consultant from Harvard University worked with administrators, teachers, and parents in a “Leadership Academy” in 2008-2009 to develop family engagement strategies. All staff members received training in family engagement and all of the elementary schools involved parents in the design and construction of new playground facilities. According to the progress report (p. 52), all schools established as a goal to “Create a welcoming atmosphere for all families that honors their involvement and connects their engagement to learning.” Each school opened a Family Resource Center that provides curricular resources; family support resources; computers, telephone and copier; activities for children; and meeting space for parents and families.

Joint public meetings with town officials increased the visibility of school functions through community television and newspaper outlets. In April of 2008, the community passed a tax override, thus increasing the net school spending on education and making the schools more attractive to parents.³⁰ The rise in the number of parents’ contacts with other parents describing

²⁸ “The percentage of parents who actively participate in their child’s education will increase in excess of 20% per year for the next five years.”

²⁹ “We will build a high achieving school system for all children with involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community. Working together we will build confidence in and ownership of our schools by all children and their families.”

³⁰ Before the override, in fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008, the percentage that actual net school spending exceeded required net school spending was 6.7, 2.9, and 4.1 percent respectively. After the override, in fiscal years 2009 and

positive experiences with the school district reported by participants in a parent focus group conducted by the review team suggests the district's success in its steps toward the goal of creating a welcoming atmosphere for families and increasing parent involvement in the schools. According to parents interviewed, friends and neighbors who had previously sent their children to charter and parochial schools in surrounding communities because of a lack of confidence in the Randolph school district have now returned them to the public school system. Administrators also said that families are returning to the Randolph Public Schools, especially to Randolph High School. This anecdotal evidence is supported at present by two pieces of data: the fact that the percentage of school-aged residents enrolled in the public schools held steady in 2010, and the increase, though small, in both the high school and the district student population in 2011 after four straight years of decrease.³¹ Interviews with teachers, parents, and principals indicated that attendance at Open House activities, parent nights, and other school functions is increasing. While data on attendance at these functions is unavailable and enrollment data over the coming years will have to be monitored, it appears to the review team from an analysis of narrative information within the district that the goals of increasing parent involvement and parent confidence are within reach.

Whether or not the strategic plan's goal of increasing by over 20 percent each year the percentage of parents who actively participate in their child's education has been achieved, the district has made significant progress toward increasing parent participation. The impact of progress toward this goal is substantial and long-enduring. By increasing the involvement of parents the district will increase community awareness of the activities and needs of the district, as well as improving support in the community for district initiatives. The team believes that the efforts the district is making toward this goal will not only substantially improve community support for the district, but will also improve the percentage of school-aged students being educated by the Randolph Public Schools.

Financial and Asset Management

The Randolph school district has the support of the town in developing its budget based on goals that arise from a combination of its strategic plan and its turnaround plan. The process used is open, participatory, and designed to elicit input from all stakeholders.

The Randolph Public Schools Department Budget Request Workbook for 2011-2012 delineates the process for the budget development. The budget planning continues from October through April when the school committee approves the final budget recommendation presented by the superintendent. During this process, there is discussion with the Randolph Education Association

2010, those percentages were 23.6 and 26.9 percent. Actual net school spending increased by \$4,876,000 (14.5 percent) between fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009, and again by \$2,114,640 (5.5 percent) in fiscal year 2010. See <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/profile.xls>.

³¹ According to the Profile of Randolph High School on the ESE website, its student population decreased from 996 in 2006 to 925 in 2007, 879 in 2008, 802 in 2009, and 726 in 2010. In 2011 it rose to 744, an increase of 18 students. The district Profile shows a similar decrease in population, from 3,450 in 2007 to 3,138 in 2008, 2,966 in 2009, and 2,851 in 2010—with an increase of 25 students to 2,876 in 2011.

in addition to individual school budget meetings. In interviews with teacher focus groups, it was indicated that teachers' input into the budget is limited, explained in an interview as being based upon a demonstrated low level of interest. The administrative team, consisting of the superintendent, executive director of finance and administration, assistant superintendent, and director of student services, meets with the principals and department heads to discuss budget requests and school needs. The process begins with a presentation by curriculum directors, ensuring that curriculum needs are addressed early in the sequence. This budget process does not include discussion of staffing needs: personnel requests are reviewed by the administrative team after discussions with individual administrators and principals. Following these reviews the superintendent presents the budget to the school committee's budget subcommittee for approval. This is followed by a public hearing. Upon approval by the budget subcommittee and the public hearing, it is presented to the full committee for approval. The superintendent makes a budget presentation to the town council, which is followed by a vote of the full council.

The Randolph School Committee has taken steps to involve the community in the budget process in order to increase participation in it and its transparency. One of the strategic direction plan's goals was to have the Randolph community approve funding for the annual school district budgets in 2008-2012 "through an open, participatory, collaborative and transparent process. Before 2008, all previous attempts to pass an override, the most recent of which were in 2006 and 2007, had failed. District staff members cited the lack of parental involvement in the political process as a contributing factor to the lack of passage during those two years. In an interview with school committee members, it was indicated that the budget process was developed to provide for the involvement of the community, ensure transparency, and increase public confidence. Interviewees reported increased attendance at school committee meetings, which are also televised. The school committee appointed a budget subcommittee that meets eight to ten times a year to encourage public participation at its meetings. It has been the practice that all school community members attend the budget meetings. According to reports from district officials in interviews, corroborated by published reports submitted to the department, community members are encouraged to attend via notifications to parents and staff, online postings, and other media. All budget information is posted on the district web site as well as being discussed in meetings of the school committee and the budget subcommittee.

In an interview, the town manager stated that his top priorities were improving the school system and increasing student achievement. In an interview with the superintendent, he indicated that the fiscal year 2012 budget, the first to be crafted under his superintendency, will be based on a blending of the goals set forth in the strategic direction plan and the turnaround plan. Both agreed that the goals of the turnaround plan were beneficial to both the students and the community, and thus form a legitimate basis for developing the budget to fund the school district. The town manager described earlier years when "members of the boards criticized each other." Although the town officials did not play an active role in developing the turnaround plan, it "changed the atmosphere." He stressed that monthly meetings of town officials, the school committee, and administrators focus on Goal III (on building a high achieving school system

with the involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community)³² and had done so for two years or more now. The town manager described school district events that he and members of the town council attended, including such events as a meeting concerning the “One Randolph; One Purpose” plan, which he termed “very important”; the high school graduation exercises; and “Back to School,” a “phenomenal event” that involved the entire community. He also described how the town was able to add \$500,000 to the fiscal year 2011 school spending account as an additional measure of the town’s involvement in and support for the school system.

Since the 2008 override, that support has been strong. Before the override, in fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008, the percentage that actual net school spending exceeded required net school spending was 6.7, 2.9, and 4.1 percent respectively. After the override, in fiscal years 2009 and 2010, those percentages were 23.6 and 26.9 percent. Actual net school spending increased by \$4,876,000 (14.5 percent) between fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009, and again by \$2,114,640 (5.5 percent) in fiscal year 2010. The fiscal year 2009 Randolph per-pupil cost was \$14,393 versus a state average of \$13,006. This per pupil cost was higher than any of the per-pupil costs for the ten comparable districts listed in the District Comparisons Based upon Grade Structure, District Wealth, and Enrollment on the ESE website.³³ The next highest per-pupil cost among the ten districts in the comparison was \$11,763 per pupil for Hudson, \$2,630 per pupil less than Randolph’s. According to the town manager, the school budget is approximately 50 percent of the town budget—approximately 65 percent if the town services provided to the school district are taken into consideration. The school system and the town coordinate the use of personnel when necessary and in particular for the maintenance of buildings, maintenance of grounds, and snow removal. There is a five year capital improvement plan developed by the school district and the town.

The district continues to face issues that will put pressure on its ability to finance educational programs and support for its students. Chapter 70 aid is projected to be lower for fiscal year 2012, based upon a declining student population in the town, regardless of the level of state support. There has also been a loss of tax revenue on the municipal side. Costs of energy and health and liability insurance continue to be volatile. As noted previously, because of budgetary pressures in 2010-2011 the district has cut the coaches it had recently instituted at the secondary level. It will be important to continue the involvement of the community and the collaborative efforts among the school committee, the administration, and the town government if responses to those challenges are to be found, but though it has not been in place long, a strong foundation has been laid for meeting them.

³² See footnote 29 above.

³³ At http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/schfin/statistics/ppx09_comp.aspx?ID=244.

Key Question 4: Has the district built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own, without continued assistance from ESE targeted to the district?

In the opinion of the review team, the district has in place a framework that would allow it to maintain continuous improvement without continued assistance targeted to it from ESE. This framework, however, is still too new to be able say, with certainty, that the district has proven its capability to maintain continuous improvement on its own.

During interviews with town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators the review team learned that open meetings began to take place every six weeks between the board of selectmen and the school committee before the development of the turnaround plan. These joint meetings began to address the separation that existed between town officials and the school system by putting into practice a collaboration aimed at building the involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community in the schools. This partnership has been formalized in the turnaround plan under Goal III, with meetings now scheduled monthly to focus on developing strategies to bring about confidence and ownership in the Randolph educational system on the part of all stakeholders. Reports from parents and staff members of improving attendance at school functions and families returning to the school district indicate that the community perception of the school district is becoming more positive.

Review of curriculum documents and assessment results indicated that the district has made substantial progress toward a completely aligned written curriculum, and there were some good instructional practices in place in classrooms randomly visited by the review team, though less evidence was found of instructional practices that develop higher-order thinking skills. Students are being regularly assessed, and the results are being used to inform and improve both curriculum and instruction. Though program assessment is less firmly embedded and the district does not have a formal process for determining cost-effectiveness, many interviewees referred to an analysis of data as having been the driving force for a new program or a modification in an existing one. Loss of some instructional coaching positions was identified by the review team as a concern in the areas of curriculum and instruction, assessment, and professional development.

The review team considered professional development for the teaching staff to be fairly strong, and the involvement of all principals in RBT training was cited as a potential benefit to a recently improved personnel supervisory system. Student support programs have recently been improved, with additional funds from the 2008 operational override returning programs and some staff positions that had been lost previously. The improved relationship between the school committee and the town officials allows greater cooperation and more planning and therefore better allocation of the funds necessary to operate the school system.

The progress made by the district since 2008 has improved both its stability, with better communication, cooperation, and parent engagement, and its capacity to deliver quality instruction to its students, with better curriculum, data analysis, supervision and evaluation, and support. But these are recent changes and have not yet had time to mature and become

institutionalized. Randolph students' proficiency rates are still 16 percentage points below the statewide proficiency rates in both ELA and mathematics.³⁴ It remains to be seen whether improvement in student achievement will accelerate to a point where this difference is diminished. The review team believes that the district leadership, as well as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, should continue to monitor the progress of the Randolph Public Schools in their effort to improve.

³⁴ See Tables 4 and 5 in the Student Performance section above.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The school district and town officials should continue their monthly joint committee meetings to address Goal III of the turnaround plan, which deals with student enrollment, community pride, media relations, and partnerships.

Joint meetings between the town officials and school committee began in order to address the separation that existed between town officials and the school system by putting into practice a collaboration focused on building the involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community in the schools. Town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators described in interviews how these meetings began before the establishment of the turnaround plan and were later formalized in the turnaround plan under Goal III.

Many accomplishments of the joint committee were identified by town and school officials. The town manager cited a \$500,000 fiscal year 2011 supplementary appropriation for the school department for continued educational improvements as a result of better collaboration and trust. School officials pointed to community financial contributions for the high school's participation in the WGBH-TV academic quiz show and the robotics club. Also cited as an example of the improved relationship between the school district and the town officials was the presence of community leaders at school events such as the back-to-school celebration, school open house, and athletic competitions.

Town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators expressed the belief that the establishment of the joint committee has resulted in a level of collaboration and trust that had not existed for many years. The review team believes that the work of the joint committee has resulted in significant progress and that the continued meeting of the committee will sustain this benefit to the community.

The new superintendent of schools should continue developing an educational plan to drive the school system. The new district plan should be linked to the current district plans and be implemented by a cohesive educational team.

Following several years without a District Improvement Plan, the development of the Randolph Public Schools "Strategic Direction 2008–2012" plan, dated October 18, 2007, was carried out during 2006–2008 through a strategic planning process entitled "Excellence in Education: One Diverse Community Working for Randolph's Future."

The comprehensive process that took place is given significant credit for a dramatic improvement in community support for the school district. A prime example of this improvement cited by town officials, school committee members, and central office administrators is the April 2008 passage of the Proposition 2-1/2 operational override of \$5.5 million to restore previously eliminated programs and services in the school system. Their declaration of the underperformance of the Randolph Public Schools pursuant to G.L. c. 69, s. 1K, prompted the Board of Education to require the preparation of the "Randolph Public Schools District

Turnaround Plan,” dated May 24, 2008. The consistency between the turnaround plan and the previously developed strategic plan was substantiated in interviews with school committee members, town officials, and school personnel and also from a review of the documents. According to the school committee members and school district leaders who were interviewed, these two plans are driving the school district. The history and importance of these district plans mean that the linking of the new plan to them would provide continuity of planning and credibility for the school district’s new direction.

For an educational plan to be successful in driving district improvement requires a commitment from the school committee, central office administrators, principals, support personnel, and teachers and a belief in the leadership skills of the superintendent. In separate interviews, principals signaled a note of caution and concern regarding the extent of two-way communications with the superintendent. Also, some uncertainty was expressed about how much site-based authority principals will have.

The superintendent is responsible for ensuring that a capable and cohesive team of principals is in place to carry out the district purpose of improving teaching and learning; to this end, he should make sure that there is adequate two-way communication with the principals by means of regular group and individual meetings. With a capable and cohesive team of principals in place, those principals should be the educational leaders of their schools with authority over all personnel within the school. Principals, in turn, should bring parents’ viewpoints into consideration in school decision-making, for instance through active school councils.

Curriculum and Instruction

Randolph should continue work to complete the remaining pieces of the K-12 curriculum and make it accessible on the district’s website to staff, parents, and the public.

Since 2008, the district has focused on creating a standards-based curriculum. The “Strategic Directions 2008-2012” plan called for the development of a standards-based curriculum, and this was also the first goal in the turnaround plan. As a result of the April 2008 tax override K-12 curriculum directors were hired and began to work with staff in the summer of 2008. The most pressing issues were the ELA and mathematics curricula for the elementary level, as the district had purchased and implemented a new literacy program, Treasures, and was implementing a new math program, Expressions. As there was no curriculum in place in either area at that time, there was an urgency to complete these. The directors worked with staff laying an understanding of frameworks and standards in the development of curriculum, and based on that groundwork were able to develop elementary ELA and mathematics curricula for implementation in the fall of 2008.

Since that time, the district has completed many portions of the curriculum at the secondary level, including individual courses at the high school, which all follow a standard template for curriculum development adopted by the district. The template includes all the components appropriate to a standards-based curriculum.

A document created in May 2010 shows the progress to date in all curriculum areas, including development of shared lesson plans and assessments. As things stand, teachers receive the curriculum they need for their classroom in a binder from the curriculum office. This does not give them the total picture of how pieces of the curriculum fit together. The district is in the process of developing its website so that teachers, administrators, parents, and the public will be able to access the complete curriculum there. The structure of the site, which was awaiting the addition of the completed curriculum, could be seen at the time of the review.

When the curriculum development process is complete and the curriculum accessible, its accessibility will facilitate its further refinement, helping especially in assuring horizontal alignment and developing vertical alignment. There will also be greater access to shared lessons, to links to resources, and to a document library. Having improved access to these will strengthen staff ability to review and modify curriculum based on data. The district can then establish a formal protocol for a cycle of curriculum review and revision.

Randolph should consider increasing coaching support at all levels.

In 2008, the district implemented a coaching structure that included coaches at the secondary level in ELA, mathematics, and science and at the elementary level in literacy and mathematics. Social studies coaching at the secondary level was added in 2009. In addition to helping implement the new standards-based curricula completed at the elementary level and under development at the secondary level, coaches have been able to strengthen instruction through use of common planning time to analyze data, develop action plans for intervention, and use data to inform instruction. The coaches can also model lessons, introduce new strategies for instruction, and assist in developing structures such as flexible cross-grade small groups at the elementary level.

Due to cuts in the fiscal year 2011 budget, coaches have been eliminated at the secondary level. Four coaches remain at the elementary level—two for literacy and two for mathematics, with each pair providing services to two schools. Coaches at this level are continuing to facilitate peer collaboration, support the flexible small group model, provide model lessons, and assist staff in understanding and using data-driven decision-making.

Coaches have been important in implementing new curriculum and new programs over the past three years. Their loss diminishes the ability of the district to move forward as quickly and steadily as it hopes to. Reinstating the coaching support that has been cut would help support new initiatives and anchor those just taking hold.

The district should continue to use data analysis to improve curriculum and instruction so as to increase achievement in ELA and mathematics, especially in subgroups.

The district has implemented many initiatives in the area of curriculum and instruction over the past few years, moving to a special education inclusion model K-12; instituting new literacy and mathematics programs at the elementary level; developing the science curriculum K-12; developing a new ESL curriculum; and adding coaches. The district reached its goal of special education inclusion at all levels in September of 2010. Coaching support started with coaches at

all levels, but was reduced to four at the elementary level for 2010-2011. The district has provided professional development through Research for Better Teaching (RBT) for both teachers and administrators, professional development on effective standards-based instruction, supported by walkthroughs, category training for teachers to support ELL students during mandatory professional development time, and professional development to support the inclusion model.

The high school achieved a ‘No Status’ declaration on No Child Left Behind based upon improved AYP and as of the time of the onsite review had been removed with respect to one standard from the probation imposed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) following its report of 2007.³⁵

In the aggregate, the district has improved achievement in ELA and math over the past three test administrations. The percent of those scoring Proficient or Advanced on MCAS in ELA increased from 49 percent in 2008 to 52 percent in 2010 and in math from 37 percent to 43 percent over the same time period, though the gap between Randolph students’ scores and those of students statewide remained about the same, with Randolph students’ proficiency rates 16 percentage points below the statewide rates in both ELA and math in 2010 (see Tables 4 and 5 in the Student Performance section). Data on subgroups presented a mixed view: the proficiency rates of special education students and ELL students were lower in 2010 than in 2008 in both ELA and mathematics, while the proficiency rates of other subgroups were higher (see Table 6 under Key Question 2).

As many initiatives are just taking hold in Randolph, the district should continue to use data analysis to develop and refine curriculum, improve instruction, especially instruction related to higher-order thinking, and support those strategies and interventions that are improving achievement, so that these structures are embedded and strengthened sufficiently to support all students. Once procedures are systematized and institutionalized they will be firmly in place and able to weather changes in leadership or resources.

Assessment

The district should expand its system of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments to core subject areas other than ELA and mathematics.

According to the Randolph Public Schools Turnaround Plan (see p. 3), a root cause of problems in the district was the lack of a systemwide standards-based and aligned curriculum in most areas. Teachers were receiving little guidance regarding content, and there had been no definition of achievement expectations. Benchmarks to measure performance against standards had not been established. These identified conditions led to Goal I in the Turnaround Plan.

³⁵ While this report was being prepared, in a letter dated February 10, 2011, the NEASC notified the school that it has been removed from probation for the standards for accreditation on curriculum, instruction, and community resources for learning. It stated that it would review the school’s accreditation status when it reviews its Five-year Progress Report, due March 1, 2012.

The district has made great progress in developing a high quality, standards-based curriculum in all subject areas from K-12. To correspond to this curriculum, the district has created a system including progress monitoring, benchmarking, and summative assessments for ELA and mathematics. Plans are underway for the development of other subject area monitoring tools. The review team encourages the district to follow through on these plans and develop a system of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments for all core subjects. The district's professional days, early release days, common planning time, or other meeting time might be used to work on developing these systems, and summer task forces might be used for the same purpose. While standards-based curriculum has been developed for all subject areas, this work may be insufficient until the district is able to determine the effectiveness of instruction through assessments. Once it is able to do so, it will be able to modify and refine curriculum and instruction in all areas and so increase learning across the board.

The district should consider developing and making available to all students, staff, and parents a districtwide assessment calendar that includes common assessments, standardized assessments, and mid-year and final exams across all subject areas.

With the possibility of additional assessments being developed in other core subject areas, the review team recommends the creation of a districtwide assessment calendar. This document would specify when assessments are scheduled, the type of assessment, the schools and grades involved, and the subject area. It could also specify what preparations and materials are needed for teachers. It would serve as an organizational tool to notify teachers within particular schools as well as parents and the community of testing expectations and to help organize the agendas for common planning time when staff meet to disseminate and analyze data about student performance. The creation and distribution of a districtwide assessment calendar could assist in coordinating testing to eliminate the possibility of overlapping testing, which could diminish the importance of some tests and spark the onset of a student perception of “test overload”. It would also be helpful in long-term planning of events and activities that might otherwise conflict with testing.

Randolph should consider forming a district data team to improve the analysis and use of data already available within the district.

Despite the substantial use of data within the Randolph Public Schools, including data from locally-developed assessments, the district lacks a centralized data team. In interviews, teachers and administrators indicated that they would be able to use additional data if it were available. Having a data team would allow the district to improve the analysis of already available raw data and to produce reports beyond the standard reports available from ESE's Education Data Warehouse (EDW). It would allow the staff to improve an already maturing capacity to use data—and so allow it to improve its support for its diverse student populations—without the necessity of sacrificing instructional time to allow additional assessment. The data team could either upload data from local assessments to EDW or use another means of analyzing it; it could also assist in making locally developed assessments more finely focused, resulting in an increase in available instructional time. The team believes that the achievement of several populations

could be improved and proficiency gaps diminished by the improved use of data already in house.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should put procedures in place, consistent with the new statewide evaluation framework to be established in spring 2011 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, to ensure that all evaluations of teachers and administrators include comments on how to improve practice and recommendations for professional development.

Randolph has begun improving its evaluation systems by improving the frequency of teacher evaluations and by training administrators and teachers in Research for Better Teaching. It is now using walkthroughs throughout its schools to improve instruction and, at the high school, with the support of the teachers' union, peer reviews.

A review of personnel files³⁶, however, showed that neither teacher evaluations nor administrator evaluations consistently contained comments aimed at improving practice (65 percent of teacher evaluations, 67 percent of administrator evaluations) or recommendations for professional development (23 percent of teacher evaluations, 78 percent of administrator evaluations). The district should revise its evaluation policies, procedures, and practices to accord with the new evaluation framework being established by the Board in spring 2011, and in particular should make sure that evaluations of both teachers and administrators include comments for improving practice and recommendations for professional development, as well as making sure that they cite factual details about the practice of the individual being evaluated and are timely.³⁷ By revising its approach to evaluation in this way, the district will be able to make full use of evaluations as a tool for improving the performance of both teachers and administrators.

The district should place a priority on planning, coordinating, and evaluating professional development activities that reflect the new District Improvement Plan, the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and professional development recommendations contained in teacher evaluations. The Professional Development Committee should be charged with determining the professional development calendar based on these resources as well as semi-annual teacher surveys.

As things stand now in Randolph, the central office administration presents a plan for professional development to the district's Professional Development Committee, and the committee works cooperatively with the administration to plan the professional development calendar. The committee is voluntary and does not have representation from every school; it strives to be responsive to all teachers by means of an annual or semi-annual survey of the teaching staff. However, since SIPs in the district do not address professional development for

³⁶ All administrator personnel files and a random selection of teacher personnel files were reviewed.

³⁷ Although the review team found that all administrator evaluations cited such details of practice and were timely, only 70 percent of teacher evaluations cited details of instructional practice and only 83 percent were timely.

the school staff much, and since teacher evaluations mostly do not contain recommendations for particular professional development, teachers' needs are not being adequately reflected in professional development offerings.

As the district improves its teacher evaluation process by incorporating professional development recommendations based on classroom performance observations, it should consider systematically reporting these recommendations to the Professional Development Committee. And it should ensure that the SIPs, as well as the new DIP, refer to needed professional development. The committee should be charged with using the recommendations from evaluations, along with the DIP and SIPs and semi-annual surveys of staff, as the primary factors in determining the calendar of professional development activities for the ensuing year. Equally important, the Professional Development Committee should be designed to clearly represent the various stakeholders of the district. A possible model might include, in addition to a central office representative, a teacher representative and an administrator representative from each school. The committee might also include parent representatives, and the team believes that the district should consider appointing a student member from Randolph High School; for instance, the principal might appoint a sophomore in June every other year, to serve until graduation.

A final consideration in improving the function of the Professional Development Committee would be for the district to consider offering a modest stipend to those who serve on it. The review team believes that a nominal level of compensation for service on the committee would serve to enhance the status of the committee in the view of those affected by its activities.

The district review team believes that by implementing this recommendation the district will have acted consistently with the desire the review team heard expressed that reform be “grass roots” and designed to achieve, “One Purpose.” The Professional Development Committee will be representative of stakeholders in the district and professional development will have been integrated with the evaluation and improvement planning systems.

Student Support

The district should use student assessment results and other student data, especially for ELL and special education students, to evaluate the newly created or modified support programs and to improve them or eliminate them as indicated.

During the period between the declaration of underperformance in November 2007 and this review team's visit to the district in October 2010, the Randolph Public Schools have undergone an exciting period of transition. But efforts in the district have not yet resulted in significant improvement in student achievement—students in the district are still performing substantially below their statewide peers—and ELL and special education students in Randolph have experienced a decline in achievement. Only about two-thirds of Randolph students graduate from high school in four years, suspension rates are high, and the district had a 2009-2010 chronic absence rate of 35.7 percent among 9th graders and a 2009-2010 9th grade retention rate (for students who were 9th graders in 2008-2009) of 20.0 percent.

The district currently reviews data and uses it to improve the instructional systems in place at all levels. It is critical however, that such data analysis be carefully applied to the newly instituted student support programs in order to maximize the effect produced by the financial investment. Efficient use of diminishing resources is vital to improve the achievement of Randolph students, especially those with such challenges as special needs or limited English proficiency. In no other way will the district be able to provide for the needs of its students and fulfill its responsibility to its community.

Financial and Asset Management

With diminishing financial resources, the superintendent, school committee, town manager and town council should develop a five-year strategic plan for financial operations and consider ways to increase income and decrease expenses.

The district continues to face budgetary pressures even after the operational override of 2008, as evidenced by the cutting in 2010-2011 of some of its recently instituted coaches. Chapter 70 aid is projected to be lower for fiscal year 2012 regardless of the level of state support, based upon a declining student population in the town. There has also been a loss of tax revenue on the municipal side. Costs of energy and health and liability insurance continue to be volatile. With increasing costs and the uncertainty of federal, state, and local funding, school and town officials should prepare a five year town/school financial strategic plan that projects future income and expenditures. Meetings to hear from various segments of the public and develop the plan should be held regularly. After the plan has been developed it should be reviewed and updated regularly to take into account updated educational and financial information, changes in school enrollment, and changing needs related to improving student achievement.

School and town officials should discuss ways to obtain additional financial resources to meet school and town needs, either by increasing income or decreasing expenses. Though the school system and the town coordinate the use of personnel when necessary, in particular for the maintenance of buildings, maintenance of grounds, and snow removal, the merger of district and town maintenance activities should be considered for improvement in the delivery of services in addition to cost savings. The consolidation of town and district human resource activities, technology, and financial functions, in whole or in part, might also result in cost savings and efficiencies and should be considered if it could be accomplished without interfering with the district's educational mission. The district and town should also consider partnerships, collaboratives, and regional approaches as possible ways to address needs in more cost-effective ways.

The additional funds obtained by any of the above measures could be used to sustain acceptable budgets for the town and school system in a time when they are facing continuing financial challenges. The review team believes that ongoing, collaborative financial planning will allow the district and the town to make the most of their financial resources and will strengthen the cooperative relationship they have entered into.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Randolph Public Schools was conducted from October 25 - October 28, 2010, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. Fred Savoie, Leadership and Governance

Joanne Grenier, Curriculum and Instruction

Willette Johnson, Assessment

Dr. Owen Conway, Human Resources and Professional Development

Dr. John Roper, Student Support (Review Team Coordinator)

Stratos G. Dukakis, Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Level 4 Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Randolph financial personnel: Executive Director of Finance of the Randolph Public Schools, Randolph Town Manager, Randolph Town Accountant, Randolph Tax Collector and Treasurer
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Randolph School Committee: Chairperson and four other members
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Randolph Teachers' Association: President, President-elect, Grievance Chairperson, two other members of the Executive Board
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Randolph Public Schools central office administration: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Executive Director of Administration and Finance, Director of Human Resources, Director of Student Services, Director of Grants and Special Projects, Director of English Language Learners & World Languages
- The review team visited the following schools in the Randolph Public Schools: Elizabeth G. Lyons Elementary School, John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Margaret L. Donovan Elementary School, Martin E. Young Elementary School, Randolph Community Middle School, and Randolph High School.
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers, and instructional coaches and counselors.
 - The review team conducted 40 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the 6 schools visited.
- The review team interviewed ESE's associate commissioner formerly responsible for accountability.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
 - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
 - District Turnaround Plan
 - District Progress Reports to ESE on the Turnaround Plan
 - ESE Monitoring Reports related to the Turnaround Plan

- Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
- Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report
- Any District or School Accountability Report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
- Teachers' contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
- Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010
- 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
 - "Strategic Direction 2008–2012" plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - School committee minutes for the past year
 - Budget Hearing Presentation PowerPoint and most recent approved budget
 - Curriculum guide overview
 - K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
 - High school program of studies
 - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
 - 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 certification and qualification information
 - Teacher planning time schedules

- Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
- Classroom observation tool not used in the teacher evaluation process
- Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
- Teacher attendance data
- All administrator evaluations and certifications
- Randomly selected teacher personnel files
- Gold Team description and summary
- 100 Hallway program description and summary
- Summer Step-Up Program brochure
- School level assessment results

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 4 review of the Randolph Public Schools, conducted from October 25 through October 28, 2010.

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday |
|--|--|--|---|
| October 25 Introductory meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents; interview with teachers' association | October 26 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (Randolph High School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups | October 27 Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (Randolph Community Middle School, Lyons Elementary, Donovan Elementary); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; focus group with parents; teacher focus group; school committee interviews | October 28 School visits (Kennedy Elementary, Young Elementary Schools); interviews with school leaders; school committee interview; classroom observations; follow-up interviews; team meeting; closing meeting with district leaders |

Appendix C: Progress on the Randolph Public Schools Turnaround Plan

Goal I – Develop, implement and support standards-based curricula and instruction in order to improve achievement by all students in all areas, with particular attention to achievement in mathematics.

Action Steps:

1. Continue development of high quality curricula aligned to state standards
The review team saw evidence of high quality curriculum materials and instructional practices in use at all school buildings. A goal stating “continue” indicates that completing will never be reached, but the team believes that the district is actively progressing on this action step.
2. In mathematics and ELA K-8, implement articulated systems of assessments, including collection tools, and collaboratively implemented analysis protocols which enable faculty to :
 - Identify students’ areas of strength and gaps in learning;
 - Determine strategies to bring students to benchmarks;
 - Monitor progress;
 - Summarize accomplishments on a regular and consistent basisGroups of administrators, teachers, staff members such as counselors and support staff, school committee members and even parents who served on school councils routinely described meetings where data was presented and served to inform the decision making process. The review team believes that the district carried out this action step in ELA K-8 and mathematics, and expanded it to other areas as well.
3. Expand / improve / implement interventions to meet the needs of students who are not meeting benchmarks / mastering standards
The review team determined by an analysis of new and revised support programs, as well as interviews with administrators, teachers and support staff, that the district was in fact expanding, implementing and improving its intervention mechanism. Since more can always be done, this action step is considered by the team to be continuing rather than accomplished.
4. 9-12, develop and implement common departmental assessments
The district reported that this activity was completed for the mathematics department, and interviews with teachers corroborated the report. Varying degrees of progress were reported by teachers in other academic disciplines and elementary levels, but it was clear to the review team that the effort was widespread and encompassing throughout the district.
5. Support implementation of effective standards-based instructional strategies in all classrooms
The hiring of new curriculum directors and literacy and instructional coaches, along with improved supervisory training for principals that included a formal process for conducting walkthroughs, as well as a broad professional development offering for teachers helped to implement

actions step 5. The district describes its efforts in this area as continuing and the review team concurs.

6. Expand efforts to draw explicit connections for students between academic achievement and future opportunity.

The district pointed to a large and growing list of partnerships with businesses, colleges and other institutions such as unions and community service agencies to explain its expanded efforts. The review team agreed that the effort, while admittedly ongoing, was an indicator that the district was seriously addressing this action step.

7. Implement the strategies designed to successfully accomplish Goal 1 of the Strategic Direction “We will achieve a year to year pattern of overall improved student learning and academic achievement, PK-12, during the period 2008-2012.”

The review team agreed that this action step represented a difficult one to rate in terms of completion. The district has implemented strategies designed to improve student learning and academic achievement, but it has not yet demonstrated a year to year pattern. The ultimate goal of completion by 2012 seems plausible to the review team.

Goal II- Improve performance for all special education students.

According to the district’s Progress Report, dated June of 2010, the goal was further explained by the explanation “By the end of the two year Turn-Around period, the number and percent of Special Education students achieving at proficient or advanced levels, as measured by the MCAS will have increased.”

Action Steps:

1. Create Inclusion teams in grades 7,8,9 for Special Education students at RCMS & RHS
This action step was begun in 2007 and considered accomplished by the end of 2008.
2. At RHS – initiate Inclusion teams for grade 10 and co-taught academic classes to special education students in grades 11,12
By the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, inclusion teams were in place throughout the district, and academic inclusion classes were being successfully co-taught at grades 11 and 12. The review team considered that this action step was accomplished.
3. Provide professional development on models of inclusion to elementary special education staff
Interviews with district staff and teachers indicated that efforts to address this action step had been underway since 2007 and continue.
4. Develop inclusion model for RPS elementary schools
Inclusion has been in place in the elementary schools since 2009-2010. Work continues to ensure that students who benefit from this instructional approach are participating.
5. Institute full inclusion in RPS elementary schools
The district reported, and the review team confirmed that this action step was accomplished as of September, 2009.
6. Continue providing professional development on scaffolding instruction to RCMS and RHS faculty

Teachers in focus groups and interviews expressed a desire for increased professional development in the area of scaffolding instruction and inclusion. Members of the professional development committee, as well as district staff, assured the review team that plans to continue and expand those offerings were in place for the 2012 school year. An outside consultant has been retained by the district since 2007 to provide professional development and consultation services to teachers. The effort is continuing.

7. Provide professional development in the content address to special education teachers in substantially separate programs

The district began its plans to increase professional development to the teachers in the substantially separate program in 2008, with additional activities in 2009 and May of 2010. Professional development was also provided to paraprofessionals working in the substantially separate programs according to district reports and interviews with professional development committee members.

8. Increase early literacy instruction

Additional staff members were hired in all of the elementary schools to assist in early literacy instruction. In addition, all of the elementary schools, by the time of the district review visit, had Lexia labs in place, and DIBELS results provided by the district indicated improving results. The review team felt that this action step was essentially completed, but work supporting this step was, and should continue.

9. All special education staff participate in ongoing observation and evaluation

The district reported that, for the first time, all paraprofessionals were routinely evaluated during the 2009 school year. Administrators conducted evaluations using the RBT model for all teachers. The review team concluded that this action step had been accomplished.

10. Develop special education program evaluation instrument

By June of 2009, the district reported this step to be completed. The completion was reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education during its Coordinated Program Review of the Randolph Public Schools.

11. Annual evaluation of RPS Special education programs.

This action step continues. According to department records, complaints filed against the Randolph Public Schools with the Bureau of Special Education Appeals declined from 22 in 2007, to 6 in 2008, to 3 in 2009. The review team concluded that the action step was accomplished, although it, too, should continue on a regular basis.

Goal III – We will build a high achieving school system for all children with involvement and investment of the entire Randolph community. Working together we will build confidence in and ownership of our schools by all children and their families.

Action Steps:

1. Selectmen and School Committee will regularly meet jointly to work on developing effective communication strategies and to rebuild trust and accountability with the greater Randolph Community.

This has been the practice since 2007, and continues. In addition, although the Board of Selectmen has been replaced by a Town Council, one council member is chosen annually to be a fully voting member of the school committee.

Appendix D: Randolph CPI Trends 2003-2010 for Schools and Subgroups

