The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

School District Examination Report:

Salem
Public Schools
Technical Report

data driven
standards based
learner centered

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

2004 - 2006

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the Salem Public Schools in February 2007. With an average proficiency index of 73 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006 (80 PI points in English language arts and 66 PI points in math), the district is considered a 'Moderate' performing school system based on the Department of Education's rating system (found in Appendix A of this report), with achievement below the state average. Less than half of Salem's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests.

District Overview

The town of Salem, located in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts, was founded in 1626 and became a city in 1836. One of the first commercial seaports in the country, it is now a historic seaside community catering to tourism, with many museums and shopping areas.. The largest sources of employment within Salem are educational, health, and social services, followed by manufacturing; professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services, and retail trade. The city is governed by a Mayor-Council form of municipal government.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), the city had a median family income of $55,635 in 1999, compared to the statewide median family income of $63,706, ranking it 258 out of the 351 cities and towns in the commonwealth. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city had a total population of 40,407 with a population of 6,368 school-age children, or 16 percent of the total. Of the total households in Salem, 26 percent were households with children under 18 years of age, and 25 percent were households with individuals age 65 years or older. Thirty-one percent of the population age 25 years or older held a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 33 percent statewide.

According to Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) data, in 2005-2006 the Salem Public Schools had a total enrollment of 4,638. The demographic composition in the district was: 59.2 percent White, 31.0 percent Hispanic, 4.7 percent African-American, 2.8 percent Asian, 0.2 percent Native American, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.1 percent multi-race, non-Hispanic; 7.8 percent limited English proficient (LEP), 41.8 percent low income,

and 21.1 percent special education. Ninety-six percent of school-age children in Salem attended public schools. The district does not offer school choice, but seven students from surrounding communities attended the Salem schools in 2005-2006. A total of 405 Salem students attended schools outside the district, including 125 students who attended North Shore Technical High School and 192 students who attended charter schools.

The district has nine schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 12, including seven elementary schools serving grades pre-kindergarten through 8, one middle/junior high school serving grades 6 through 8, and one high school serving grades 9 through 12. The administrative team at the time of the review consisted of a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a director of finance, a director of special education, a human resources director, and a director of guidance. Each school had a principal and the high school also had three headmasters and the middle school also had two assistant principals. The district has a seven-member school committee.

In FY 2005, Salem's per pupil expenditure, based on appropriations from all funds, was $11,419, compared to $10,626 statewide, ranking it 90 out of the 328 school districts reporting data (charter schools not included). The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from $44,420,716 to $46,139,372; Chapter 70 aid increased from $10,290,730 to $10,536,330; the required local contribution increased from $28,359,639 to $29,992,288; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 5,101 to 4,912. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 23.2 percent to 22.8 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total Schedule 1 net school spending reported in the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report decreased from 58.2 to 57.8 percent.

Context

The Salem Public Schools are characterized by transitions. Reflecting its community, the district hosts a growing population of increasingly diverse students. The number of economically disadvantaged students is rising, as is the number of special education students. At the same time, the student population on the whole is declining, as the district faces increasing competition

for students from private and parochial schools in the area. Thirty percent of the teaching staff have served the district for fewer than three years, and 50 percent have been in the district for fewer than 10 years. The administrative staff fits the same profile, with only five members of the 13-member leadership team having served as administrators during the 2003-2004 school year, when the EQA examiners previously reviewed the district.

The city faces financial constraints that are common to many communities. Salem experienced a fiscal crisis during 2005-2006, when the district had to cut $1.5 million halfway through the fiscal year. That reduction resulted in the loss of more than 30 staff members and 60 positions (approximately half had been vacant) from among the teaching and support staff. The budget for the following year was level funded, but included the funds that had been cut from the previous year. Most of the buildings were in good repair due to the expenditure of $100 million in construction and renovations. The Collins Middle School and the Saltonstall and Horace Mann elementary schools were still in need of repair at the time of the EQA's most recent district review. All district schools were secure and had visitor procedures in place.

The district prides itself in its community partnerships. Salem State College, the Museum of Science, and the Peabody Essex Museum have worked with the school district to provide enrichment and professional development programs designed to benefit both students and teachers.

The Salem Public Schools have implemented districtwide management procedures that have had both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, schools were free to provide programs, supports, and assessments that made sense in terms of a neighborhood school model. On the other hand, the districtwide coordination and oversight that such a model requires was lacking. The district seemed to struggle with striking a balance between district-based and school-based governance. Administrators referred to this management system as "freedom, with parameters," but the EQA examiners observed a lack of clarity and focus. The district needs to move more quickly and affirmatively to manage its own transitions so that it can meet the expectations of its changing community. Overall, the city of Salem is and should be proud of its school district and supportive of its continuing efforts to implement and modify programs to improve student achievement.

The EQA Examination Process

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

From February 5-8, 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Salem Public Schools for the period 2004-2006, with a primary focus on 2006. This examination was based on the EQA's six major standards of inquiry that address the quality of educational management, which are: 1) Leadership, Governance, and Communication; 2) Curriculum and Instruction; 3) Assessment and Program Evaluation; 4) Human Resource Management and Professional Development; 5) Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support; and 6) Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency. The report is based on the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not consider documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the onsite visit.

For the period under examination, 2004-2006, this report finds Salem to be a 'Moderate' performing school district with an average proficiency index of 73 proficiency index (PI) points in 2006, marked by student achievement that was 'Moderate' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Low' in math on the 2004-2006 MCAS tests. Over this period, student performance improved by nearly one PI point in ELA and by slightly more than one-half PI point in math, which closed the district's average proficiency gap by almost three percent.

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

Summary of Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

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

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

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

- Salem's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 73 proficiency index (PI) points, five PI points less than that statewide. Salem's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 27 PI points.
- In 2006, Salem's proficiency gap in ELA was 20 PI points, four PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of two and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Salem's proficiency gap in math was 34 PI points in 2006, six PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than four PI points per year to achieve AYP. Salem's proficiency gap in STE was 36 PI points, seven PI points wider than that statewide.

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

Between 2003 and 2006, Salem's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall, in ELA, and in math, and was relatively flat in STE.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by four percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Salem narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of nine percent.

- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Salem showed slight improvement, at an average of one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of seven percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP. Math performance in Salem improved during this period at an average of one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of more than 10 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Salem showed little change in STE performance between 2004 and 2006. Although the percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased by two percentage points over this period, Salem's STE proficiency index improved by almost one PI point due to a decline in the percentage of students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category. This change in the STE proficiency index resulted in an improvement rate of two percent.

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Salem students. Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Salem in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 50 PI points in ELA (regular education students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, respectively) and 41 PI points in math (non low-income students, LEP students, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Salem in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, LEP students, Hispanic students, African-American students, low-income students (those participating in the free and reduced-cost lunch program), and male students. Roughly one-third of Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students, and more than two-fifths of male students, attained proficiency. Only 14 percent of students with disabilities and five percent of LEP students attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, non low-income students, and female students. For each of these subgroups, more than half the students attained proficiency.

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

The performance gap in Salem between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 56 PI points in 2003 to 49 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 38 to 40 PI points over this period.

- In Salem, all student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, although the pattern of change varied among subgroups. The most improved subgroups in ELA were regular education students, LEP students, and Hispanic students.
- In math, all subgroups in Salem showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were non low-income students, White students, and regular education students.

Standard Summaries

Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Two superintendents administered the Salem school district during the past three years. Both leaders developed strong working relationships with city officials and the school committee. A mission statement and strategic goals guided the district and informed development of individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The district welcomed newly elected school committee members through an orientation program that presented district successes and challenges and provided a context for decision-making concerning the education of the district's 4,600 students.

The district leadership team, comprised of central administrators and principals, collaborated effectively to develop SIPs that identified student academic weaknesses as indicated by the MCAS exams. The assistant superintendent stated that the plans focused on the improvement of writing skills across the district, and beginning in 2006-2007 a consistent implementation of the elementary Everyday Math program. Plans as well as student achievement results were routinely

communicated to school committee members, parents, and the general public by means of locally televised school committee meetings, newsletters, and a comprehensive district website. Building-based efforts to raise student achievement yielded very modest results. Special education students and English language learner (ELL) students posed the greatest challenge to the district since those students scored significantly lower than their peers statewide. With the appointment of a new assistant superintendent in April 2006 after a year-long vacancy, the district has recommitted itself to regaining momentum in the areas of instructional improvement, curriculum development, promotion of student achievement, and data-driven decision-making.

District leaders effectively governed the district from 2003 through 2006. A cooperative relationship existed between the school committee and district staff. The school committee regularly reviewed its policies and had a clear understanding about its role and that of the superintendent under the Education Reform Act. The superintendent annually presented educationally sound budgets that were carefully reviewed prior to their submission to the city council for adoption.

The district adopted a strategic plan that guided the initiatives of the district from 2001 to 2006, and the district currently contemplates a successor plan. During that time the district embarked on a comprehensive building renovation/replacement project. Renovations to Salem High School will be completed in another year. The district maintained clean buildings despite inadequate custodial resources. A financial deficit in FY 2006 caused the elimination of more than 60 positions and the layoff of approximately 30 staff members (about half the positions eliminated had been vacant). The reduction of math leadership positions as result of the deficit reduced the district's leadership capacity in this critical academic area.

Curriculum and Instruction

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

The district had aligned its curricula with the state frameworks, but curriculum at the elementary level lacked the expected components that would have made it user-friendly for teachers. The district curricula had a degree of horizontal alignment in elementary ELA, the middle school

core content areas, and high school science courses. In other areas, the curricula lacked the specificity, particularly with regard to assessments, which brings alignment. During the period under review, the middle and high school principals were the curriculum leaders who oversaw the continuing development of curriculum in their respective schools. At the middle school and in the science department at the high school, administrators and teachers had data to evaluate the use, consistency, and effectiveness of delivery of the curriculum. In elementary schools, principals and literacy coordinators gathered student achievement data in ELA from the administration of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Similar activities in elementary math and high school English and math were not reported to EQA examiners.

The district and the schools promoted several programs for the improvement of writing and began to provide teachers training in instruction appropriate for English language learners. The district implemented First Steps, the Six Traits of Writing, Harcourt Trophies, and Looking at Student Work (LASW) at the elementary level, the Collins Writing Program at the middle school, and Writing Across the Curriculum at the high school.

In addition, during the period under review, the district increased the amount of instructional time for elementary math and ELA and for high school courses. At the elementary level, each school established a longer literacy block ranging from 90 to 120 minutes per day. Time allocated to math instruction was set at not less than 60 minutes. In 2005-2006, the high school shifted from five 48-minute periods for a total of 240 minutes per day of instruction to four 80-minute periods for 320 minutes per day. Extended instructional blocks were already in place at the middle school. The district also provided appropriate instructional technology, promoted its use through professional development, and funded technology integration specialists to support teachers.

For the most part, the district confined its examination of MCAS test results to scores in the aggregate and to item analysis rather than broaden its scope to include analysis of subgroup achievement. However, administrators and coaches did sometimes examine student achievement by classroom and discuss the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies. The district

formally provided teachers with strategies for addressing the needs of ELL students during the final year of the period under review. While the district included special education students in regular education classrooms, interviewees reported little professional development in supporting these students.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Students were extensively assessed within the Salem Public Schools. Particularly in the elementary grades, MCAS tests results, which were analyzed both for aggregate information and trends, were a part of an information gathering system. Principals explained that they used data to conduct trend analyses to evaluate individual student progress from year to year and school to school, or to evaluate the effect of the length of stay in the Salem Public Schools on overall academic growth. They had also used data in the assignment of staff and in monitoring grant funded initiatives. Low districtwide achievement on the 2005 MCAS tests led to implementation of First Steps and Five Traits in Writing at the elementary school, the Collins Writing Program at the middle school, and Writing Across the Curriculum at the high school.

Elementary level assessment tools included the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), all of which were used for assessing students' accomplishments in English language arts. Fewer options were available in mathematics or science. In math at the elementary levels, as well as in all subjects at the middle and high school levels, the district relied heavily on MCAS tests results as well as individual class or course assessments made at the building level. The district actively required all students to participate in all required assessments.

Across the district, individual examples existed of data being used to evaluate programs, but the efforts were not deeply ingrained and frequent. Analysis at all levels of MCAS aggregate data and trends was common, allowing teachers and principals to make changes in curricula, but the practice was individualized and lacked districtwide support and direction. The district had

policies in place requiring program evaluation, but there was little evidence that programs were analyzed using disaggregated data, despite the fact that in 2006 only five percent of limited English proficient students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests compared to 58 percent of regular education students. Other than those required by law and related to Title I or district finances, the district did not engage in any internal or external program audits. However, it was a member of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and had undergone school-wide evaluations at both the high school and one elementary school. In neither case did the audits focus on program effectiveness, and the results were not used specifically to improve programs or instruction.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Maintaining a fully staffed human resources office even during a period of fiscal austerity allowed the district to continue implementing efficient and equitable hiring practices, and assisted in the effective monitoring of professional licensing. The district used both free and commercial advertising and participated in job fairs to attract a wide range of applicants for open positions. Interviews were conducted, and principals made the final decision with respect to hiring the best candidate. Administrators reported that there was no pressure applied from the district office to avoid the best-qualified candidate at the expense of one who could be hired at a lower salary.

Following reference and criminal record checks, the district checked licensure. If a potential hire was licensed, the offer letter was issued immediately. If the candidate was not licensed, an application for licensure would be generated immediately in the candidate's presence, and a letter requesting a waiver of certification would be dispatched to the Department of Education before the candidate left the office. In the event of open or newly created positions, all qualified internal candidates were guaranteed interviews, in order to help retain valuable district employees. Representatives of the teachers' association reported that the district had experienced substantial personnel changes over the previous years, with 30 percent of the faculty having held

their positions for fewer than three years, 50 percent for fewer than five years, and 70 percent for fewer than 10 years.

The professional development plan for the district was building-based and supervised actively by the district office. Principals were allowed to plan professional development activities that would best train their faculties in accordance with the SIPs. The district shared the professional development time by planning and sponsoring districtwide initiatives that would lead to the successful implementation of the DIP. Topics included Everyday Math and Looking at Student Work. Over the review period, the district budgeted $800,000 for professional development activities, of which $570,000 represented teacher salaries charged to professional development for the full-staff professional development days.

The teachers' association contract called for tuition reimbursement for a three-credit course at Salem State College upon prior approval of the superintendent and upon successful course completion. During the 2005-2006 school year, this allotment amounted to $420 per teacher and totaled $40,000. In addition, the district participated in an initiative with surrounding communities called the Tri-district Initiative for Leadership in Education (TILE), which assembled a cohort group intended to encourage the pursuit of advanced degrees by faculty and administrators.

All new teachers were provided both a two-day orientation before the beginning of the school year and a year-long mentoring program designed to support and nurture the teacher. Administrators were also provided with mentors whose experience matched their new assignments. The mentoring program could be extended for an additional year if found to be beneficial to the candidate.

While the district fulfilled its contractual obligation to observe and evaluate teachers, principals agreed that they wished they had more time to directly supervise their staffs. No classroom monitoring occurred, but principals reviewed plan books and student test results. The system used for evaluations resulted in annual observations for non-professional status teachers, but as few as one classroom observation every five years for professional-status teachers. In general, evaluations reviewed by the EQA examiners were complete, but had few recommendations for

improvement or comments on the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques, either on the classroom observation reports or the summative evaluations themselves.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

The Salem Public Schools provided an array of special education services for its children, including early childhood education and services for children with learning, emotional, behavioral, and physical needs. The district placed these children in the most inclusive setting possible. The district, home to a sizeable English language learner (ELL) population, ran sheltered immersion programs and pullout instruction through the middle school level with a somewhat separate program at the high school. It also began to provide training for its regular education teachers in the teaching of such students. Each elementary school provided 90 to 120 minutes of instruction daily in ELA and 60 minutes in math. Literacy instruction took various forms: Reading Recovery, Title I, and guided reading. Although some schools received grant funding or more services, each school provided services within its available resources and appropriate to its population.

The differences in grant funding affected the variety and type of MCAS remediation that each school provided. These included in-school courses for at-risk populations at the high school, general remediation in reading and writing for all grade 6, 7, and 9 students, and after-school programs in either literacy or math at some elementary schools and at the high school. One elementary school without a grant had no supplementary services, and another had a special homework night each week.

Although guided reading groups at the elementary school were scheduled so that special education and ELL students could receive services from knowledgeable professional staff, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not provide sufficient direction to regular education teachers serving these students in inclusionary settings. The DCAP provided neither specific recommendations nor lists of available Salem services for children. Although staff members reported that it was a resource used by Child Study Teams, they also acknowledged

that there were no plans to update the document to include new accommodations such as those presented in the ELL trainings that the district had conducted. Instructional practices needed for special populations were not strongly in evidence in the classroom observations.

The district effectively tracked and monitored teacher attendance. The schools posted information bulletins urging attendance in all student handbooks. Student attendance, tracked by IPASS software, were at acceptable levels except at the high school where attendance averaged slightly below 90 percent. Chronic absenteeism rates ranged from 13 to 17 percent at the middle school, while the high school figures ranged between 32 and 40 percent. Staff throughout the district spoke about the effect of the transient population on record keeping and instruction. The problem was more pronounced at the high school, which had high retention and suspension rates.

The district had an extensive and detailed disciplinary code that appeared in all student handbooks. The district also provided the services of two conflict resolution counselors, Child Study Teams in every building, and a resource officer to assist the schools with disciplinary and attendance issues. Elementary principals reported handling discipline on a case-by-case basis, involving parents when necessary, and they did not report problems with discipline. The middle school benefited from an in-school suspension program and two instructional programs, one on-site and the other off-site, for providing specialized care to students with behavioral and emotional issues.

The high school instituted a Freshman House and Freshman Seminar in order to ease the transition to high school. It also provided an alternative after-school program, child care for teenage mothers, the Hawthorne Program, vocational courses, and other resources to assist students. However, the district did not initiate its own summer school until the end of the review period. Since the high school lost its in-school suspension program several years prior to the review period due to budget cuts, repeated disciplinary referrals resulted in out-of-school suspension for a quarter of the student body in grades 9-11 during the last two years of the review period. The budget for FY 2008 calls for the resumption of the in-school suspension program at the high school. In addition, retention rates reported to the Department of Education exceeded the state average in each year of the period under review. Additional data provided by the high school revealed a high retention rate and a large number of students who, either due to

transfers or dropping out, disappeared from the student rolls. The high school did not provide clear data on whether students' failure to re-enroll was due to their having transferred or dropped out. The dropout rate exceeded the state average every year. Data provided by the high school revealed that 12 percent of the class of 2006 had dropped out.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

The budget process was defined in the policies of the school committee and was implemented by the superintendent. Early in the budget process, the superintendent and mayor met to set the parameters for the development of the school department budget. Upon receipt of instructions from the superintendent as to the allowable budget increase, the principals and districtwide administrators prepared their budgets with input from their staffs. In order to provide equity, each budget item, with the exception of salaries and districtwide activities accounts, was based on a per pupil cost allocation. The budget development process included the goals of the superintendent and those of the SIPs and DIP. The superintendent and school committee had been committed to preserving small class sizes and considered this to be the most important aspect of the budget process. The superintendent held meetings with the individual principals and administrators to review their budgets. The budget document did not include information on state and federal funds, revolving accounts, or other financial resources. The budget recommended by the superintendent was submitted to the school committee. Several public school committee meetings were held, followed by a mandated public hearing. Upon adoption by the school committee, the budget was sent to the mayor and city council for review and final appropriation.

The city of Salem had two financial crises that affected the delivery system in the Salem schools, one in FY 2004 with the reduction of Chapter 70 funding, and another in FY 2006 with a reduction of $500,000 by the mayor followed by the school department having to absorb a $1,100,000 special education tuition budget deficit. This resulted in substantial reduction in staff and services. According to the superintendent, this was accomplished with minimal impact on

the school system's educational goals. The instructional costs in FY 2006 increased by 4.01 percent over those in FY 2005.

The school system exceeded net school spending (NSS) requirements for the period under review. According to the mayor, 50 percent of the city budget had been allocated to the school system. City audit reports reported that "the city had experienced financial challenges." The city and the school department had experienced rising health care costs for employees/retirees, energy costs, and pension costs.

Several years ago the city and the school department embarked on a $100 million building project to renovate all of the elementary schools. This effort was completed in FY 2005. The final phase of the building project consisted of the $47.5 million renovation of the Salem High School. As a result of the rebuilding of the infrastructure of the Salem schools, the schools will have state-of-the-art facilities that will help provide an excellent education for its students. In interviews with the administration, it was stated that the Collins Middle School, the Saltonstall School, and the Horace Mann Lab School (under the jurisdiction of Salem State College) required substantial repairs and improvements.

Visits to the schools revealed that the schools were well maintained and conducive to student learning and achievement. The FY 2006 mid-year reductions in the school department operating budget had a negative impact on the building service department and on the schools and the learning environment; the impact was a 28 percent reduction (10 full-time positions) in the custodial department, which affected all the schools. The school department did not have a formal written preventive maintenance program for its schools. The schools had adequate security systems.

Analysis of MCAS Student Achievement Data

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

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

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA subjected the most current state and district MCAS test results to a series of analyses to determine whether there were differences between the mean results of district students and those of students statewide or among student subgroups within the district. Descriptive analyses of the 2006 MCAS test results revealed differences between the achievement of students in Salem and the average scores of students in Massachusetts.

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

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

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

for overall achievement as well as achievement in an individual subject. Please see Appendix A for more detailed information about the proficiency index.

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

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

Achievement

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

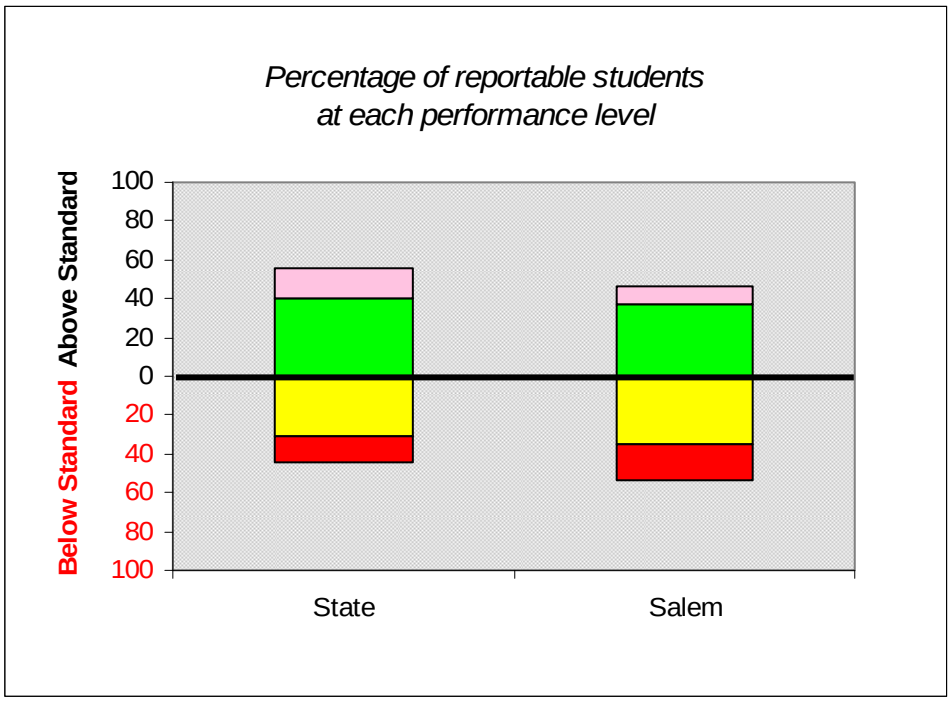
Findings:

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

- Salem's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 73 proficiency index (PI) points, five PI points less than that statewide. Salem's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 27 PI points.

- In 2006, Salem's proficiency gap in ELA was 20 PI points, four PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of two and one-half PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Salem's proficiency gap in math was 34 PI points in 2006, six PI points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of more than four PI points per year to achieve AYP. Salem's proficiency gap in STE was 36 PI points, seven PI points wider than that statewide.

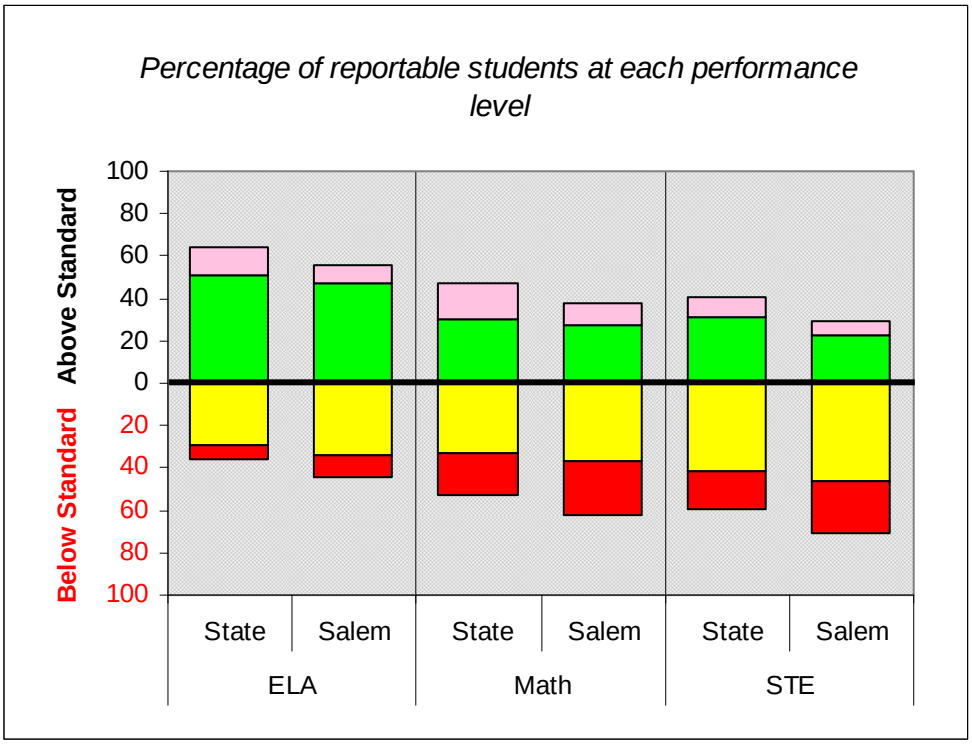
Figure/Table 1: Student MCAS Test Performance, All Students, 2006



	State	Salem
Advanced	15	9
Proficient	41	37
Needs Improvement	31	35
Warning/Failing	14	18
Percent Attaining Proficiency	56	46
Average Proficiency Index (API)	78.3	73.1

In 2006, 46 percent of Salem students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests overall, 10 percentage points less than that statewide. Eighteen percent of Salem students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category, four percentage points more than that statewide. Salem's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 73 proficiency index (PI) points, five PI points less than that statewide. Salem's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 27 PI points.

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



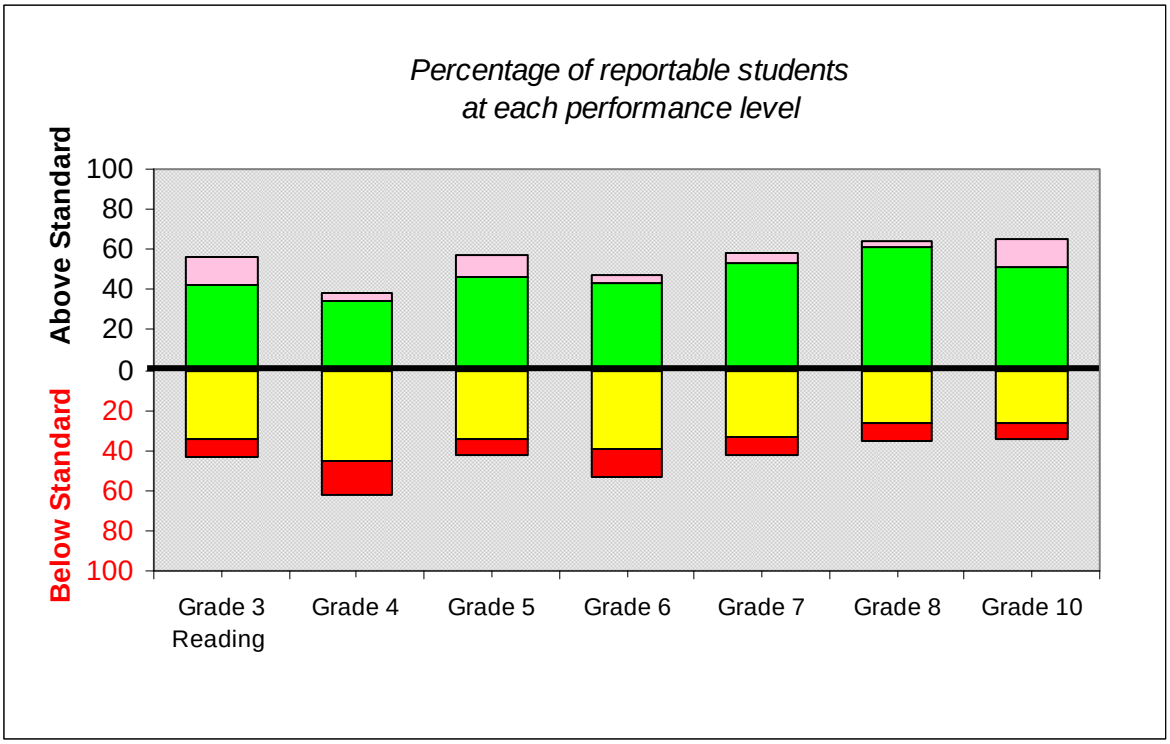
	ELA		Math		STE	
	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem
Advanced	13	8	17	10	10	7
Proficient	51	47	30	28	31	22
Needs Improvement	29	34	33	36	42	46
Warning/Failing	7	10	20	26	17	25
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	55	47	38	41	29
Proficiency Index (PI)	84.3	79.8	72.3	66.3	71.4	63.7

In 2006, achievement in English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE) was lower in Salem than statewide. In Salem, 55 percent of students attained proficiency in ELA, compared to 64 percent statewide; 38 percent attained proficiency in math, compared to 47 percent statewide; and 29 percent attained proficiency in STE, compared to 41 percent statewide.

Salem students had stronger performance on the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA than in math and STE. The proficiency index for Salem students in ELA was 80 PI points; in math it was 66 PI points; and in STE it was 64 PI points. These compare to the statewide figures of 84, 72, and 71 PI points, respectively.

The proficiency gap for Salem students was 20 PI points in ELA, 34 PI points in math, and 36 PI points in STE. These compare to the statewide figures of 16, 28, and 29 PI points, respectively. Salem's proficiency gaps would require an average annual improvement of two and one-half PI points in ELA and more than four PI points in math to meet AYP.

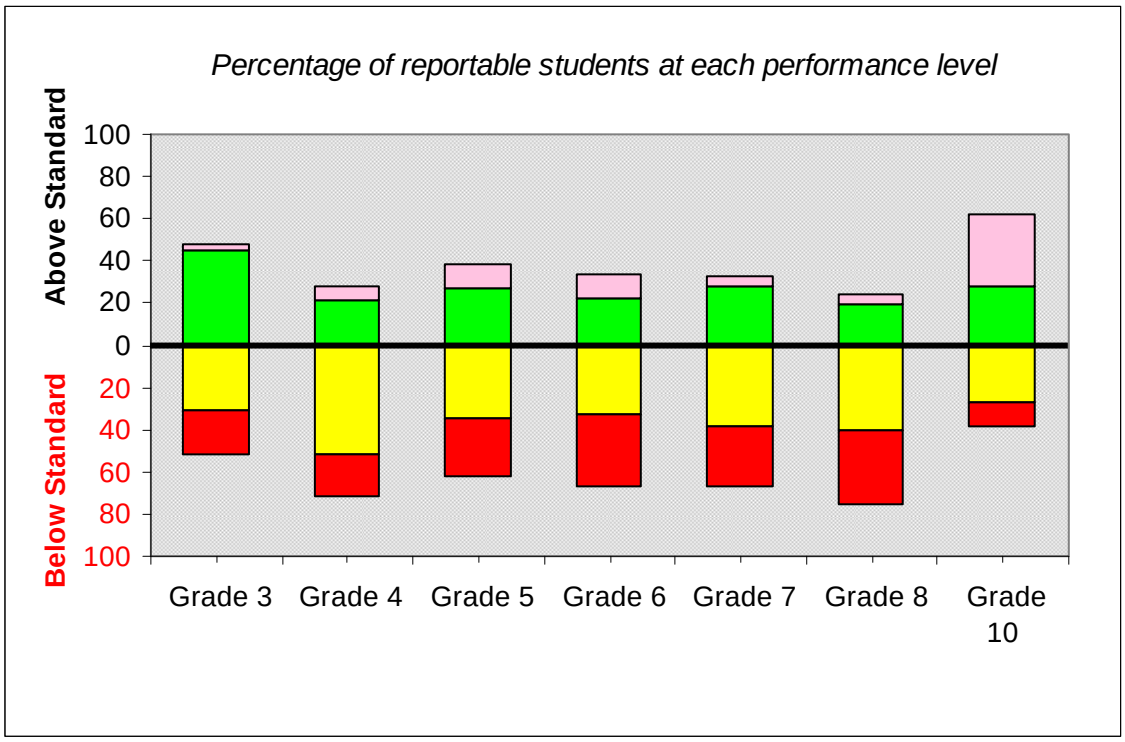
Figure/Table 3: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	15	4	12	4	5	3	14
Proficient	42	34	46	43	53	61	51
Needs Improvement	35	45	34	39	33	27	27
Warning/Failing	9	17	9	14	9	9	8
Percent Attaining Proficiency	57	38	58	47	58	64	65

The percentage of Salem students attaining proficiency in 2006 in ELA varied somewhat by grade level, ranging from a low of 38 percent of grade 4 students to a high of 65 percent of grade 10 students.

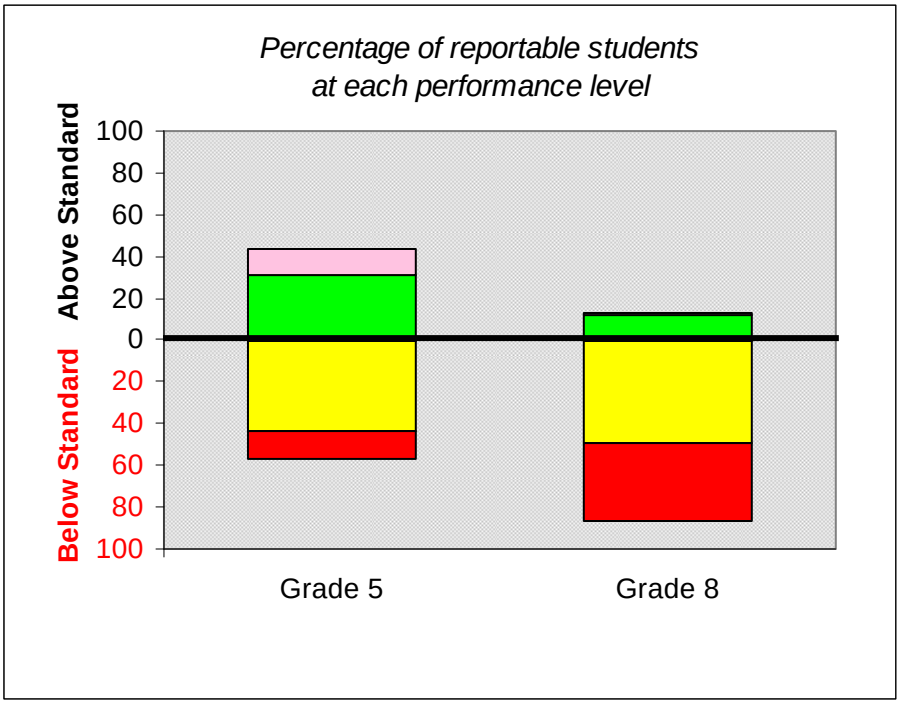
Figure/Table 4: Student MCAS Math Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
Advanced	3	7	11	12	5	5	34
Proficient	45	21	27	22	28	19	28
Needs Improvement	30	51	35	32	38	41	27
Warning/Failing	22	21	27	34	29	35	11
Percent Attaining Proficiency	48	28	38	34	33	24	62

The percentage of Salem students attaining proficiency in 2006 in math also varied by grade level, ranging from a low of 24 percent of grade 8 students to a high of 62 percent of grade 10 students.

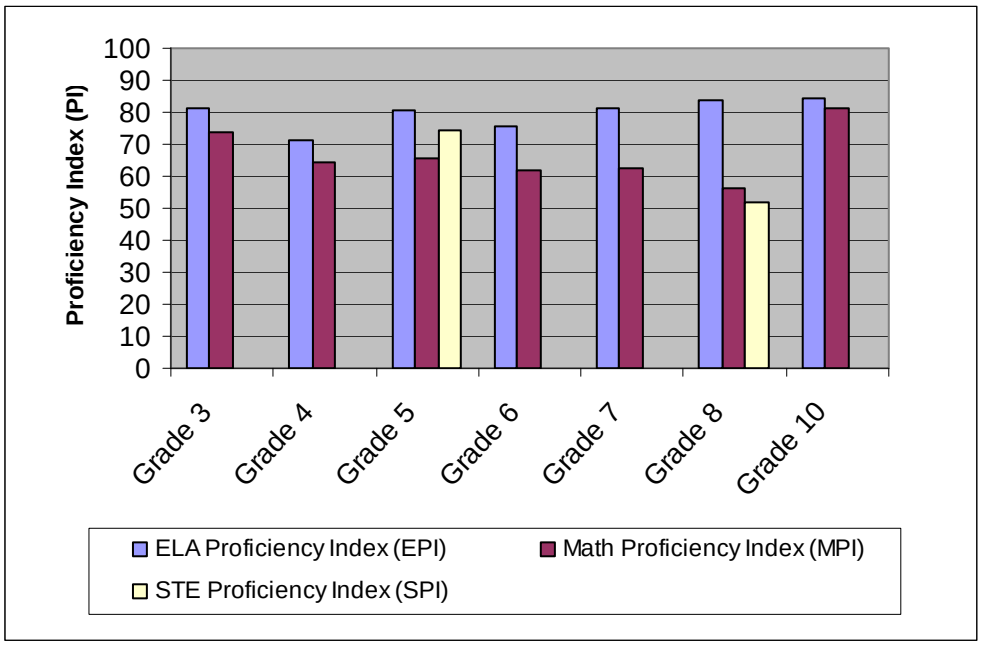
Figure/Table 5: Student MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) Test Performance, by Grade, 2006



	Grade 5	Grade 8
Advanced	12	1
Proficient	31	12
Needs Improvement	44	49
Warning/Failing	13	38
Percent Attaining Proficiency	43	13

In Salem in 2006, 43 percent of grade 5 students attained proficiency in STE, and 13 percent of grade 8 students did so.

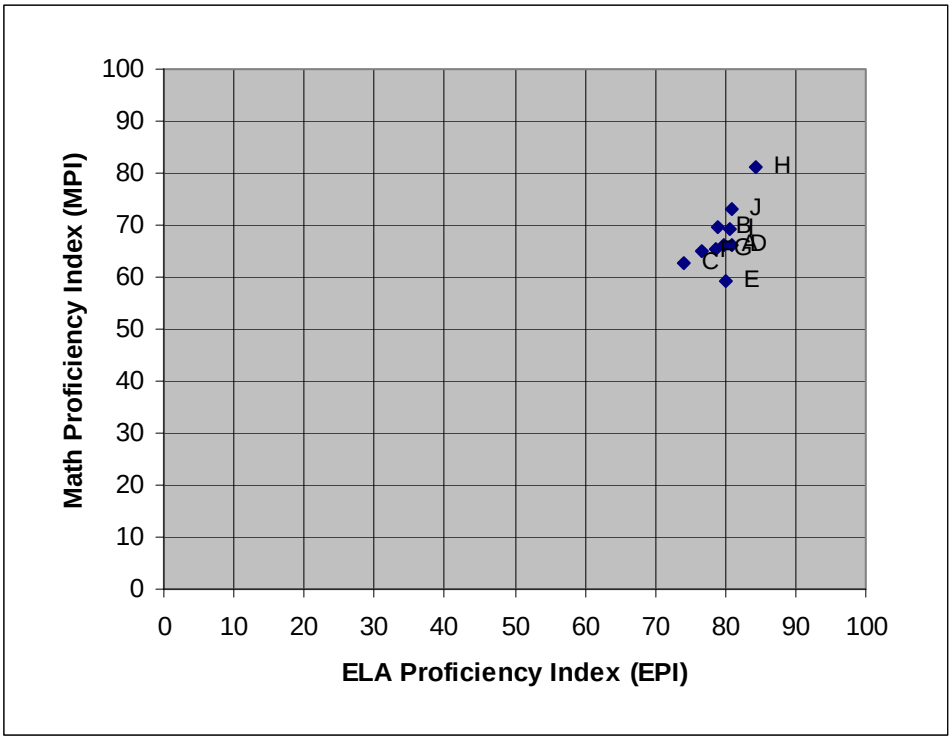
Figure/Table 6: Student MCAS Proficiency Indices, by Grade and Subject, 2006



	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
ELA Proficiency Index (EPI)	81.1	71.1	80.7	75.6	81.1	83.7	84.2
Math Proficiency Index (MPI)	74.0	64.2	65.4	61.9	62.7	56.5	81.3
STE Proficiency Index (SPI)			74.3			52.0	

By grade, Salem's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 16 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 29 PI points at grade 4. Salem's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 19 PI points at grade 10 to a high of 43 PI points at grade 8. Salem's STE proficiency gap was 26 PI points at grade 5 and 48 PI points at grade 8.

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



		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Salem	79.8	66.3	4,540
B	Bates Elementary	78.8	69.8	358
C	Bentley Elementary	74.2	62.8	297
D	Carlton Elementary	80.8	66.1	170
E	Collins Middle	80.1	59.2	1,545
F	Horace Mann Laboratory	76.7	65.1	242
G	Nathaniel Bowditch	78.5	65.4	654
H	Salem High	84.2	81.3	552
I	Saltonstall Elementary	80.6	69.3	288
J	Witchcraft Heights Elem	80.9	72.9	434

Salem's ELA proficiency gap in 2006 ranged from a low of 16 PI points at Salem High School to a high of 26 PI points at Bentley Elementary School. Salem's math proficiency gap ranged from a low of 19 PI points at Salem High School to a high of 41 PI points at Collins Middle School.

Equity of Achievement

Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

Findings:

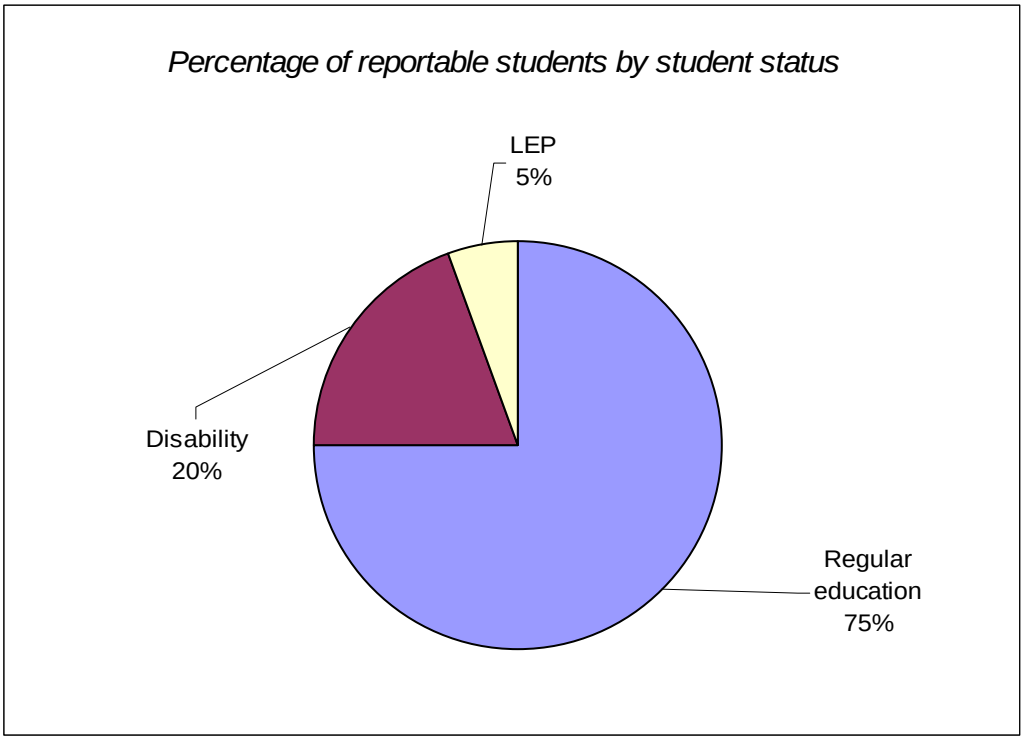
- MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Salem students. Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Salem in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 50 PI points in ELA (regular education students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, respectively) and 41 PI points in math (non low-income students, LEP students, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Salem in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, LEP students, Hispanic students, African-American students, low-income students (those participating in the free and reduced-cost lunch program), and male students. Roughly one-third of Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students, and more than two-fifths of male students, attained proficiency. Only 14 percent of students with disabilities and five percent of LEP students attained proficiency.

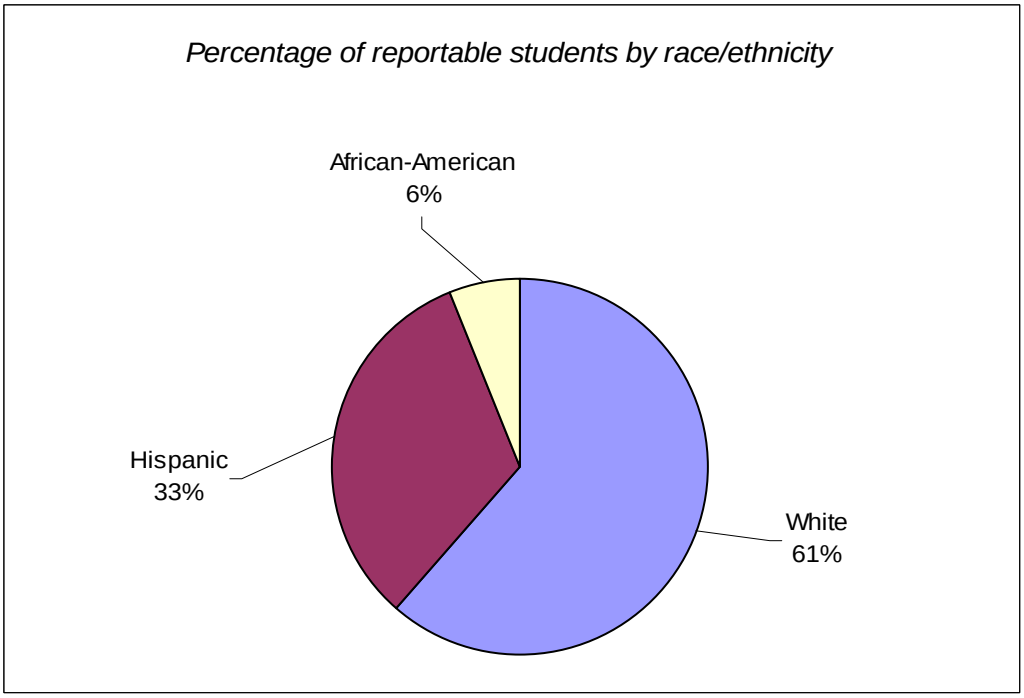
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, non low-income students, and female students. For each of these subgroups, more than half the students attained proficiency.

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

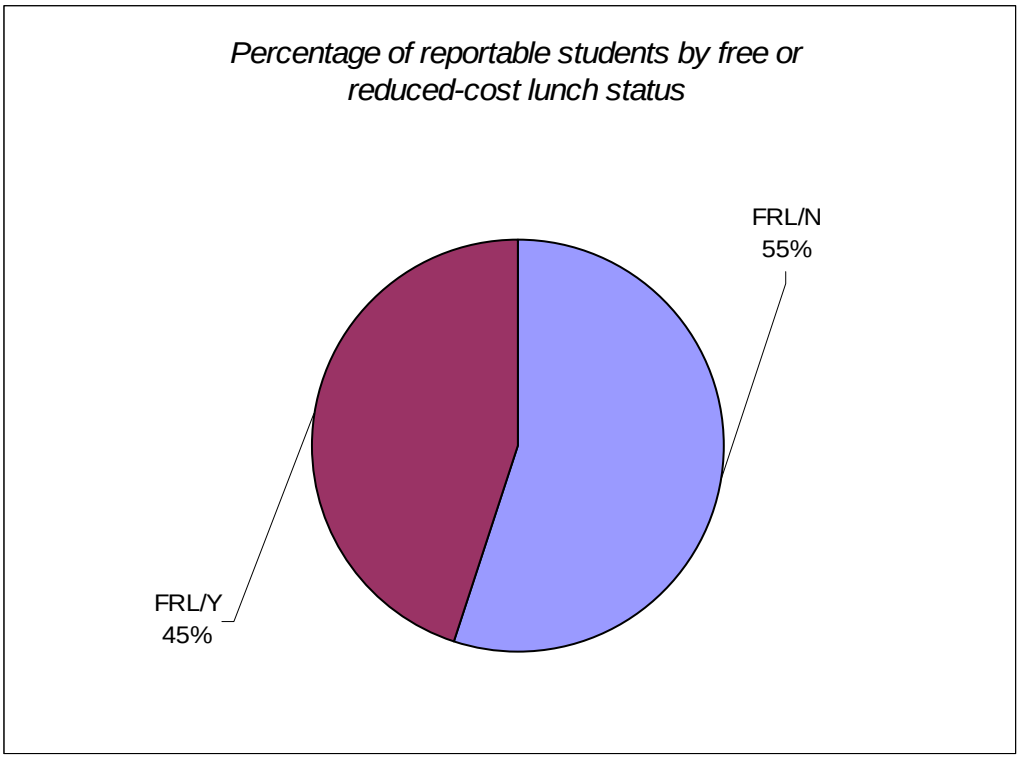
A.



B.



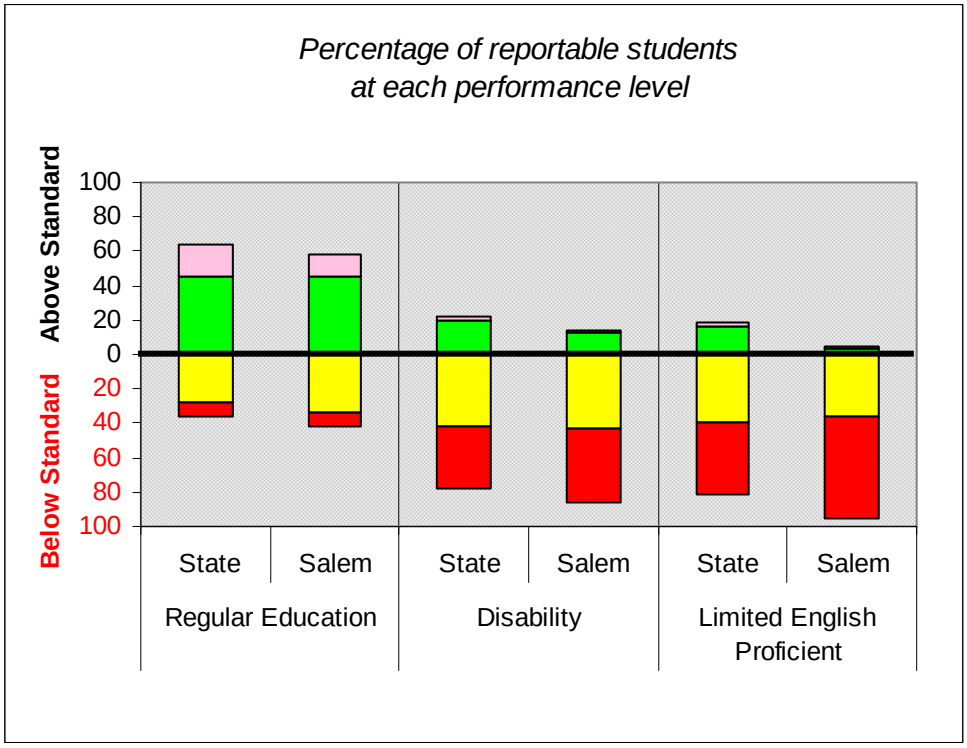
C.



	Subgroup	Number of Students
Student status	Regular education	1,734
	Disability	454
	LEP	127
Race/ethnicity	White	1,366
	Hispanic	725
	African-American	135
Free or reduced-cost lunch status	FRL/N	1,273
	FRL/Y	1,042

In 2006, Salem's percentage of students with disabilities was 20 percent, of limited English proficient (LEP) students was five percent, of Hispanic students was 33 percent, of African-American students was six percent, and of low-income students (FRL/Y) was 45 percent.

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

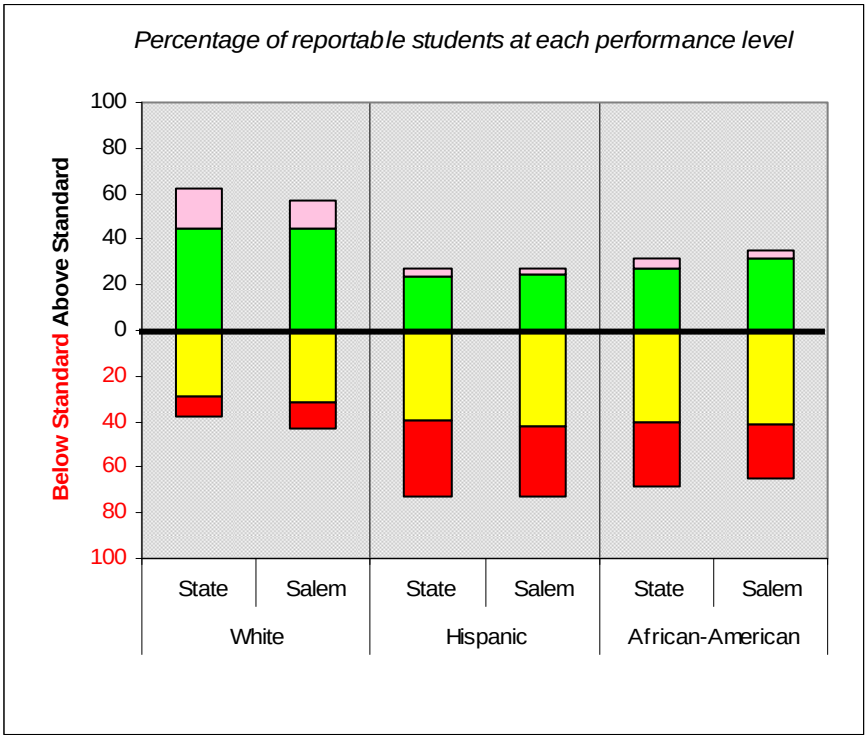


	Regular Education		Disability		Limited English Proficient	
	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem
Advanced	18	12	2	1	3	1
Proficient	46	46	20	13	16	4
Needs Improvement	28	33	41	44	40	36
Warning/Failing	8	9	36	42	42	59
Percent Attaining Proficiency	64	58	22	14	19	5
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.0	81.2	55.9	50.8	52.0	36.5

In Salem in 2006, the proficiency rate of regular education students was more than four times greater than that of students with disabilities and nearly 12 times greater than that of limited English proficient (LEP) students. Fifty-eight percent of regular education students, 14 percent of students with disabilities, and five percent of LEP students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests.

Salem's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 19 PI points for regular education students, 49 PI points for students with disabilities, and 63 PI points for LEP students. The average performance gap between regular education students and students with disabilities was 30 PI points, and between regular education students and LEP students it was 44 PI points.

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

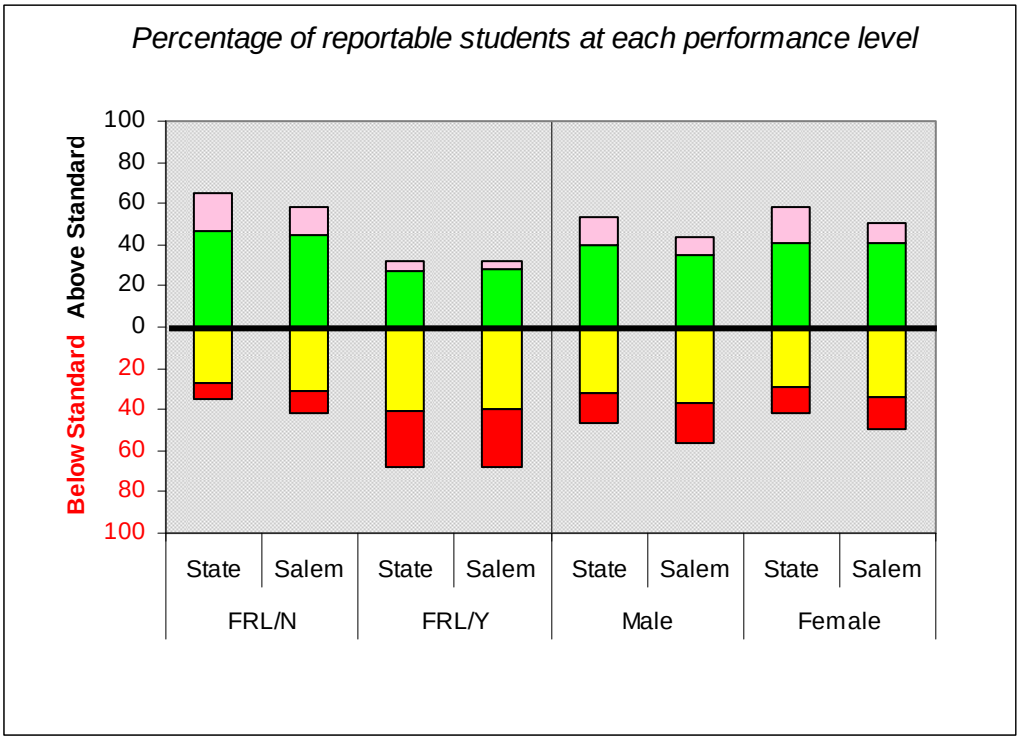


	White		Hispanic		African-American	
	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem
Advanced	17	13	4	3	4	3
Proficient	45	45	23	24	27	32
Needs Improvement	29	31	40	42	40	41
Warning/Failing	9	11	33	31	28	24
Percent Attaining Proficiency	62	58	27	27	31	35
Average Proficiency Index (API)	82.9	80.1	59.2	59.6	63.2	68.1

In Salem in 2006, performance on the MCAS tests varied widely by race/ethnicity, as 58 percent of White students, 27 percent of Hispanic students, and 35 percent of African-American students attained overall proficiency.

Salem's average proficiency gap in 2006 was 20 PI points for White students, 40 PI points for Hispanic students, and 32 PI points for African-American students. The average performance gap between White and Hispanic students was 20 PI points, and between White and African-American students it was 12 PI points.

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

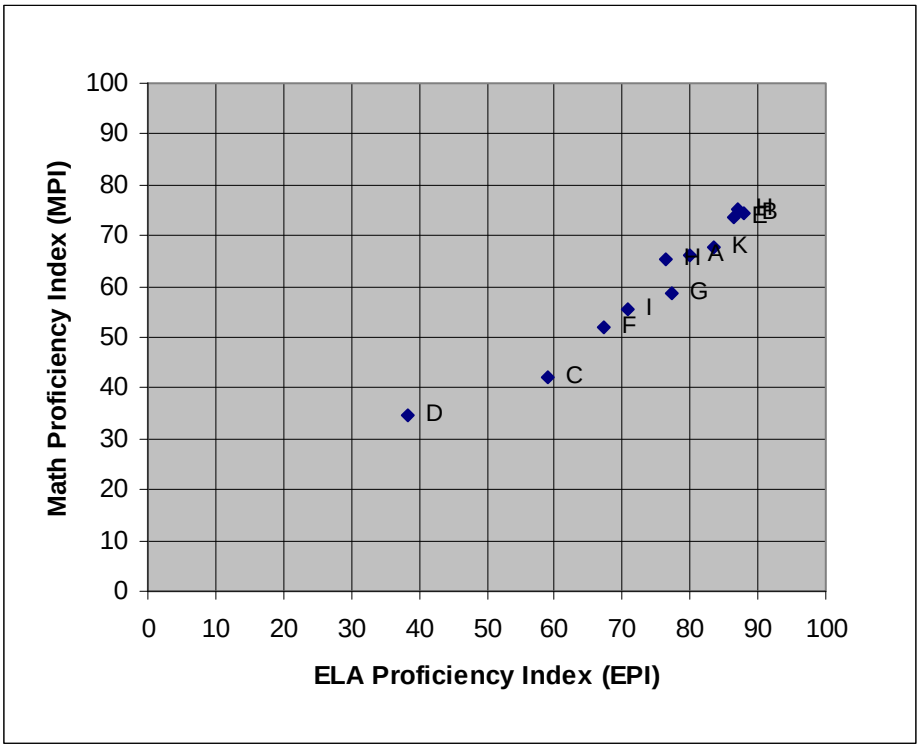


	FRL/N		FRL/Y		Male		Female	
	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem
Advanced	19	14	5	4	13	8	17	10
Proficient	46	45	27	28	40	35	41	40
Needs Improvement	27	31	40	40	32	37	29	34
Warning/Failing	8	10	27	28	15	20	13	16
Percent Attaining Proficiency	65	59	32	32	53	43	58	50
Average Proficiency Index (API)	84.5	81.1	63.5	63.3	77.1	70.9	79.6	75.5

In Salem in 2006, 32 percent of low-income (FRL/Y) students attained overall proficiency on the MCAS tests, compared to 59 percent of non low-income (FRL/N) students. The average proficiency gap was 37 PI points for low-income students and 19 PI points for non low-income students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was 18 PI points.

On the 2006 MCAS tests, in Salem 50 percent of female students and 43 percent of male students attained overall proficiency. The average proficiency gap was 24 PI points for female students and 29 PI points for male students, and the average performance gap between the two subgroups was five PI points.

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

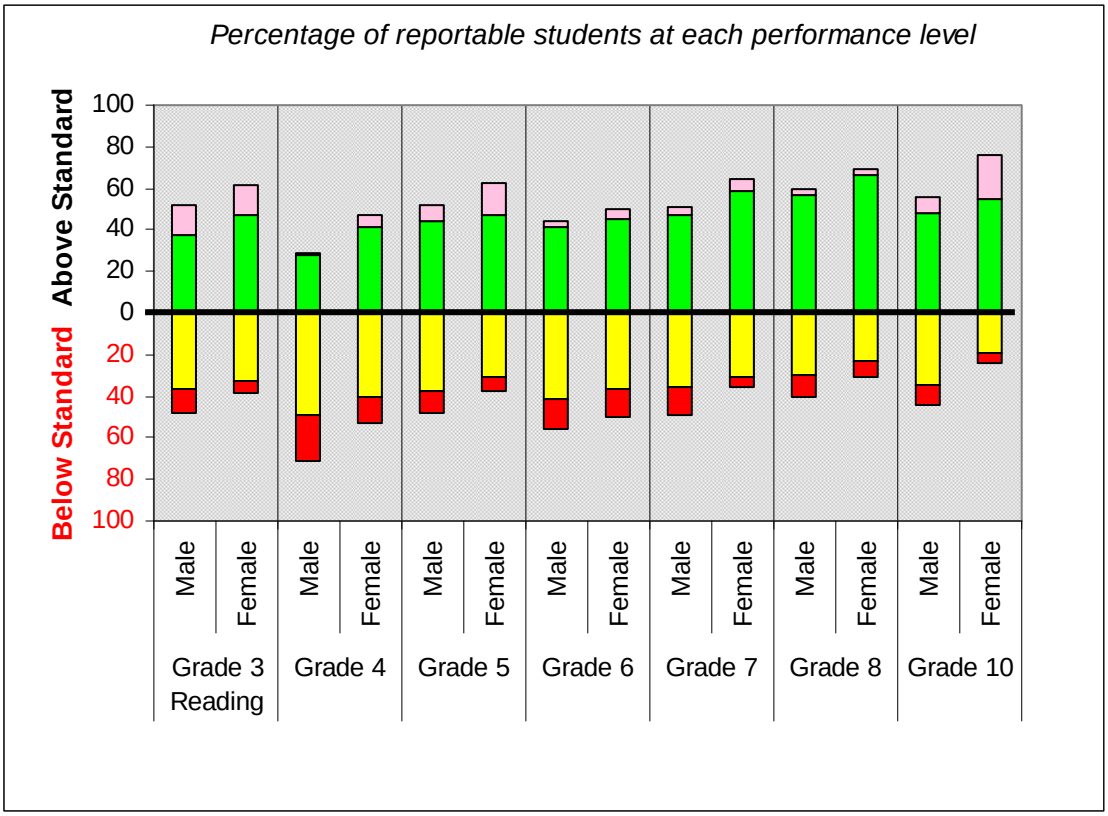


		ELA PI	Math PI	Number of Tests
A	Salem	79.8	66.3	4,540
B	Regular Education	87.9	74.4	3,454
C	Disability	59.1	42.3	831
D	LEP	38.3	34.6	255
E	White	86.3	73.8	2,701
F	Hispanic	67.3	51.8	1,399
G	African-American	77.3	58.8	263
H	FRL/N	87.1	75.1	2,514
I	FRL/Y	70.9	55.6	2,019
J	Male	76.5	65.3	2,312
K	Female	83.4	67.6	2,221

Of the 10 measurable subgroups in Salem in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 50 PI points in ELA (regular education students, LEP students, respectively) and 41 PI points in math (non low-income (FRL/N) students, LEP students, respectively).

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

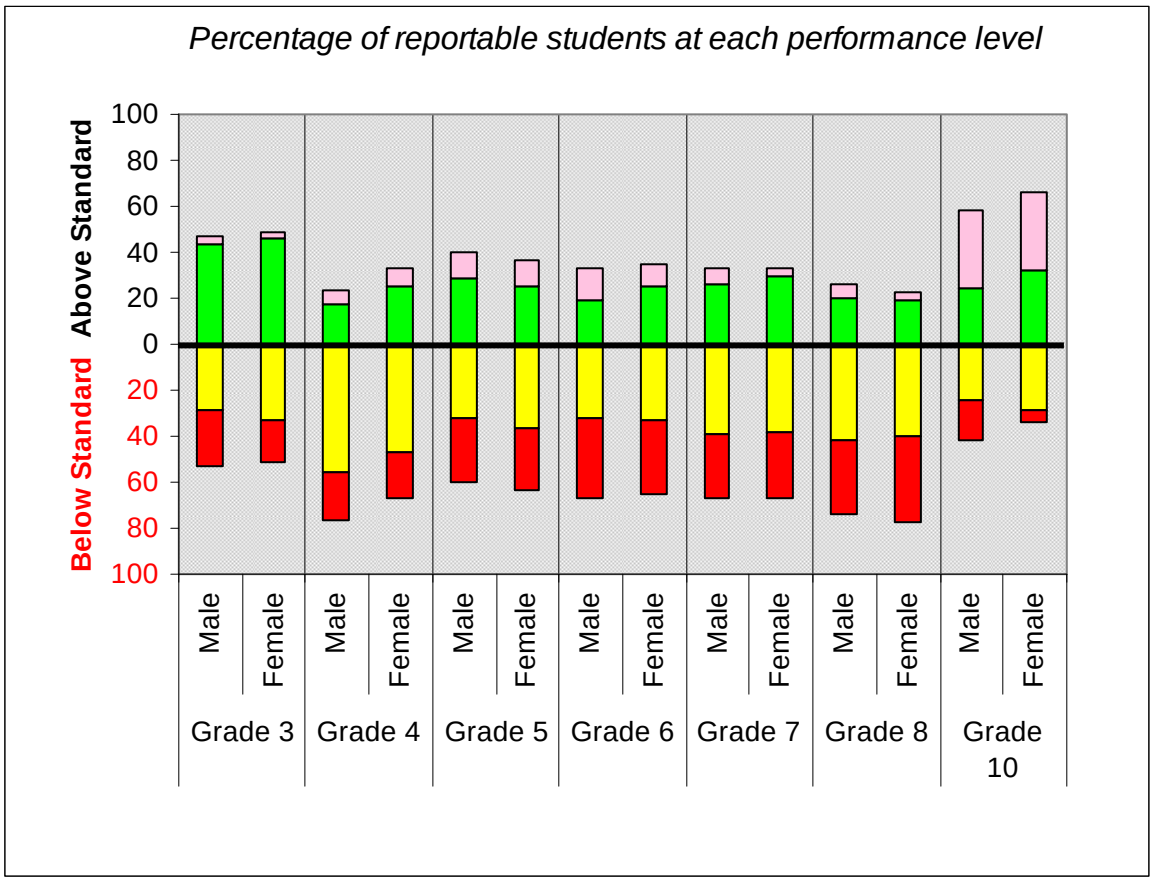
Figure/Table 13: Student MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) Test Performance, by Grade and Gender, 2006



	Grade 3 Reading		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Advanced	14	15	1	6	7	16	3	5	5	6	3	4	8	21
Proficient	37	47	28	41	45	47	41	45	47	58	57	66	48	55
Needs Improvement	36	33	49	41	38	30	41	36	35	31	30	23	34	19
Warning/ Failing	12	5	22	12	10	7	14	13	13	5	10	8	10	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	51	62	29	47	52	63	44	50	52	64	60	70	56	76

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

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



	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Advanced	4	3	6	8	11	11	13	9	7	4	6	4	34	34
Proficient	43	46	17	25	29	25	19	25	26	29	20	19	24	32
Needs Improvement	28	33	55	47	32	37	32	33	39	38	42	40	24	29
Warning/ Failing	25	18	21	20	28	27	35	33	28	29	32	37	18	5
Percent Attaining Proficiency	47	49	23	33	40	36	32	34	33	33	26	23	58	66

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

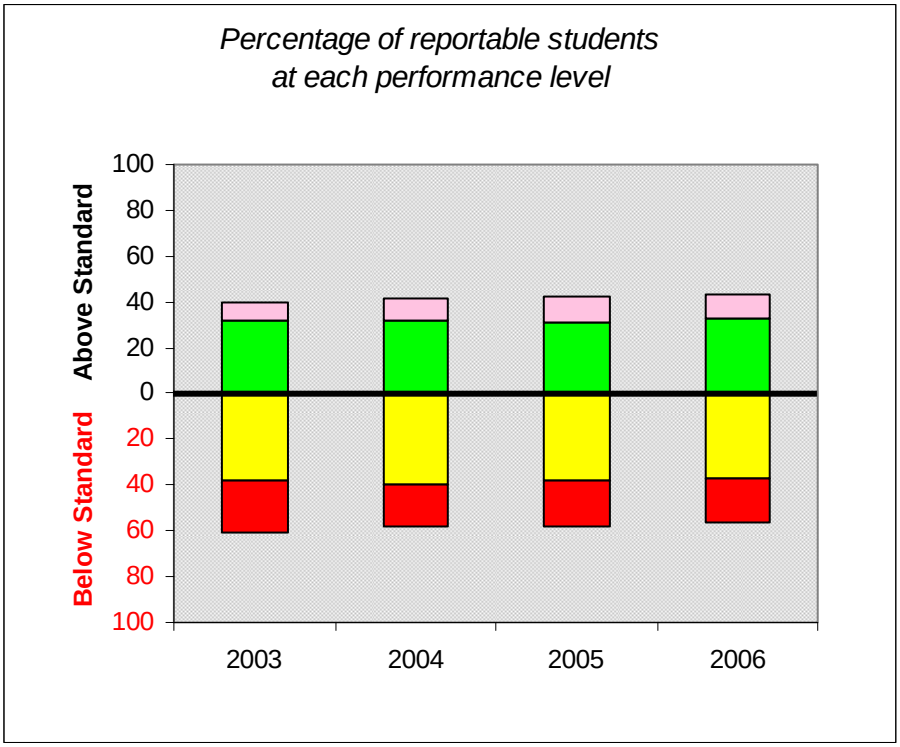
Improvement

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

Findings:

- Between 2003 and 2006, Salem's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall, in ELA, and in math, and was relatively flat in STE.
- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by four percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased by four percentage points. The average proficiency gap in Salem narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006. This resulted in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of nine percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Salem showed slight improvement, at an average of one-half PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of seven percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP. Math performance in Salem improved during this period at an average of one PI point annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of more than 10 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.
- Salem showed little change in STE performance between 2004 and 2006. Although the percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased by two percentage points over this period, Salem's STE proficiency index improved by almost one PI point due to a decline in the percentage of students scoring in the 'Warning/Failing' category. This change in the STE proficiency index resulted in an improvement rate of two percent.

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



A.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	8	9	11	11
Proficient	32	32	31	33
Needs Improvement	38	39	38	37
Warning/Failing	23	19	20	19
Percent Attaining Proficiency	40	41	42	44
Average Proficiency Index (API)	68.1	70.3	71.0	71.1

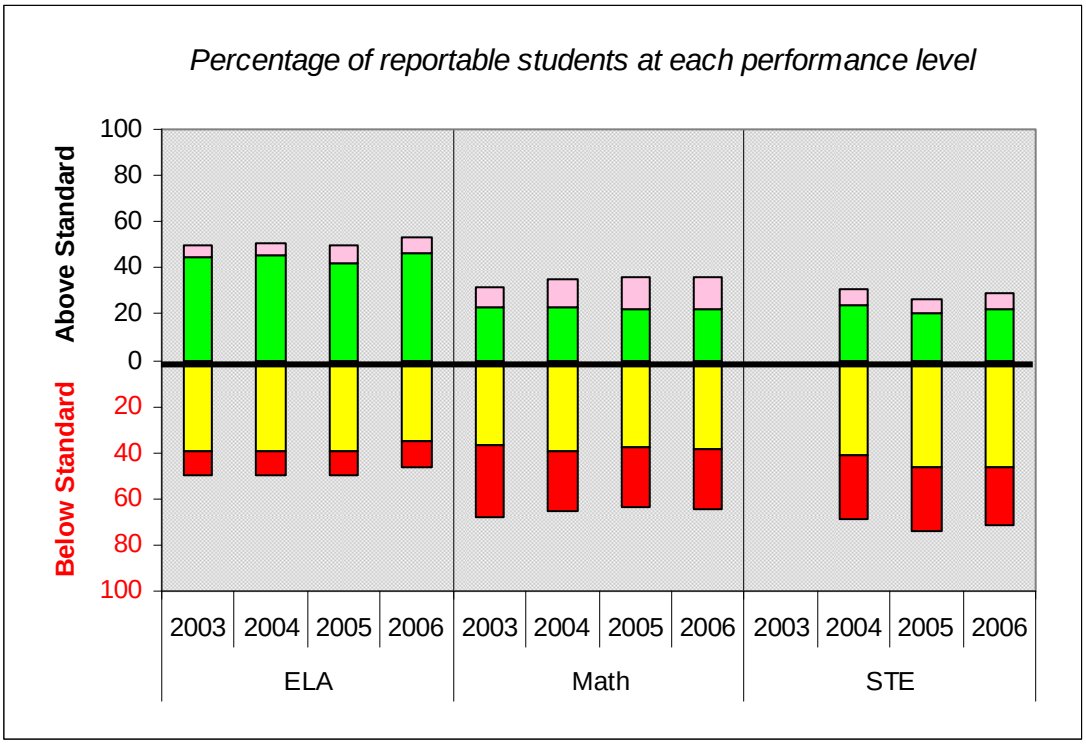
B. n-values

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	198	227	280	228
Proficient	842	771	762	685
Needs Improvement	987	949	944	774
Warning/Failing	592	456	486	407
Total	2,619	2,403	2,472	2,094

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

The percentage of Salem students attaining overall proficiency on the MCAS tests increased from 40 percent in 2003 to 44 percent in 2006. The percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category decreased from 23 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2006. The average proficiency gap in Salem narrowed from 32 PI points in 2003 to 29 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of nine percent.

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



	ELA				Math				STE			
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
Advanced	6	5	8	7	9	13	14	13		8	6	7
Proficient	45	45	42	46	23	23	22	22		23	20	22
Needs Improvement	39	39	39	35	37	40	38	38		41	46	46
Warning/ Failing	11	10	11	11	31	25	26	26		28	28	25
Percent Attaining Proficiency	51	50	50	53	32	36	36	35		31	26	29
Proficiency Index (PI)	77.1	78.0	77.9	78.7	61.5	64.7	65.8	65.3		62.9	61.7	63.7

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

The percentage of Salem students attaining proficiency in ELA increased from 51 percent in 2003 to 53 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in ELA narrowed from 23 PI points in 2003 to 21 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of seven percent, a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Salem students attaining proficiency in math increased from 32 percent in 2003 to 35 percent in 2006. The proficiency gap in math narrowed from 39 PI points in 2003 to 35 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate of 10 percent, also a rate lower than that required to meet AYP.

The percentage of Salem students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 31 percent in 2004 to 29 percent in 2006. However, the proficiency gap in STE narrowed from 37 PI points in 2004 to 36 PI points in 2006 due to a decline in the percentage of students scoring at the 'Warning/Failing' level.

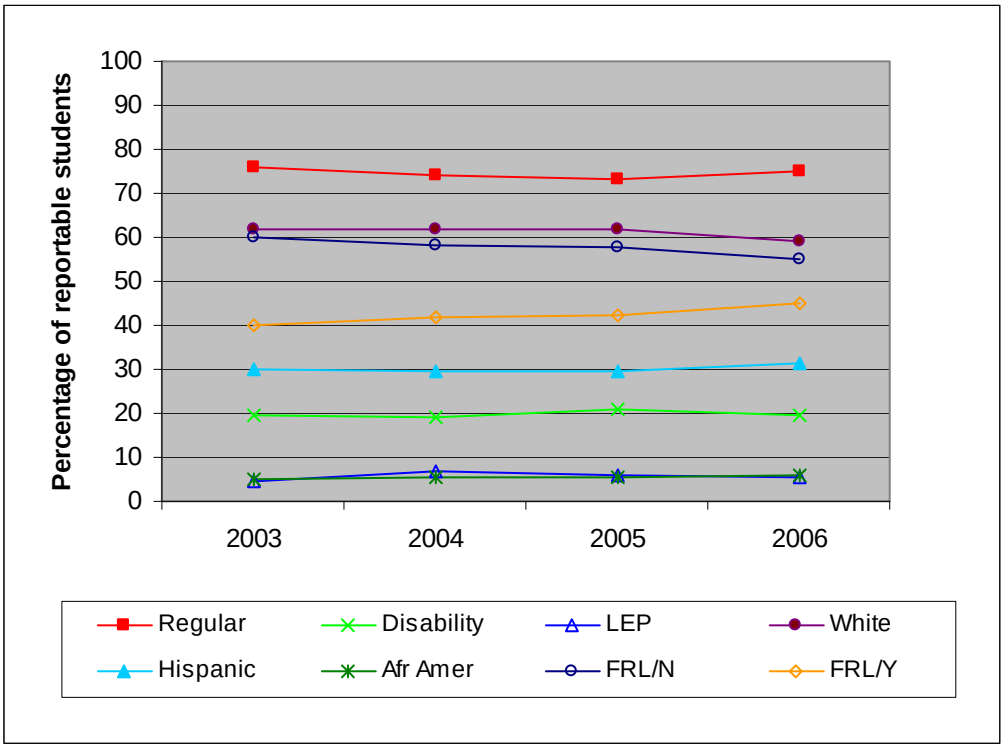
Equity of Improvement

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

Findings:

- In Salem, all student subgroups with the exception of students with disabilities had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, although the pattern of change varied among subgroups. The most improved subgroups in ELA were regular education students, LEP students, and Hispanic students.
- In math, all subgroups in Salem showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were non low-income students, White students, and regular education students.
- The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 56 PI points in 2003 to 49 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 38 to 40 PI points over this period.

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



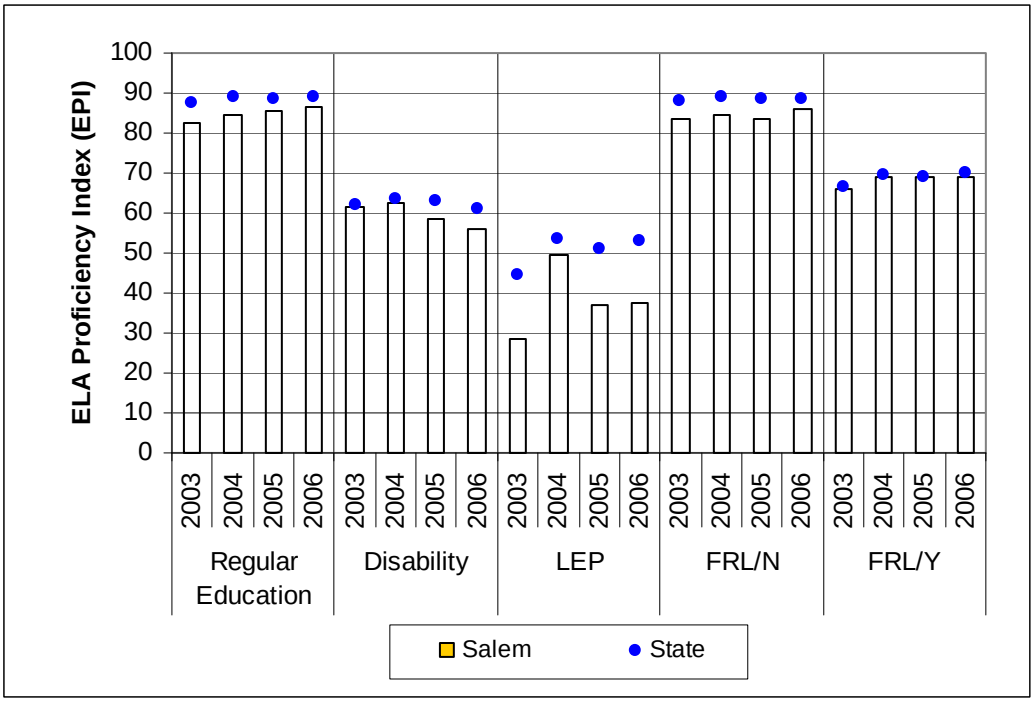
	Number of Students				Percentage of students			
	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Salem	1,850	2,185	1,994	2,315	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular	1,401	1,622	1,460	1,734	75.7	74.2	73.2	74.9
Disability	363	416	413	454	19.6	19.0	20.7	19.6
LEP	86	147	121	127	4.6	6.7	6.1	5.5
White	1,142	1,348	1,236	1,366	61.7	61.7	62.0	59.0
Hispanic	557	646	585	725	30.1	29.6	29.3	31.3
Afr Amer	92	121	110	135	5.0	5.5	5.5	5.8
FRL/N	1,113	1,275	1,148	1,273	60.2	58.4	57.6	55.0
FRL/Y	737	910	846	1,042	39.8	41.6	42.4	45.0

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

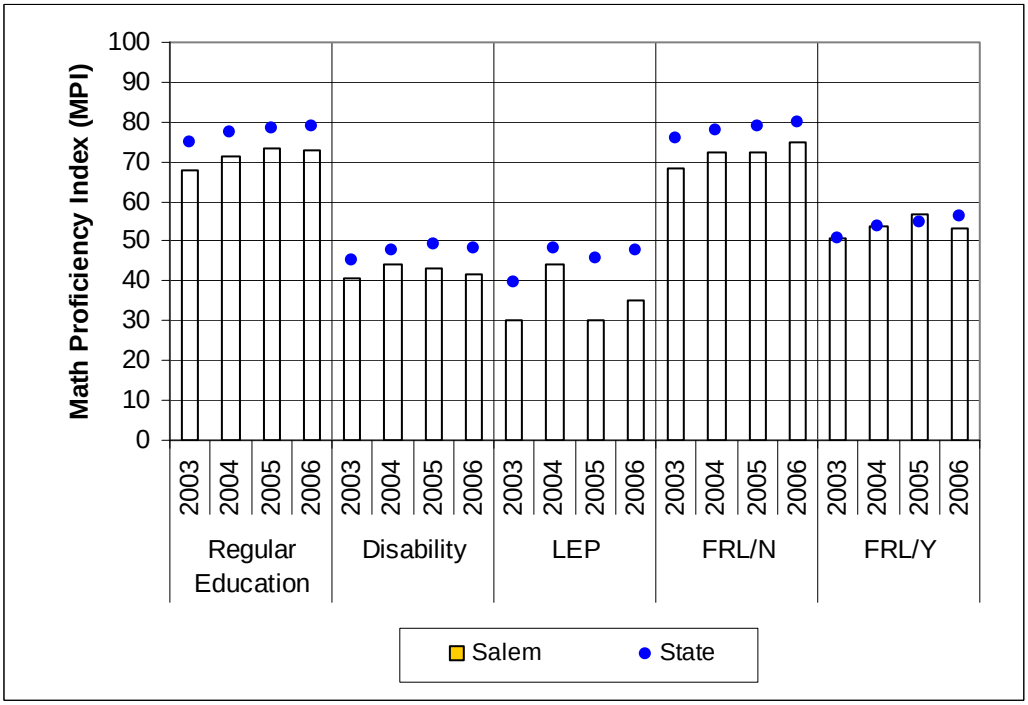
The makeup of the Salem student population did not change much between 2003 and 2006. The proportion of students with disabilities stayed the same; the proportion of LEP students, Hispanic students, and African-American students increased by roughly one percentage point each; and the proportion of low-income (FRL/Y) students increased by slightly more than five percentage points during this period.

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

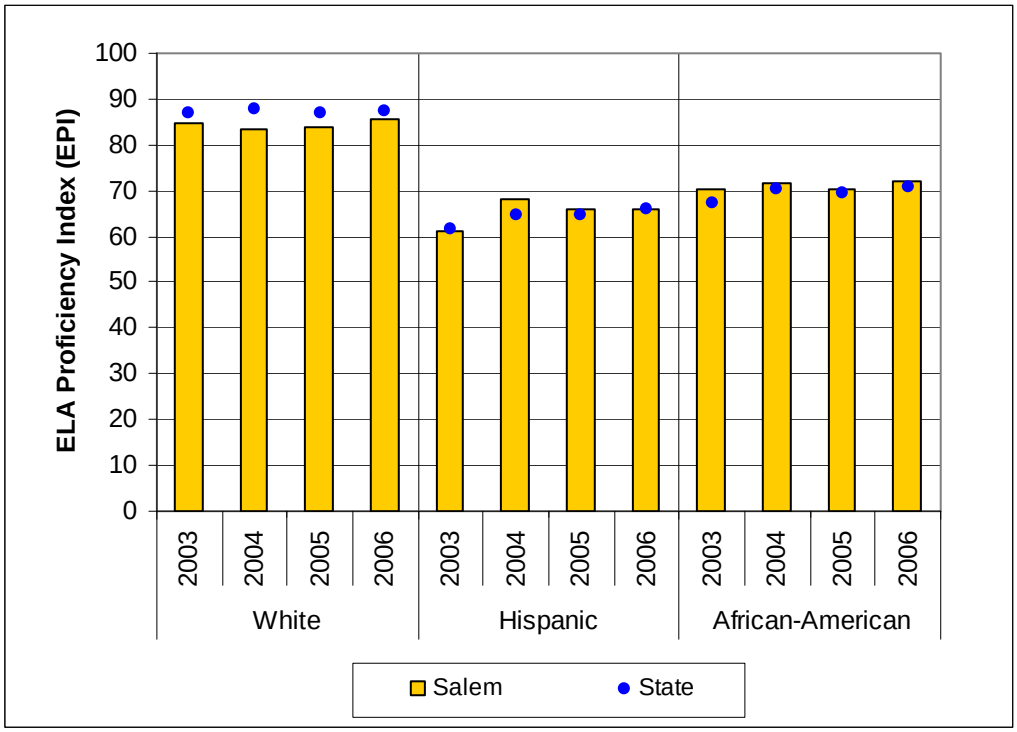
A. ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



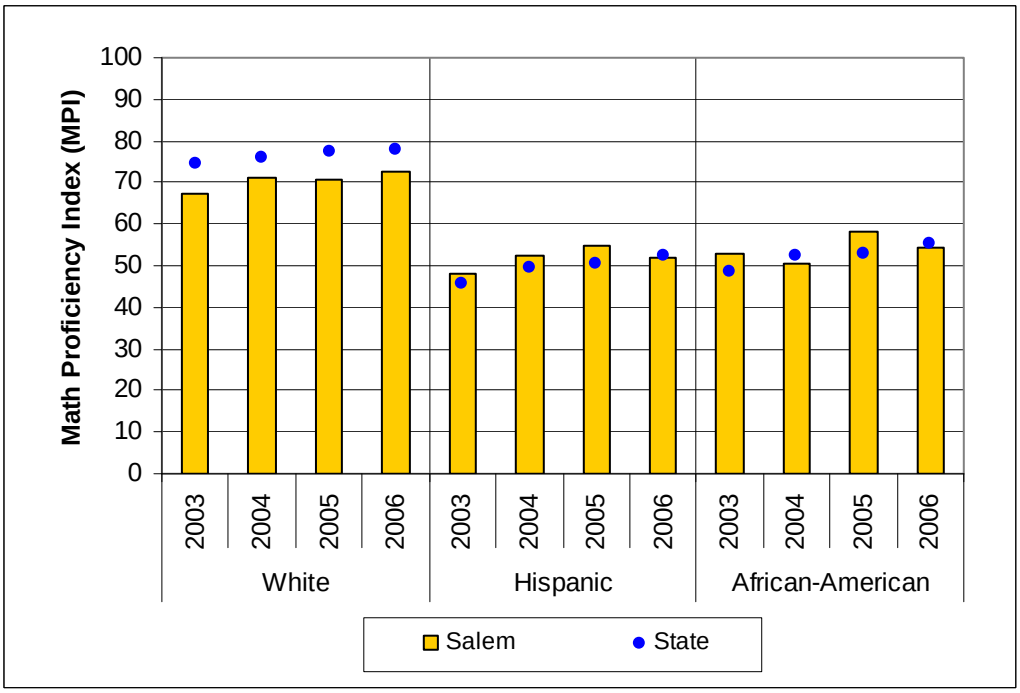
B. Math Proficiency Index (MPI) by Student Status and Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch Subgroups



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



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

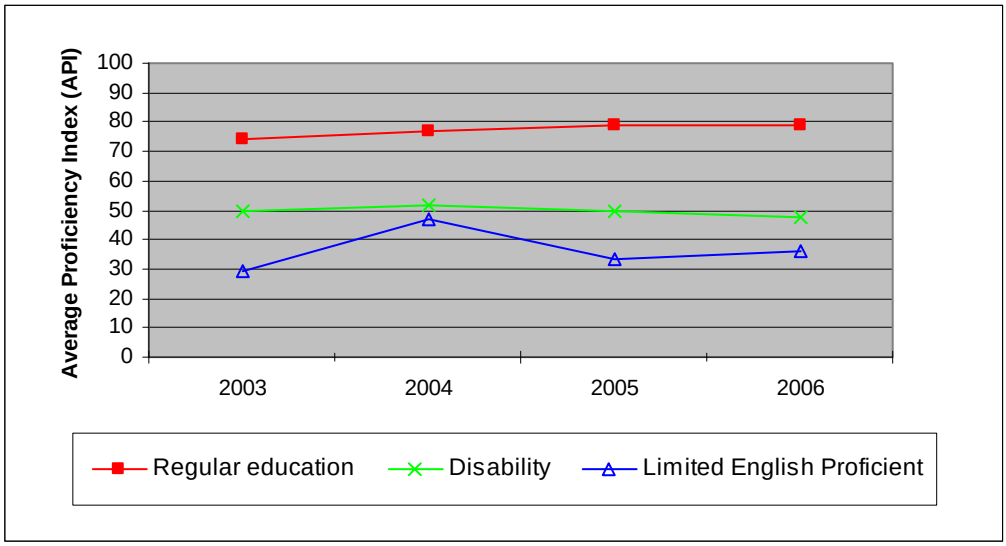


State				Salem			
Subgroup	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**	**Subgroup**	**Year**	**EPI**	**MPI**
Regular Education	2003	87.3	74.7	Regular Education	2003	82.7	67.9
	2004	89.2	77.4		2004	84.6	71.2
	2005	88.3	78.2		2005	85.4	73.6
	2006	89.0	78.9		2006	86.6	73.0
Disability	2003	62.1	45.3	Disability	2003	61.6	40.5
	2004	63.3	47.9		2004	62.3	44.2
	2005	62.9	49.0		2005	58.3	43.1
	2006	61.2	48.4		2006	55.9	41.8
LEP	2003	44.4	39.6	LEP	2003	28.4	30.2
	2004	53.4	48.4		2004	49.4	44.2
	2005	50.9	45.6		2005	37.2	30.2
	2006	52.9	47.9		2006	37.3	35.1
FRL/N	2003	87.9	75.9	FRL/N	2003	83.7	68.3
	2004	88.9	78.1		2004	84.5	72.3
	2005	88.3	79.0		2005	83.5	72.2
	2006	88.6	79.7		2006	85.9	75.0
FRL/Y	2003	66.6	50.7	FRL/Y	2003	66.2	50.8
	2004	69.7	53.9		2004	68.9	53.6
	2005	68.8	55.0		2005	69.2	56.7
	2006	70.0	56.3		2006	68.8	53.2
White	2003	86.9	74.4	White	2003	84.5	67.2
	2004	87.7	76.2		2004	83.3	71.1
	2005	87.1	77.2		2005	84.0	70.7
	2006	87.4	77.8		2006	85.5	72.6
Hispanic	2003	61.4	45.7	Hispanic	2003	61.0	48.3
	2004	64.8	49.3		2004	68.1	52.4
	2005	64.6	50.6		2005	65.8	54.8
	2006	65.8	52.2		2006	66.0	52.0
African-American	2003	67.1	48.4	African-American	2003	70.3	53.1
	2004	70.5	52.3		2004	71.8	50.3
	2005	69.4	52.8		2005	70.3	58.4
	2006	70.9	55.2		2006	72.2	54.4

In Salem, all student subgroups, with the exception of students with disabilities, had improved performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006, although the pattern of change varied among subgroups. The most improved subgroups in ELA were regular education students, LEP students, and Hispanic students. In math, all subgroups in Salem showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroups in math were non low-income (FRL/N) students, White students, and regular education students.

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 56 PI points in 2003 to 49 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 38 to 40 PI points over this period.

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

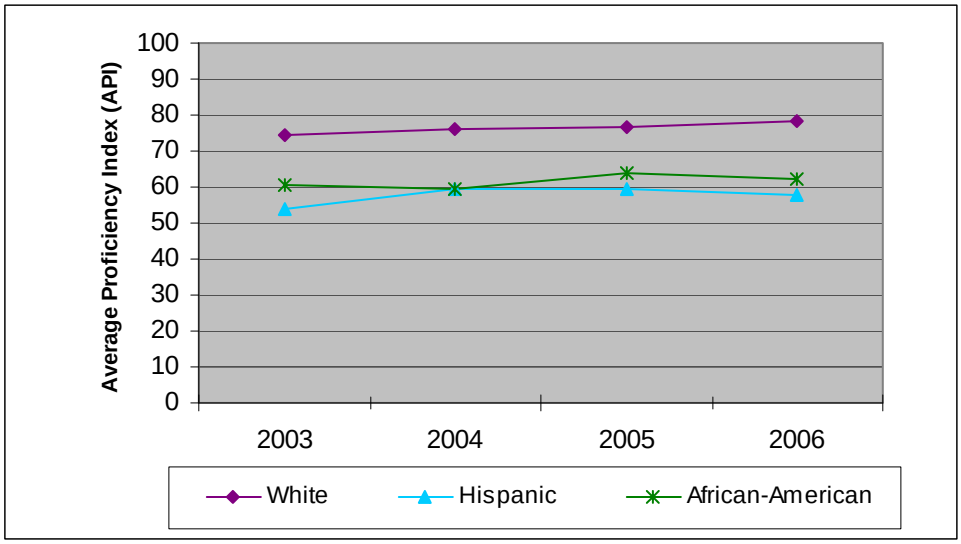


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Regular education	2003	74.2	82.7	67.9	59	39
	2004	76.8	84.6	71.2	61	43
	2005	78.6	85.4	73.6	61	45
	2006	78.9	86.6	73.0	65	45
Disability	2003	49.4	61.6	40.5	20	5
	2004	51.8	62.3	44.2	21	9
	2005	49.5	58.3	43.1	19	9
	2006	47.8	55.9	41.8	16	9
Limited English Proficient	2003	29.5	28.4	30.2	8	8
	2004	46.7	49.4	44.2	10	13
	2005	33.4	37.2	30.2	7	2
	2006	36.0	37.3	35.1	4	4

Students with disabilities in Salem had decreased overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006 due to decreased ELA performance, while the performance of LEP students and regular education students improved during this period. The average proficiency gap for Salem's regular education students narrowed from 26 PI points to 21 PI points; for students with disabilities, it widened from 51 to 52 PI points; and for LEP students, it narrowed from 71 to 64 PI points during this period.

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

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

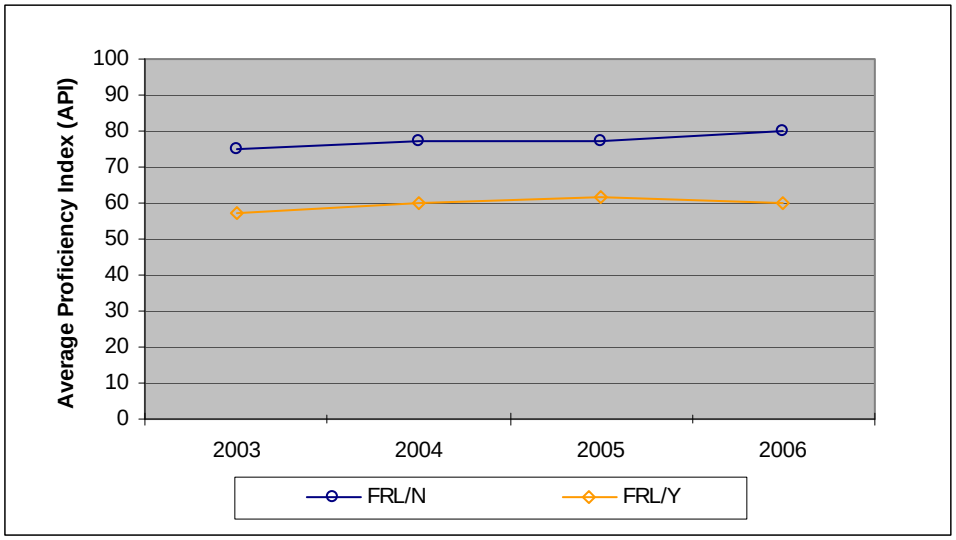


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
White	2003	74.5	84.5	67.2	61	39
	2004	76.2	83.3	71.1	60	43
	2005	76.4	84.0	70.7	60	44
	2006	78.2	85.5	72.6	65	45
Hispanic	2003	53.7	61.0	48.3	27	16
	2004	59.2	68.1	52.4	33	20
	2005	59.5	65.8	54.8	31	21
	2006	58.0	66.0	52.0	33	19
African-American	2003	60.4	70.3	53.1	34	18
	2004	59.4	71.8	50.3	43	15
	2005	63.6	70.3	58.4	34	23
	2006	62.2	72.2	54.4	38	16

All three racial subgroups in Salem had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for White students narrowed from 26 to 22 PI points; for Hispanic students, it narrowed from 46 to 42 PI points; and for African-American students, it narrowed from 40 to 38 PI points.

Between 2003 and 2006, the average performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing racial subgroups remained the same at 20 PI points.

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

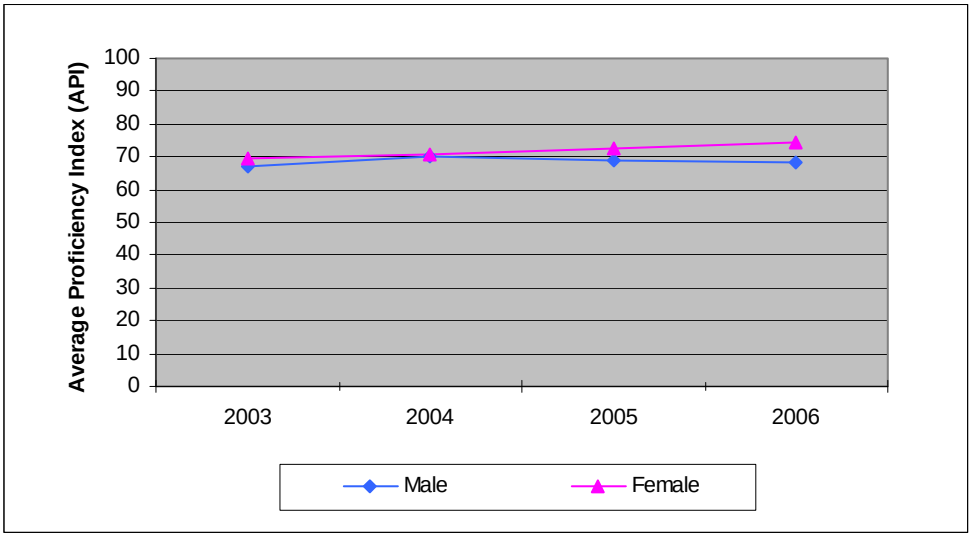


		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
FRL/N	2003	74.9	83.7	68.3	61	41
	2004	77.4	84.5	72.3	62	46
	2005	77.1	83.5	72.2	60	46
	2006	79.8	85.9	75.0	65	48
FRL/Y	2003	57.2	66.2	50.8	32	18
	2004	60.2	68.9	53.6	35	19
	2005	61.9	69.2	56.7	35	23
	2006	59.8	68.8	53.2	38	20

Both the low-income (FRL/Y) and non low-income (FRL/N) subgroups in Salem had improved overall performance on the MCAS tests between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for low-income students narrowed from 43 to 40 PI points, and for non low-income students it narrowed from 25 to 20 PI points.

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

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



		API	EPI	MPI	Percent Attaining Proficiency ELA	Percent Attaining Proficiency Math
Male	2003	67.2	74.6	61.6	45	32
	2004	70.0	77.1	64.8	48	36
	2005	69.2	74.4	65.3	44	36
	2006	68.1	74.3	63.6	45	34
Female	2003	69.3	79.8	61.8	56	32
	2004	70.7	78.9	64.7	53	34
	2005	72.8	81.7	66.3	56	37
	2006	74.5	83.2	67.4	62	38

Both male and female students in Salem had improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The average proficiency gap for male students narrowed from 33 to 32 PI points, and for female students it narrowed from 31 to 25 PI points.

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

Participation

Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Finding:

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

n-Values by Subgroup and Performance Level, 2006

Subgroup	Performance Level	ELA	Math	STE
Salem	ALL LEVELS	**2,278**	**2,262**	**746**
	Advanced	189	231	49
	Proficient	1,079	623	167
	Needs Improvement	775	825	345
	Warning/Failing	235	583	185
Regular Education	Advanced	186	223	45
	Proficient	998	585	144
	Needs Improvement	491	654	274
	Warning/Failing	55	262	95
Disability	Advanced	3	6	4
	Proficient	76	34	23
	Needs Improvement	232	130	63
	Warning/Failing	109	241	64
Limited English Proficient	Advanced	0	2	0
	Proficient	5	4	0
	Needs Improvement	52	41	8
	Warning/Failing	71	80	26
White	Advanced	154	186	39
	Proficient	751	455	125
	Needs Improvement	376	473	202
	Warning/Failing	73	233	78
Hispanic	Advanced	17	23	5
	Proficient	231	110	27
	Needs Improvement	315	271	115
	Warning/Failing	140	292	90
African-American	Advanced	5	4	3
	Proficient	57	27	7
	Needs Improvement	53	55	20
	Warning/Failing	17	45	13
Asian	Advanced	10	18	2
	Proficient	36	25	8
	Needs Improvement	29	26	7
	Warning/Failing	3	9	2
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/No	Advanced	155	186	39
	Proficient	698	430	113
	Needs Improvement	347	441	186
	Warning/Failing	61	196	56
Free or Reduced-Cost Lunch/Yes	Advanced	34	45	10
	Proficient	380	193	54
	Needs Improvement	427	384	158
	Warning/Failing	172	384	128
Male	Advanced	72	123	25
	Proficient	503	301	95
	Needs Improvement	436	417	171
	Warning/Failing	149	311	88
Female	Advanced	117	108	24
	Proficient	575	322	72
	Needs Improvement	338	408	173
	Warning/Failing	84	269	96

n-Values by Grade and Year, 2003-2006

Grade	Year	ELA	Math	STE
Grade 3	2003	328	0	0
	2004	398	0	0
	2005	308	0	0
	2006	362	361	0
Grade 4	2003	415	416	0
	2004	320	320	0
	2005	384	385	0
	2006	305	306	0
Grade 5	2003	0	0	0
	2004	0	0	395
	2005	0	0	300
	2006	391	392	392
Grade 6	2003	0	395	0
	2004	0	378	0
	2005	0	330	0
	2006	263	260	0
Grade 7	2003	394	0	0
	2004	390	0	0
	2005	348	0	0
	2006	322	323	0
Grade 8	2003	0	396	0
	2004	0	388	390
	2005	0	379	381
	2006	354	349	354
Grade 10	2003	299	304	0
	2004	303	304	0
	2005	324	322	0
	2006	281	271	0
All Grades	2003	1,436	1,511	0
	2004	1,411	1,390	785
	2005	1,364	1,416	681
	2006	2,278	2,262	746

Notes

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

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

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

The participation rates of limited English proficient (LEP) students reported here differ from those reported by the Department of Education in its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports, as the latter includes students who formerly had LEP status but no longer did at the time of testing.

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

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

Rounded values may result in slight apparent discrepancies.

Standard Findings and Summaries

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

I. Leadership, Governance, and Communication

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district mission, goals, and improvement plans were aligned and communicated to all stakeholders.
- The district typically lacked data-driven decisions regarding program development, revision, and replacement, particularly with respect to its special education and English language learner (ELL) subgroup populations.
- All school committee members received substantial training and information related to education reform.
- The school committee evaluated the superintendent each year of the review period except in 2005-2006 due to his impending retirement. The evaluation included a goal related to the promotion of student achievement. The superintendent evaluated each principal annually, and a sample of goals provided to the EQA team revealed a strong focus on the promotion of student achievement.

- As a result of a budget shortfall in FY 2006, the city required the district to reduce its budget by $1.5 million, which required the elimination of more than 60 positions and the termination or layoff of more than 30 staff members (about half the positions had been vacant).
- A collegial relationship between the administration and the teachers' association enabled staff layoffs to occur without rancor.
- Through partnerships with Salem State College, the Charles Read Foundation, and the Salem Education Foundation and federal and state government grants, the district received support for science and literacy programs and professional development.

Summary

Two superintendents administered the district during the past three years. Both leaders developed strong working relationships with city officials and the school committee. A mission statement and strategic goals guided the district and informed development of individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The district welcomed newly elected school committee members through an orientation program that presented district successes and challenges and provided a context for decision-making concerning the education of the district's 4,600 students.

The district leadership team, comprised of central administrators and principals, collaborated effectively to develop SIPs that identified student academic weaknesses as indicated by the MCAS exams. The assistant superintendent stated that the plans focused on the improvement of writing skills across the district, and beginning in 2006-2007 a consistent implementation of the elementary Everyday Math program. Plans as well as student achievement results were routinely communicated to school committee members, parents, and the general public by means of locally televised school committee meetings, newsletters, and a comprehensive district website. Building-based efforts to raise student achievement yielded very modest results. Special education students and English language learner (ELL) students posed the greatest challenge to the district since those students scored significantly lower than their peers statewide. With the appointment of a new assistant superintendent in April 2006 after a year-long vacancy, the district has recommitted itself to regaining momentum in the areas of instructional improvement, curriculum development, promotion of student achievement, and data-driven decision-making.

District leaders effectively governed the district from 2003 through 2006. A cooperative relationship existed between the school committee and district staff. The school committee regularly reviewed its policies and had a clear understanding about its role and that of the superintendent under the Education Reform Act. The superintendent annually presented educationally sound budgets that were carefully reviewed prior to their submission to the city council for adoption.

The district adopted a strategic plan that guided the initiatives of the district from 2001 to 2006, and the district currently contemplates a successor plan. During that time the district embarked on a comprehensive building renovation/replacement project. Renovations to Salem High School will be completed in another year. The district maintained clean buildings despite inadequate custodial resources. A financial deficit in FY 2006 caused the elimination of more than 60 positions and the layoff of approximately 30 staff members (about half the positions eliminated had been vacant). The reduction of math leadership positions as result of the deficit reduced the district's leadership capacity in this critical academic area.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district developed a strategic plan in 2001. The plan incorporated the thinking and interests of stakeholders across the school system. Subsequent to its development the school system adopted and implemented its District Improvement Plan (DIP) that articulated the system's mission statement and strategic goals. The DIP, dated 2004-2006, guided the district during the review period. The district revised and updated the plan effective 2006. Based upon interviews with the superintendent and school committee members and a review of document, the goals and strategies within the plan reflected a commitment to the improvement of student achievement in the areas of English language arts (ELA), math, and science technology and engineering (STE).

The plan specified five strategic goals: 1) maximize the opportunities for each student to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially to become productive members of a global economy and thoughtful participants in a democratic society; 2) develop, expand and/or improve curriculum models and implement best instructional practices; 3) provide leadership by establishing a learning community in Salem through partnerships with higher education, community organizations, and businesses; 4) establish a plan for ensuring successful leadership development and professional growth at all levels; and 5) ensure safe and state-of-the-art facilities in order to provide optimal environments for student achievement and community learning. The DIP also articulated prior year accomplishments, annual objectives, strategies, and methods of assessment related to each strategic goal. MCAS student performance data in math and ELA informed the strategies employed each year and set performance targets for the district. The district communicated its mission and strategic goals on its website, in its individual School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and in its individual student/ school handbooks. The plan focused the efforts of the district and influenced the initiatives embodied in the individual SIPs.

The district established partnerships with many local agencies, organizations, and businesses. Its partnership with Salem State College enabled the Horace Mann School to serve as a laboratory school on the campus of the college. Based upon interviews with district leaders and building-based staff, the collaboration with the college provided opportunities for professional dialogue, mentorships, and student teaching placements. According to the principal, new opportunities to strengthen and expand the relationship were in the exploration stage. A review of the SIPs revealed a variety of partnerships throughout the district that provided opportunities for civic engagement, financial support, and student externships. Collaboration with neighboring school districts afforded leadership development opportunities. The Tri-district Initiative for Leadership in Education (TILE) enabled teachers from Beverly, Danvers, and Salem who were interested in a leadership career to enroll in a Master of Education in Leadership program and ultimately receive a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) from Salem State College. The program brochure described its purpose “to identify talented teachers and administrators who have demonstrated leadership potential and skills and provide them with a comprehensive and innovative training program in educational administration.” In addition to coursework, participants performed school related projects such as analyzing user fee costs in comparable communities and preparing other projects and reports as requested.

During the period under review, the district continued its comprehensive building renovation plan. In recent years, the city expended approximately $100 million dollars in construction and renovation funds to ensure that its students learned in safe and state-of-the-art facilities. The district initiated and continued renovation work at Salem High School. The school committee, city officials, and superintendents both past and present ensured the successful completion of these projects.

The district received support for its science program through a partnership with the Read Foundation. The fund, endowed by the estate of Charles Read, partnered the district with the Museum of Science in Boston. Annually, students visited the museum and teachers received training in science education and instruction. The Salem Education Foundation provided enhancement grants to teachers. The foundation received staff requests for support of innovative projects and distributed approximately $12,000 in funds each year.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Individual members of the school committee received training in the requirements of the Education Reform Act through their participation in the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) "On Board" training and orientation program. According to the superintendent and members of the school committee, the district provided a half-day orientation/induction program to its newly elected school committee members. District administrators briefed school committee members concerning important issues the system faced and provided valuable insights concerning the context in which the system operated. According to the superintendent, the committee scheduled two annual retreats to discuss relevant issues and set priorities. The superintendent and vice-chair of the committee set the agendas for these retreats. According to interviews with school committee members and district-level staff, the committee utilized student achievement data and other educationally relevant data in its policymaking and decision-making responsibilities. Five subcommittees of the school committee

regularly met and directed their attention to the areas of curriculum, policy, buildings and grounds, personnel and collective bargaining, and finance. The school committee regularly reviewed and updated its policy manual. Policies reviewed by the EQA team were informed by the Education Reform Act. School committee policy 2500 cited the requirement for each school to establish a school council and articulated the council's purpose and method for selection of its members. School committee policies 6102-6107 defined the role of the school committee and the corresponding role of the superintendent.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district gathered and analyzed student achievement data at all levels of the school system. School Improvement Plans incorporated data and influenced strategies employed at each school and across the district. The district communicated MCAS results annually to the school committee through its district improvement and school improvement annual progress reports. At the elementary level, language arts achievement data were derived from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), and other formative assessment measures. Data were gathered at the middle school through the use of benchmark performance assessment instruments in each discipline, and at the high school in science through a common departmental assessment.

Additionally, the district gathered other data regarding chronic student absenteeism, dropout rates, student transience, underperformance by English language learner and special education students, and special education costs in excess of the state average by $5,000. Access to such data afforded the district an opportunity to make data-driven decisions and design programmatic responses. However, there was little evidence that the district took advantage of these opportunities. According to the superintendent, the high cost of out-of-district special education tuitions influenced a decision to begin to develop in-district special education programs that afforded better services at lower cost. The district remained committed to expansion of these opportunities for Salem students. To some extent, budget restraints inhibited initiatives in these

areas. During the 2005-2006 school year, due to the unanticipated retirement of the previous assistant superintendent and a significant budgetary crisis, the position of assistant superintendent remained unfilled for most of the year. With the appointment of the current assistant superintendent in April 2006, the district recommitted itself to regaining momentum in the areas of instructional improvement, curriculum development, promotion of student achievement, and data-driven decision-making. The responsibilities of the assistant superintendent included the communication and dissemination of student achievement data to both the school committee and each school principal.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, each school adopted and implemented a School Improvement Plan. Based upon interviews with principals and school council members and document review, the plans revealed a focus on the improvement of student achievement. MCAS data identified areas in need of improvement and enabled the principals and faculty to focus on and commit to instructional change and learning reinforcement strategies. The plans aligned individual school improvement efforts to the vision and goals set forth in the District Improvement Plan. According to the assistant superintendent, the plans reflected a commitment to improvement of writing skills across the district, and beginning in 2006-2007 a consistent implementation of the elementary Everyday Math program. According to principals, monthly school council meeting agendas included items related to School Improvement Plan implementation progress. Faculty and team/grade-level meetings focused on strategies to improve student performance. District administrators and building principals designed and scheduled professional development activities intended to enhance teaching skills and promote student learning.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The development of the annual operating budget enabled each principal and districtwide program leader to propose budgetary items that responded to the unique needs and challenges of their school or department. According to districtwide staff, the superintendent disseminated budget instructions to all administrators each December. Budget requests, based upon the initiatives of each school or program, included a description of the purpose and usage of the funding request. The district assigned a per pupil allocation amount for each level based upon a historical analysis of per pupil funding costs. The budgetary process provided consistency in terms of per pupil allocation yet also afforded equity in its capacity to permit requests unique to each school, program, student demographics, and challenges.

The controlled choice student assignment process ensured equity in the assignment of students on a space available basis to seats in any school in the district. Options included: a dual language-based K-8 school; a college-based laboratory school; an extended day and year K-5 school; as well as the more typical elementary, middle, and high school grade configuration facilities. During the period under review, considerable community interest in expanded K-8 options resulted in a proposal to add middle school grades to the Saltonstall School. The school committee recently approved that proposal, effective September 2007.

The federal and state government targeted additional funds to several schools in the form of Title I and John Silber Early Reading grants. Grants supported the employment of additional literacy staff and classroom paraprofessionals.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Based upon interviews with city officials and school committee members, the superintendent recommended educationally sound budgets consistent within the financial parameters and anticipated revenues of the city. The budget was prepared based upon the needs of the school system, reviewed and modified by the superintendent and ultimately submitted to the school

committee for its consideration. According to interviews with the superintendent and other district staff, principals submitted requests based upon their analysis of instructional and curricular needs. District staff collated the submissions, analyzed the implications, and quantified the cost. Based upon this review, the superintendent modified and/or deleted requests as appropriate and submitted the budget to the committee for its consideration. Regular meetings between the mayor and the superintendent provided timely and realistic projections regarding revenue available for all city departments. The school committee conducted public hearings on the proposed budget and evaluated the merits of each request. Budget meetings included staff presentations supported by detailed program profile and budget overview documents. Subsequent to these meetings, the school committee forwarded its budget request to the city council for its consideration and adoption. According to the superintendent and members of the school committee, the school committee understood and recognized the impact of the annual operating budget on student achievement throughout its deliberations. To enhance student achievement, the committee advocated for small class sizes. The committee and superintendent succeeded in this regard as evidenced in the classroom observations conducted by members of the EQA team during the site visit.

As a result of a $3.5 million shortfall in the FY 2006 city budget, the city required the district to reduce its budget by $1.5 million. The budget reduction required the elimination of more than 60 positions and resulted in the termination or layoff of more than 30 staff members. The reduction of funds in FY 2006 challenged the district in its efforts to maintain an adequate and educationally sound budget.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Annually, the district reported to the school committee aboout its progress in meeting the goals described in the District Improvement Plan. A presentation by the assistant superintendent described the performance of the district in meeting its adequate yearly progress (AYP) and

composite performance index (CPI) achievement targets. Each principal presented his/her school's progress in raising student achievement and the extent to which it met the school's AYP target. The school committee broadcasted its meetings on local television. In this manner, the community received direct communication concerning the progress of its schools in raising student achievement. Members of the media attended meetings and reported to the community on the extent to which the district raised the achievement of its students and their performance on MCAS tests. There were no links to school report cards or MCAS test results on the district website.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the review period, according to interviews with district leaders and principals, the district developed practices that enabled it to regularly review and analyze student performance data. All administrators received training in the use of TestWiz and had it installed on each of their computer desktops. Aggregate MCAS results influenced the development of the DIP and SIPs. Individual student results were reviewed at the grade and individual teacher level. However, the district did not demonstrate sustained improvement in the achievement of its subgroup populations. Special education and limited English proficient (LEP students lagged behind other Salem students and their peers statewide. A review of the results of the 2006 MCAS tests revealed that Salem's regular education students scored in the 'Proficient' and 'Advanced' categories at a rate four times higher than disabled students compared to a statewide average that was three times higher. Similarly, regular education students outperformed LEP students at a rate eleven times higher in Salem compared to a statewide average that was approximately three times higher.

During the final year of the review period, the district began training regular education staff in strategies to address the needs of English language learners. During the review period, the district created and filled the position of ELL coordinator and replaced the retiring special

education director, effective September 2006. The district focused its efforts on the improvement of literacy instruction. Due to the budgetary reductions in FY 2006, the district eliminated leadership positions in math at both the elementary and high school levels. Title I funds directed additional services to low-income students.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district monitored student achievement data throughout the year. According to interviews with principals that were corroborated by districtwide leaders, school faculty meetings and school council meetings regularly included opportunities for the review and analysis of student achievement data. Scheduled release days at both the district and building levels provided opportunities for staff to discuss student performance and receive training in the improvement of instructional strategies. During the review period, the district provided training in data gathering and analysis as well as in the use of protocols to examine student work. Based upon an analysis of student achievement data, the assistant superintendent collaborated with and mentored the principals in the development of School Improvement Plans.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district, during the review period, implemented an evaluation process to measure the performance of district leaders and principals. School committee policy 21005 described the process utilized to evaluate the superintendent. Based upon interviews with school committee members and the superintendent, the school committee evaluated the previous superintendent each year. The school committee did not evaluate the superintendent serving during school year 2005-2006 due to the fact that he had announced his retirement effective June 2007. The school

committee based its evaluation of the superintendent on mutually agreed upon goals that described strategies of accomplishment and methods of assessment. The evaluation document consisted of nine standard goals that the school committee included annually as well as personal goals set by the superintendent. Of the nine goals, one required the evaluation of the performance of the superintendent as it related to the promotion of student achievement. The goal entitled "Instruction and Curriculum Management" identified among its eight indicators the superintendent's ability to "ensure the continuous focus on improved student achievement," and "monitor and assess the effectiveness of the overall instructional/academic program of the district." Other goals of the evaluation instrument described the superintendent's responsibilities and performance in response to the goals of the district as well as leadership in a variety of governance and administrative areas. Individual school committee members rated the superintendent on his attainment of each goal. The entire committee compiled a composite evaluation document based upon each member's individual ratings. The school committee also assumed the responsibility for the evaluation of the school business manager but chose not to complete that evaluation during the review period.

According to the superintendent and confirmed by a review of individual administrator personnel files, the superintendent evaluated each principal annually during the review period. The superintendent and/or assistant superintendent met with each principal to set goals and establish measures to determine goal attainment. A sample of goals provided to the EQA team revealed a strong focus on the promotion of student achievement. In each case reviewed, the principal set goals to meet or exceed state mandated improvement guidelines for scores on the MCAS tests in each subject area, to provide instructional leadership in the facilitation and implementation of district curriculum initiatives, to provide professional development in the areas of English, mathematics, and/or writing, and to increase the achievement of second language learners. The superintendent conducted midterm conferences to measure progress and at times to revise or establish new goals. The superintendent assessed the performance of the principal on the progress demonstrated in the fulfillment of the goals set forth in the SIP. At the end of the evaluation process the superintendent prepared a summative document that described performance in a number of areas including those described in the principal's goals. The superintendent did not evaluate the assistant superintendent since that position was vacant for most of the 2005-2006 school year.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The superintendent organized central office administrators and principals into a district leadership team. The leadership team met twice a month with either the superintendent and /r the assistant superintendent. The meetings focused on governance, administration, curriculum, and instruction. Based upon interviews with the superintendent and corroborated by the principals, the leadership team functioned effectively and collegially. The superintendent trusted the judgment and dedication of the principals and expected them to act professionally. The principals reported that they appreciated the confidence that the superintendent placed in them and enabled them to be more effective site-based managers. District administrators supported the principals as appropriate. According to the superintendent, his leadership style did not include "micromanagement or looking over people's shoulders" but rested on the premise that principals should have "the ability to have a strong work ethic, the ability to have and share a vision and a willingness to work well with parents."

The current and former superintendent developed an open and trusting relationship with the mayor, city officials, and the school committee. The district shared information on a regular basis with the school committee. School committee meetings, sub-committee meetings, and retreats enabled the school committee to receive information and student achievement data and to make informed policy and budgetary decisions

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school committee and district leaders developed a collegial and respectful relationship with each of their collective bargaining units and respective leaders. Based upon interviews with

school committee members and union leaders, the superintendent met regularly with union leaders to facilitate communication, solve problems, and anticipate potential conflicts. Union leaders described the superintendent's open door policy as most helpful in the enhancement of the strong partnership that existed between the union and the administration. During the FY 2006 budget crisis, the district laid off more than 30 staff members. In each case according to union officers, the district reached its decisions in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement and demonstrated sensitivity to the plight of the affected staff members. The union has operated without a teachers' contract since June 2006. Currently in contract mediation, the relations between the union and the administration remain harmonious. Teachers interviewed cited the support of the administration in raising expectations for student achievement and remained committed to work together to accomplish that end.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided a safe and secure learning environment in each of its buildings for its students and staff. The school committee articulated its cooperation with the police department in its policy 1401. The policy served as the foundation for a memorandum of agreement with the police that was in effect during the review period. The memorandum described the differing and cooperative roles of the police and school staff to ensure student safety. Each building secured its doors and granted entrance with a buzzer system and a sign-in and sign-out procedure at the front desk. During the visit, the EQA team observed and encountered these procedures in place in every school. The district participated in the School Threat Assessment and Response System (STARS). In time, this system will enable the district to record and store entrances and floor plans electronically in case of emergency. During the review period, each school maintained and communicated as appropriate a school emergency pre-planning guide. The district also maintained a system-wide plan that guided the individual school plans. Each plan included specifications for evacuation, shelter-in-place, and other emergency responses.

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

II. Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- District staff reported that the MCAS test results did not adequately reflect their students' progress, and cited student mobility as a factor. However, the district used little assessment information beyond MCAS test results to monitor student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Formative assessment information was available in elementary ELA and in the middle school core content areas, and summative assessment information was available only in elementary ELA and high school science.
- Curricula at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were aligned with the state frameworks. Curricula developed during the period under review at the middle and high schools contained most curriculum components; however, the elementary ELA and the elementary math curricula lacked a number of expected curriculum components.
- Districtwide classroom observations by EQA examiners found positive instances of classroom management in 89 percent of classrooms observed and of climate in 84 percent. Examiners found considerable evidence of positive student activity and high expectations at the elementary level, some at the middle level, and little at the high school.
- The district focused on the achievement of students in the aggregate rather than that of subgroup populations.

- Not until the 2005-2006 school year were administrative academic chair positions in English, math, science, and social studies in place to oversee the implementation of the newly revised curricula. Budget cuts at the end of that year resulted in the elimination of the math and social studies positions.
- The elementary schools did not have a math specialist for each building, a districtwide elementary math coordinator, or recognized formative assessments to track individual and classroom student achievement.

Summary

The district had aligned its curricula with the state frameworks, but curriculum at the elementary level lacked the expected components that would have made it user-friendly for teachers. The district curricula had a degree of horizontal alignment in elementary ELA, the middle school core content areas, and high school science courses. In other areas, the curricula lacked the specificity, particularly with regard to assessments, which brings alignment. During the period under review, the middle and high school principals were the curriculum leaders who oversaw the continuing development of curriculum in their respective schools. At the middle school and in the science department at the high school, administrators and teachers had data to evaluate the use, consistency, and effectiveness of delivery of the curriculum. In elementary schools, principals and literacy coordinators gathered student achievement data in ELA from the administration of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Similar activities in elementary math and high school English and math were not reported to EQA examiners.

The district and the schools promoted several programs for the improvement of writing and began to provide teachers training in instruction appropriate for English language learners. The district implemented First Steps, the Six Traits of Writing, Harcourt Trophies, and Looking at Student Work (LASW) at the elementary level, the Collins Writing Program at the middle school, and Writing Across the Curriculum at the high school.

In addition, during the period under review, the district increased the amount of instructional time for elementary math and ELA and for high school courses. At the elementary level, each

school established a longer literacy block ranging from 90 to 120 minutes per day. Time allocated to math instruction was set at not less than 60 minutes. In 2005-2006, the high school shifted from five 48-minute periods for a total of 240 minutes per day of instruction to four 80-minute periods for 320 minutes per day. Extended instructional blocks were already in place at the middle school. The district also provided appropriate instructional technology, promoted its use through professional development, and funded technology integration specialists to support teachers.

For the most part, the district confined its examination of MCAS test results to scores in the aggregate and to item analysis rather than broaden its scope to include analysis of subgroup achievement. However, administrators and coaches did sometimes examine student achievement by classroom and discuss the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies. The district formally provided teachers with strategies for addressing the needs of ELL students during the final year of the period under review. While the district included special education students in regular education classrooms, interviewees reported little professional development in supporting these students.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

A review of documents as well as interviews during the site visit indicated that before the review period, the district, using a common format, had aligned its curricula with the state frameworks in the grades K-12 tested content areas. The format consisted of a horizontal chart listing key terms, essential understandings, essential skills, and strands and standards. This provided teachers with a minimal frame for classroom teaching. Components such as resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments were seldom included. During the period

under review, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, examiners saw varying degrees of amplification of these curricular formats.

At the high school, the horizontal chart became a vertical course description which included the following components: an essential question, skills and knowledge proficiencies (e.g., "What you teach"), formative and summative assessments, instructional strategies, key resources, and alignment with curriculum framework learning standards. Student learning objectives were stated, and the assessments ranged from the specific in science to the more generic in math and ELA. In science and math, framework learning standards were limited to an appropriate few and were fully stated; in ELA, they were not fully stated but instead consisted of a long list of numbers.

At the middle school, units were developed and documented for student mastery of the curriculum objectives. These units sometimes included benchmark performance objectives and assessment criteria as well as growth activities.

At the elementary level, two of the seven schools had Reading First grants and one had a John Silber grant. These three schools used the Harcourt Trophies series and all but one of the remaining schools used balanced literacy and guided reading. The English language arts (ELA) curriculum document did not include components such as resources, instructional strategies, or assessments. According to reports from teachers, coordinators, and administrators, some of these elements were in place, but curriculum documents had not been revised to reflect that. In math at the elementary level, the specificity was supplied by inclusion of units from the Everyday Math series. However, interviewees indicated that the math series was not the curriculum.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum varied across elementary, middle, and high school levels and within specific content areas. At the elementary level, interviewees reported that the mix of basal and balanced literacy programs in ELA and the lack of specificity in the curriculum documents meant that the programs were aligned at the conceptual level rather than

through the use of common resources and instructional strategies. However, they added that the periodic administration of the DIBELS, the DRA, and the SRI brought consistent skills instruction in ELA. In math, the implementation of a common math program, Everyday Math, led to horizontal alignment. However, administrators agreed that the lack of a coordinator for elementary math led to uneven implementation of the program. In addition, the relative autonomy of each of the seven elementary principals meant that program implementation varied from school to school. Finally, teachers did not use unit assessments in the Everyday Math program as formative assessments in the same way that formative assessments were used in ELA, namely to periodically determine each student's progress and need for support.

During the period under review, a team of teachers and administrators met to address issues with both horizontal and vertical alignment of the math program as the district moved from Everyday Math in grades 4 and 5 to Connected Math in grades 6 and 7. They reported that by the end of the period under review, team members had brought back to their building colleagues the revised aligned curriculum.

Middle school teachers brought consistency and horizontal alignment to their curricula by meeting with like-content teachers once every six school days to review and update it. These discussions were facilitated by curriculum coordinators who were teachers without classroom responsibilities. Common benchmark performance assessments brought continuity across classrooms in the middle school. However, common midterm and final exams were not in place.

Not until the 2006-2007 school year were teachers to pilot a common Algebra exam for grades 8 and 9 students which was to guarantee horizontal alignment of the course at any level at which it was taught. During this same year, teachers had opportunities to discuss curriculum and instruction with teachers in other schools. These discussions addressed a need that was apparent during the period under review, that of teachers having limited understanding of the content addressed at levels other than their own.

At the high school, horizontal alignment of curriculum in Biology, Chemistry, and Earth Science was guaranteed by the administration of common final examinations. But neither the math nor the English departments had common examinations in place during the period under review. As

a result, there was no information concerning the extent to which students had mastered a common curriculum.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The extent to which building curriculum leaders oversaw the use, alignment, consistency, and effectiveness of delivery of the district's curricula varied by levels and within content areas. In the middle school, firm leadership by the principal as well as shared responsibility with curriculum coordinators and teachers for review, development, and oversight of curriculum implementation led to assurances regarding the consistency of the curriculum delivered. Common benchmark performance assessments meant there was information concerning the extent to which each teacher's students had achieved the learning objectives. This led to discussions among teachers as to which instructional strategies had proved effective. However, this information about individual teacher effectiveness over time did not become part of the evaluation process.

At the high school, the principal in place during the period under review had led the effort to revise the curriculum so that it would have more rigor. But not until the 2005-2006 school year were administrative academic chair positions in English, math, science, and social studies in place to oversee the implementation of the newly revised curricula. Then at the end of that year, due to budget cuts, the math and social studies positions were eliminated, and part-time teacher-level department head positions were put in place. In the 2005-2006 school year in the science department only, teachers administered common final exams in Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry and then examined each teacher's results to share effective instructional strategies. The math and English departments did not have common final exams, so analysis of results to determine the effectiveness of curriculum delivery was not possible.

At the elementary level, principals analyzed data from MCAS tests and formative ELA assessments such as the DIBELS, DRA, and SRI. Each school had a literacy specialist who

worked with teachers on addressing assessment results in addition to coaching and supporting teachers. The elementary schools did not have a math specialist for each building, a district elementary math coordinator, or recognized formative assessments to track individual and classroom student achievement.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Teachers and administrators reported that professional development and leadership for effective instructional strategies were provided. During the final year of the period under review, the district had provided elementary and middle school teachers with initial training for addressing the instructional needs of English language learners (ELLs). As a result, approximately 20 teachers had completed training in something similar to Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training. However, there was no evidence that administrators followed up on the use of these strategies in classrooms. In addition, the high school focused on differentiated instruction during the period under review. Writing instruction was a particular focus in 2005-2006 in light of low districtwide achievement on open-response questions. Elementary supervisors worked on the implementation of First Steps and the Six Traits of Writing in classrooms. Curriculum coordinators at the middle school expected implementation of the Collins Writing Program with its Focused Correction Areas (FCA). Writing Across the Curriculum was reported as the focus at the high school.

Further, at the elementary level as a result of the implementation of Harcourt Trophies in the grant schools, all elementary schools studied Isabel Beck's work on vocabulary development and began implementing appropriate instructional strategies. Also, in several elementary schools teachers began the process of Looking at Student Work (LASW).

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

Rating: Needs improvement

Evidence

The district did not have an established, documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of curricula. Rather, curriculum development occurred either regularly and continuously, as at the middle school, or when a leader was in place, as at the high school; it occurred infrequently at the elementary schools during the period under review due to intermittent leadership at both the assistant superintendent and math and literacy coordinator level. The result was that during the period under review curriculum review at the secondary level depended upon building rather than district leadership. At the same time, at the seven elementary schools coordinated curriculum review depended upon district leadership which, during the period under review, defaulted to individual principals, in part because of lack of district personnel to lead the process. Interviewees reported that district curriculum development in elementary ELA throughout the period under review had been confined to alignment of the district curriculum with the state frameworks. The curriculum work needed in elementary math was beginning in 2006-2007, after the review period.

Principals described in interviews the extent of their training in TestWiz and their resulting careful analysis of MCAS tests results. They indicated that MCAS testing drove some of the curriculum revisions that were made. At the same time, Salem personnel repeatedly assured EQA examiners that MCAS tests results did not reflect the progress their students were making. However, they provided little quantitative data to support this assertion. As well, interviewees frequently explained flat achievement of student subgroups by referring to problems created by the movement of students in and out of the district. Interviewees had developed documentation that those students who remained in the district made achievement gains.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the allocation of instructional time in elementary schools and at the high school changed as a result of analysis of student achievement results. At the elementary level, each school established a longer literacy block ranging from 90 to 120 minutes per day in duration. In addition, time allocated to math instruction was fixed at not less than 60 minutes. Earlier in the review period, the schedule had been considerably shorter at some schools. In 2005-2006 the high school shifted from five 48-minute periods, for a total of 240 minutes per day of instruction, to four 80-minute periods, for 320 minutes per day. Extended instructional blocks were already in place at the middle school. Each of the schools met the state requirements for time on learning.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviewees reported that as the district completed its extensive renovation projects, more of the schools had updated educational technology available. They reported that all schools had at least one computer lab as well as a bank of computers in the library media center. In addition, most schools also had laptop carts. Also, examiners saw interactive white boards in use in high school science classrooms. Examiners found during classroom observations an average of 2.6 computers per classroom, although students were observed using instructional technology on only two of 34 occasions.

Teachers and administrators reported a number of professional development opportunities on the use of technology for the delivery of instruction. In one focus group, teachers described training in the student use of video technology. Also, the high school and the middle school each had one technology integration specialist, and elementary schools either had one or shared one with another school. As a result, teachers had on hand a specialist to assist them with the integration of technology into their instruction.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviewees at all levels voiced a firm commitment to the improved achievement of all their students. There were some situations in the district in which teacher instruction was monitored through the analysis of assessment results not only for individual students or for student subgroups, but also for each classroom. At the elementary level, with the use of a formative assessment such as the DIBELS, principals and coordinators had information concerning the effectiveness of a particular teacher's instruction at a specific point in time. At the middle school, coordinators and teachers could examine by classroom the results on the common benchmark performance assessments. At the same time at the middle school, students were graded on their progress rather than their level of achievement, which limited expectations for their achievement. Finally, in Earth Science, Chemistry, and Biology classrooms at the high school, teachers and the academic chair examined common final exam results by classroom and discussed the instructional strategies which may have helped one teacher achieve more success than another. These instances of administrators and teachers closely examining student and teacher results reflected their commitment that each student achieve and their understanding that some teachers were more successful than others. The district chose to focus discussions on teacher effectiveness on the use of particular instructional strategies in higher achieving classrooms. Administrators did not use this information, gathered over time, in the evaluation of teachers.

With regard to MCAS test achievement expectations, administrators and teachers regularly asserted that MCAS results did not account for the totality of their students' progress. Yet, they could point to few other assessments which did accurately reflect their students' progress.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Formative assessment data were available in elementary ELA through the administration of the DIBELS, the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Examination (GRADE), and the SRI. In some instances this led literacy specialists to provide coaching support to individual teachers. The middle school also had formative assessment data through the administration of benchmark performance assessments. The curriculum meetings which took place one out of every six days encouraged teachers to discuss the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies. The science department at the high school had summative assessments, since the department administered common final exams, though other departments did not. The formative assessments given in elementary ELA also yielded summative data since they were administered at the end of the school year as well. The middle school did not give common mid-year or final exams.

There was little evidence that the summative data provided by MCAS test results regarding low achievement among the ELL and special education subgroups led to more support and professional development. The district formally provided teachers with strategies for addressing the needs of ELL students during the final year of the period under review. In addition, while the district included special education students in regular education classrooms, interviewees reported little professional development on supporting these students.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the site visit, the EQA examiners observed a total of 34 randomly selected classrooms and recorded the presence or absence of 26 attributes reflected in the Principles of Effective Teaching. The attributes were grouped into five categories: classroom management, instructional practice, expectations, student activity and behavior, and climate. The EQA examiners checked the attributes that they observed in each of the five categories during their time spent in the classroom. Observations were conducted at the district's nine schools as follows: 21 at the elementary schools, five at the middle school, and eight at the high school. In total, the EQA

examiners observed 14 ELA classrooms, 11 math classrooms, and nine classrooms of other subjects.

Classroom management refers to the maintenance of order and structure within the classroom. Positive indicators of classroom management were evident in 89 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 95 percent at the elementary level, 85 percent at the middle school level, and 75 percent at the high school level.

Instructional practice was the largest category reviewed by the examiners. Effective instructional practice is considered evident when the teacher's questions transcend direct recall and include open-ended questions that require the use of higher order thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to go beyond their initial responses, to analyze, to synthesize, to compare and contrast, and to explain their own thinking. Class time should be focused on student learning. Students who have finished their work should be provided with other appropriate tasks; students who are off-task should be redirected to their task. The work should engage all students; it should be age-appropriate, and attuned to many learning modalities, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The pace of the class should be appropriate, challenging, and engaging for all students. Instruction should be differentiated so that all learners are challenged. The lesson should be clearly aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and either posted on the board or cited in the teacher's planner. The lesson's objectives should be clear and explicitly articulated. The teacher should use standards-based instruction to set objectives, to plan activities, to assess the effect of the lesson, and to measure progress for all learners. Positive indicators of instructional practice were evident in 68 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 81 percent at the elementary level, 56 percent at the middle school level, and 40 percent at the high school level.

Expectations refers to the maintenance of high standards for students by teachers. Evidence of high expectations could include recent examples of high quality student work posted in the classroom. In addition, high quality work should be evident through rubrics that may sometimes be generated by students. Tasks should be challenging for all students, and all students should have access to the same curriculum, although the instruction and strategies may be adapted to the needs of students. The teacher should clearly maintain and communicate high expectations for

student work during class time. All students should be expected to be on task and engaged in the lesson. High expectations for students were evident in 67 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 80 percent at the elementary level, 56 percent at the middle school level, and 41 percent at the high school level.

Positive student activity and behavior are considered evident when students are actively engaged in the learning process. They must show a clear understanding of the objective of the lesson and interact with the teacher and each other in accomplishing the tasks at hand. They should be attentive and responsive. While the environment may be busy and constructive, it must also be controlled and orderly. There should be few distractions, and the learning process must be clearly evident. Indicators of positive student activity and behavior were evident in 61 percent of the classrooms districtwide, with 71 percent at the elementary level, 47 percent at the middle school level, and 44 percent at the high school level.

Finally, the concept of *climate* is considered evident when the classroom is welcoming, and the teacher is an active listener and treats all students with respect. Students should listen attentively to and be respectful of all other students. Many resources and means beyond the textbook should be available for learning; these may include technology, manipulatives, cassettes, visuals, overhead projectors, and a classroom library. Positive indicators of climate were evident in 84 percent of the classrooms observed districtwide, with 94 percent at the elementary school level, 80 percent at the middle school level, and 63 percent at the high school level.

Summary of Classroom Observations

	Number of Classrooms				Average Class Size	Average Paraprofs. per Class	Computers		
	ELA	Math	Other	Total			Total Number	Number for Student Use	Average Students per Computer
Elementary	11	8	2	21	14.6	1.0	60	56	5.5
Middle	2	1	2	5	15.0	0.6	10	10	7.5
High	1	2	5	8	17.1	0.0	20	16	8.6
Total	14	11	9	34	15.2	0.7	90	82	6.3

	Classroom Management	Instructional Practice	Expectations	Student Activity & Behavior	Climate
Elementary					
Total checks	80	154	67	89	59
Maximum possible	84	189	84	126	63
Avg. percent of checks	95	81	80	71	94
Middle					
Total checks	17	24	11	14	12
Maximum possible	20	43	20	30	15
Avg. percent of checks	85	56	55	47	80
High					
Total checks	24	29	13	21	15
Maximum possible	32	72	32	48	24
Avg. percent of checks	75	40	41	44	63
Total					
Total checks	121	207	91	124	86
Maximum possible	136	304	136	204	102
Avg. percent of checks	89	68	67	61	84

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

III. Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district did not make special efforts to communicate the results of student assessments to parents, although staff repeatedly expressed that parents were welcome to request a meeting.
- All students within the district participated in all forms of assessment administered. The district made efforts to ensure that all students were tested on schedule.
- The district utilized numerous sources of data, especially at the elementary level, which it analyzed and used in making decisions regarding school leadership and curriculum changes.
- While assessment of students was widespread and systemic throughout the district, assessment of programs was not.
- A review of the 2006 adequate yearly progress (AYP) data revealed that the district met its ELA and math targets for all subgroups.

Summary

Students were extensively assessed within the Salem Public Schools. Particularly in the elementary grades, MCAS tests results, which were analyzed both for aggregate information and trends, were a part of an information gathering system. Principals explained that they used data to conduct trend analyses to evaluate individual student progress from year to year and school to

school, or to evaluate the effect of the length of stay in the Salem Public Schools on overall academic growth. They had also used data in the assignment of staff and in monitoring grant funded initiatives. Low districtwide achievement on the 2005 MCAS tests led to implementation of First Steps and Five Traits in Writing at the elementary school, the Collins Writing Program at the middle school, and Writing Across the Curriculum at the high school.

Elementary level assessment tools included the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), all of which were used for assessing students' accomplishments in English language arts. Fewer options were available in mathematics or science. In math at the elementary levels, as well as in all subjects at the middle and high school levels, the district relied heavily on MCAS tests results as well as individual class or course assessments made at the building level. The district actively required all students to participate in all required assessments.

Across the district, individual examples existed of data being used to evaluate programs, but the efforts were not deeply ingrained and frequent. Analysis at all levels of MCAS aggregate data and trends was common, allowing teachers and principals to make changes in curricula, but the practice was individualized and lacked districtwide support and direction. The district had policies in place requiring program evaluation, but there was little evidence that programs were analyzed using disaggregated data, despite the fact that in 2006 only five percent of limited English proficient students attained proficiency on the MCAS tests compared to 58 percent of regular education students. Other than those required by law and related to Title I or district finances, the district did not engage in any internal or external program audits. However, it was a member of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and had undergone school-wide evaluations at both the high school and one elementary school. In neither case did the audits focus on program effectiveness, and the results were not used specifically to improve programs or instruction.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, the district administered a wide variety of student assessments and conducted analyses of the data yielded from them, particularly at the elementary level. Policy 5212 in the district policy manual called for the evaluation of instructional programs, and further stated that "evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum [is] to be of primary importance." This policy specified that "elements of this evaluation shall include testing required by the Massachusetts DOE," and that "the school committee supports the use of standardized tests as one method of assessing goals."

Interviews with administrators and principals revealed that the district utilized a wide battery of both standardized tests and in-house assessments to track the academic progress of its students. This was especially evident at the elementary grades, in which teachers used the DIBELS, the DRA, the GRADE, and the SRI, all with the ELA classes. At the middle and high school levels, assessments were generally developed on a class-by-class or course-by-course basis. In addition, the district spent a great deal of time reviewing and analyzing the results from the MCAS tests. With some minor exceptions, the district had been engaged in this level of assessment and interpretation of data since prior to the review period.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district did require all students to participate in all appropriate assessments. This was confirmed in interviews with principals and teachers. Principals explained that in the case of high stakes assessments such as the MCAS tests they went to extensive lengths to make sure that every child took part. They sent numerous reminders to the home, provided free breakfast on

testing days, and even drove to students' houses to provide individualized transportation for them if necessary.

A review of documentation provided by the district did not reveal any specific policy in either the policy manual or any of the student handbooks that mandated participation. A review of the 2006 AYP data revealed that the district met its targets for both ELA and math for all subgroups. Overall participation on the MCAS tests ranged between 99 percent and 100 percent for both ELA and math. A closer examination of the data showed that these levels of participation were consistent for both ELA and math for all groups in the elementary and middle school grades. However, at the high school some instances were found in which certain subgroups did not meet the state requirement of 95 percent and did not make AYP. For example, on the math assessment the participation rates for low income and Hispanic students were 91 and 94 percent, respectively.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The primary area in which the district was found to use assessment systems to measure the attainment of goals, progress, and effectiveness was in the development of the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP for school year 2004-2005 was presented in a table format and included a column showing 2003-2004 accomplishments, as well as 2004-2005 objectives that were strongly linked to student achievement, in particular to the MCAS ELA and math test results.

Interviews with principals, as well as parent members of the school improvement councils, explained that they typically revisited their School Improvement Plans at the end of the school year. The purpose of this was to determine the progress that they had made toward accomplishing their goals. Interviewees cited student achievement measured by assessments as one factor in determining the degree to which their schools had met their goals.

When asked about informing parents of progress made, principals explained that none of the student assessment data were specifically communicated to all parents. However, they said that parents had opportunities to visit the school to meet with teachers and discuss these issues. The district provided newsletters to parents on a regular basis, and also maintained an informative website. The district website included a link to the Department of Education website from which information on assessment results could be obtained, although this information was not easily identified or accessed.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district used a wide array of assessments to measure student progress, especially at the elementary grades. Diagnostic tests such as the SRI, DRA, DIBELS, and others were administered on a regular basis and the data were recorded for each student. Classroom teachers paid close attention to the growth made by each student over time. Some principals explained that they had used data of this type to conduct trend analyses to evaluate individual student progress from year to year and school to school, or to evaluate the effect of the length of stay in the Salem Public Schools on overall academic growth.

Principals explained that data form the majority of the district assessments were used by individual classroom teachers as part of their regular daily assessments of their students. Although the high school used local benchmarks, these data were not typically collected centrally and analyzed in the aggregate. This was especially true at the secondary grades. At the elementary grades, assessment data were gathered and compiled centrally, and were used as part of monitoring the Title I program as well as other grant-funded initiatives.

All parties agreed that there was a wide distribution of the MCS test data and accompanying analyses. Principals explained that they would download the data for their schools as soon as the DOE posted them. Most stated that they conducted some analysis before handing the data on to the teachers. They unanimously explained that they provided data to their staffs as soon as

possible. They also presented the general trends, and followed up with in-depth dissection of the data.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

School district policy 5212, approved on January 9, 2006, called for the evaluation of instructional programs. Interviews with administrators, principals, and teachers revealed that in practice evaluation efforts mainly focused on curriculum.

Every year teachers conducted an item analysis of the MCAS test results at all pertinent grades. These analyses revealed areas of strength or weakness. Teachers and principals were then able to make adjustments to the curriculum as needed. In addition, at the high school an analysis of common final examinations in Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry provided additional supporting information. At the district level, analyses of a similar nature were conducted. The overall trends were then found to be highlighted in the DIP.

A review of the documentation provided to examiners revealed very few other instances in which student assessment results had been used to measure the effectiveness of either instructional or support programs.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review the district did not regularly engage in internal or external audits to inform the effectiveness of its program implementation and service delivery systems.

Administrators and principals explained that in some instances reviews had been conducted. For example, in finance, in which audits are mandatory, and special education, annual reviews were

conducted. In each case, audits did not typically focus on the effectiveness of program implementation. Interviewees stated that they did not recall that resulting audit reports were circulated among staff.

The district was part of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), which accredited two of the district's schools, Salem High School and the Bentley Elementary School.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the period under review, the assessment used most frequently by the district as part of its decision-making process was the MCAS. Interviews with administrators, principals, and parents from school improvement councils revealed that they regularly used the results of the MCAS tests as one of the factors while prioritizing district and school goals. A review of the DIP and of the SIPs showed some explicit references to students' achievement and the average scores on the MCAS tests. Principals stated that this type of data use was mostly limited to the instructional portion of their school's respective SIP. They stated that the other parts were developed through discussion with the various constituents in the school.

When assigning staff, principals were very clear that there was no impediment to assigning staff wherever the need was greatest. They explained that certification was primary in the process. They took into account the overall strength of a cluster, team, or grade when making reassignments and considered many criteria such as classroom management, knowledge of content, the balance of novice and veteran staff, and class size when reassigning teachers. According to the special education personnel interviewed, student data were a contributing factor when assigning support staff. Paraprofessionals with the best credentials in ELA were routinely assigned to work with students requiring the most assistance with language-based disabilities as revealed by assessment results.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the review period, the administrators and principals were able to cite examples of using the results of an analysis of MCAS tests scores as a rationale to initiate, modify, or discontinue programs. Low districtwide achievement during the 2005 MCAS test administration led to implementation of First Steps and Five Traits in Writing at the elementary schools, the Collins Writing Program at the middle school, and Writing Across the Curriculum at the high school.

Instructional delivery options changed as well. At the elementary level, each school increased instructional time in literacy from 90 to 120 minutes. Time allocated to math instruction was fixed at 60 minutes minimally. In the 2005-2006 school year, the high school shifted from five 48-minute periods to four 80-minute periods of instruction. Extended instructional blocks had previously been implemented at the middle school.

Without an assistant superintendent for school year 2005-2006, many changes were initiated at the building level, and it was unclear how many were implemented because of student assessment results rather than financial conditions.

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

IV. Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The district had efficient practices for recruiting, interviewing, selecting, and employing effective teachers and support staff, and provided incentives and professional support such as tuition reimbursement and promotional opportunities to retain them.
- Forty-three of 45 randomly selected personnel files revealed evidence of licensure or waiver. Staff members were licensed when hired, or arrangements for licensure or waivers from licensure were made before an offer letter was given to candidates.
- Despite a negotiated evaluation process that the district implemented, administrators did not supervise teachers consistently. Of the 39 evaluations reviewed, most were informative, but few were instructive or geared toward professional growth.
- Of 21 administrators' personnel folders, only 12 contained evaluations. All 12 were informative, but few were instructive, and compensation was not linked to student achievement.
- While all school buildings were safe and secure, and fire drills were scheduled and carried out as required by law, the district did not practice other procedures in its crisis management plan in all buildings on a regular or consistent basis.

Summary

Maintaining a fully staffed human resources office even during a period of fiscal austerity allowed the district to continue implementing efficient and equitable hiring practices, and assisted in the effective monitoring of professional licensing. The district used both free and commercial advertising and participated in job fairs to attract a wide range of applicants for open positions. Interviews were conducted, and principals made the final decision with respect to hiring the best candidate. Administrators reported that there was no pressure applied from the district office to avoid the best-qualified candidate at the expense of one who could be hired at a lower salary.

Following reference and criminal record checks, the district checked licensure. If a potential hire was licensed, the offer letter was issued immediately. If the candidate was not licensed, an application for licensure would be generated immediately in the candidate's presence, and a letter requesting a waiver of certification would be dispatched to the Department of Education before the candidate left the office. In the event of open or newly created positions, all qualified internal candidates were guaranteed interviews, in order to help retain valuable district employees. Representatives of the teachers' association reported that the district had experienced substantial personnel changes over the previous years, with 30 percent of the faculty having held their positions for fewer than three years, 50 percent for fewer than five years, and 70 percent for fewer than 10 years.

The professional development plan for the district was building-based and supervised actively by the district office. Principals were allowed to plan professional development activities that would best train their faculties in accordance with the SIPs. The district shared the professional development time by planning and sponsoring districtwide initiatives that would lead to the successful implementation of the DIP. Topics included Everyday Math and Looking at Student Work. Over the review period, the district budgeted $800,000 for professional development activities, of which $570,000 represented teacher salaries charged to professional development for the full-staff professional development days.

The teachers' association contract called for tuition reimbursement for a three-credit course at Salem State College upon prior approval of the superintendent and upon successful course

completion. During the 2005-2006 school year, this allotment amounted to $420 per teacher and totaled $40,000. In addition, the district participated in an initiative with surrounding communities called the Tri-district Initiative for Leadership in Education (TILE), which assembled a cohort group intended to encourage the pursuit of advanced degrees by faculty and administrators.

All new teachers were provided both a two-day orientation before the beginning of the school year and a year-long mentoring program designed to support and nurture the teacher. Administrators were also provided with mentors whose experience matched their new assignments. The mentoring program could be extended for an additional year if found to be beneficial to the candidate.

While the district fulfilled its contractual obligation to observe and evaluate teachers, principals agreed that they wished they had more time to directly supervise their staffs. No classroom monitoring occurred, but principals reviewed plan books and student test results. The system used for evaluations resulted in annual observations for non-professional status teachers, but as few as one classroom observation every five years for professional-status teachers. In general, evaluations reviewed by the EQA examiners were complete, but had few recommendations for improvement or comments on the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques, either on the classroom observation reports or the summative evaluations themselves.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used effective practices to identify, recruit, and select an effective teaching force. The utilization of a fully staffed human resources office allowed the district to maintain consistent, repeatable, and reliable human resources and hiring practices that ensured that the hiring of all candidates was uniform and consistent with school committee policy.

Most positions were either for replacement staff or newly created by the school committee and listed in the budget book. The principals notified the human resources office when positions became open and were to be refilled. Human resources staff members checked the budget book to see if the position was funded, and if so it was posted. Open positions were posted for at least 10 days on the superintendent's bulletin, and distributed to all professional staff and outside sources. According to administrators, 90 percent of open positions were advertised in *The Boston Globe*. Other venues for the postings included placement job web pages at Salem State College and Gordon College. Human resources staff members also described job fairs in which they participated if principals were willing to attend in order to attract suitable candidates. They reported that they were willing to post vacancies on any Internet site that would accept them.

Responses to all postings were received by the human resources office and then forwarded to principals for the paper screening. Principals reported that they conducted the paper screening and then assembled an interview team. The composition of the team was building specific and sometimes dependent on the time of year. After the principal chose the final candidates, he or she conducted a telephone check of references, and completed a personnel action form (PAF) to serve as cover sheet for the packet. The packet included an application, letter of interest, resume, letters of reference, evidence of licensure, and transcripts. Transcripts could be unofficial, but before employment was offered official transcripts had to be on file from the candidates' colleges. Similarly, the candidate had to successfully pass a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check. If the candidate did not present evidence of licensure, the waiver was completed during the final meeting with the personnel office, during which the required employment forms were completed.

2. <u>All professional staff had appropriate Massachusetts licensure.</u>

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district had a standing procedure to ensure that all teachers employed were either appropriately licensed or employed on Department of Education certification waiver. If the candidate was not certified, personnel office interviewees reported that a request for waiver and application for licensure were completed in the personnel office before the candidate left the

premises. Interviewees reported that both licensure results and CORI results were returned on a timely basis.

The district also reported that evidence of certification was placed in each employee's personnel folder. An examination of 45 randomly selected personnel files revealed evidence of 43 teachers who were either licensed or employed on waiver. The remaining two files belonged to non-teaching staff members (one school nurse and one speech therapist), and evidence of non-DOE professional licensure was present in each.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

According to administrators, all staff members were licensed when hired, or were assisted in applying for licensure at the time of hire. In addition, waivers were requested for all unlicensed teacher candidates at the time of hire, and both the principal and the human resources office mutually monitored their progress toward final certification.

The district provided a two-day orientation for new teachers and their mentors during the August prior to their first day of class. In addition, a year-long mentoring program was provided for them, with resource materials given. According to administrators, there were several cases when the mentoring experience was extended for a second year when administrators felt that the teacher would benefit from the experience.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district provided both teachers and administrators new to the district with mentors in their respective roles. The district provided and compensated trained mentors for the teachers, and

made efforts to match the mentor with the assignment of the new teacher. The mentoring relationship was implemented according to a schedule of monthly meetings organized to "foster collaboration, collegiality, and risk taking among educators; improve instruction; increase student performance and retain teachers new to the profession," according to the *Salem Teacher Mentoring Program* (p.3).

Interviewees reported that the district provided mentors to new administrators as well. The job responsibilities of mentors who were used approximated as closely as possible the job responsibilities of the protégé. For example, the mentor for a new elementary school principal was a serving elementary school principal who eventually became the assistant superintendent. In the case of the high school principal, no other serving administrator was available on staff, and an administrator from outside the district was provided. Administrators reported that the mentoring program for administrators was less formal than for new teachers. Administrators who were experienced at the position but newly appointed within the district were assigned a mentor, but the mentor served as a contact person and maintained little additional interaction other than that which was requested by the administrator new to the district. Administrators reported that they felt supported throughout their first years, despite the informality of the approach to mentoring that they experienced.

All administrators reported that they had been trained in TestWiz, and that the program and district data were downloaded onto their computers for ready access to the data. They also reported that there were many opportunities for teachers to be trained, and that many teachers took advantage. Other teachers chose to wait until the principal provided the data to them. All teachers, however, reported the use of data from several sources and described their potential for use in informing instruction, particularly at the elementary level. Their embrace of data use reflected their initial training in the use of DIBELS, the SRI, the DRA, and most recently GRADE in the grant schools, as well as other assessment tools, early in the teachers' tenure in Salem.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district conducted regular, supervised, professional development opportunities for teachers to analyze student assessment results in many forms. The district ensured compliance between the professional development plan and the DIP by incorporating one within the other. According to district policy 4205, the professional development plan should include "training in the teaching of new curriculum frameworks and other skills required for the effective implementation of this act, including participatory decision-making, and parent and community involvement." The professional development plan document provided to EQA examiners met the requirements of that policy.

In addition to MCAS, schools used several forms of assessment to measure student achievement. Test results from the DIBELS, GRADE, SRI, and common examinations in science at the high school were all used to monitor student performance. In addition, results were uploaded onto the student data management system, IPASS, in order to allow all teachers access to the test results on an ongoing basis.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district placed a high priority on encouraging professional growth and recognition, and to the extent possible provided promotional opportunities for staff members within the district.

In addition to professional development provided by the district, the teachers' association contract called for tuition reimbursement for a three-credit course at Salem State College upon prior approval of the superintendent and upon successful course completion. During the 2005-

2006 school year, this allotment amounted to $420 per teacher, and totaled $40,000. This amount did not fund the entire course, however, since the college had increased fees separate from tuition in recent years.

In addition, the district participated in an initiative with surrounding communities called the Tri-district Initiative for Leadership in Education (TILE), which assembled a cohort group intended to encourage the pursuit of advanced degrees by faculty and administrators.

Promotional opportunities were provided within the staff for successful teachers. Teachers were regularly promoted to positions of leadership and rewarded with stipends for serving as teacher mentors, curriculum leaders or department chairs, and other administrators. School committee policy 4201 required an interview for any employee applying for a newly created position, and the practice, according to administrators, was for any qualified employee who applied for any open position to receive an interview. During the period under review, teachers were appointed to several administrative positions, including assistant principal and principal. New academic chair positions were created and district teachers were appointed to them as well. The assistant superintendent had previously been a principal during the period under review, and the superintendent had previously been an assistant superintendent.

Representatives of the teachers' association reported that the district had experienced substantial personnel changes over the previous years. According to union officials, 30 percent of the faculty had held their positions for fewer than three years; 50 percent for fewer than five years; and 70 percent for fewer than 10 years. The superintendent stated that 15 percent of the faculty had held their positions for fewer than three years, and 25 percent for fewer than five years. Interviewees reported that few teachers left their positions for teaching assignments in neighboring districts, and cited retirement and child care issues as the predominant reasons for leaving a teaching position in Salem.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

During the 2005-2006 school year, the district essentially had no assistant superintendent due to a long-term absence, followed by a search, and then an interim appointment. During that time, one administrator reported that professional development "was happening, but with no district oversight." According to interviewees, the district used a two-tiered approach to professional development. Principals had substantial flexibility in designing their SIPs, and as a result many professional development activities were building-based and intended to service the needs of local teachers as identified in the SIPs. These professional development opportunities allowed teachers to become more familiar with technology, in addition to focusing on district needs that applied to a particular building. In one example, teachers from the high school and middle school met to improve vertical curriculum articulation. Meanwhile, the Title III schools were continuing their training of teachers in category-1 instructional techniques, a modified structured immersion teaching technique. Elementary teachers had been trained in categories-1, -2 and -3, and still required training in category-4, while category-1 training was still a priority for high school teachers. Looking at Student Work training was ongoing for the teachers in Witchcraft Heights and the Bentley Elementary School.

During the final months of school year 2005-2006 and the beginning of school year 2006-2007 (after the review period), the district used half of the professional development time to focus on district needs. According to administrators, "no school in this district should be spending its time on agenda-driven meetings." The district saw a need to "re-commit to Everyday Math," and planned to offer programs for a new version that the district expected to acquire in school year 2007-2008, and for the current version during school year 2006-2007. Looking at Student Work training had been a district priority for school year 2004-2005 and was offered by an outside consultant from Salem State College. Other topics offered during the period under review included work on a Salem in History grant, Critical Friends, and Professional Learning Communities, all of which had been implemented effectively at different schools.

Administrators reported that all professional development programs were evaluated at their conclusion at the building level, and the results of the surveys were used to plan further training opportunities. They also stressed that MCAS results were a prime driving force for these district

initiatives, although other data drove some of them as well. Administrators cited DIBELS and SIOP training as being data driven.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Administrators reported that they used teacher evaluations to monitor curriculum and instruction. However, there was little evidence that walk-throughs, walk-bys, or classroom observations were used in a systematic way to monitor or support changes in expectations for programs and practices brought about by professional development activities.

Principals believed that they knew the state of their buildings by "being visible" and "being available to teachers, parents, and students." A new teacher evaluation tool had been implemented during the 2005-2006 school year. Principals reported that they signed-off on teachers' professional development plans, and most kept copies on file in their buildings. Some principals said that they were able to monitor the effectiveness of professional development activities by reviewing plan books and monitoring student achievement scores.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district's evaluation procedure for administrators was informative and aligned with the Education Reform Act, but in a review of 26 administrative personnel folders, EQA examiners did not find the evaluations to be instructive or to promote growth and overall effectiveness.

Compensation and continued employment were addressed in the administrative evaluations, but were not specifically linked in any documented way to increased student performance.

The term "informative" is used by the EQA to indicate evaluations that cite administrative or supervisory techniques. Examiners considered all of the administrative evaluations to be informative. The term "instructive" refers to comments intended to improve administrative performance, offering techniques or strategies that the administrator might try to improve or to vary the activities observed as a part of the administrator's role. Examiners found only 7.7 percent of the evaluations to be instructive.

Although student achievement was mentioned as a factor in the administrators' performance evaluation form, it was not linked either with compensation or with continued employment. EQA examiners reviewed 26 administrative folders and found evaluations for all principals and central office personnel. These files represented 21 active administrators, and of these 12 folders contained evaluations while nine did not. Eight of the administrators had been promoted from the teaching ranks, and their folders contained evaluations of their performance as teachers, not administrators. Three administrators' most recent evaluations were dated 1997 and 2000.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

EQA examiners reviewed 45 randomly selected personnel folders containing 39 recent evaluations. The other folders represented teachers who were newly hired, for whom the first year had not yet expired. Of the 39, 76.9 percent of the evaluations were timely. To be considered "timely" the evaluation had to be dated within the past year for a non-professional status teacher and within two years for a professional-status teacher. Both teacher and evaluator signed all of the evaluations, and all were developed in accordance with the requirements of the Education Reform Act.

All of the evaluations were considered informative. This term is used to indicate that the evaluation discussed pedagogy and was not merely descriptive of the activities and climate. Only 18.5 percent were found to be instructive. The term "instructive" refers to comments intended to improve instruction, offering techniques or instructional strategies that the teacher might try to improve or to vary the activities observed in the classroom. Only 28 percent of the evaluations contributed to professional growth by mentioning suggestions for further professional development that would assist a teacher in improving technique or content knowledge.

Administrators reported that there were "a few" teachers who had been placed on improvement plans during the period under review. Following a period of probation, the teachers were either re-signed to another contract or non-renewed. Administrators described one case in which a teacher with professional status was terminated for inefficiency, and while the termination was contested in the courts, the district ultimately prevailed.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Teacher evaluations were clearly aligned with the Education Reform Act, although not with the requirements of 603 CMR 35.06. For non-professional status teachers, the district used a three-year rotation, with four classroom observations during the first year, three during the second, and two during the third. Following each series of classroom observations, a summative evaluation was done. The district used a four-year evaluation cycle for professional status teachers. During the first year, the teacher was observed in the classroom once, with a summative evaluation done. Each classroom observation was preceded by a pre-conference and followed by a post-conference. During the second year of the cycle, the teacher was "off" and not subject to evaluation. For the third year, the teacher was allowed to choose, with the evaluator's agreement, either a formative or summative evaluation. The summative would again be accompanied by a classroom observation, but the choice of a formative evaluation would involve some alternative activity, negotiated in advance with the evaluator, and presented at its conclusion with a pre-

negotiated culminating activity. This system, lacking at least an alternate year classroom observation, did not meet state regulatory requirements.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Both the human resources and supervision processes within the district were linked and structured as a system. The professional development program was beginning to become linked with the effective mentoring program. There was still a separation of staff supervision from the professional development portion of the process. The levels of funding necessary to carry out the successful integration were adequate. Over the three years under review, the district budgeted $800,000 for professional development activities, of which $570,000 represented teacher salaries charged to professional development for the full-staff professional development days. The sum was $826,000 in school year 2003, $806,000 in school year 2004, and $807,000 in school year 2005.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

While the district had a crisis response plan in place, and the plan had been developed with substantial community and public safety support, there was little evidence of emergency drills, other than for fire evacuation being conducted by the schools.

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

V. Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

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

Standard Rating: Needs Improvement

Findings:

- The district provided time and materials and trained staff for literacy instruction in all the elementary schools; however, 20 percent of Salem's grade 4 students failed the grade 4 MCAS ELA test.
- The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) was outdated. The district did not have plans to incorporate into the document new instructional strategies from districtwide professional development initiatives such as sheltered English immersion. The DCAP did not assist staff to identify specific support services available in the Salem Public Schools.
- The district did not address low achievement of student subgroups, in particular special education students, English language learners, and low-income students.
- The district struggled with student transience after grade 8. Daily attendance rates at the middle and high schools were below expected levels, and chronic absenteeism rates were high. The district did not effectively address the problem of student absence or inquire into the loss of one-third of the student population between grades 9 and 12.
- The district had procedures in place to assist students to make an effective transition to Salem High School; however, retention rates in grade 9 indicated that the policies and procedures were not adequate to promote student success.

- Districtwide disciplinary practices were ineffective at Salem High School, as approximately one-fourth of all grade 9-10 students were suspended out of school during the course of the year. Budget reductions resulted in the elimination of in-school suspension services.

Summary

The Salem Public Schools provided an array of special education services for its children, including early childhood education and services for children with learning, emotional, behavioral, and physical needs. The district placed these children in the most inclusive setting possible. The district, home to a sizeable English language learner (ELL) population, ran sheltered immersion programs and pullout instruction through the middle school level with a somewhat separate program at the high school. It also began to provide training for its regular education teachers in the teaching of such students. Each elementary school provided 90 to 120 minutes of instruction daily in ELA and 60 minutes in math. Literacy instruction took various forms: Reading Recovery, Title I, and guided reading. Although some schools received grant funding or more services, each school provided services within its available resources and appropriate to its population.

The differences in grant funding affected the variety and type of MCAS remediation that each school provided. These included in-school courses for at-risk populations at the high school, general remediation in reading and writing for all grade 6, 7, and 9 students, and after-school programs in either literacy or math at some elementary schools and at the high school. One elementary school without a grant had no supplementary services, and another had a special homework night each week.

Although guided reading groups at the elementary school were scheduled so that special education and ELL students could receive services from knowledgeable professional staff, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not provide sufficient direction to regular education teachers serving these students in inclusionary settings. The DCAP provided neither specific recommendations nor lists of available Salem services for children. Although staff members reported that it was a resource used by Child Study Teams, they also acknowledged that there were no plans to update the document to include new accommodations such as those presented in the ELL trainings that the district had conducted. Instructional practices needed for special populations were not strongly in evidence in the classroom observations.

The district effectively tracked and monitored teacher attendance. The schools posted information bulletins urging attendance in all student handbooks. Student attendance, tracked by IPASS software, were at acceptable levels except at the high school where attendance averaged slightly below 90 percent. Chronic absenteeism rates ranged from 13 to 17 percent at the middle school, while the high school figures ranged between 32 and 40 percent. Staff throughout the district spoke about the effect of the transient population on record keeping and instruction. The problem was more pronounced at the high school, which had high retention and suspension rates.

The district had an extensive and detailed disciplinary code that appeared in all student handbooks. The district also provided the services of two conflict resolution counselors, Child Study Teams in every building, and a resource officer to assist the schools with disciplinary and attendance issues. Elementary principals reported handling discipline on a case-by-case basis, involving parents when necessary, and they did not report problems with discipline. The middle school benefited from an in-school suspension program and two instructional programs, one on-site and the other off-site, for providing specialized care to students with behavioral and emotional issues.

The high school instituted a Freshman House and Freshman Seminar in order to ease the transition to high school. It also provided an alternative after-school program, child care for teenage mothers, the Hawthorne Program, vocational courses, and other resources to assist students. However, the district did not initiate its own summer school until the end of the review period. Since the high school lost its in-school suspension program several years prior to the review period due to budget cuts, repeated disciplinary referrals resulted in out-of-school suspension for a quarter of the student body in grades 9-11 during the last two years of the review period. The budget for FY 2008 calls for the resumption of the in-school suspension program at the high school. In addition, retention rates reported to the Department of Education exceeded the state average in each year of the period under review. Additional data provided by the high school revealed a high retention rate and a large number of students who, either due to transfers or dropping out, disappeared from the student rolls. The high school did not provide clear data on whether students' failure to re-enroll was due to their having transferred or dropped out. The dropout rate exceeded the state average every year. Data provided by the high school revealed that 12 percent of the class of 2006 had dropped out.

Indicators

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The Salem school district used data to identify students at risk and provided a number of supports; however, it did not ensure that student subgroups received adequate instruction within the regular curriculum. When asked about the DCAP in interviews, staff hesitated and then described separate programs for subgroup populations. The district's DCAP, dated 2003 and attributed to East Longmeadow Public Schools and the Colorado Department of Education, appeared to be the same document noted unfavorably in the 2004 EQA review of the Salem school district. The document made generalized recommendations that were not specific to the services available within the district. Some of the recommendations appeared to be outdated. For example, the administrative leadership did not have plans to incorporate recommendations from the training for sheltered English immersion classes into the DCAP. Some staff members said that recommended accommodations mentioned in the DCAP were used by the Child Study Teams and also to complete Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). However, classroom observations provided little evidence that the DCAP was used to adjust instruction for subgroups in the regular education classrooms.

Staff interviews indicated that special education students were placed in the least restrictive environment. A paraprofessional was observed in 70 percent of the classrooms visited. The Carlton Elementary School housed a large number of students with emotional and behavioral issues. These students comprised one-third of the enrollment. This specialization by school was true of other buildings as well. The Nathaniel Bowditch School had the dual language program, and another school contained most of the students with language-based difficulties. The Bentley School had an early childhood school for special education and regular education students.

The district enhanced the delivery of educational services by considering the scheduling of the school day. Interviews revealed that three of the elementary schools without grant funding in reading used guided reading groups that allowed English language learners and special education students to receive reading instruction with the appropriate specialists. The Nathaniel Bowditch Elementary School found that the ELL and special education students required more instructional time with specialists and provided that additional time during social studies and science reading rather than during the guided reading portion of the literacy block. ELL students were instructed in regular education classrooms with some pullout support, except at the high school where the bulk of the program was substantially separate. The district had begun to prepare regular education staff in the teaching of sheltered immersion classes for ELL students. Many faculty members had received training in support of ELL students and for administering the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). The district was in the initial stages of training teachers to adapt lessons (sheltered instruction) and teach reading and writing to ELL students.

Middle school interviewees indicated that they had initiated two separate programs for students with emotional difficulties. One program for grade 7-8 special education and regular education students ran in self-contained classrooms within the building. A second program for more severely disabled students was located in a private school on Winter Island. The high school also had classes comprised of regular education and special education students for those with emotional and social problems.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

According to teachers and administrators, grant funding for students who failed MCAS tests varied greatly by school. As a result, each school provided a different level of services. The 21st Century grant was used in many schools to fund MCAS review after school, although some

schools had to pay for these services out of the regular budget or through the parent-teacher organization (PTO). Elementary school students were usually identified for these programs through the DRA and SRI, both given at least twice per year. The program at the Bentley School ran four afternoons per week until 6 p.m. The Nathaniel Bowditch School shortened the time period and ran the program twice per week for two groups of students in order to include twice as many students. The Carlton Elementary School funded its own after-school MCAS review program. The Bates School did not have grant money and did not run a program, although staff said it was needed. In some buildings there was a "Day Back" in which students received extra help once per week during the teachers' afternoon session. The Witchcraft Heights School conducted MCAS remediation through its special Tuesday night homework assignment. Common to all elementary schools were the services of reading specialists and/or Title I personnel.

The Collins Middle School restricted its after-school program to students who had failed the MCAS math test or who were ELL students. Parents of children who did not fall into these categories enrolled their child in this after-school program for a fee. During the school day Reach for Reading occurred three days out of six during the literacy block in grade 6. The focus of these classes was on decoding. The program has expanded to grade 7 and now also targets reading comprehension skills. The middle school used its Title I services for math support. It, along with at least one other elementary school, also used Study Island to reinforce math skills.

Salem High School ran MCAS review sessions during the school day and also after school in late winter/early spring. The Freshman Seminar, enrolled in by all freshmen students, addressed writing skills among other topics. The high school did not hold MCAS review sessions during the summer.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Interviews revealed that, with the principal as the educational leader of the building and a variety of funding methods in place, each building had its own literacy intervention programs. Each building had set aside a literacy block of 90 minutes to two hours. All elementary buildings had a literacy specialist and Reading Recovery for early intervention. All elementary schools except the Saltonstall had Title I support as well. Two elementary schools had Reading First grants, and one had special funds from the Bay State Initiative. These grants provided Harcourt Trophies, a scientifically-based reading series, and required extensive pre- and post-testing as well as professional development for staff. The Carlton School also used a Harcourt series called Signatures, which it had acquired through a piloting agreement. The remaining schools had leveled libraries and used a guided reading program that allowed a class to be divided into small flexible, leveled reading groups that were taught by a regular education, ELL, or special education teacher as appropriate. The Nathanial Bowditch School used guided reading but provided the ELL and special education support during social studies and science classes in order to provide a second literacy exposure. Despite the services, 20 percent of Salem's 2006 grade 4 students failed the grade 4 MCAS ELA test.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Interviews revealed that, in this building-based system, the receiving school was the primary initiator in the transition process. Middle and high school principals invited entering students and parents to attend information sessions and visits. The middle school principal invited parents and students to attend an introductory event in early spring. In June, students visited the middle school for a half-day. School tours were led by former students of the visited school. One or two of the bi-monthly principal's letters contained a column directed at incoming students and parents and was sent to parents of grade 5 students. In addition, a fall Open House gave parents another opportunity to visit the school and learn more about programs.

The middle school prepared a form for grade 5 teachers in order to collect information on incoming students for placement purposes. Special education counselors and teachers discussed placement options with parents at the annual review of the IEP. They held as many sessions with parents as necessary to permit the parent to feel comfortable with the transition. Elementary schools forwarded student files to the middle school. These files contained basic information, ISSPs, special data and information for ELL students, writing samples, and math assessment results.

The high school held an introductory meeting in January called "Salem Showcase," at which the school presented its programs and gave parents a tour of the facility. Department heads attended to answer questions about the courses. On the day before the opening of school in September, incoming freshmen were invited to a half-day orientation. To ease the transition, the high school formed freshman teams. In addition, all freshmen took the Freshman Seminar which met for one block, divided into four segments for keyboarding, guidance, writing practice, and study skills. In 2007-2008, the study skills course will focus on math to better prepare students for MCAS tests. Middle school counselors met with high school counselors to ensure that recommendations for student placement in academic courses were appropriate. Student folders were sent to the freshman housemaster. Middle and high school guidance counselors met with special education liaisons to ensure a smooth transition for special education students. Despite the transition practices of the middle and high schools, the retention rate for grade 9 students was high.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Documents and interviews revealed that the district had a clear policy regarding disciplinary penalties; however, only the high school had written grade retention policies. The disciplinary penalties were printed in all of the student handbooks. Faculty interviews revealed that the middle school had an in-school suspension program and used this option most frequently. The in-school suspension program at the high school was eliminated several years ago for budgetary reasons. After teacher and school detention options had been deployed, the only option was out-

of-school suspension. In 2005-2006, Salem High School reported out-of-school suspension rates in the range of 13 to 29 percent, with the higher percentages at grades 9 and 10. The accuracy of the data was confirmed by school personnel. Other resources to address disciplinary issues included the conflict resolution specialist stationed at both the middle and high schools. Child Study Teams at every academic level also addressed disciplinary and attendance issues. The district dealt with other persistent disciplinary issues through the special education diversion and mainstreaming program at all levels and the middle school's self-contained and off-site classrooms.

The Salem Public Schools retained few students through grade 8. Principals said that they spoke to the parents of the students who they recommended for retention. The final decision was an agreement between all parties. Interviews and documentation indicated that the school committee policy placed the decision about retention in the hands of the principal. At the middle school, interviewees reported that students who failed two trimesters in a core subject might be retained; however, the principal said that students were rarely retained except due to extended absence. The middle school report card permitted teachers to give a student an 'A' for progress, but note that he or she was still performing below grade level.

With the block schedule at the high school, students lost one-quarter of the course credit after three absences and all credit after 10 absences. High school personnel also discussed the significant percentage of students who did not complete high school in four years. The staff also believed that the number of transient students contributed to the total numbers of students retained. Massachusetts Department of Education data reported Salem's high school retention rate as eight percent in 2004 and nine percent in 2005. An enrollment and graduation analysis provided by Salem High School showed that approximately 14 percent of students fell behind in grade 9, did not catch up, and ultimately did not graduate with their cohort. Until the summer of 2006, Salem High School did not run a summer school. In the past, the school sent all of its students to neighboring communities to make up subjects they failed during the regular school year. Last summer, approximately 140 students attended summer school.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Document review and interviews revealed that Salem High School tried to improve student achievement with the Freshman House (team) and the Hawthorne Program, a project-based program taught by regular education staff and a counselor, designed to help students with emotional and social issues. The high school also ran an Alternative School in the afternoons for students at risk of dropping out. In addition, it offered a number of vocational programs as well as a child care program for the children of teen mothers. Salem provided access to GED instruction in night school or at other resources near Salem, including North Shore Community College.

Interviewees said that the high rates of transience in the student body contributed to the difficulties children had with academic success and passing the MCAS tests, and to student tracking problems. Each year, the number of students who did not re-enroll at the high school increased. For example, for the class of 2006 enrollment numbers showed a decline of approximately one-third over four years. During that time period, the school data indicated that one or two students dropped out each year, with the whereabouts of the remaining students unknown. The dropout rate exceeded the state average every year. School-provided data showed that 12 percent of the class of 2006 had dropped out. They could not say what effect attendance and retention policies might have had on those rates.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The human resources director, Parent Information Center, and high school personnel processed paperwork for homeless students who lived in Salem and those who were temporarily living outside the city. They arranged for transportation and informed the food service for the provision of free and reduced-cost lunch. Staff also routinely collected information about needed

educational services for students in programs such as special education, ELL, Title I, gifted and talented, and vocational education to ensure proper placement. The forms were available in both English and Spanish.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

Document review and interviews indicated that attendance was an area of concern in Salem. Although the average attendance rate was 93.2 percent, the average student was absent for 11.6 days during the 2005-2006 school year. The high school attendance rate averaged between 87.6 and 90.5 percent during the period under review. Chronic absenteeism ranged from 13 to 17 percent at the middle school, while the high school figures ran between 32 and 40 percent. Interviews revealed that some parents took children out of school for extended periods in the middle of the school year, although absence rates of elementary school children were not as high as those of older children. To discourage this practice the schools instituted a policy of removing students from the enrollment lists after 10 days of continuous absence, requiring parents to re-enroll students when they returned. In addition, the rate of transience was high. Some students returned to Salem after a long absence while others transferred out or simply left

All school handbooks carried language describing the importance of attendance and requiring a doctor's note in the case of extended absence. The high school attendance policy was printed on the school's website along with telephone numbers for parents to call in reporting a child's absence. The district used IPASS software to keep track of attendance and discipline referrals. Staff reported that the schools worked with the truant officer in case of frequent and extended absences. Elementary and middle school leadership also reported involving parents or calling the home. Principals filed Child in Need of Services (CHINS) reports if it did not appear that other methods were working. The Salem Police Department had a resource officer stationed at the school who was also available to help.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

Staff attendance figures submitted by the Salem school district indicated an average teacher absence rate of between six and 12.5 days per year. When the professional development days were removed from the equation, the average number of absences per year declined to between six and 11 days. The average of all teacher absence days was 10.5 with professional development factored in, and slightly over 9 without it. The human resources director said that she sent a note to teachers with a demonstrable pattern of absence. Teachers earned sick leave at the rate of 1.25 days per month. In the last two years, teachers were required to submit a medical note for more than five days of absence. Notes were also required monthly from those on extended leave. Principals said that they spoke to teachers who appeared to be abusing the sick leave policy, although they did not believe that this was a serious problem in Salem.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The Salem High School course selection booklet contained language encouraging students to attempt Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This section appeared in both the English and Spanish version of the course of studies. Review of the AP course enrollments showed some representation among Hispanic, African-American, and Asian students, and those of other ethnic/racial groups, as well as low-income students.

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

VI. Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Standard Rating: Satisfactory

Findings:

- The superintendent stated that because of Salem's financial difficulties, the school system's high special education tuition costs, and the reduction of Chapter 70 funds, the district lacked adequate financial resources to ensure educationally sound programs and quality facilities to meet students' needs and improve achievement.
- The present mayor stated that the city had been in the process of developing a five-year capital plan that incorporates the needs of the schools. All of the elementary schools (except Horace Mann Lab School, operated by Salem State College) have been renovated as a result of a $100 million commitment by the city, and a $47.5 million renovation project for Salem High School has been underway. The administration stated that the Collins, Saltonstall, and Horace Mann Lab schools required substantial repair.
- Teachers, principals, districtwide administrators, and other stakeholders participated in the development of the budget that resulted in a clear, comprehensive, detailed, and understandable document but did not include information from all fund sources. The DIP and

SIPs were included as part of the deliberations in the development of the district's budget, but student performance data were not.

- The school department used the city's MUNIS accounting system software. The principals did not have electronic access to the system for submitting purchase requisitions. The encumbrance system consisted of purchase orders, while salaries were monitored on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the business office.
- Visits by the examiners to each of the schools in the system revealed that the schools had been well maintained and conducive to learning. The schools had adequate security measures.
- The city and the school department did not have a formal written agreement regarding indirect costs for services provided by the city. The business manager contacted city department heads to obtain the necessary information to complete Schedule 19 of the End of Year Pupil and Financial Report.
- The city and school system had policies and procedures in place that ensured that state procurement laws had been followed. The school system did not employ staff with MCPPO credentials or a certified school business official. The city employed a new auditing firm, replacing one that had been previously retained for eight years.

Summary

The budget process was defined in the policies of the school committee and was implemented by the superintendent. Early in the budget process, the superintendent and mayor met to set the parameters for the development of the school department budget. Upon receipt of instructions from the superintendent as to the allowable budget increase, the principals and districtwide administrators prepared their budgets with input from their staffs. In order to provide equity, each budget item, with the exception of salaries and districtwide activities accounts, was based on a per pupil cost allocation. The budget development process included the goals of the superintendent and those of the SIPs and DIP. The superintendent and school committee had been committed to preserving small class sizes and considered this to be the most important aspect of the budget process. The superintendent held meetings with the individual principals and administrators to review their budgets. The budget document did not include information on state and federal funds, revolving accounts, or other financial resources. The budget recommended by

the superintendent was submitted to the school committee. Several public school committee meetings were held, followed by a mandated public hearing. Upon adoption by the school committee, the budget was sent to the mayor and city council for review and final appropriation.

The city of Salem had two financial crises that affected the delivery system in the Salem schools, one in FY 2004 with the reduction of Chapter 70 funding, and another in FY 2006 with a reduction of $500,000 by the mayor followed by the school department having to absorb a $1,100,000 special education tuition budget deficit. This resulted in substantial reduction in staff and services. According to the superintendent, this was accomplished with minimal impact on the school system's educational goals. The instructional costs in FY 2006 increased by 4.01 percent over those in FY 2005.

The school system exceeded net school spending (NSS) requirements for the period under review. According to the mayor, 50 percent of the city budget had been allocated to the school system. City audit reports reported that "the city had experienced financial challenges." The city and the school department had experienced rising health care costs for employees/retirees, energy costs, and pension costs.

Several years ago the city and the school department embarked on a $100 million building project to renovate all of the elementary schools. This effort was completed in FY 2005. The final phase of the building project consisted of the $47.5 million renovation of the Salem High School. As a result of the rebuilding of the infrastructure of the Salem schools, the schools will have state-of-the-art facilities that will help provide an excellent education for its students. In interviews with the administration, it was stated that the Collins Middle School, the Saltonstall School, and the Horace Mann Lab School (under the jurisdiction of Salem State College) required substantial repairs and improvements.

Visits to the schools revealed that the schools were well maintained and conducive to student learning and achievement. The FY 2006 mid-year reductions in the school department operating budget had a negative impact on the building service department and on the schools and the learning environment; the impact was a 28 percent reduction (10 full-time positions) in the custodial department, which affected all the schools. The school department did not have a

formal written preventive maintenance program for its schools. The schools had adequate security systems.

Indicators

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school committee's policy on budget planning states that the district will "(1) engage in thorough advance planning with staff and community involvement in order to develop budgets and guide expenditures in a manner that will achieve the greatest educational returns for and contributions to the educational program in relation to dollars spent; (2) establish levels of funding that will provide high quality education for all students, and (3) use the best available techniques for budget development and management." The mayor and the superintendent met to agree to the parameters for the development of the budget for the school system.

The budget process began in December with the distribution of budget information, which included prior year expenditures and instructions by the business manager to the principals and other school administrators. The parameters included a per pupil allocation for supplies and material, leases, and service contracts, along with a per pupil allocation for professional development. The budgetary process allowed for equity for each school and program. The school principals prepared their school's respective budget with input from school councils, staff members, and schoolwide administrators. The budget development process included the goals of the superintendent in addition to those of the DIP and SIPs. The business manager collated all the budget requests followed by a review by the superintendent. The superintendent met individually with principals and school administrators who defended their individual budget. The budget document did not include information from state and federal grants, revolving accounts, and other financial resources. The budget document included a budget summary of the prior year budget and the recommended budget, with the percentage change of each of the school and other districtwide activities. It also included personnel and non-personnel data by individual schools.

An initial draft of the budget was sent to the school committee followed by three to four public meetings with the school committee. The budget presentation by the business manager included a budget history and summary. Principals and schoolwide administrators made presentations in their area of responsibility to the school committee. The meetings of the school committee had been broadcast on local access television that reached the city residents. The school committee presented the budget at a mandated public hearing in May. The budget that the school committee adopted was presented to the city council for final appropriation and adoption.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

In an interview, the superintendent stated that because of the high cost of out-of-district tuition and level funding of the budget, it became difficult to consider specific educational needs to improve student achievement using aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data. According to the superintendent, "it had been difficult to deflect funds from one school to another — there have not been sufficient resources to reallocate funds." As a result, the budget was not developed using aggregated and disaggregated assessment data. The primary focus of the school committee and the administration was the maintenance of small class size. The budget process included an analysis of MCAS scores to initiate and modify programs to improve student achievement. Student analysis was conducted on a student-by-student basis, and by item analysis. The primary goals of some of the state and federal grants were to focus on improving MCAS scores. The Academic Support grant provided for school tutorials and summer programs for MCAS preparation. Other grants in support of student achievement included Reading First, Title I, Title II, Title III, and the Comprehensive School Reform grant. The school system received a Reading First grant that had been used to increase student achievement. The elementary schools continued to focus on math and the budget reallocated resources to improve MCAS scores.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The superintendent stated that the school system budget and supplemental funding had been adequate through FY 2005; however, a substantial reduction in instructional services in FY 2006 resulted in inadequate operational resources for instruction. The school system had to address two budget deficits: one based on a reduction in Chapter 70 funding, and the other based on underestimated and unanticipated special education costs. In FY 2004, the district experienced a net loss of 31.4 positions, including 18 teachers from the previous year; however, the district had been able to maintain low student-teacher ratios and adequate instructional materials for students. In FY 2006 the mayor required a reduction of $500,000 in the adopted district budget. Because of unanticipated out-of-district tuitions that had not been budgeted, the Salem Public Schools had to absorb a $1,100,000 reduction. This resulted in the elimination of 66 positions and other cutbacks. The superintendent stated that despite the fiscal constraints, the elementary schools maintained low class sizes.

The school system exceeded the required NSS for each of the years under review. The budget increased by 1.7 percent (from $40,209,293 to $39,525,000) in FY 2005, 3.6 percent (from $40,209,283 to $42,163,350) in FY 2006, and 0.0 percent in FY 2007. The school district's per pupil costs in FY 2005 were $8,617 compared to the state's per pupil cost of $9,096. The End of Year Report stated that the instructional expenditures for FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006 were $26,758,133, $27,233,179, and $28,325,109, respectively. The present mayor stated that 50 percent of the city's budget had been allocated to the schools. Department of Revenue figures showed that Salem's general fund expenditures for education amounted to 46.37 percent of the total for FY 2006. The school system had received over $6,000,000 in federal, state, and private funds. In interviews with principals, teachers, and support staff, they indicated a lack of

resources for the classroom and lack of building maintenance. Teachers indicted that they spent their own money to purchase supplies for the classroom.

The city's audit reports for FY 2005 and FY 2006 reported that "the city had experienced financial challenges." The city has experienced rising health care costs for employees/retires, as well as increased pension and energy costs. The city had been at its maximum tax levy and the reports stated that it was forced to maintain insufficient free cash and stabilization funds. The city had $2,732 090 in free cash, and $1,021,351 in the stabilization fund.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

During the period under review, the school system did not implement a review process to determine cost effectiveness for all programs and initiatives based on student performance data. The school system implemented user fees for transportation, athletics, and student activities in order to generate savings, provide additional revenue, and accomplish the reallocation of resources. A grant facilitator had been hired to ensure that the grant funds, including the 21st Century Learning Community grant, had been used in the manner for which they were intended, and to ensure cost effectiveness. The audit report listed that the school lunch program deficit increased from $89,000 to $195,000 in FY 2006. The audit report stated that the school lunch fees were insufficient and recommended an increase in the fees that the district charges. After an analysis of the operation of the school lunch program, the business manager instituted cost saving measures to erase the deficit.

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

Rating: Unsatisfactory

Evidence

The school department and the city did not have a formal written agreement regarding the indirect costs provided by the city. This was confirmed in an interview with the mayor. The city distributed forms to all city departments requesting the amount of indirect costs to each department. The school business manager contacted individual city departments to obtain charges allocated to the school system. The business manager determined the reasonableness of the charges and on occasion required negotiation of the city department charges. The school business manager incorporated the indirect charge information in Schedule 19 of the End of Year Report that had been approved by the business manager, city accountant, and the superintendent.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The school department budget was funded above the required local contribution. The required local contribution from FY 2003 to FY 2006 increased by 8.0 percent (from $27,776,272 to $29,992,288). Salem exceeded the required net school spending (NSS) for each year from FY 2003 to FY 2006. Salem's required NSS increased by 1.0 percent (from $40,110,869 to $40,528,618) for the same time period. Chapter 70 aid had decreased by 14.2 percent from FY 2003 to FY 2006 (from $12,290,730 to $10,536,330). In FY 2004, Salem exceeded the required NSS by $5,770,347 ($36,650,369 subtracted from $44,420,716) or 14.9 percent over the requirement. In FY 2005, the school department exceeded the required NSS by $3,480,056 ($39,301,881 subtracted from $42,781,937) or 8.9 percent over the requirement. In FY 2006, the school department exceeded the required NSS by $7,621,482 ($40,528,618 subtracted from $48,150,100) or 18.8 percent over the requirement.

Salem received a reduction of 16.6 percent in Chapter 70 aid in FY 2004 (from $12,334,597 to $10,290,730). Chapter 70 aid remained the same for FY 2005. The school system received a 2.4 percent increase in FY 2006 (from $10,290,730 to $10,536,330). Foundation enrollment deceased from 5,101 in FY 2004 to 4,912 in FY 2006, a decrease of 4.0 percent. Total instructional costs increased by 6.0 percent for the same period ($26,756,133 to $28,325,109),

while indirect expenditures increased during the review period in areas such as short-term interest, tuition to charter schools, school choice, and other non-employee insurance.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

School committee policy required that "the superintendent or designee submit financial reports on a quarterly basis." The school committee received monthly financial reports, which included correspondence, original appropriation, transfers, revised budget, year-to-date expenditures, supplies and material encumbrances, available budget, and percent change. The report also showed a financial update, a comparative analysis for selected operating budget accounts for FY 2007 and FY 2006, Profit and Loss (P&L) statements of the school lunch program and the Black Cat Café, in addition to an administrator's memo and a list of transfers. The financial report to the school committee included a comparative analysis of the use of natural gas. In interviews, the business manager stated that the grant financial reports and the End of Year Reports had not been submitted in a timely manner. The FY 2006 audit report stated, "Form FR-1 (Final Financial Report) for the Title I Program was due October 31, 2006 and was not filed until December 6, 2006." The Teaching American History grant and the Smaller Learning grant were not administered in compliance with federal regulations for cash management. As a result, the audit recommended that the district return $34,100 of unreported interest earnings. The city prepared a comprehensive annual financial report that consisted of management's representation of the city's finances for FY 2006.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

The district used the city's MUNIS accounting system that integrated the information of each school and program. The business office was networked with the city. The principals and other administrators did not have electronic access to the MUNIS system. The schools submitted requisitions to the business office and they were reviewed and approved by the business manager. The requisitions were converted to purchase orders and forwarded to the city purchasing agent for processing and encumbering to the appropriate account using the MUNIS system. The system had been designed such that a purchase order could not be generated without sufficient funds in the account. The business manager stated that only purchase orders were encumbered. The business office maintained an Excel spreadsheet to monitor salary expenditures and forecast expenditures. A review of the payroll and purchasing system with business office personnel showed that there were control procedures to ensure spending would be in conformity with the approved budget. Transfers did not require school committee approval.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The school system pursed and acquired local, state, federal, and private funds, and hired a grants coordinator to seek and monitor all grants. Affected departments prepared and submitted grants. In FY 2006, the school system received $6,323,36 in state and federal grants, which included nine competitive grants totaling $1,509,739 and $323,632 from the Charles Read Foundation trust funds. The responsible grant managers and the school system grant coordinator monitored state, federal, and private grants sing the MUNIS accounting system. The school district's business manager and the city treasurer and accountant monitored special revenue and revolving and fee accounts. The grant managers issued purchase requisitions that required the approval of the business manager and the city purchasing agent. All cash receipts had been forwarded to the city treasurer and inputted in the accounting system. The encumbrance system had been used for purchase orders and not for salaries and other areas of the budget.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The city purchasing agent, as the chief procurement officer for the city, developed and administered the purchasing program for the schools in accordance with legal requirements. School committee policy required an annual inventory of computer equipment, laptop computers, audio visual equipment, cell phones, custodial equipment, school department vehicles, and other major articles. The FY 2005 audit noted that a manual system had been used in monitoring the sick and vacation time used by school personnel, in lieu of using the MUNIS accounting system.

The school system did not employ staff with MCPPO credentials, nor a certified school business official. The business manager stated that the employment contract requires completion of the requirements for certification by the end of FY 2006. The business manager stated that all of the requirements for certification have been met except in one area, which is currently being addressed. The school committee hired the business manager, and the business manager's contract required evaluation by the school committee. The mayor stated that although the business manager had been hired by the school committee, the business manager reported to the superintendent. Interviews with the superintendent and some school committee members indicated that the business manager reported to the school committee.

The city had a purchasing order manual that had been revised, dated June 2006, to ensure that school system personnel complied with the state procurement laws and the city's requirements. The city followed the requirements of the state bidding laws. The school department approved purchases up to $5,000 and initiated purchases in excess of $5,000. All purchases from $5,000 to

$14,999 required three quotes and purchases over $15,000 required formal bids. Purchase requisitions had been prepared by the initiator and approved by the principal or responsible administrator. Processing of purchase orders had been the responsibility of the business office and required approval by the business manager. All purchase orders required final approval by the city purchasing agent.

The city complied with the requirements of GASB 34 in FY 2006. The city audit report for FY 2006 noted that city did not have formal policies and procedures regarding the city's capital asset database to track its fixed assets. According to city officials, the threshold for recording assets had been $5,000. According to the business manager, an annual physical inventory had not been kept up to date as required by school committee policy.

The city changed auditing firms for FY 2006, and had employed the prior firm for eight years.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The district did not have a formal preventive maintenance program. The facilities manager stated that a formal preventive maintenance program could be categorized as "not active or implemented." Due to financial shortfalls the custodial and maintenance department reduced its personnel by 11 custodians in FY 2006. The school system employed 30.2 custodians, which included a maintenance craftsman, a full-time groundskeeper, and a part-time groundskeeper. The district outsourced major maintenance activities. The facilities manager stated that the current custodial staff was inadequate to maintain the schools in a manner that was conducive to promoting student learning and achievement. The facilities manager stated that the following schools required repair or substantial improvement: the Collins Middle School (between $8.5 and $12 million in repairs), the Saltonstall School ($6 million in repairs), and the Horace Mann Laboratory School, which was owned and operated by Salem State College. The School Building

Assistance Bureau designated all the schools as "five" except for Collins, Saltonstall, and Salem High School, which it rated as "three," and the Horace Mann Lab, rated "one."

A walk-through of the schools by the EQA examiners revealed that the schools were clean, well lit, well maintained, and conducive to student learning and achievement. This positive report can be partially attributed to the recent renovation of the elementary schools.

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

Rating: Needs Improvement

Evidence

The business manager stated that the city had a five-year capital improvement plan that included the schools. The mayor stated that the city was currently in the process of updating and preparing the capital improvement plan. The school department had submitted a five-year capital plan as part of the city improvement plan that accurately reflected the future needs of the school system. Due to the city's limited financial resources, the district's capital improvements had not been adequately funded. The director of building and grounds, business manager, and superintendent developed the district's capital plan. As a practice, the school committee did not approve the capital plan. EQA examiners had not been able to obtain a capital improvement plan for the schools for the period under review. A city capital improvement plan had been provided for FY 2008 to FY 2012. The city of Salem embarked on rebuilding the infrastructure of all the city schools. The city provided over $100 million for the renovation of all the elementary schools except for the Horace Mann Lab School, which is under the jurisdiction of Salem State College. The city also provided $47.5 million for the renovation and remodeling of Salem High School, which is currently in progress.

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

Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence

One of the goals of the strategic plan was “to ensure safe and state of the art facilities in order to provide optimal environments for student achievement and community learning.” The school system had adequate security systems for each of the school facilities to ensure student safety. Seven of the schools had cameras in the main office that observed people entering the building. The high school had a security person at a desk that used a sign-in and sign-out process for people entering and leaving the school. The school system had an identification badge system for each of the schools. All schools had an intrusion detection system for after-school hours. An outside vendor provided a central monitoring system of the schools. Motion detectors and other door-activated security systems ensured after-hours security.

The school system had a crisis response manual dated 2004-2005. Each school has a school-based crisis team that developed its own crisis manual. Salem’s Local Emergency Planning Committee had developed a school emergency community pre-planning guide for 2006-2007 for each school. Each of the schools had fire and evacuation drills four times per year. EQA examiners had not been able to determine if lockdowns and bomb evacuation drills had been held, or if training programs were performed in all buildings.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index (PI)

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

The proficiency index is calculated as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B: Chapter 70 Trends, FY 1997 – FY2006

	Foundation Enrollment	Pct Chg	Foundation Budget	Pct Chg	Required Local Contribution	Chapter 70 Aid	Pct Chg	Required Net School Spending (NSS)	Pct Chg	Actual Net School Spending	Pct Chg	Dollars Over/Under Requirement	Percent Over/ Under
FY97	4,771	0.4	29,938,283	1.3	22,123,651	7,047,005	11.7	29,170,656	5.7	29,954,590	5.7	783,934	2.7
FY98	4,900	2.7	31,505,968	5.2	22,133,763	8,047,790	14.2	30,181,553	3.5	31,543,814	5.3	1,362,261	4.5
FY99	5,016	2.4	33,992,335	7.9	23,524,331	9,895,526	23.0	33,419,857	10.7	34,625,295	9.8	1,205,438	3.6
FY00	5,120	2.1	34,997,082	3.0	25,014,258	10,663,526	7.8	35,677,784	6.8	36,803,745	6.3	1,125,961	3.2
FY01	5,145	0.5	35,777,307	2.2	25,867,830	11,563,901	8.4	37,431,731	4.9	40,392,129	9.8	2,960,398	7.9
FY02	5,110	-0.7	37,191,987	4.0	26,344,383	12,078,597	4.5	38,422,980	2.6	42,150,149	4.4	3,727,169	9.7
FY03	5,111	0.0	38,141,011	2.6	27,776,272	12,334,597	2.1	40,110,869	4.4	44,435,266	5.4	4,324,397	10.8
FY04	5,101	-0.2	38,650,369	1.3	28,359,639	10,290,730	-16.6	38,650,369	-3.6	44,420,716	0.0	5,770,347	14.9
FY05	5,003	-1.9	38,963,907	0.8	29,011,151	10,290,730	0.0	39,301,881	1.7	42,781,937	-3.7	3,480,056	8.9
FY06	4,912	-1.8	39,985,833	2.6	29,992,288	10,536,330	2.4	40,528,618	3.1	48,162,450	12.6	7,633,832	18.8

	Dollars Per Foundation Enrollment			Percentage of Foundation			Chapter 70 Aid as Percent of Actual NSS
	Foundation Budget	Ch 70 Aid	Actual NSS	Ch 70	Required NSS	Actual NSS	
FY97	6,275	1,477	6,278	23.5	97.4	100.1	23.5
FY98	6,430	1,642	6,438	25.5	95.8	100.1	25.5
FY99	6,777	1,973	6,903	29.1	98.3	101.9	28.6
FY00	6,835	2,083	7,188	30.5	101.9	105.2	29.0
FY01	6,954	2,248	7,851	32.3	104.6	112.9	28.6
FY02	7,278	2,364	8,249	32.5	103.3	113.3	28.7
FY03	7,463	2,413	8,694	32.3	105.2	116.5	27.8
FY04	7,577	2,017	8,708	26.6	100.0	114.9	23.2
FY05	7,788	2,057	8,551	26.4	100.9	109.8	24.1
FY06	8,140	2,145	9,805	26.4	101.4	120.4	21.9

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