Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Salem Public Schools
District Review

Review conducted January 10-19, 2011

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

This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner
Date of report completion: December 2011

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

Table of Contents

Overview of District Reviews

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) conducts district reviews under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws. This review is focused on "districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations." Districts subject to review in the 2010-2011 school year include districts in Level 3 or 4 of ESE's framework for district accountability and assistance[1] in each of the state's six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

Methodology

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

[1] http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/default.html

Salem Public Schools

The site visit to the Salem Public Schools was conducted on January 10-11 and 18-19, 2011. The site visit included visits to all of the district's schools: Bates (K-5), Bentley (K-5), Carlton (K-5), Horace Mann (K-5), Witchcraft Heights (K-5), Nathaniel Bowditch (K-8), Saltonstall (K-8), Collins Middle School (6-8), and Salem High School (9-12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

Following the district review, a new superintendent was hired in July 2011. The 2011 MCAS results were released on September 20, 2011, and the Bentley Elementary School was designated as a Level 4 school on November 15, 2011, resulting in the designation of Salem Public Schools as a Level 4 district. The 2011 MCAS data also revealed that four other Salem schools are on the cusp of Level 4 in terms of student performance and improvement. Subsequently, as required by law, the district began developing a School Turnaround Plan for the Bentley Elementary School with the assistance of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). Because of the time that elapsed between the end of the ESE site visit and the Center for District and School Accountability's production of the draft report for factual review, the Department has been asked to consider new information and data that demonstrate the changes that have taken place in the district since the review was conducted.

Rather than delay the report further, the Department is publishing this report and has decided, in partnership with the district, to work with the leadership of Salem Public Schools to develop a districtwide *Accelerated Improvement Plan* that will be monitored monthly by the district and an Accountability Monitor assigned by the Department. Quarterly Progress Reports on the implementation of the district plan will be given to the school committee over the next two years.

District Profile[2]

The city of Salem is located on the north shore of Massachusetts, 16 miles from Boston. Founded in 1626 by European colonists, the city has been the site of 385 years of American political, economic, cultural, and maritime history, including the infamous Salem Witch Trials of 1692. The city recovered from the dark period of the witch trials through the East India and China Trades to thrive as an international seaport in the 18th and early 19th century. The legacy of Salem's wealthy, seafaring, merchant families is still visible today in the city's exceptional Federalist architecture and cultural institutions including the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) and Salem State University. Founded by sea captains in 1799 as the Essex Institute, PEM is America's oldest continuously operating museum and is nationally recognized for its collections,

[2] Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources. Historical information about Salem derived from the following websites: www.salem.com, www.wickedlocal.com, www.salem.org .

which cover early America, the city's maritime trade, whaling, and the art and culture of Asia. Salem State University was founded in 1854 as Salem Normal School for teacher training.

In the 19th and early 20th century, the city developed a retail and manufacturing base in leather tanneries, cotton mills, and light manufacturing such as the Parker Brothers game company, manufacturers of *Monopoly*. During that time, the city attracted immigrant workers from French-speaking Canada, Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe. The latest immigrants to the city arrived from the Dominican Republic. Salem is also home to families that have moved from Puerto Rico.[3] In the 2011 school year, the Salem Public Schools enrolled 4565 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The district comprises nine schools: an early childhood center for pre-kindergarten children, five elementary schools that provide educational and support services for children in kindergarten through grade 5, one K-8 school that offers an extended day and extended year program, one K-8 school that aspires to be an English-Spanish dual language school, one middle school for students in grades 6-8, and a high school for students in grades 9-12. The district operates under a controlled choice student assignment policy to place students in kindergarten. Priorities under the policy on the district's website are: 1) racial balance, 2) availability of space, 3) programmatic placements, 4) prior assignment, 5) sibling attending the same school, 6) residential proximity, and 7) random lottery.[4]

A seven-member school committee, elected at large and chaired by the mayor, has responsibility for school governance. The superintendent at the time of the review was in his fourth year of service and was formerly director of human resources in another Massachusetts school district. In his first year, the district was the focus of attention and investigation because of a $4.7 million budget shortfall that threatened the jobs of teachers and other staff members. Resolution came when the state legislature passed an act allowing the city of Salem to borrow or amortize up to $1 million[5] and residents raised enough money to avert major teacher layoffs. However, significant reductions did occur in administrator positions and support staff that continue to make an impact on the district. In July 2010, a newly appointed assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction replaced a respected district leader who had a long, multi-role career in the school system as a teacher, then principal, then assistant superintendent. In addition, according to interviews, in the 2010-2011 school year four new elementary principals joined the district, as well as 40 new teachers. In fact, according to district seniority lists a recent high rate of turnover has meant that between 2008 and the time of the review, the district employed 147 new teachers of a total teaching force that now consists of 408 teachers.

Demographic percentages of the district's students indicate that now, more than half of all students (55.1 percent) come from low-income homes, almost a quarter (23.8 percent) live in homes where English is not the first language, and almost a quarter (23.9 percent) are students receiving special education services. This report describes how the Salem Public Schools have responded to the challenges of educating this diverse student population.

---

[3] A large majority of students who are English language learners in Salem today have Spanish as their first language.
[4] See the Salem Public Schools website at http://salemk12.org/Pages/SPS_DistParentRes/enrollment/kindergarten_app_reg_info#control_choice.
[5] See St. 2008, c. 15, available at http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2008/Chapter15.

Table 1: 2010-2011 Salem Student Enrollments by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total
African-American	216	4.7	First Language not English	1087	23.8
Asian	137	3.0	Limited English Proficient	509	11.2
Hispanic or Latino	1438	31.5	Low-income	2515	55.1
Native American	7	0.2	Special Education*	1106	23.9
White	2598	56.9	Free Lunch	2195	48.1
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	320	7.0
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	168	3.7	Total enrollment	4565	100.0

*Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The local appropriation to the Salem Public Schools budget for fiscal year 2011 was $47,000.000, up slightly from the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 of $45,876,000. School-related expenditures by the City of Salem were estimated at $27,303,768 for fiscal year 2011, up from the estimate for fiscal year 2010 of $22,108,424. According to the district's fiscal year 2010 End-of-Year Report to ESE, in fiscal year 2010 the total amount of actual school-related expenditures, including expenditures by the district ($45,764,069), expenditures by the city ($25,731,664), and expenditures from other sources such as grants ($10,355,116), was $81,850,849. Actual net school spending in fiscal year 2010 was $53,062,065.

In examining the district's systems and practices intended to meet students' learning needs at a time of scarce resources, the review team found that systems and practices were fragmented and implemented inconsistently. There were indeed pockets of good practice in the district, but these positive efforts were not consistent and the benefits from them to students were frequently impeded by weaker systems and practices, described in the findings below. Many leaders and teachers are working hard and empathetically to understand and meet the learning and social/emotional needs of the district's diverse students, yet there is insufficient capacity and conviction to meet those needs with good success.

The findings below describe a school district with variation among its personnel in the belief that all children can learn to high levels; a district that still has to develop a complete and aligned curriculum and a balanced, comprehensive assessment system; a district that has still to coalesce around a strong, articulated, shared vision of what constitutes good instruction and corresponding expectations; a district that does not yet effectively supervise and evaluate its teachers to support and promote strong instructional practice and professional growth; and a district that has not yet

developed a workable system of supports to meet the needs of its lowest-achieving students in a way that will improve their learning. In addition, the district has not aligned its resources well to support its most important learning needs: its financial systems are not constructed to enable adequate cost analyses, and its budget process does not include the allocation of resources based on the needs shown by student achievement data. While some meaningful progress has been made in recent years in identifying and implementing new instructional programs and in revising some systems, there is still important work to do in the district to promote the success of all students.

Student Performance[6]

As noted earlier (see Purpose section above), the Salem Public Schools were selected for review because of low aggregate student performance on the 2010 MCAS and little Composite Performance Index (CPI) movement in comparison to other districts in the Northeast region of the state. Table 2 compares Salem students' 2010 CPIs and median student growth percentiles (median SGP) in English language arts (ELA) in the aggregate and by subgroups to those of the state.

Table 2: 2010 Salem and State
Comparison of Composite Performance Index and Median Student Growth Percentile by Selected Subgroups, for ELA

		Composite Performance Index			Median Student Growth Percentile		
Student group	N	Salem	State	Difference	Salem	State	Difference
All Tested Students	2267	79.5	86.9	-7.4	45.0	50.0	-5.0
Asian	63	93.7	89.8	+3.9	58.5	59.0	-0.5
African American/Black	115	73.7	76.6	-2.9	57.0	46.0	+11.0
Hispanic/Latino	707	67.5	73.6	-6.1	44.0	47.0	-3.0
White	1285	85.5	90.5	-5.0	45.0	50.0	-5.0
LEP	213	47.1	59.8	-12.7	45.0	50.0	-5.0
FLEP	89	67.4	80.1	-12.7	44.5	55.0	-10.5
Special Education	594	62.8	67.3	-4.5	40.0	41.0	-1.0
Low Income	1287	72.3	76.5	-4.2	42.0	46.0	-4.0

Note: 1. N is the number of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers used for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

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

The district's students in the aggregate had a CPI in ELA in 2010 that was 7.4 points lower than the CPI of students statewide. With the exception of Asian students, whose CPI was 3.9 points higher than the statewide CPI for Asian students, the CPIs for all district subgroups fell below the corresponding state CPI; the biggest gaps (-12.7 in both cases) were for the limited English proficient (LEP) and formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) subgroups. Limited English proficient students, also known as English language learners (ELLs), demonstrated the lowest CPI of any of these subgroups at 47.1 points; the special education subgroup demonstrated the next lowest CPI at 62.8 points.

The district's African-American/Black subgroup had a considerably higher median SGP in ELA than peers statewide: 57.0 versus 46.0. Otherwise, median SGPs in ELA for all district subgroups fell below those of their statewide peers, with formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) students showing the biggest difference in median SGP (44.5 for district FLEP students versus 55 for the state subgroup).

Table 3 compares Salem students' 2010 CPIs and median SGPs in mathematics in the aggregate and by subgroups to those of the state.

Table 3: 2010 Salem and State
Comparison of Composite Performance Index and Median Student Growth Percentile by Selected Subgroups, for Mathematics

		Composite Performance Index			Median Student Growth Percentile		
Subgroup	N	Salem	State	Difference	Salem	State	Difference
All Tested Students	2268	68.7	79.9	-11.2	40.0	50.0	-10.0
Asian	63	90.9	89.0	+1.9	61.5	62.0	-0.5
African American/Black	113	57.3	65.1	-7.8	47.0	48.0	-1.0
Hispanic/Latino	710	54.4	63.9	-9.5	38.0	47.0	-9.0
White	1284	76.5	84.1	-7.6	40.0	50.0	-10.0
LEP	216	41.4	56.2	-14.8	47.5	53.0	-5.5
FLEP	88	55.4	73.3	-17.9	44.0	55.0	-11.0
Special Education	592	50.1	57.5	-7.4	33.5	43.0	-9.5
Low Income	1289	59.3	67.1	-7.8	39.0	47.0	-8.0

Note: 1. N indicates the number of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers used for the calculation of the median SGP are different.
2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

In mathematics, the district's students in the aggregate had a CPI that was 11.2 points lower in 2010 than the CPI of students statewide. With the exception of the district's Asian students, whose CPI at 90.9 was the highest of subgroups in the district, and 1.9 points higher than the state CPI for Asian students, the CPIs for all district subgroups fell below the corresponding state CPI. The largest differences in CPIs are shown in the -17.9 point differential for formerly limited

English proficient (FLEP) students and -14.8 point differential for limited English proficient (LEP) students, also known as English language learners (ELLs). The ELL subgroup had the lowest CPI of any of these subgroups at 41.4 points, and the special education subgroup the next lowest at 50.1 points.

Median SGPs in mathematics were lower than state median SGPs for every subgroup. Although the Asian subgroup had a notably high median SGP at 61.5, three subgroups had median SGPs below the moderate range of 40.0-59.9—the low-income (39.0), Hispanic/Latino (38.0), and special education (33.5) subgroups. Hispanic/Latino, white, and FLEP students and students receiving special education services all had median SGPs from 9 to 11 points lower than those of their counterparts statewide.

In summary, seven of these eight district subgroups demonstrated lower performance than the state subgroup in both ELA and mathematics, as measured by CPI. Considering both performance and growth, the subgroups that raise the most concern are English language learners and students who were formerly English language learners.

Table 4 compares district proficiency rates (the percentages of students scoring advanced or proficient on MCAS) and median SGPs with those of the state, by grade level, for ELA, for 2008, 2009, and 2010. Though it rose 2 percentage points from 2008 to 2010[7], the proficiency rate for all tested district students was 12 percentage points below the state rate in 2008 and 14 percentage points below it in 2009 and 2010; median SGPs showed moderate growth. With the exception of grade 5 students in 2008, the proficiency rate for students in each grade fell below the state proficiency rate for that grade by 10 percentage points or more. In other words, no grade had a proficiency rate that either met or exceeded the state rate.

Median SGPs were in the moderate range (40.0-59.9) for each grade in these years except for grade 7 in 2008 and grades 6 and 10 in 2009, which had relatively low median SGPs of 35.0, 37.0, and 36.0.

[7] The district CPI in ELA was the same in 2010 as in 2008 (68.7).

Table 4: 2008-2010 Comparison of Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), by Grade Level Salem Public Schools and State ELA

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*
Grade 3—District	45	*NA**	43	*NA**	50	*NA**
Grade 3—State	56	*NA**	57	*NA**	63	*NA**
Grade 4—District	35	*40.0*	42	*44.5*	38	*44.0*
Grade 4—State	49	*48.0*	53	*50.0*	54	*50.0*
Grade 5—District	58	*55.0*	49	*41.0*	47	*49.0*
Grade 5—State	61	*51.0*	63	*50.0*	63	*50.0*
Grade 6—District	52	*42.0*	52	*37.0*	57	*50.0*
Grade 6—State	67	*50.0*	66	*50.0*	69	*50.0*
Grade 7— District	53	*35.0*	57	*44.0*	62	*42.0*
Grade 7— State	69	*50.0*	70	*50.0*	72	*50.0*
Grade 8— District	59	*50.0*	65	*44.0*	61	*46.5*
Grade 8— State	75	*49.0*	78	*50.0*	78	*50.0*
Grade 10— District	61	*NA**	68	*36.0*	65	*44.0*
Grade 10— State	74	*NA**	81	*50.0*	78	*50.0*
All Grades— District	52	*44.0*	53	*41.0*	54	*45.0*
All Grades—State	64	*50.0*	67	*50.0*	68	*50.0*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs were not calculated for Grade 10 students until 2009.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Table 5 compares 2008-2010 district proficiency rates (percentages of students scoring advanced or proficient on MCAS) and median SGPs with those of the state, by grade level, in mathematics. The proficiency rate for district students was 13 percentage points below the state

proficiency rate in 2008 and 2009 and then 18 percentage points lower in 2010, when the district rate dropped 1 point and the state rate rose 4.[8]

Median SGPs for most grades were in the moderate range (40.0-59.9) over the three years; however, in 2008 grades 4 and 7 had median SGPs below that range (39.0 and a very low 26.0), in 2009 grades 6 and 10 did (34.0 and 38.0), and in 2010 grades 4, 6, and 10 did (36.0, 31.0, and 38.0).

Table 5: 2008-2010 Comparison of Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), by Grade Level Salem Public Schools and State Mathematics

	2008		2009		2010	
Grade	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*	Percent Proficient/ Advanced	*Median SGP*
Grade 3—District	51	*NA**	46	*NA**	47	*NA**
Grade 3—State	61	*NA**	60	*NA**	65	*NA**
Grade 4—District	35	*39.0*	33	*41.0*	32	*36.0*
Grade 4—State	49	*49.0*	48	*50.0*	48	*49.0*
Grade 5—District	48	*58.0*	42	*46.0*	39	*48.0*
Grade 5—State	52	*51.0*	54	*50.0*	55	*50.0*
Grade 6—District	40	*42.0*	42	*34.0*	43	*31.0*
Grade 6—State	56	*50.0*	57	*50.0*	59	*50.0*
Grade 7— District	27	*26.0*	37	*55.0*	40	*44.0*
Grade 7— State	47	*50.0*	49	*50.0*	53	*50.0*
Grade 8— District	34	*48.0*	34	*48.0*	33	*46.5*
Grade 8— State	49	*51.0*	48	*50.0*	51	*51.0*
Grade 10— District	58	*NA**	61	*38.0*	55	*38.0*
Grade 10— State	72	*NA**	75	*50.0*	75	*50.0*
All Grades— District	42	*41.0*	42	*43.0*	41	*40.0*
All Grades—State	55	*50.0*	55	*50.0*	59	*50.0*

Note: The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.
*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time. Median SGPs were not calculated for Grade 10 students until 2009.
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

[8] The district CPI in mathematics was one point higher in 2010 (79.5) than in 2008 (78.5).

To sum up, the proficiency gap between Salem students and students statewide increased rather than narrowing from 2008 to 2010; in 2010 the gap was 14 percentage points in ELA and 18 percentage points in math. In 2010, with the exception of Asian students, all of the Salem subgroups shown in Tables 2 and 3 above had lower performance and showed less growth than the corresponding statewide subgroup. The subgroups with the largest proficiency gaps in both ELA and math were ELL students and formerly ELL students, and in both subjects the subgroup whose median student growth percentile was farthest below that of the corresponding state subgroup was formerly ELL students.

Findings

Leadership and Governance

The Salem Public Schools do not have a clearly defined philosophy or clear plan to raise student achievement, and not all staff have a strong conviction that all students can achieve at high levels.

In interviews, the former superintendent, principals, and staff indicated a tendency to look for a "magic bullet," an easily replicated program that will resolve the achievement issues in the district, rather than recognizing the need for a homegrown districtwide instructional focus and model. Some principals indicated that they expected that the central administration would settle upon a model that once implemented would result in the desired increases. This belief in a solution that could be imported was prevalent in discussions with administrators including the former superintendent, indicating the district's inability to conceptualize the problem as calling for strategic planning. None of the educational leaders who were interviewed were able to articulate a clearly defined philosophy or a clear plan to raise student achievement. Most responses cited incremental school-based initiatives that were loosely linked throughout the system through the central office's curriculum and instruction and assessment functions. Principals did not have adequate plans either individually or as a group to increase achievement in their respective buildings. Many improvement plan items reviewed by the team focused on improving MCAS scores without addressing the underlying practices that can make an impact on MCAS scores.

In addition, as a group, administrators were not able to answer the central focus of the review team's questions—"Why have none of the curricular and instructional initiatives resulted in increased student achievement?"—with a unified, insightful, systemic response. Administrators expressed varying views regarding the reasons for the persistent low achievement in general, as well as among subgroups. Their responses ranged from references to not understanding all students as learners and lacking support and materials to mentioning the significant population of students who move schools and move from town to town and the students who enter the district without having had previous formal schooling. In general, a broad frustration was voiced by teachers and administrators that all of the district's improvement efforts fail to result in higher achievement. In some interviews with teachers and administrators, reasons given for that failure were the cultural and economic background of the students, linguistic differences and limited English proficiency among students, and the high rate of mobility among students, especially English language learners (ELLs).

Some staff members spoke with empathy about the challenges students face—not having their basic needs met, coming to school hungry—and the need to serve the whole child. Others mentioned that the district does not pay attention to cultural issues and needs to. Still others said that education was not a priority among low-income families or that it was a "hoax" to think that poverty can be overcome through education. According to staff interviewed, there is some latent resentment about current students being different from what Salem students were historically,

and some staff have low expectations for students, especially ELLs, while other staff are "very committed." The ownership of all students in the district was said to be "very uneven."

Without a clearly defined philosophy, instructional initiatives are disjointed and result in varied and unsustainable improvements to instruction and thus to learning. In addition, the fact that it is not universally accepted in the district that all children can achieve at high levels makes teachers with doubts as to their students' capabilities less effective and impedes the district's ability to move deliberately and boldly to address the academic needs of its most needy students. As a result, efforts are fragmented and do not strategically address teaching and learning issues. District leaders termed some of the improvements "cosmetic," such as the reintroduction of Latin at the high school, an attempt to retain higher-achieving students at the secondary level. Others, such as the overlaying of the Laying the Foundation program as an instructional strategy in ELA for grades 6-10, represent a positive start.

The Salem Public Schools have not been operating from a strategic plan to improve student achievement; as a result, initiatives across the district have been fragmented and reactive.

The review team was provided with an updated District Improvement Plan (DIP) just before its arrival onsite. According to the former superintendent, the plan's four over-arching goals are centrally developed and are reflected in all School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Principals reported that the 2010-2011 DIP had been "cut and pasted" using pieces from the previous year's SIPs. They reported that they were not actively involved in the development of the DIP and that several of them were collaborating to revise it after having seen the draft.

Typically the implementation of school district planning processes runs from July to June. This enables districts and schools to deploy resources strategically and initiate improvement efforts at the beginning of the school year. The planning process for the Salem DIP, however, is based on the calendar year rather than the district's fiscal year. The district engages in planning in the fall for implementation in January after MCAS results are known and analyzed. This timing for the development of the DIP precludes strategic deployment of resources, as budgets and school populations are already set when the DIP is developed. In addition, the timing of district planning exemplifies the lack of strategic direction. Rather than being aimed at producing a strategic plan that moves the district toward a shared vision, planning in the Salem Public Schools is positioned to be reactive.

Principals indicated dissatisfaction with the SIP format, which is almost solely focused on MCAS scores. This format omits the areas of school climate and family involvement, which are central to school reform. The new SIP format was dictated by the central office. Principals reported that as a result the involvement of the school councils in the development of the plans and in general decision-making about their schools has been diminished. At least one elementary school reinstated those responsibilities at the insistence of the school council for its 2010-2011 plan. It was unclear whether this level of autonomy would be accommodated in the approved SIP or would extend to other school councils.

Principals acknowledged that while the SIPs' format was standard, their content and their approaches to addressing MCAS achievement were school-specific. A review of the plans

revealed that there was not a common approach to instruction across the district. Nor were there common literacy instructional materials above grade 2. This fragmented approach to instruction and programs is a hindrance to the district improving all its students' achievement.

The Salem Public Schools have intra-district choice. Principals and program coordinators reported that the imbalance of ELL students[9] among the schools is due to the historical tendency of ELL parents to register their children late in the summer. Principals reported that no seats are held for these students during the registration process. The district has not amended its student assignment procedures to address the imbalance of ELL students. The ELL coordinators, who are full-time teachers, proposed that newcomer classes be added to the Saltonstall and Witchcraft Heights schools in September 2011 to address this issue. These are among the schools with the lowest enrollments of ELL students and the strongest achievement in the district. They reported that their proposal was supported by the respective principals and ultimately approved by the superintendent. While the coordinators deserve commendation for recognizing the imbalance in student assignments, the issue is a district one that should have been addressed as soon as the pattern of student assignment resulting from intra-district choice was evident. That the district did not do so speaks directly to the lack of a district plan that seeks to raise student achievement through strategic initiatives.

At the time of the review the school committee was engaged in a strategic planning process with a broader scope, to include all aspects of the district. The review team received a draft of this plan at noon on its last day onsite. A review of the draft showed that the ongoing planning effort did not yet encompass a cohesive strategic plan for improving student achievement. A clear, comprehensive plan to raise student achievement, with hard targets for achievement and specific strategies to attain them, was still lacking.

Because of the lack of a strategic plan to raise student achievement, the district's efforts as of the time of the review were episodic, school-based initiatives whose effectiveness had not been evaluated and that were mostly targeted at low-performing students rather than being holistic approaches. Without a comprehensive strategic approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is supported by a plan for professional development and effective resource allocation, it will be difficult to improve student achievement in the Salem Public Schools.

The Salem Public Schools do not have the administrative capacity to effectively guide, supervise, and evaluate the staff to implement reform and improvement initiatives. There is too little communication between the central office and principals, principals reported having too little time to supervise teachers, and the numerous paraprofessionals are not evaluated.

The school committee reported that their goals for the superintendent did not include a goal or goals that held him accountable for student achievement. Interviews with central office leaders indicated hesitancy at holding principals accountable for student achievement. In turn, principals

[9] In 2011, the percentages of ELL students among the schools with elementary grades, middle grades, or both ranged from 5.1 percent at the Bates Elementary School to 28.2 percent at the Bentley Elementary School.

reported that the difficult conversations about student achievement were not part of the discussions in their supervision and evaluation of teachers.

The superintendent at the time of the review described his administrative style as one that consisted primarily of holding "conversations" about district problems in an effort to engage principals and other administrative staff in the work of raising student achievement. However, principals reported that their meetings with central office leaders, in particular their regular meetings with the assistant superintendent, were informational and logistical in nature rather than problem-solving (although in-depth questions and discussions about teaching and learning were common among school-based administrators and between school-based administrators and teachers, both groups reported). Principals reported that the nature of their meetings with central office leaders was a change from their previous experience, when they had professional development opportunities regarding school improvement that focused on data-driven discussions and problem-solving. There were four new elementary principals in the system in 2010-2011. Although each had a mentor, there was scant opportunity for these new administrators to form a cohort. Thus, each is left on his or her own within the school to solve problems that are common across the district.

In education, there are administrative models in which system initiatives are coordinated centrally but key responsibilities are distributed among the appropriate administrative staff. However, where these models of distributive leadership exist, they are predicated on a shared belief system, an integrated plan for improvement efforts, and a tightly woven system of accountability at every level of the district that are all clearly communicated within the school system and the community. The administrative model observed in the Salem Public Schools did not have these characteristics. The leadership was focused at both the district and school levels on discrete initiatives that addressed particular student groups.

Key to improving instruction, and thus student achievement, is more effective administrative supervision and evaluation of the teachers and paraprofessionals who are involved in instruction. However, the administration of the Salem Public Schools was structured too thinly at the time of the review, as follows:

- in the central office, superintendent, assistant superintendent, and pupil personnel services (PPS) director, with a systemwide director of special education working under the aegis of the PPS director;
- at the high school, a principal, three house masters, and an academic chair for curriculum;
- at the middle school, a principal, two assistant principals, and a curriculum coordinator;
- at each elementary school, including the two K-8 schools, a principal.

Personnel in other, support positions such as coordinators for Title I, literacy, and math; literacy and math coaches; and head teachers are unable to provide adequate supervision of the instructional program because, as the review team was told in interviews, they do not have the power to evaluate any staff members. In addition, many of these positions carry full-time or nearly full-time teaching loads.

At the time of the review, there was no administrator with a specialty in ELL in charge of the ELL program, which includes 11.2 percent of Salem students. Rather, two full-time teachers shared the coordination duties K-12. In 2010 the achievement of English language learners (ELLs), the lowest-performing subgroup, was 12.7 CPI points lower in ELA than state ELLs' and 14.8 CPI points lower in math (see Tables 2 and 3 in the Student Performance section above). These were the largest gaps with state counterparts for any subgroup except for the formerly ELL subgroup.

In recent years, the already thinly-distributed administrative staff has been reduced, rather than reducing teacher numbers, in order to maintain class sizes. According to data submitted to ESE, district administrators were reduced from 7.0 full-time equivalents (FTE) in 2008 to 5.0 FTE in 2010.[10] One of the most significant reductions was the elimination of the human resources position. Over the same years, school administrators were reduced by .6 and instructional coaches by .9 FTEs.[11] The reduction in instructional coaches was somewhat mitigated by the use of ARRA funds: the initial reduction proposed had called for an elimination of 3.4 FTE coaches.

An examination of four comparable districts using data from ESE's District Analysis Review Tool (DART)[12] demonstrates a concerning difference. Among the four districts—Waltham, Fitchburg, Somerville, and Marlborough—Waltham is the highest-performing. All four have comparable student demographics and serve approximately the same number of students, between 4,496 and 4,997 in 2010. Three have significantly more people in the DART category "district administrators." [13] Waltham reported 12.5 FTE, an increase from 7.0 in 2008; Fitchburg 10.0 FTE, an increase from 7.0 FTE; Somerville 18.0 FTE, an increase of 1.0 FTE. Marlborough had 6.6 FTE in 2010, a decrease from 7.5 in 2008. Salem also had the lowest number of administrators among these districts in another DART category including central office administrators, "other [district] instructional leaders."[14] Salem had 3.0 FTE in this category in 2010; Fitchburg reported 4.0 FTE; the other three districts far outpaced Salem's 3.0 FTE in instructional leaders reporting 8.2, 10.0 and 10.5 FTE.

Salem had the highest administrator-to-student ratio of this group of comparable districts for both categories of administrator in 2010. For "district administrators" it was 899:1; for "other [district] instructional leaders" it was 1,499:1.

Principals and central office administrators readily acknowledged that the number of administrators is not adequate to closely supervise and evaluate instruction, especially instruction performed by non-professional-status teachers. A review of data provided by the district showed that approximately 40 percent of the teaching staff had fewer than five years of experience. In

[10] See District Analysis and Review Tool (DART Detail: Staffing and Finance) for Salem, District Staff tab, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html.
[11] Ibid.
[12] See Table 12 in Appendix C.
[13] See DART Detail: Staffing and Finance, tab for staffing definitions, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html.
[14] Ibid.

fact, district seniority lists showed that 147 new teachers were hired between 2008 and the time of the review in January 2011, along with 7 new administrators. The president of the teachers' union cited the many teachers new to the district.

The evaluation system requires four clinical observations of teachers without professional teacher status during their first year in the district, tapering to two in their fourth year. Since clinical observations require a pre- and post-conference in addition to the classroom observation, meeting these requirements is time-consuming for principals. Those at the high school and middle school have assistant principals; those at the other schools do not, and there is very little other assistance available for evaluating staff. Principals reported that there is little time left for the supervision of instruction after evaluating the greater number of non-professional-status staff, as well as the professional status teachers. Principals also reported that in conducting the supervision and evaluation of non-professional status teachers, there is virtually no discussion of student achievement with individual teachers.

In contrast to the number of its administrators, in 2010 the Salem Public Schools had 181.8 FTE paraprofessionals to support classroom instruction, more than any of the four comparison districts discussed above; the ratio of students to paraprofessionals was 25:1.[15] There were 408 teachers in the district. Of the four comparison districts, Marlborough had the highest number of paraprofessionals, reporting a staff of 126.4 FTE, or 30 percent fewer than the Salem Public Schools. The ratio of students to paraprofessionals in Marlborough was 36:1. Of the other three comparison districts, Somerville had 115.0 paraprofessionals (42:1), Fitchburg had 104.6 (48:1), and Waltham had 94.8 (50:1). The former superintendent and assistant superintendent reported that there is no evaluation procedure for paraprofessionals. Principals reported that they do not evaluate paraprofessionals. Thus, paraprofessionals, who are integral to the instruction of one of the lowest-performing subgroups and who are the least qualified instructional staff, are not evaluated.

In the judgment of the review team the Salem Public Schools have an administrative team in the central office and schools without the capacity to closely supervise instruction and ensure its quality for all students. The result of an administrative staff without the capacity to supervise and evaluate instruction effectively is variation across the district in the teaching strategies used and inconsistency in the implementation of instructional programs. Thus students in the Salem Public Schools are not assured of high-quality instruction, nor are they assured of the same quality of instruction or the same instructional programs across the district. As long as this is the case, it will be difficult to raise student achievement across the Salem Public Schools.

Curriculum and Instruction

Though it has some curriculum guides and maps, the district lacks a fully developed curriculum that is vertically and horizontally articulated and consistently implemented. No curriculum guides or maps were complete for any subject for grades 9 through 12.

[15] Again, see Table 12 in Appendix C.

Salem has developed curricula containing most of the essential components in mathematics and science for kindergarten through grade 8, but the ELA curriculum is incomplete, and all of the grade 9-12 curricula were being developed or revised at the time of the review. There is no systemic district process for curriculum development and revision, and whether teachers have regular common planning time varies across schools; the district has eliminated the once-a-week common planning period during the elementary school day.

Salem's documented curriculum consists of curriculum guides and maps based on framework standards. The curriculum guides all have the same format, containing standards, essential understandings, essential skills, and key terms. The review team found that the curriculum guides developed for pre-kindergarten through grade 5 contain some essential curriculum components, such as student goals, unit themes, and learning standards/strands. However, no evidence was found of other components such as instructional strategies, models of teaching, assessments, or resources.

The ELA curriculum guide lists the framework standards and the essential skills that students will demonstrate for pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In interviews with the review team, teachers and administrators stated that there is no districtwide literacy curriculum; rather, the curriculum is school-based, varying from school to school. Furthermore, there is no process for either developing or systematically reviewing curriculum, according to interviews with professional staff members. The ELA pacing guide for the middle grades includes numbered standards and essential questions, timelines (based on trimesters), unit names and content descriptions, skills to be acquired, and generic assessment methods. In a focus group, some teachers said that they were unaware of these curriculum materials until well into their first year of teaching. An administrator said that she "unearthed them [the curriculum maps and guides] under a pile" in her office after many months on the job, and frankly stated, "Teachers don't ever use that stuff." When asked what the curriculum was in the district, many teachers cited instructional programs such as Laying the Foundation (LTF), *Connected Math*, FASTT Math, and *Superkids*. No mention was made of curriculum guides or maps without a prompt. It is concerning that the teachers named two "off-the-shelf" programs (LTF and *Superkids*) when asked about curriculum, apparently not realizing that these packaged programs are not equivalent to a curriculum.

Grades do not use the same instructional materials across the district. For example, the mathematics curriculum map for grades 6 to 8 includes timelines, textbooks, strands, teacher notes, and supplemental material suggestions, as well as references and resources for teachers. In this particular document, provision is made for the grade 6 and 7 *Connected Math* program, and connections are made to the state mathematics frameworks. Standards are numbered and times for assessments are noted, for instance at the end of a unit. In addition, there is a separate map containing grade 8 math curriculum, specifically labeled "Collins Grade 8 Algebra Curriculum Map" and "Collins Grade 8 Integrated Math Curriculum Map," which, in addition to the above-mentioned components, lists the number of times an item has been queried on past MCAS tests and the page(s) in the textbook where the item can be found. It is unclear whether the grade 8 classrooms at the Bowditch and Saltonstall Schools, the two schools besides Collins with grade

8, use this same map. Teachers reported using *Everyday Math* in kindergarten though grade 5, although the Saltonstall and Bowditch schools use it through grade 6. The Saltonstall School and the Collins Middle School use *Connected Math* in grades 6 and 7 as well as Prentice Hall's *Algebra I* and *Integrated Math* textbooks in grade 8. FASTT Math is an individualized computer-based intervention program that is used widely for grade 3 with varying degrees of adherence to the program depending on the availability of computers at each school. In general, there is no meaningful current mechanism for horizontal curriculum articulation to take place across the elementary schools and the three middle school programs. With regard to vertical articulation of the curriculum, teachers said that meetings had been arranged for discussions between the 8th and 9th grade teams—for the purpose of placing students with disabilities only—but that the curriculum articulation between grades 5 and 6 was "nil."

Several teachers in two different focus groups noted that ELL students have difficulty with *Everyday Math* and *Connected Math* because these programs have so much verbal content. Likewise, an administrator said in an interview that *Everyday Math* is "embedded in language," which results in more challenges to ELL students. When asked if the district was planning to review the selection of this program, since the number of students whose first language is not English (FLNE students) and ELL students in the district is substantial, and has been during the seven years since its adoption, the teachers said that they did not know of any such plan but that they were sure that the district would listen to them. There is, however, research that indicates that mathematics programs that require a high degree of literacy can actually help students increase verbal as well as mathematical skills—if they are taught well.

The science curriculum map for grades 6 to 8 describes unit themes, essential questions, key terms, classroom resources, and library/website connections and includes references for teachers to several books and articles. Timelines in this document are broad, with notations such as, "Sept.-Nov." The science curriculum map also includes cross-curricular connections, with references to fiction and nonfiction works, math books, and computer programs that might be used for each theme. Laboratory skills are also referred to in the science curriculum map. Science coordinators explained that there is a science curriculum for kindergarten through grade 5, but that there is no text or program, and teachers create their own assessments. Instruction in elementary-level science is supported by a science integration specialist (a teacher certified in elementary science education) at each school who works independently with students and is also available as a resource for classroom teachers, if they wish to collaborate. These positions are funded through a grant by the Henry Reade Foundation, a private local foundation.

The high school was developing and revising curriculum at the time of the review. It had some curricular components but not a complete curriculum. The district did not provide the review team with evidence of curriculum pacing guides or maps for any subjects in grades 9 through 12. During focus groups, high school staff discussed the ongoing curricular changes that were taking place during the new monthly early-morning common planning time at the school. For two hours each month, the school opening is delayed for common planning time, which was being devoted wholly to curriculum, to develop maps and pacing guides. Teachers were doing an overview of each course and developing curriculum units based on an essential questions format. Looking at

the core, the teachers were also continuing to develop common midterms and finals within the academic teams. High school administrators attested that the curriculum is based on the state frameworks and noted that vertical articulation was carried out several years ago, but that it has not been revisited since that time.

High school staff members provided an example of work currently being done in the English language arts department. The ELA Curriculum Overview given to the review team included content descriptions, essential questions (per unit), skills such as reading strategies, and assessments. Instructional techniques, supplemental resources, and models of teaching were not in evidence in the materials given to the review team. Several high school staff members mentioned in focus groups that the school's ELA curriculum was being revised and that the revision was being driven by the recent adoption of the Laying the Foundation (LTF) program for grades 6 through 10. (According to the program's website, Laying the Foundation is a program that "provides math, science and English teachers in grades 6-10 with the content knowledge, teaching strategies, vertically aligned materials, and assessments required to emulate AP-level coursework in the lower grades."[16] Salem uses only the English part of the LTF program.) Teachers reported being pleased with the ongoing implementation and alignment of the curriculum that they were writing and revising. One teacher described the ELA curriculum at the high school during a focus group: grade 9 features an "Introduction to Literature"; grade 10 is "MCAS driven"; the curriculum in grade 11 is basically American literature; and the curriculum in grade 12 has been British literature but the high school is "moving away from that."

In mathematics, according to high school staff members, the curriculum revisions were based on a typical pattern for mathematics courses in which students who have done well in 8th grade algebra can take honors geometry in grade 9 and successful math students in grade 11 can enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) calculus in grade 12. Staff noted in a focus group that there are sometimes gaps in algebra preparation coming into grade 9, given that grade 9 students enter from three different and uncoordinated middle school programs. The AP calculus class was available to twice as many students in 2010-2011 as the year before after the school loosened up prerequisites for taking AP courses. The administration noted that although a few had dropped out, most students were doing well in the course. It was also mentioned that 15 upper-grade students were taking statistics.

The Salem Public Schools lack a complete, consistently implemented, vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum. Salem's curriculum does not serve the needs of its diverse student population, particularly since there is minimal evidence of curriculum and models of instruction that are directed toward the subgroups that are most in need, i.e., ELL students and students receiving special education services. The fragmented curriculum materials are not even always used as the basis for district assessments of student achievement or progress (MCAS results appear to be used instead); because they are not, analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of curriculum content, though needed, is not possible. Salem has a history of localized shaping of the curriculum, even to the school or classroom levels, with limited support and direction from

[16]See https://www.ltftraining.org/OurProgram.aspx.

central office administrators. This approach is a concern; in the light of the profound needs of the student population, more centralized and systemic approaches are needed.

The district lacks a common definition of high-quality instruction

In the absence of district-level direction, academic leaders and the teachers with whom they work have developed *ad hoc* definitions for high-quality instruction. In interviews with the review team, principals and teachers did not express a shared vision or shared definition of high-quality instruction to be implemented across the district. Rather, principals stated that they were unclear as to the instructional priorities of the district, and that there was no real focus on instruction by the central office. When asked to define high-quality instruction in focus groups, some teachers and administrators cited portions of the Principles of Effective Teaching (PET) then appended to 603 CMR 35.00 on evaluation, and many told the review team that the evaluation tool had the needed information about teaching. Other responses indicated that teachers need to have flexibility and a sense of humor and to be prepared. On the whole teachers in focus groups responded with little discussion or clarity about effective instruction following this question.

When asked in focus groups who were the academic leaders in their schools, teachers identified the curriculum coordinators, who were generally credited with implementing many new programs, such as *Superkids* and Laying the Foundation (LTF). In general, teachers seemed pleased with these programs, and several review team members reported seeing, during classroom observations, an alignment in the *Superkids* instruction across some schools. The coordinators, the team was told, are truly appreciated by administrators and teachers alike, and are viewed as real resources in the schools.

According to the district's School Improvement Plans (SIPs) there are three different types of "coordinators," some with different titles. There are literacy specialists and reading specialists at the elementary level who report to the principal and are responsible for coaching, collecting data, modeling instruction, bringing in supplementary materials as needed, in some cases leveling books, and conducting team meetings with teachers. In the Collins Middle School, there are coordinators in the English language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, technology education, and physical education departments. They report to the principal and the assistant superintendent and are also responsible for collecting and analyzing data, conducting weekly meetings with teams, and providing materials, support, and instructional strategies to their teams. The coordinators are responsible for the decisions regarding what is taught in classrooms and for curriculum review, which, according to several respondents, is, as one of them said, "done every day, all the time."

In general, most new teachers learn what to teach from mentor teachers, not from curriculum documents. Teachers view the district's mentoring program as valuable to new staff members, who, it was reported in a number of focus groups, are given mentors and provided training as needed, albeit with some inconsistency. One teacher said that he arrived new to the district with no training or guides, but that his mentor helped him a great deal. New specialists stated that they followed the lead of the subject teachers for the first year in Salem and that the mentor teachers

had been their "go to" person for everything. Responding to a question about supervision, one teacher said, and other teachers nodded affirmatively, that, the only time they were observed was when they were being evaluated by the principals. In response to the question, "How and when do hard conversations about instruction take place?" teachers replied that they regroup the students, use flexible grouping, talk to their partner or the coordinator in their cluster and ask each other about the students' preparation for the classes, for example.

Review team members inquired in focus groups about the level of professional development available to fulfill some of the ongoing curricular and instructional needs in the district. Some teachers said, and others agreed, that there was training for new programs, such as *Superkids* and FASTT Math. Other staff members stated that there was very little training at that time in sheltered English immersion (SEI) to support teachers working with ELL students, and that in many cases, even when initial training was given, there had been little if any follow-up support. District staff members lack cohesive strategies for teaching regular education as well as ELL and special education students beyond flexible grouping, regrouping, and pull-out in small groups. One administrator said that the district lacks "cognitive clarity," meaning knowing what to do and why.

The district has many educators supporting teachers in classrooms. There are the coordinators. And the district has a significant number of new teachers, who reported having good mentors. But these educators and teachers do not share a common definition of quality instruction. The lack of a coherent, agreed-upon definition and models of high-quality instruction results in conversations between and among teachers and other staff that are focused largely on student outcomes and do not appear to extend to improving teachers' instructional practices in a consistent way. The lack of a common definition of high-quality instruction hinders the district's efforts to imbue new teachers with best instructional practices; it also hinders the improvement of instruction generally.

During its classroom observations, the review team observed too little evidence of solid teaching practice to improve achievement for Salem students.

To get a firsthand view of instructional practices in the district, the review team observed instruction in 75 district classrooms: 48 at the elementary level, 19 at the middle school level, and 8 at the high school. The elementary classes included 28 ELA classes, 16 math or science classes, 2 special education classes, and 2 ELL classes. At the middle school level, the team observed 9 ELA, 8 math or science, and 2 special education classes. The team observed 2 ELA classes, 4 math or science classes, 1 social studies, and 1 special education class at the high school. The observations ranged from 15 to 30 minutes each; observers used a standard instructional inventory that included 14 characteristics of effective instruction and learning. Review team members rated the prevalence of these characteristics using three ratings: Solid Evidence, Partial Evidence, or No Evidence. Worthy of note is that the day of the classroom observations was postponed twice because of snow. During the day when observations finally occurred, the high school students were reviewing for midterms scheduled to begin the day after.

The range of characteristics found during the review team's observations varied; the highest percentage was the 85 percent of classrooms that exhibited solid evidence of a classroom climate marked by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. In general, solid evidence of classroom organization skills, represented by 3 of the 14 characteristics, was found in 68 percent of classes visited. Solid evidence of the characteristics of instructional design and delivery, representing the other characteristics, was found in only 39 percent of classes visited.

There were very few characteristics of instructional practice for which solid evidence was observed in more than 60 percent of the classrooms visited. One characteristic for which solid evidence was observed in more than 60 percent of classes was maximizing time for learning. However, solid evidence of aligning materials with students' developmental levels and the level of English proficiency was low at both the middle school and high school levels, at 37 and 38 percent respectively, though it was higher at the elementary schools at 53 percent. Solid evidence that the teacher paced the lesson to keep students engaged was found in 54 percent of the elementary classes, but in only 32 percent and 25 percent of the middle school and high school classes respectively. A strong element at the middle school was the linking of academic concepts to students' prior knowledge and experience, for which solid evidence was found in 74 percent of classes.

Evidence of students working in pairs or small groups, inquiring, exploring or problem-solving together signals that students are collaborating and using higher-order thinking skills and often indicates that instruction is differentiated to meet students' learning needs. Across school levels, little evidence was seen of this characteristic: observational reports showed solid evidence in 50 percent of the elementary classrooms and in 26 and 25 percent of the middle and high schools, respectively, that students were working in pairs or small groups. Salem's teachers, on the whole, articulated in focus groups no common understanding of what constitutes consistent high quality instruction, and the review team's observations reflected that.

The team's observations indicated inconsistencies and weaknesses in instruction that hinder the district's efforts to improve student achievement. The number of staff who can, by contract, truly supervise and also evaluate staff is very low. Coordinators, who have significant responsibilities, developing curriculum and informally revising the curriculum with the teams in the schools, can only suggest that a teacher change instructional practice. Lacking supervisory authority, coordinators must rely on goodwill from the other members of the teaching team and hope that changes are made. Without development of a districtwide understanding of effective instruction, increased supervision, and targeted professional development on critical instructional practices, the Salem Public Schools will be unable to provide high-level, 21st-century curriculum and instruction to its students. Without direction from district and school leadership about what constitutes high-quality instruction, coupled with school-based discussions and support, the district will continue to be a system of individual schools, each limited to what the people in the building know.

Assessment

Inconsistencies and lack of alignment in assessment have contributed to a stalling of the district's effort to have a balanced and comprehensive assessment system that could provide teachers and leaders with full information about curricular, instructional, and student needs.

The district is in the early stages of having a balanced and comprehensive assessment system that provides qualitative and quantitative data and information to serve multiple purposes: 1) to measure student achievement and monitor progress, 2) to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, 3) to guide instruction, and 4) to inform decision-making for staffing, program support, and other resource allocation.

Documents and interviews revealed that components of a balanced and comprehensive assessment system are in place in various instructional programs and at some levels in the district. However, inconsistencies in assessment design and implementation mean the assessment system is not yet aligned to function optimally in practice. It is fragmented. For example, one can find multiple assessment formats in use—formative, summative, benchmark, and authentic—but their use is erratic across schools and subjects. In addition, as noted earlier, the lack of a complete and aligned standards-based curriculum and curriculum maps at all levels and uneven instruction and supervision contribute to make the assessment less informative and useful to leaders and teachers. The evidence described below shows why the assessment system can not yet be considered balanced and comprehensive.

Assessment in the Elementary Schools

For elementary ELA, consistency is found in the common literacy inventory assessments given to kindergarten students three times a year to monitor progress in their acquisition of literacy skills. However, beyond kindergarten, the range and implementation of assessments are often inconsistent within and across schools and classrooms. In kindergarten through grade 3, the district requires formative assessments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to assess phonemic awareness, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary, and the Dynamic Reading Assessment (DRA-2) to gauge reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. Literacy and reading specialists, coaches, and teachers use DIBELS and DRA-2 results to monitor progress and inform decisions about shaping flexible reading groups. Students take DIBELS three times a year (September, January, and June) and the DRA-2 twice a year (September and May), although in some schools, DRA-2 is also administered in January. Students in grades 2-5 also take the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) twice a year to measure reading comprehension. These are appropriate assessments; yet, in some elementary schools, DIBELS and the DRA-2 are administered to students beyond grade 3 with poor literacy skills; in others, they are not. Most important, there *is* no common required ELA assessment beyond grade 3. Some elementary schools also use Fountas and Pinnell's ELA benchmark assessments assiduously; others do not, even though teachers and leaders noted in interviews that they are available to all. This lack of consistent measures and consistent good practices, especially

beyond grade 3, to support all students, and especially to support low-achieving students, occurs in a district where, in most instances from 2007 to 2010, less than half of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 demonstrated proficiency in ELA on MCAS and almost all proficiency rates were 10 or more percentage points below state rates. See Table 6.

Table 6: MCAS Proficiency Rates in ELA at Elementary Grades
Salem Compared to State
2007-2010

GRADE	2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem	State	Salem	State
Grade 3	49	59	45	56	43	57	50	63
Grade 4	48	56	35	49	42	53	38	54
Grade 5	52	63	58	61	49	63	47	63

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Elementary ELL specialists may also administer portions of the DIBELS and the DRA-2 tests to ELL students and use those results along with MCAS results, Language Assessment Survey (LAS) results, Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) results, and Massachusetts English Language Assessment—Oral (MELA-O) scores to make instructional and placement decisions for ELL students. All students with disabilities are expected to take all mandatory subject-based tests with the exception of students with severe learning disabilities.

For elementary mathematics, the district uses *Everyday Mathematics* to implement the curriculum in kindergarten through grade 5. The program's common unit assessments, ongoing formative classroom assessments chosen from an assessment bank, and common mid-year and final assessments are administered to all students. Elementary principals and teachers maintain notebooks with Recognizing Student Achievement (RSA) checklists that record students' progress in attaining benchmarks based on state standards. Two principals agreed that these checklists are closely monitored across the district and used for grouping and targeting instruction. In addition, there is the potential for computerized FASTT Math assessments, but computers are not evenly distributed across schools and classrooms, making access to this intervention across schools also uneven.

Overall, K-5 mathematics assessments are appropriate in format, although they tend to consist entirely of paper and pencil quizzes and tests. Furthermore, *Everyday Mathematics* is a literacy-intense mathematics program. Students need good reading and speaking skills to take full advantage of the program's benefits in small and large group instructional settings and to maximize the program's capacity to assess students' skills and knowledge. As described in the District Profile section above and shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 there, the district has significant subgroups of students who are limited English proficient (English language learners) or whose first language is not English (FLNE).

Table 7: Percentages of ELL and FLNE Students in Schools with Elementary Grades 2010-2011

School and Grades	LEP	FLNE*
Bates K-5	5.1	7.8
Bentley K-5	28.2	36.6
Carlton K-5	16.1	23.4
Horace Mann K-5	13.4	18.2
Nathaniel Bowditch K-8	15.8	32.5
Saltonstall K-8	10.0	13.1
Witchcraft Heights K-5	10.4	14.8

*First Language Not English
Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

The percentages of ELL and FLNE students in the schools with elementary grades show that a meaningful segment of the student population needs additional support in learning mathematics using a program that is verbally rich—as well as in ELA—because they are still learning English or have another language as their first language. It can be good practice to use such a program, provided that it is well taught and support systems are in place for students who need help. Interviewees noted in focus groups that some, but not all, teachers had created and use supplements in mathematics to support students with language and literacy weaknesses. Like many practices in the district, it is episodic. In addition, interviewees noted that the variety and availability of supplements and interventions to support students varied across schools. Interviewees also noted that teachers did not always enter the data that informs intervention planning, making it even more difficult to appropriately target interventions to students who need them.

As a positive step, coordinators and coaches have worked with teachers to apply good ELA practices to mathematics by instituting student mathematics folders and flexible grouping. Formative mathematics assessments inform almost weekly regrouping in order to differentiate mathematics instruction—a positive trend. However, leaders and teachers agreed in focus groups that teachers' skills in differentiating instruction varied widely across the district and that follow-up professional development to improve skills in differentiating instruction in mathematics was not a district priority.

Classroom observations conducted by review team members revealed minimal use of sheltered English immersion (SEI) strategies to support ELL and other students' learning. The use of a literacy-based elementary mathematics program without adequate and consistent classroom supports and intervention procedures means that many students may not be able to realize their potential to learn mathematics and may not be able to accurately demonstrate what they know, can do, and understand in mathematics.

As noted earlier, elementary science classes are taught by both the classroom teacher and a science integration specialist (SIS) in the science lab at each school. The SISs are certified in science at the elementary level, and one is assigned to each elementary school. There is an elementary science curriculum but no common textbook or instructional materials. Each school or teacher can develop and use teaching materials. Interviewees noted that there were no true common assessments in science class, just teacher-generated activities and sometimes rudimentary assessments, depending on the school and teacher. Elementary science labs support hands-on learning through the collaboration of the specialists and classroom teachers, but according to those interviewed, the degree of collaboration varies with the comfort level of the classroom teachers. Often there is just an informal arrangement with no regular schedule. Interviewees noted that labs do have assessments but said that they are "not like math assessments."

Assessment in the Middle School Programs

The three middle school programs present challenges to ensuring a consistent well-aligned assessment system, an aligned curriculum, and shared expectations about good instruction in the three schools with middle school grades: Collins (6-8), Bowditch (K-8, aspiring "dual language" school), and Saltonstall (K-8, extended day, extended year). Each operates within a different instructional model but adheres to a common curriculum in core subjects. The Collins Middle School administers the SRI in grades 6-8 twice yearly to assess reading comprehension. SRI, classroom-based assessments, and MCAS results influence flexible grouping for literature circles. In mathematics classes, Collins teachers administer pre- and post-tests and quick, formative math assessments for *Connected Math* units in grades 6 and 7 and for Algebra I and Integrated Math assessments in grade 8. Flexible grouping is also used in mathematics classes at Collins. All Collins Middle School students take common mid-year and end-of-year ELA and math assessments. Collins has also recently designed a standards-based report card to track and report students' achievement and progress. This does not exist in the other two middle school programs. All students in the district are screened for algebra at the end of grade 7 using the Orleans-Hanna Algebra Prognosis Test.

In middle school science, the Collins Middle School has taken steps to institute two common assessments for the three units that science comprises in grades 6, 7, and 8, and there is a common assessment for lab skills in grade 8. The Collins Middle School has a goal of using exhibitions and rubrics in the science program.

In the Saltonstall and Bowditch middle school classrooms, teachers implement the same curriculum and use the same instructional programs. However, at Saltonstall there are significant

differences in terms of assessment and instruction. One is the use of multi-age classrooms in the format of kindergarten, grades 1-2, grades 3-4, and grades 5-6. In 2010-2011 Saltonstall's grade 8 and the grade 7-8 format were new, so the school is defining its upper grades middle school program. *Superkids* is used in ELA for kindergarten through grade 2, and there is no set program in grades 3-6 (as opposed to grades 3-5 in other elementary schools). *Everyday Mathematics* is used through grade 6 (rather than through grade 5 as in the other elementary schools) and *Connected Mathematics* in grade 7 and, in 2010-2011, in the new grade 8, which also has options for able students to study algebra and integrated math.

Saltonstall School's instructional model is designed to apply the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) to teaching and learning. The school adds portfolio assessments as well as multi-disciplinary projects to its assessment format, although interviewees noted that recently hired teachers are less skilled in MI and portfolios since unstable school leadership (eight principals in 15 years) had eroded the implementation of these practices as part of the school's culture. As a result, some teachers integrate them into their repertoire; others do not. Given its extended day and extended year schedule, the pacing of topics at Saltonstall is more flexible at the classroom level than at the other schools. Saltonstall teachers use more varied assessment formats, analyze classroom indicators as well as data, and, encouraged by the principal, make decisions based on students' needs by involving school-based ELL and special education specialists in the discussion. As part of a districtwide assessment system, Saltonstall is an outlier. Questions can be raised about comparability when including Saltonstall data in districtwide data: the school has different grade level configurations, some textbook programs are implemented at different grade levels than at other schools, both the school day and the school year are longer, and there is more variety in assessment formats.

Assessment at the High School

At Salem High School, interviewees noted that there is now a greater effort to use common classroom assessments and unit tests for like courses in the core academic subjects. Many of these are in the development process. In 2010-2011, grade 9 teachers and others were also focusing on grade calibration as a way to make student assessments more meaningful and useful. Currently, high school students take common midterm and final exams in core subjects prepared by teacher teams that include ELL as well as special education teachers, many of whom also co-teach classes. In grade 9, there are common assessments for each math unit and math electives are taught by one teacher, implying the use of common assessments. The high school science program has common mid-year and final examinations and common writing competencies (rubrics) across all science subjects for writing lab notes and reports.

Interviewees noted that analysis of high school final exam results is almost non-existent in all subjects since teachers tend to leave for summer vacation once grades are assigned. When the new school year begins, the last year's final exam results are not discussed in meetings to prepare for instruction. Also, rubrics are in place at the high school in multiple subjects, but interviewees noted in focus groups that they are unevenly applied as guides for either students or teachers to assess work. There appear to be few assessments at the high school that depart from

the format of summative paper and pencil quizzes and tests. Teachers did not describe culminating projects, self-assessments, or the self- and peer-assessments that strong secondary school programs tend to use to help students learn to take more responsibility for their learning. In addition, the use of technology-based assessment tools such as a Classroom Response System (CRS), or "clickers," was neither mentioned nor observed at the high school or at other schools. As noted earlier, the lack of completeness and alignment in the high school curriculum also affects its assessment system.

In good, systemic educational practice, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are tightly linked and aligned. They form the well-known "three-legged stool," a metaphor for how an academic program stands strong when all three components are soundly designed and consistently implemented. A solid assessment system is balanced and comprehensive. It comprises multiple assessment formats and provides multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery and integration of knowledge and skills and to show growth. It provides a range of information and data to give teachers and leaders a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction as well as in student achievement. A start has been made in Salem in developing and implementing formative and summative assessments at some levels, in some programs, and in some courses. But benchmark assessments, a key to standards-based instruction, are infrequently evident. Authentic assessments such as portfolios, rubrics, peer- and self-evaluations, and multi-disciplinary projects are not consistently embedded across the district. Given these trends, the assessment system is neither balanced nor comprehensive. In the Salem Public Schools, the weaknesses and inconsistencies in assessment practices, the lack of curriculum alignment, and the unevenness in instruction and supervision all likely contribute to student achievement falling well below state achievement in terms of ELA and mathematics proficiency and to the insufficient improvement in student achievement over the past several years.

The district's accountability system does not consistently demonstrate the characteristics of a highly effective system: a focus throughout the district on the analysis and use of data; districtwide guidelines for its presentation, analysis and use; training for teachers and administrators in analyzing and using data; sufficient time for meetings to discuss data; and accountability based on data.

Amount of Focus and Training on Data

Staff expertise in data analysis is uneven and data analysis practices are inconsistent across the district. Interviewees reported that in 2008-2009 newly constituted data teams and other staff members from each school were trained in data analysis. School-based data teams and principals are now expected to analyze and report out MCAS data (and, in some schools, other data) to colleagues to help inform all sorts of educational discussions and decisions. In addition, specialists and coordinators collect and interpret data in their work with teachers. However, principals and other leaders told review team members that not many teachers are skilled in analyzing and interpreting data. At the same time, district-level professional development for staff members to learn how to analyze data better has been discontinued. Therefore, teachers

without these skills are expected to gain needed expertise by participating in data discussions or in professional development offered by individual schools, if they choose to offer it to build staff capacity. Not all have made this a priority. Interviewees also noted that the data teams' work had "gotten off track" recently and that training on the new bullying policy had been prioritized during the district's limited meeting time. "The whole piece of improving instruction has been put aside," was a common theme expressed in interviews.

Newly hired administrators noted that they had had only rudimentary exposure to district expectations and practices related to the collection, analysis, and use of achievement data. Some new administrators, but not all, rely on their own expertise and prior experience to create opportunities for meaningful data discussions at their schools. In addition, according to other interviewees, data use and analysis are no longer a focused part of district-level administrator meetings and do not usually inform conversations or problem-solving. The review team was told in several interviews that these meetings tended at the time of the review to be used mainly for information-sharing.

Variety across the District

Interviewees with multiple roles in the district—principals, teachers, coaches, and coordinators—indicated a variety of formats and protocols for analyzing and using data in their work. While some consistency was evident, it became apparent to review team members that there really were no districtwide expectations or guidelines or timelines for how data would be arrayed, analyzed, and used to inform decision-making. Acceptable practices for data analysis are used in some individual schools, but practices are inconsistent across and within schools. For example, only one school used a data wall to make student data visible and transparent for the entire school community, to use to identify improvements. Data analyses and interpretations are dependent on how much time individual principals allocate at faculty meetings or at other targeted meetings, which varies across schools. Data analysis and interpretation also vary according to the skills and capacity of each school's teachers, coaches, and coordinators. Some principals' time is so taken up with other administrative tasks, such as evaluating staff or coping with the structural and educational issues related to being new leaders, that setting expectations and goals for data analysis slips off of their agendas.

Time for Data Analysis

Time in schools for close data analysis is lacking. Across schools, some teachers have regular common planning or meeting time to discuss MCAS results and other student achievement data; some do not. The district has eliminated the once-a-week common planning period during the elementary school day to satisfy an increase under the collective bargaining agreement for 2010-2011 in the amount of elementary teachers' preparation time per week. Therefore, K-5 teachers must find time to meet voluntarily at opportune times—at lunch, after school, or at other faculty or professional development meetings, which are often allocated to other purposes. Collins Middle School teachers and specialists and the high school's grade 9 teachers do have regular and frequent dedicated team meeting time to review and discuss student achievement data—and they use it accordingly. It is unclear whether or not teachers in the other two middle school

programs (grades 6-8 at Bowditch and Saltonstall) have common planning time since they are housed in K-8 schools where instructional models and schedules differ from the Collins model. High school faculty members have carved out one two-hour meeting at the beginning of one Wednesday each month by starting school two hours late on that day. This gives high school teachers additional time, but not enough time, to tend to all curricular and instructional matters. High school interviewees noted that the Wednesday meetings have been allocated to the development, refinement, and alignment of the curriculum. Apart from these once-a-month meetings, high school teachers must find time voluntarily and informally to meet with colleagues to discuss student achievement and analyze assessment data. In fact, as mentioned, teachers noted that students' end-of-year exams are not thoughtfully analyzed; they are administered, grades are given, and then summer vacation begins.

Timeliness of Data Analysis

Timeliness of data analysis is an issue. Interviewees observed that when data is used, there is too long a time lag between assessments (not just MCAS assessments) and the time teachers receive and can discuss data on the assessment results for them to be able to make timely adjustments in instruction. The introduction of software such as Scantron or Reach or Remark Office OMR (Optical Mark Recognition) to formulate, generate, and analyze testing results can mitigate this problem; however, not enough teachers know how to use these software programs and more professional development is needed.

Use of a Variety of Sources of Data

Leaders sometimes take into account other sources of teaching and learning data that provide valuable information to promote improvements in student achievement. The high school initiative to open up AP courses to more students and the Laying the Foundation initiative in grades 6-10 to prepare students for higher level courses are two examples of efforts to respond to data indicators and to boost academic rigor and expectations. Another is the recent attempt to improve the high school graduation rate and the proposal to open a Horace Mann charter school to recover previous high school dropouts (see the first Student Support finding below).[17] However, other opportunities to seek and use meaningful data are missed. For example, principals do not conduct systematic walkthroughs to gather information, either to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning or to monitor what are said to be district instructional priorities such as differentiated instruction or sheltered English immersion (SEI) strategies. As a result, though they are said to be priorities, these strategies were infrequently observed at high levels of practice during classroom observations by review team members. Some principals conduct informal walkthroughs to be generally informed about what is happening in classrooms or to be visible in their schools. Only one principal interviewed reported conducting systematic classroom walkthroughs to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of instructional practice with the intent to use the data collected to make decisions about improving it. Also, according to interviewees, central office leaders had only limited academic presence in schools and had no observational database of each school's strengths and

[17] ESE approved this proposal, and the Salem Community Charter School opened in the 2011-2012 school year.

weaknesses. They did not sit with principals on site to review and discuss achievement data for the school by indicators such as subject or subgroup performance. In the view of interviewees, their presence in schools was to appear at events, to attend meetings, or to offer support in disciplinary actions.

Use of Data for Accountability

Hard conversations about accountability for improving student achievement using data as evidence rarely take place in the district, according to interviewees and a review of administrator and teacher evaluations. School committee members interviewed stated that they did not include a goal or goals that addressed improvement in student achievement as one of the multiple goals set for the former superintendent in his three-year plan—the goals that formed the basis for the former superintendent's evaluation. In addition, school committee interviewees noted that student achievement data was not used to guide budget decisions: budget decisions were mainly based on an equal division of resources rather than being based on needs.

Interviews with principals showed that the former superintendent did not hold them accountable for specific improvements to student achievement, as measured by MCAS or other data, in their goal setting and their performance reviews. However, principals clearly stated that improved MCAS scores were of primary importance in the district and in their schools. That message had been clearly delivered in the district. Also, principals and others described how MCAS improvement was central to many school improvement plans, with most SIP goals targeting improved scores or better responses to types of questions, such as open-response questions. SIP improvement goals relating to MCAS are based on MCAS item analysis and sometimes on subgroup analysis. Principals expressed the view that they hold themselves accountable and spoke of a strong commitment to improving teaching and learning in their schools.

Teacher focus groups and interviews with coaches and other specialists revealed that conversations about student achievement data tended to be general and to occur in small or large group meetings at school. The difficult one-on-one conversations between a principal and a teacher about student achievement data, with that data at hand and central to the conversation, do not occur either informally as part of supervision or formally as part of an evaluation conversation. And other staff members charged with supervisory roles who might also need to have accountability conversations about student achievement and data—the coaches (who teach full-time) and the subject coordinators—have no supervisory leverage because they do not have the power to evaluate those whom they supervise. They do, however, meet with teachers to review student achievement data. When time permits, teachers also discuss aggregate and disaggregated student data in meetings with each other and with coaches to fine-tune curriculum and improve instruction.

Use of Data to Review Programs and Services

The district conducts no systematic internal reviews of its programs and services using district data or comparative data from other, similar districts with the same academic programs to discern program or service effectiveness. A 2007 report by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability noted, "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."[18] This has not changed. While interviewees stated that programs were constantly under review and revision, the review team determined that these revisions were actually fine-tuning of pacing, emphasis, and topic placement that is clearly important to do, but does not constitute a comprehensive evaluation of program effectiveness.

Conclusion

Fragmentation, noted as an emerging theme by the review team during the site visit, is a feature of the district's accountability system. There are pieces of acceptable and good practice in Salem around assessment and accountability, notably the decisions the district has made about the key assessments to be used in some subjects and the focus on developing more common assessments. However, the system as currently implemented has too many missing components to operate at a highly effective level, a level leading to a more complete curriculum, a higher quality of instruction, and improved student achievement. In the judgment of the review team, until all the components of a strong assessment and accountability system are in place and aligned, student achievement will likely continue to show little improvement.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district does not have a full-time human resource director and has no published procedures or standards to guide its recruitment, screening, interviewing, and hiring of new teaching staff or to connect them with whole-district needs. This is particularly a problem in Salem where administrator turnover has been significant and where there is a high need for instructional vacancies to be filled by candidates with the specific competencies and skills to meet the needs of the student population.

At the time of the review, the district had recently eliminated the full-time position of human resource director because of budget cuts. As a result, the former superintendent, an experienced school district human resource director, had been assigned the district's human resource supervisory oversight in addition to his role as chief executive officer. While this administrative compacting helped the district meet its financial demands, combining these two positions subtly weakens the potential impact of both positions in a system as large and as complicated as Salem's. The superintendent, as chief executive officer, needs to have confidence in a district recruiting and staffing process that follows a coherent strategic plan, with a strategic connection to pools of potential teaching candidates with proven track records with a student population similar to that in Salem. Currently there is no apparent connection in the district's recruitment efforts to the needs recognized in the District Improvement Plan or to the teaching competencies now needed in the district to improve the achievement of a changing population of students, including a growing number of ELL students. The current recruitment process seeks to fill positions as vacancies occur rather than operating as a systematic, district-controlled outreach to pools of potential teaching candidates with proven track records. In a random review of personnel files, entry-level application materials showed that minimal information is sought by

[18] See EQA's 2007 Technical Report for the Salem Public Schools, p. 11.

the district or provided by candidates about their previous successes with student populations similar to those attending the Salem Public Schools.

The human resource function is weakened because to execute it well requires a time-consuming strategic outreach to attract human capital to the district that can bring robust, proven approaches to educating children from different cultures, many from families for whom English is not the first language. The superintendent's duties are complex enough without the requirement that he, for instance, be out-of-district in colleges interviewing candidates in the region or attending strategy meetings to plan talent searches. This combination of the superintendent function with oversight of the human resource function may also be confusing if the superintendent is called to meetings by supervisors about potential disciplining of employees and then later fills the superintendent's role in the grievance process.

From interviews with administrators and teachers, the review team learned that it is necessary to recruit staff with the ability to meet the needs of a changing student population. However, the internal processes for recruiting, selecting, and assigning teaching staff are not organized as a strategic outreach to candidate pools with the background, expertise, or experience to improve achievement for Salem students, especially ELL students and students from different cultures.

There is no comprehensive district recruiting plan to provide early contacts with able recruits with records of success with similar student populations who could fill vacancies in the district. In fact, most new hires live and earn teaching degrees locally and, as previously mentioned, applicants provide minimal authentication of their classroom skills or success at promoting student learning among students with similar needs to Salem's.

There is a school committee policy (4106) with a lead sentence reading, "The Salem School Department is an equal opportunity employe[r]." This declarative sentence lays out a value statement that should be reflected both in the goals of a strategic recruiting plan and in the racial and ethnic diversity of Salem Public Schools employees. A review of records and onsite observations by the review team indicated that it was reflected in neither.

In interviews and through review of documents, the team learned that the District Improvement Plan and its companion School Improvement Plans are so non-specific and all-encompassing (e.g., "Biology Teachers; Administration") in their assignment of the personnel responsible for accomplishing objectives (also non-specific, e.g., "January PD dedicated to mathematics concerns") as to be of very little value in holding anyone accountable for accomplishing parts of the plans. In addition, none of the plans speak to including human capital strategies as resources to bring in new ideas and competencies to improve teaching and learning. Because they do not, and because the district does not have a strategic recruiting plan, the important needs expressed in district and school plans are not reflected in recruiting.

At the time of the review there had been significant turnover in administrators: in superintendents (three in a decade); principals (four new elementary principals in 2010-2011); business managers (four in five years); and curriculum supervisors. Such turnover takes its toll on district operations. Historical connections between district oversight and the staff who do the day-to-day work, developed for the most part by talented administrators over time, vanish when

those administrators leave the system. In most successful organizations, internal supervisory methods are memorialized in administrative regulations, standing committees, or standard operating procedures that are open to review and revision. In a district, these processes tend to be found in its bargaining agreements, not in administrative regulations. The district does not have standard operating procedures or internal structures that would ensure that important internal connections continue after key administrators leave the district (e.g. screening rubrics, interview procedures and questions, training of screeners and interviewers, due diligence protocols, professional development centralization, and the like).

Vacancies occur over time, but with some predictability. At the time of the review there had been no recent reductions in force and no recall lists in the district. Most vacancies, according to several sources, occur because of retirements, which can be forecast and become the foundation for a strategic recruiting plan. According to several staff members, some vacancies occur because teachers depart for other districts for higher salaries. Occasionally, non-professional-status teachers are not renewed, but most remain.

From 2008 to 2010, 147 new Bargaining Unit A members (including all classroom teachers) were hired, according to district seniority lists. Many school districts anticipate retirements so that they can pre-interview potential candidates in anticipation of vacancies. There is no such strategic effort in Salem.

In an interview, the review team learned that when a written vacancy request arrives at the central office, it is reviewed and coded. It circulates between the human resource administrative assistant, the finance office and the assistant superintendent for notation and approval. A job posting is written reflecting minimum qualifications, a statement of functions, closing date, and application procedures. It is sent out in the superintendent's bulletin and to the schools; depending upon the level of position, it may be placed in newspapers as well.

When the closing date occurs, the supervising administrator comes to the central office and reads the applications. No common district screening rubric is used. The supervisor selects some applications for further review, and the human resource office makes copies of résumés. These are taken by the supervisor back to his or her school. From that point on, the process is up to the supervisor, who can select candidates to interview and can decide whether to select or reject them and whether to accept a transfer. The supervisor may have a screening team or not, may have an interview team or not, and may consider the needs of the DIP or SIP or not. There are no district standards, common screening instruments, or district-authorized questions and scoring rubrics available or in use. The process is highly variable and standards for hiring exist in the mind of the supervisor of the position, rather than in approved district protocols.

A final recommendation is signed by the principal and then goes to the superintendent. Under education reform law in Massachusetts, the principal hires his or her own staff with the concurrence of the superintendent. In interviews, the team learned that no recent recommendations had been sent back from the superintendent to any principal.

There are no written protocols to guide the checking of candidates' credentials and references or to guide accurate entry salary placement. According to interviewees, reference checks are

performed by the principal or supervisor, usually by telephone. Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check details are completed by the human resource administrative assistant. The superintendent makes the final entry salary step decision.

There were no documents on file available for review by the reviewing team that would allow auditing of the hiring process described here.

It is a school-centered, *ad hoc* human resource recruiting, selection, and hiring system, without district controlling standards or written guidelines and superimposed on already overburdened administrators, who have had to absorb new supervisory responsibilities for their cost centers. Each supervisor of a vacant position operates on his or her own in screening applications, interviewing candidates, and checking references.

Under this system, there will be wide variation in the skills new teachers have to meet the needs of the system. These new teachers may be with the district for decades. Without centralized values that are incorporated into the recruitment and hiring of new staff, each school will try to meet its own needs. Although new teachers are hired in the Salem Public Schools, once hired, they cannot be involuntarily transferred to another school, where their expertise or skill set could be better used, except "for cause." (Article VII, C).[19] The district human resource staffing function is without sufficient central office oversight or approved standard operating procedures. As a result, it is highly variable, with each supervisor looking only to the narrow needs of his or her school rather than also considering the broader needs of the district.

Unless the district develops a strategic recruiting effort that is aligned with its most serious instructional needs and creates common screening and interview protocols that promote investigation into the incoming skill levels of potential new teachers and other hires, it will continue to be weakened in trying to bring high levels of competence and of appropriate skills to its classrooms and schools.

District job descriptions are not updated and do not always set non-negotiable minimum qualifications. Paraprofessionals are not evaluated, and their compensation rates are not set according to their various job duties.

School committee policies (4201 and 4301) require that job descriptions be presented to the school committee for all professional and support positions and that a comprehensive file of professional job descriptions be maintained.

In addition, the collective bargaining agreement for teachers (Article VI, J,4) requires that the district prepare job descriptions for "all positions, administrative and supervisory in nature, which affect teachers." These in turn will "be made available to teachers and other members of the staff." In interviews, however, the review team learned that when vacancies occur for budgeted positions, generally only "postings" are prepared, not a full job description.

There is a three-ring binder in the human resource office that contains a number of job descriptions for many job titles, but many are decades old and outdated. Many job descriptions

[19] See bargaining agreement for teachers, available at http://educatorcontracts.doemass.org/view.aspx?recno=237.

do not require those holding the position to display some mastery of technology related to the job, though most offices, classrooms, and libraries visited by the review team contained computers and an array of technological devices in use by staff.

Other job descriptions contained weak or optional descriptions of minimum qualifications. A review of job descriptions revealed that they were not reviewed periodically for updating with a view to their currency with respect to job function or their appropriateness to the changing work of the schools.

For example, there were some 181 paraprofessionals in the district in 2010, a large number when compared to the number of paraprofessionals employed in comparable districts (see finding on administrative capacity in Leadership and Governance, above). There are several job descriptions in the three-ring binder which describe the qualifications and duties of the various paraprofessional job titles. Qualifications are described but can be waived by the supervisor of the position with no district-approved rationale for doing so. This *ad hoc* waiver option may lead new hires and job incumbents with very different skill levels to be employed at the same rate of pay, while producing results at very different levels because of the differences in their skills. In general, paraprofessionals earn both compensation and benefits at equal levels despite the vast differences in their work responsibilities. No job analyses with references to compensation studies or update reviews were contained in the job description files reviewed by the visiting team.

The idea that a single compensation rate fits all is inaccurate in relation to the work that these various job incumbents do, especially those paraprofessionals who work with ELL students and students receiving special education services. Their minimum qualifications are more critical to their work than the minimum qualifications for other paraprofessional job titles. In addition, many special education and ELL paraprofessionals work in classrooms with high-need populations supporting student safety and well-being as well as learning.

The review team learned in interviews that paraprofessionals are not evaluated for their performance and productivity. The flexibility as to applicant qualifications coupled with a lack of evaluations leaves open the possibility of abuses in hiring, assignment, and retention and substantially weakens the district’s ability to provide high levels of paraprofessional service to students on IEPs, in ELL programs, and in other classroom settings.

There is no accountability for paraprofessional positions although many of the job incumbents working in these positions are working with students in classrooms in clusters or in a one-to-one ratio. Despite paraprofessional collective bargaining language (Article XVI) that a paraprofessional evaluation system would be in place by 2005, interviews and documentation showed that none had been developed. Article V, G of the contract (2010-2011) lays out an evaluation system, but in interviews the review team was told that paraprofessionals cannot be evaluated. In addition, the school committee has agreed to a disciplinary/dismissal standard of “just cause” (Article V, F) for this large group of employees. To meet a “just cause” standard, clear job descriptions and requirements are necessary, rather than the flexible qualifications statements of the district's current paraprofessional job descriptions. One administrator said in an

interview, "It is impossible to dismiss a paraprofessional in Salem." The language contained in the paraprofessional contract and in the job descriptions on file support that observation, in the opinion of the review team.

As the team progressed through its interviews, school visits, and review of documents, it became clear that the reduction of central office administrative positions was having an effect on district oversight, supervision, and evaluation of staff. This compacting of organizational functions has weakened the district's efforts to hold employees accountable for important tasks. Although organizational functions were in part absorbed by existing administrators, job descriptions were not updated to include these absorbed duties. In addition, supervisory functions were expected of personnel whose positions give them virtually no authority or leverage to meet expectations of them.

The job description file is ineffective in its design and its functioning. The qualifications required to hold a position and to which the person in the position is to be accountable are not accurate or up-to-date. In the case of paraprofessionals who deal with students with particular needs this situation is especially concerning.

District documents must also be aligned with the Department of Labor regulations regarding eligibility for overtime for both exempt and non-exempt staff. For example the collective bargaining agreement for teachers (Article III, D) cites an absolute rate-of-pay for teachers who work beyond the school day that is above what some teachers make per hour for their normal job responsibilities.

The superintendent can affix both responsibility and accountability for various functions in the district only with current, realistic job descriptions that set high standards of expected performance. Not updating job descriptions or setting non-negotiable minimum qualifications as vacancies are posted, coupled with not assessing job performance, weakens the district's efforts to provide high quality services to its departments, schools, and students.

Professional status teachers are required to be evaluated only once every four years, and many teacher and administrator evaluations were not in compliance with 603 CMR 35:00[20].The district's teacher and administrator evaluation systems have limited value in promoting employee performance and effectiveness.

A review of past and current teacher contracts yielded no provision for teacher evaluation. There is one section of the contract (Article VI, J) which refers to supervision and "the administrator evaluating the teacher," but neither that article nor any other describes the district's teacher evaluation process. The review team was given a separate document entitled "Supervision and Evaluation Procedures" (2005) which contained verbatim references to 603 CMR 35:00 and the accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching, as well as a listing of approximately 80 descriptors distributed among seven major areas of teaching competencies. That document was

[20]As in force at the time of the review. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted on June 28, 2011, to replace the regulations at 603 CMR 35.00 with new regulations on the Evaluation of Educators.

not signed by either party in negotiations, nor was any letter of agreement between labor and management presented to the review team.

Despite the absence of enabling language in the collective bargaining contract, the district followed a four-year cycle of evaluation for professional teacher status (PTS) teachers and an annual cycle for non-PTS teachers. When a teacher opts for a professional development or project year instead of a summative evaluation year, the four-year cycle is out of compliance with 603 CMR 35:06(1), which required the evaluation of teachers with professional teacher status at least once every two years.

The team reviewed 70 randomly selected personnel files of teachers to examine the pattern of the district's evaluations of their performance. According to these randomly chosen records, non-professional-status teachers were observed annually, and written evaluation documents were included in their personnel files. All 13 files of teachers without professional status reviewed by the team contained current license information. These files were acceptable as to their timeliness and their informative[21] and instructive[22] qualities. None contained recommendations for improving instruction through participation in formal professional development.

Of the remaining 57 files, for teachers with professional status, one-third did not have timely evaluations, and the evaluations in those that did contained minimal instructive information for improved practice. Nine files indicated that the teacher's license had expired. No evaluation contained any recommendation for professional development to improve instruction. About 10 percent of the evaluations for teachers with professional status reviewed contained detailed descriptions of what was observed in classrooms during administrators' visits so that the reader could see a snapshot of the class, the lesson, and the teacher-student interaction. Nearly all scores (98 percent) on teacher evaluation forms reviewed indicated the highest levels of classroom performance. This is in contrast to what the team found during observations in classrooms (see the last Curriculum and Instruction finding above) and seems to be in contradiction to the picture of achievement presented in the Student Performance section above. In analyzing the Supervision and Evaluation Procedures provided by the district, the team noted that a minimum number of required pre- and post-meetings were mandated for evaluations both of non-professional-status teachers and professional-status teachers, with a different number of required meetings for each.

A calculation of the combined number of observations and evaluation meetings required in the evaluation of teachers according to handbook guidelines revealed that for 2010-2011, principals and other evaluators needed to conduct almost 1500 meetings and observations for non-professional-status teachers and 900 meetings for teachers with professional status.[23] These numbers represent an extraordinarily burdensome meeting calendar for both teacher and

[21] "Informative" means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks.

[22] "Instructive" means that the evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

[23] These calculations were made estimating the number of observations that evaluators had to make to meet the 2005 teacher evaluation handbook requirements and using the Unit A seniority list as a base line.

evaluator. This allocation of time is a diversion from other productive uses that could make an impact on improving the district's flat student achievement as represented by MCAS results.

In addition, in the handbook provided to the review team there were 18 separate prescriptions and proscriptions expressed as requirements. These restrict and limit supervisor/evaluator behavior. This document is not referred to in the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, but was provided to the team as a binding, yet unsigned, procedure agreed to by both parties.

Personnel files for 25 administrators were reviewed by the team. Of this group, eight administrators were new hires and had no evaluations on file. Of the remainder, the personnel files for only five administrators had timely evaluations. The rest had none for the previous two years. Principal evaluations reviewed were well-done, instructive, and informative. Some administrators, in Unit B, are not evaluated—none of the Unit B administrators had any evaluations in their files. This is in non-compliance with state statutory law[24] and 603 CMR 35:06(1), which require that administrators be evaluated annually.

Again, 98 percent of all scores on administrator evaluations were scored at the highest levels of performance. According to district records, administrators are operating successfully, but student MCAS scores remain low and flat. Furthermore, the form in use for administrator evaluations was not consistent with the state regulations for evaluation at 603 CMR 35:00, and of the four new principals in the district, only one had an entry plan on file that outlined assumptions, strategies, and learning goals that would guide the first year in that role.

The teacher evaluation form currently provided in the Supervision and Evaluation Procedures document is used to memorialize observed data and translate it into a proficiency score for the record for each teacher in the seven areas of competency included in the Principles of Effective Teaching accompanying 603 CMR 35.00. It is a very limited process, as described, and is incapable of providing accurate, timely information to teachers, administrators, parents, and students about the effects of instruction on student learning. For example, although there are approximately 80 descriptors in the seven areas, only pre-selected Principles may be discussed at the pre-conference each time an observation is planned. Despite the district's evaluation forms having all of the ESE-provided Principles and descriptors, an analysis of these forms indicated that by meeting one of the Principles, the teacher could meet them all for the purposes of a final rating.

Many of the Principles of Effective Teaching listed in the Supervision and Evaluation Procedures are ignored in practice and never rated. Thus important information about teaching performance is missed and a minimalistic approach to evaluation of teaching performance is used.

Under the procedures, a teacher with professional status who chooses the professional development option described below could go through two decades of teaching with only 2.5 hours of observation (one-half hour every four years) for retention purposes, with only a small number of the descriptors of effective instruction being used in each observation as the

[24] See G.L. c. 71, s. 38.

foundation for retention. In a district seeking ways to improve teaching and learning, this process has little value.

Another major instance of the Salem teacher evaluation process's non-compliance with the requirements of 603 CMR 35:00 is the option permitting a teacher with professional status to select a professional development activity to substitute for a year of summative classroom evaluation. While this may be a useful opportunity to help teachers focus on some area of professional interest, and to pursue professional development activities for re-licensing, it is not in compliance with the two-year summative evaluation cycle for teachers with professional status required by Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 38, and 603 CMR 35.06(1).[25]

The team learned in interviews that no professional status teacher had been separated from employment for performance reasons within recent memory. There is no standard in the teachers' collective bargaining agreement or in school committee policies for dismissal of a professional status teacher. There was mention in interviews that some teachers without professional status had been non-renewed and that some teachers had been let go before the 90-day benchmark,[26] but there is no indication that there is an appropriate district procedure, consistently implemented, to make sure that teachers in both categories are appropriately evaluated and, if necessary, separated from employment. Without adhering to the provisions of 603 CMR 35:00, which provide for adequate and appropriate evaluation of teachers and administrators, the evaluations being conducted in the district at the time of the review have limited value in providing timely information about performance and effectiveness and produce little leverage to improve student achievement.

Professional development opportunities in the district are available but are not centralized in their strategic priorities, planning, implementation, funding, or impact.

The Salem Public Schools had no central professional development committee or any districtwide comprehensive professional development plan in use at the time of the review.

In interviews, the review team learned that the recently retired assistant superintendent had a centralized vision and plan for professional development. Records show that she also initiated and led professional development events for principals in "Text-Based Discussions" and other related leadership-focused events. She then followed up on these sessions by commenting on whether these topics played out in her observations of their performance as educational leaders. Written comments were included in the principal's annual evaluations reviewed by the visiting team.

There is an array of professional development initiatives in place in the district. Both full and partial days are set aside for professional development, but these events do not seem to be reviewed for their potential influence on district goals. Activities are planned and executed by a variety of presenters, but there was no evidence in written records available to the visiting team

[25] See G.L. c. 71, s. 38, and 603 CMR 35.00.
[26] Teachers who have not yet been in a school system for 90 days may be dismissed without the protections afforded to other teachers without professional teacher status by Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, s. 42.

that reflected any evaluation of these activities and events. The district does not track professional development activities or their effects on employee performance or student achievement as part of its computerized management information system.

Four days are set aside at the beginning of the school year for professional development. For new teachers, one day is set aside for an orientation to the city, its culture, and the district. Both district representatives and representatives of the teachers' union are presenters. Mentors are assigned to new teachers and a year-long schedule of meetings is established so that these paired teams can meet. During the year, the full days of professional development occur on Election Day and in January. Depending on the issues perceived to be important, professional development time is devoted to various school and district topics. Often these are "topics of the hour" such as the bullying awareness training provided during most of the January day.

Trainings take place in various locations around the district, led by district staff and/or external trainers. In addition, there are half-days of school-based professional development scheduled during the school year on certain Wednesdays.

Cost centers devise their own models of professional development. In some cases, principals send a team of teachers to an event. In other cases principals use a "train the trainer" model. In others, teachers gather to understand a "shelf product" in a training session, e.g., for the *Superkids* K-2 literacy program.

Teachers keep their own Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) on file. Principals sign off on various workshops and course work requested by teachers. Credits that are received by teachers as a result of course completion are used for relicensing. The district has $40,000 available annually for tuition re-imbursements for teachers. In addition, the district accounting system charges salaries to the professional development account for teachers who attend various full- and part-time district and school-based professional development days during the school year. No data was available to the review team about what kind of return-on-investment, in terms of improvement to teaching, the district or schools earned for these expenditures.

In interviews, the visiting team learned that literacy and math coaches at the pre-K-5 level were valued. Coaches helped teachers collect, understand, and interpret data while providing "just-in-time professional development" with students during classes. The effects of this kind of field-based professional development are not tracked in district records.

As mentioned above, the district provides a mentoring program for teachers new to the district. It has been a one-year program, but there is an interest in extending it, and some teachers informally continue the mentor-mentee relationship into a second year. Mentors and mentee teachers interviewed were very satisfied with the beneficial effects that this professional interaction had on their work. Also, the review team read a series of documents reflecting the reactions of mentored teachers. The detailed mentee feedback contained a rich array of complimentary reflections on the program's value to newly hired teachers. According to the feedback, the mentoring process is a powerful informal way to provide assistance and advice, support and instructional feedback to newly hired teachers, but time and other scheduling and logistical issues hinder providing them with more robust, timely, and uninterrupted assistance.

Another professional development opportunity is found in the teacher evaluation handbook: a professional status teacher can opt to have a year of professional study or of a similar project instead of a biennial summative evaluation. These self-selected professional development projects are approved and tracked by that teacher's supervisor, and records of progress and completion entered into the teacher's personnel file. No data was available or presented to show the relative value of this kind of professional development to the participating teacher in place of a summative observation. In addition, there was no evidence in files reviewed by the team to suggest that the completion of this professional development activity involved shared learning with colleagues.

It was noted that one alternative professional development possibility included in the evaluation handbook was National Board Certification, a research-based, teacher-controlled national effort to improve instruction. In interviews, the team learned that no teacher had chosen that process.

The team reviewed a random selection of 70 teacher personnel files. None included recommendations for formal professional development coursework, workshops, or other specific learning activities for teachers as a way of improving their teaching skills.

The district has an array of professional development opportunities that it offers through events, tuition re-imbursements, workshops, grants, and other points of access both within and outside of the district. The offerings in this array, however, are not part of a district-approved professional development plan aligned with district goals and priorities, but rather originate at different cost centers throughout the district. The funding for professional development is centralized in the district budget, but priorities for it and its effects are not documented. The review team could find no operational priority connecting the funding, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the district's professional development offerings in district files. There is no systemwide published plan and no professional development oversight committee. Staff members who were interviewed knew about specific professional development opportunities, but no unified listing of projects, topics, and priorities was available to the team.

Not to align, prioritize, systemize, document, track, and evaluate these many professional development offerings as a unified connected effort to align instructional competence with the district's changing student learning needs has weakened the school system's efforts to improve student learning.

Student Support

The district does not have fully-developed, comprehensive, and targeted systems and practices to address the academic, emotional, and social needs of diverse learners, especially English language learners.

The Salem Public Schools have a published strategic goal found in the District Improvement Plan: "To maximize the opportunities for *each student* [emphasis added] to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially to become productive members of a global economy and thoughtful participants in a democratic society." While the review team did discover evidence of some promising practices through observations and interviews with school and community

stakeholders, these efforts tended to be sporadic and did not reflect a clear vision of how to systematize and institutionalize practices that would bring about improved student learning and achievement. One interviewee who was familiar with district planning processes voiced frustration at district decision-making: this interviewee did not understand how and why decisions are made and saw "a lot of wheel spinning and not a lot of follow-up."

In interviews, district administrators and school staff could not clearly articulate what the district was doing in relation to the low performance of ELLs and students receiving special education services. They did make reference to programs, but it was unclear how these programs were working together to improve student performance. There appeared to be a prevailing assumption that the analysis of MCAS scores would lead to improvements in subgroups. Review team members were told in interviews that teachers were "differentiating instruction" but interviewees could not explain how this approach was specifically addressing the needs of diverse learners. Interviewees also noted that capacity to differentiate instruction was weak in the district. Classroom observations revealed little evidence of differentiation or sheltered English immersion (SEI) instruction.

Another theme that emerged from interviews with district administrators and school staff was that some appeared to be resigned to the school district not having the capacity to address the problems of ELLs and their families and other families. Many interviewees attributed lagging test scores to the effects of limited English proficiency, poverty and its accompanying problems, and mobility and attendance issues. According to some interviewees, the community has found it difficult to adjust to its changing population, particularly the increase in residents who speak other languages; cultural issues are not addressed in the schools; and some administrators and staff do not have high expectations for students, especially ELLs. One effect of a lack of a clear vision in how to serve diverse students and their families is the eroding belief and conviction among some school staff that the district can successfully address the academic, emotional, and social needs of all students. This effect was apparent in interviews with school staff who appeared overwhelmed with the needs of students. Unless a vision of how to serve diverse students and their families is developed and the resignation of staff who do not now see a way to improve these students' achievement is addressed, it will be difficult to bring about the improvement.

In spite of the obstacles outlined above, the district is not starting from ground zero in relation to student support. There are promising programs in place that can serve as building blocks for a more comprehensive approach to support the subgroups most in need.

English Language Learners

The subgroup achieving at the lowest levels in Salem is the ELL population (see Tables 2 and 3 in the Student Performance section above). Table 8 below provides a comparison of ELL performance in Salem with ELL performance in a comparable district (Fitchburg) and statewide. In every instance, the district's ELL performance lags behind the comparison groups. Interviews with school principals and staff cited the ELL coordinators (one for grades K-5, one for grades 6-12) as playing a critical role in providing support to principals and teaching staff in providing

services to ELL students. However, interviewees reported that since the coordinators function under a teacher's collective bargaining agreement and teach full-time, they did not have the time or the authority to mandate changes in ELL services or to supervise staff. The coordinators work very closely with schools and teachers, but without evaluative authority, the result is that schools do not appear to be held accountable for what the review team observed to be an inconsistent implementation of the SEI instructional model.

Table 8: 2010 Percentages of ELL Students Scoring Proficient or Above in ELA and Math Salem Compared to Fitchburg and State

	Salem	Fitchburg	Difference	State	Difference
ELA Proficiency Rate	7	11	- 4	22	- 15
Math Proficiency Rate	9	13	- 4	24	- 15

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

In addition, in 2010 Salem ELL students did not meet the targets set by the state for progress toward English language proficiency and for attainment of English language proficiency, as shown by the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA). Fitchburg ELL students met both targets. Statewide, 60 percent of ELLs made progress toward English proficiency

As a way to provide more support to new ELLs in the district, a committee composed of the ELL coordinators, the assistant superintendent, specialist directors, and representative school principals devised a plan to institute a newcomers program at the elementary and early middle school levels. The committee developed a draft entitled "ELL Elementary Program Model Options" outlining the following model for implementation in the fall of 2011:

Table 9: Proposed Newcomer Program, Grade Distribution by School

School	Grade level
Witchcraft Heights	K, in class support only
Carlton	Grades 1 - 2
Bentley	Grades 3 - 4
Saltonstall	Grades 5 - 6
Bates	Phase out ESL services

Source: Documentation provided by the Salem Public Schools

A stated goal for this program was to "more efficiently use current district resources to increase instructional time for ELLs learning English and academic content." This program is one of the few instances where there appeared to be a concentrated and comprehensive attempt to more effectively serve ELLs in the district.

Special Education

The special education population is another subgroup that is performing significantly lower than their peers statewide. The following table provides a brief summary of the performance of students receiving special education services compared to their state peers.

Table 10: 2010 Percentages of Special Education Students Scoring Proficient or Above in ELA and Math
Salem Compared to State

	Salem	State	Difference
ELA Proficiency Rate	19	28	- 9
Math Proficiency Rate	12	21	- 9
ELA Median Student Growth Percentile	40	41	- 1
Math Median Student Growth Percentile	33.5	43	- 9.5

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

In 2009, the school committee commissioned two consultants to conduct a study of special education services in the district. In interviews, district administrators, school committee members, and school staff identified a number of purposes for the study. They indicated that it was intended 1) as a cost-saving measure to cut down the number of out-of-district placements, 2) as a strategy to develop more effective and equitable programs for students receiving special education services, and 3) as a call to action to ensure that students were not prematurely referred to the special education department. Interviewees cited the director of pupil personnel, new in 2010-2011, as having an instrumental role in implementing the study's recommendations.

One of the key recommendations of the study was to improve the charge and procedures for the Child Study Teams (CSTs), now called the Instructional Support Teams (ISTs), at each school. The study reported that the IST was originally meant to be a forum where classroom teachers could discuss cases of students who were struggling academically. The study reported that these teams were operating inconsistently across the district, in some cases becoming venues where teachers were making premature special education referrals. For the newly formed ISTs, a protocol for how these teams should operate was developed and adjustment counselors, who serve as facilitators for their meetings, were trained in the new protocol. District administrators and special education coordinators and staff reported in interviews that the meetings were now focused on helping teachers to improve their instructional repertoire to meet students' learning needs, rather than serving as pre-referral meetings. Interviewees also reported that although ISTs were operating more consistently across the district, more work still needed to be done to ensure that these teams are highly functioning.

Programs for At-risk Students

A review of the 2010 attendance data for Hispanic/Latino students revealed that 23.7 percent were chronically absent. The problem is even more severe at the high school where 39 percent of Hispanic/Latino students were chronically absent in 2010. When the review team asked what the district was doing in response to this chronic attendance problem, the following programs were cited as addressing this issue.

The Parent-Child Home program is a national and international program that has been in Salem since 1988. The program focuses upon "child readiness"; in it, a home visitor goes to parents' homes with toys and books to model the kinds of practices that will support linguistic and cognitive development. The director of the program reported in an interview that principals could tell which students have taken part in the program because they were sometimes ahead of their peers. She further reported that there was data to support the effectiveness of the program. The review team did not see data on the program's impact in the district, but the program's website indicated that there have been positive trends in data for the program on the national level. When asked who the program serves, the director stated that she reviews a database of families with at-risk indicators (e.g., low-income, English is not the primary language at home) and then invites families to participate. The program was serving 40 to 50 students but had not been able to expand because of budget constraints.

The Freshman House was instituted in 2004 to support the transition of students from middle to high school. Incoming students are assigned to a team of teachers who meet daily during common team time to strategize ways to best serve their students' academic needs. The Freshman House has its own house master and adjustment counselor. The Bridge Academy is a school-within-a-school at the high school that serves students who have extensive emotional needs. Interviews and the high school's website revealed that these students are connected to mental health programs in the city and are required to meet regularly with an adjustment counselor. The housemaster reported that the Bridge Academy is also committed to using innovative ways to educate students.

Based upon the Bridge Academy model, the district submitted a plan to ESE for a Horace Mann charter school to target high school age students who have dropped out of school.[27] The proposed charter school would also link students to needed social services. When the review team asked why Hispanic/Latino students had chronic attendance problems and were dropping out of school at high rates, it was stated that students require more "wraparound services" to address emotional needs.

Advanced Placement Courses

In 2009-2010, only 18 percent of students were enrolled in one or more Advanced Placement courses. An interview with a parent focus group revealed parental concerns that the district was also not providing appropriate support for students who were performing at advanced levels.

[27] ESE approved this plan, and the Salem Community Charter School opened in the 2011-2012 school year.

One parent who had had a child in the high school reported that she placed her child in a private school because she was concerned about the lack of "curricular coherence" and high expectations for her son.

When school administrators and teachers were asked what was being done to ensure that students would excel at high levels, teachers spoke about the Laying the Foundation (LTF) program. LTF is aimed at improving the readiness of students for Advanced Placement coursework, but teachers reported that LTF would also benefit students who chose not to take AP classes. In Salem, LTF focuses upon improving literacy practices in English language arts from grade 6 to grade 10. Teachers have received professional development in order to implement LTF strategies in their classrooms.

Family and Community Outreach

The review team found striking the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among administrators and school staff in a district where approximately a third of the student body is Hispanic/Latino. In the fifteen years since 1996, the percentage of white students has fallen from 70.3 percent to 56.9 percent, and the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students has increased from 23.2 percent to 31.5 percent. Table 11 below shows the lack of diversity among the district's full staff.

Table 11: Comparison of Student and Staff Race/Ethnicity Percentages
Salem Public Schools
2010-2011

Race/Ethnicity	Students	Staff	Differential
African-American	4.7	0.4	-4.3
Asian	3.0	0.3	-2.7
Hispanic/Latino	31.5	3.1	-28.4
Multi-race (non-Hispanic)	3.7	0	-3.7
White	56.9	96.1	+39.2

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

One staff member attributed the district's struggle to understand the Hispanic/Latino population to the lack of diversity in the staff, giving the review team as an example the district's use of adjustment counselors. An adjustment counselor is assigned to each school, but none of these counselors is bilingual. According to this staff member, although a translator is provided during a counseling session, it is difficult for a translator to communicate all the nuances of language and culture. The staff member went on to say that the lack of diversity is not just a district problem but is also a problem in city offices where students and their families seek social services. Several staff members in interviews reported how students serve as "cultural mediators." Many

times students do not come to school because they need to serve as translators if a family member requires medical attention or is trying to get help from a social service agency.

From a review of the District Improvement Plan, individual School Improvement Plans, and school committee minutes, it appears that the district does not have an explicit priority related to bridging this cultural divide. According to one interviewee, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) provides English as a Second Language (ESL) training and computer training to parents; this program was initiated by the ROTC. The dynamic of the ROTC ESL program appeared to replicate other models prevalent in the district: programs and initiatives to support underserved populations are rarely initiated by the district through a thoughtful planning process that sets priorities and develops systems to accomplish them. Rather, initiatives appear to be the *ad hoc* result of the ideas of individuals or groups who work within the system. But, this being the case, there is no potential for a larger impact for a practice or program because it is not part of a larger district vision that is clear and communicated. Another problem is related to budget. If an effective program or practice is not well known to the district, the program may be cut back or completely eliminated. Interviewees said that they had already seen this dynamic. The district can not respond effectively to the diverse student support needs in the district without balancing top-down and bottom-up initiatives and ensuring that they align to district as well as school priorities.

Effective instructional and assessment practices to support the learning and achievement of diverse learners (especially ELLs) do not appear to be embedded in classrooms.

A review of documents and interviews with district and school staff revealed that the following instructional models have been adopted districtwide: sheltered English immersion (SEI), Response to Intervention (RTI), and differentiated instruction (DI). The 2010 District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) provides a comprehensive overview of how these various models address different categories of diverse learners, for instance, ELLs, students with autism spectrum disorders, gifted and talented students, visually impaired students, and students with social and emotional disorders.

While the DCAP is comprehensive in identifying research-based instructional and assessment practices that are effective in serving diverse learners (consistent with SEI, RTI, and DI), the plan does not outline how these practices are to be instituted in the district or how schools are to be held accountable for implementing these practices. When principals were asked how they monitored or implemented the DCAP or other instructional models (SEI, RTI, DI), they replied that they relied upon ELL and special education coordinators. The lack of clear implementation and accountability systems has resulted in an uneven implementation of the DCAP and its instructional models as evidenced in interviews and classroom observations. For example, while school staff reported that SEI was being used in classrooms, the review team saw few instances where a language objective was clearly stated or an SEI instructional strategy was in use, e.g., placing English labels on all the classroom furniture and other features in an elementary school classroom. When teachers were asked about DI, it was evident that many teachers did not have an in-depth understanding of how to differentiate instruction effectively. According to classroom

observations, too, DI did not appear to be a consistent part of teachers' instructional repertoire. Most small groups observed were just groups of students working on the same activity rather than groups working on various activities targeted to the diverse learning needs of the members of each group. When asked about RTI procedures, interviewees told review team members that there was still much work to do in the district to ensure that intervention procedures were clearly developed and well-implemented throughout the district.

Some school principals gave a frank assessment that instructional models such as SEI, DI, and RTI have not become institutionalized within schools. They cited the lack of follow-up in professional development as a primary reason for this. For example, one principal noted that while some staff members had been trained in different levels of SEI and RTI, they did not receive any follow-up training. This principal attributed the lack of implementation of effective instructional models to a lack of focus and follow-up in the district's professional development approach. The principal explained that professional development is school-based and wondered whether the district would see improved results if professional development were more coordinated and ongoing. It appeared to the review team, based on interviews and documents, that many improvement initiatives in the district are of limited duration. They are the focus of attention for a period of time and then are overtaken by new initiatives and not followed up with continued support. The lack of a clear and consistent focus in training teachers in effective instructional models has a clear impact in the classroom. In a number of classrooms the review team observed disengaged students who were not being encouraged toward higher-level thinking and learning. In addition, supplementary materials were not evident in many classrooms. The low achievement and persistent achievement gaps for the ELL and special education subgroups can be correlated to the inconsistent and fragmented use of effective instructional and assessment practices.

Financial and Asset Management

There was no evidence that costs related to an instructional program are integrated into its budget, that programs are evaluated for cost-effectiveness, or that in developing the district's budget resources are allocated on the basis of student needs, such as those indicated by student achievement data.

Central office administrators as well as principals confirmed in interviews that MCAS results are thoroughly analyzed for regular education students and students receiving special education services as well as for other district subgroups. Other interviews indicated that the school committee had also been continuously informed about MCAS results as well as ongoing initiatives intended to improve MCAS scores.

As part of a new budget process, principals noted that they met with the former superintendent to discuss their recommendations for allocation of personnel. There was no evidence from interviews with leaders, however, that the proposed staff allocations have been driven by overarching, prioritized district needs determined by reference to student achievement data. A parent in a focus group reiterated the concern about indistinct messages from the central office pertaining to the relationship between student learning and staffing, stating that "We have each

school doing their own thing with no clear statement from administration. They should say, 'We're going to do 1, 2, 3, 4 to improve learning.' There's no top down approach. It's all bottom up."

Interviewees and district documents referred to several student learning initiatives currently active at all levels and in all disciplines throughout the district. However, interviews, focus groups, and planning documents did not explain how the district's current instructional program has been determined by reference to any of the individual programs' cost-effectiveness or how those programs link instructionally within a cohesive, all-encompassing district structure derived from planning and priority-setting**.** One principal discussed the fact that student data does not motivate staff and is not used as a problem-solving tool. Student data as it relates to program planning and funding has not been discussed at budget time, the principal reported. A list of staff and other needs has simply been presented by principals to the central office, which, if funding is not available, has subsequently been ignored. When a question relating to budget decisions being driven by student needs was asked to another principal, the reply was that "[Budget decisions] are not organized around the student."

An interview with the former superintendent revealed that in spite of the district's best efforts at improved performance on standardized tests, specifically on MCAS, the improvement efforts are **"**not systemic" and are minimal in relation to the magnitude of the district's challenges. Both teacher focus groups and administrator interviews indicated that the district had an assortment of new or continuing instructional program initiatives operating somewhat independently, disconnected from each other and from a cohesive, aligned strategy. A central office administrator said that further curriculum issues would "likely start in the classroom,**"** confirming the parent comment cited above about the bottom up approach. When asked how it was known that the needs of students and subgroups were being met, he indicated that teachers use data from their own formative assessments. "The only other data available is from Superkids and FASTT Math, internal reading tests, math tests and not much else."

According to interviews and focus groups, curriculum supervisors and principals work together on instructional and support program issues. There was no evidence from interviews with any stakeholders, however, that program initiatives are assessed or that MCAS results and other test scores are used in determining a program's cost-effectiveness. Additionally, there was no mention of integrating any current or new instructional initiative costs into an instructional program's budget. An example would be adding to the ELA program budget the cost of professional development to train a cadre of teachers to understand and implement the Laying the Foundation program.

While interviewees alluded several times to the district or, more often, individual schools taking student scores and achievement into account when considering the adoption of new programs, there was little evidence that assessment of the scores was comprehensive enough to explain and justify new initiatives. Additionally, interviews did not indicate that administrators build appropriate specific program costs into annual budgets or reveal how they allocate resources to initiatives currently in place.

Interviewees also did not refer to assessing or estimating program cost-effectiveness or modifying the existing structure of the academic program and its curriculum based on cost-effectiveness. Currently, it falls to the specialists to assess and determine whether or not it is appropriate to retain or supplement existing program initiatives or add new ones to the budget, and if it is appropriate, how this should be done. There was no indication whether or not those assessments and determinations are even communicated to the central office leaders.

At budget time, the district loses an opportunity through the failure to design staffing, supplies, equipment, professional development and other cost requests based on student achievement and to document how they relate to student achievement. In its budget planning and analysis, the district fails to "connect the dots" to achieve the matrix of integrated program planning that every district with multiple disciplines, multiple levels, and multiple student groups requires. Program cost budget design is the analytical tool that can quantitatively describe the network of programs within a district. Without it, the district loses the opportunity both to reduce overall expenses and to determine the most effective allocation of its resources.

The structure of the fiscal year 2011 budget is one-dimensional and opaque rather than strategic, multi-dimensional, and transparent. It does not allow stakeholders to see expenses other than by broad categories, and its MUNIS codes are not organized educationally in the way that ESE codes are.

The structure of the school budget at the time of the review team's visit did not reflect the district's full capacity to provide stakeholders with additional and alternate expense-sort criteria or with useful subtotals for expenses now reflected in large groups of line items without subtotals.

Interviewees from the city and the district indicated the view that the fiscal year 2011 budget's format was adequate and would be used in fiscal year 2012 to capture expense information.

The budget format for fiscal year 2011 does not sort expense data other than by broad categories. Instructional and non-instructional categories are sequenced by MUNIS codes, capturing all of the necessary school-related functions ranging from Administration (1303) through Professional Development (1399). The sequence does not always organize expenses appropriately. For example, pupil transportation is buried among instructional expenses under "Regular Day" (1357) rather than reflected as a non-instructional stand-alone figure, which should include crossing guards, as required for reporting in the End-of-Year Report to ESE.

The "Regular Day" budget includes 51 aggregated (mostly) instructional salary line items totaling $18,379,796, followed by 98 similarly aggregated non-salary (text, supplies, travel, etc.) lines totaling $1,093,842.The cumulative cost of these items of $19,473,638 represents over 41 percent of the school budget. The budget does not present cost data subtotaled by (1) school, (2) paraprofessional salaries, or (3) textbooks or instructional supplies, to name only a few of the most critical categories which would make the budget significantly easier to understand and analyze. Currently the only subtotal breakdown is between personnel and other expenses.

The special needs budget is aggregated with 33 personnel and 16 non-personnel lines totaling $15,802,150, with administration, tuitions, and transportation all reflected as aggregated line items. The number of paraprofessionals employed in the Salem Public Schools, 181.8 FTE in 2010, is an exceptionally high number for a district of approximately 4,500 students (see Table 12 in Appendix C and the second Leadership and Governance finding above), but nowhere in the budget is there an indication of FTEs or their allocation among schools or their specific functions—for instance, how many of them are one-on-one aides. The combined regular and special needs budget totals $35.3 million dollars, or 75 percent of the school budget, and is presented without a clear explanation of the expenses for either program.[28]

Additionally, the current chart of account codes has little relation to the less restrictive, educationally sequenced ESE codes and could be re-sequenced to produce a far more transparent and multi-dimensional educational budget. An interview with the city's financial director revealed that he was open to a MUNIS code revision to regroup educational categories. As things stand, the impact of the fiscal year 2011 budget format is that the general public, school committee, and other parties see only large, aggregated subtotals that convey a one-dimensional and insufficient view of the budget based on the current MUNIS codes.

[28] The budget also had a group of expenses (1346) that was mislabeled as being for the Bates Elementary School instead of Media/Library Personnel.

Recommendations

Leadership and Governance

The Salem Public Schools must ensure the development by a wide range of stakeholders of a long-range strategic plan that includes specific strategies in a variety of areas to raise student achievement. The district should consider ways to improve staff members' understanding of the students they teach.

The planning efforts of the Salem Public Schools were twofold: a districtwide strategic plan that was being developed at the time of the review and the District and School Improvement Plans. The principals described the DIP as having been compiled from the previous year's SIPs, and the SIPs as being too focused on MCAS scores and school-specific in their approaches to addressing MCAS achievement. At the time of the review, none of these plans was strategically positioned to improve student achievement. For the most part, too many efforts to improve instruction have been episodic and school-based. Current district improvement initiatives include a new literacy program for kindergarten through grade 2 and Laying the Foundation for grades 6-10. Planning efforts do not include specific district-level strategies with hard targets for achievement, nor do they pay enough attention to areas such as school climate and family involvement.

In the absence of a district strategy to improve achievement, instructional models vary across the district; achievement and median student growth percentiles also vary. Most improvement efforts are targeted at low-performing students rather than at whole district/whole school initiatives that raise the achievement of all students, including low-performing students. In addition, the fact that some staff in the district, according to interviews, have doubts that children from low-income families and English language learners can learn at high levels makes these staff members less effective and impedes the district's improvement initiatives. In turn, the absence of strategic district improvement planning and the lack of success of past episodic improvement efforts reinforce the doubts among the staff.

The district should initiate a new strategic planning process, with participation by a wide variety of stakeholders including staff from both the school and district levels, family members, and community groups. The district should make sure that the stakeholders participating in the planning represent English language learners and students with disabilities and include families and community members of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, with representative participation from the Hispanic/Latino community. Rather than being focused narrowly on MCAS, the new strategic plan should take a more holistic approach to raising student achievement. It should address supports for students, including differentiated supports for the needs of English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students from diverse backgrounds. The district should also consider whether strategies related to school climate and family involvement should be included. In order to shift the attitudes of some members of its staff, the district should also consider providing staff with training on competency in the cultures of different groups of students in the Salem Public Schools. The combination of strategic planning by the district and greater understanding among staff members

of the students they teach will help the district narrow the proficiency gap that has been hard to diminish.

The district should bolster administrative capacity to supervise and evaluate instruction, to help it implement a new system of supervision and evaluation based on the new strategic plan.

In every school system there is a need to maintain a balance between district and school initiatives. The tension between "top down" and "bottom up" management is one that must be managed with skill and strategic vision. The district should provide that vision and clear strategies to attain it, as recommended above, and schools should work within the overarching district structure. At the time of the review, the individual schools of the Salem Public Schools were forming their individual strategies and often working in isolation rather than as integrated parts of a whole. This was not only because of insufficient strategic planning, but also because of too little communication between the central office and principals. Meetings between the principals and central office staff were reported to the review team to be informational and logistical rather than data-driven and problem-solving. Principals were mostly left on their own to solve problems that might be common across the district.

There was also too little support from the central office for evaluation of staff in the schools. At the elementary level, principals are solely responsible to coordinate, supervise, and evaluate instruction. At the middle and high schools there are assistant principals (middle school), house masters (high school), and curriculum coordinators (both schools) with whom principals share these responsibilities. No other personnel responsible for program and instructional design, implementation, and supervision evaluate teachers. Especially given the large number of observations required by the district's evaluation system and the large number of new teachers, the absence of support from central office staff in performing evaluations makes it difficult for school administrators to complete those evaluations and leaves them little time for supervision of instruction. Furthermore, the absence of any evaluation of teachers by administrators with districtwide responsibilities contributes to the variation in the implementation of programs and curriculum across the district. Thus students are not assured of consistent instruction or a comparably high level of instruction throughout the system.

In combination with the absence of a strong district philosophy and plan, insufficient supervision by central office administrators of school administrators and by school administrators of their staffs is a contributing factor in the variable achievement across the district. The district should implement a cohesive system of supervision and evaluation of instruction based on the new district strategic plan and consistent with the new state regulations on evaluation of educators (see evaluation recommendation below), a system that the district can use to develop a consistent and effective instructional model across schools and levels and to achieve its curriculum goals.

To implement this system, the district needs to have enough administrators. The review team found that the Salem Public Schools' central office had significantly fewer administrators than four comparable districts. Principals and central office administrator readily acknowledged that the number of administrators was not adequate for supervision and evaluation. In recent years,

the already thinly-distributed administrative staff has been reduced, rather than reducing teacher numbers, to maintain class sizes.

The district may need to reconsider the earlier decision to reduce the number of administrators in order to preserve class sizes, and rather look at ways to increase the number of its administrators so that it has enough to carry out supervision and evaluation effectively. Then the district could implement a system of supervision and evaluation both of school administrators and of their schools' staffs that will advance teaching and learning toward a shared vision of high quality instructional practice, which is key to raising student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district should develop a system for curriculum development and renewal, informed by data and supported by professional development, and use this system to complete its curriculum, aligned to the new Massachusetts frameworks.

The review team found the district to be without a fully developed curriculum that was vertically and horizontally articulated and consistently implemented. The district is also without a system for curriculum development and renewal. Teachers, coordinators, and coaches at every school address curricular needs in an ongoing fashion, with limited support and direction from the central office administrators. Salem Public Schools' curriculum, assessment, and professional development functions are not fully integrated and often operate separately and in a fragmented way.

The district should develop a process for structuring and phasing curriculum development and renewal. There are many models to consider, but most have common features, beginning with formation of a curriculum steering committee. Fulfilling the need to have both centralized and school-based expertise, a committee drawn from all levels of the system should develop a multi-year, cyclical process to review and revise curriculum, one that addresses the diverse learning needs of all students. This would ensure that the curriculum has both common presence and permanence across the district, and that review is ongoing.

The curriculum steering committee typically establishes a continuous multi-year cycle for curriculum development and renewal, such as a five-year repeating cycle consisting of an analysis year, followed by two design and development years and two implementation years. The steering committee usually appoints a subcommittee for each discipline made up of kindergarten through grade 12 teachers.

- In the analysis year, the subcommittee for each discipline reviews student performance and other data to determine curricular strengths and weaknesses and reports its findings to the steering committee.
- In the first design year, the subcommittee reviews best practices and recommends revisions to the curriculum to correct deficiencies, circulating preliminary drafts to the steering committee and faculty for comment.

- In the second design year, the subcommittee finalizes the revisions for approval of the steering committee.
- In the first implementation year, the teachers are introduced to the approved curriculum and receive professional development on the new instructional and assessment practices. In the second implementation year, the steering committee begins to assess the effectiveness of the curricular changes.

Salem should adopt this, or a similar model, for curriculum development and renewal.

Under current conditions, the district's curriculum and data analysis functions are not formally linked. Data is provided to teachers by the principal, the coordinators, or the data team. The review team encourages the district to establish a fully functioning data team in each school and to form a district data team composed of data team members representing the three school levels. The district data team would analyze relevant data for the curriculum steering committee to inform the curriculum renewal process.

Under current conditions, the district's curriculum and professional development functions are not formally linked. Under any model the district chooses for curriculum development and renewal, the district's professional development committee should work with the curriculum steering committee to ensure that the district's curricular and instructional needs are given the highest priority in its professional development program.

Salem has developed curricula containing most of the essential components in mathematics and science for kindergarten through grade 8, but the ELA curriculum for grades 3-5 and grades 6-12 is incomplete, and all of the grade 9-12 curriculum areas were being developed or revised at the time of the review. The district should give completion of this curriculum, including models of instruction for ELL students and students with disabilities as well as regular education students, a high priority in its curriculum plan.

A full, aligned, and consistently implemented curriculum with models of instruction for ELL students and students with disabilities will help the district improve the proficiency of its students, including these subgroups. With a continuous process for curriculum development and renewal, and sufficient time and personnel to implement that process, the district will ensure that its curricular content is current, research-based, and aligned with the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Integration of the district's curricular, assessment, and professional development functions will result in more systematic identification of student, curricular and instructional strengths and needs, as well as relevant topics for professional development. Integration will also help to increase the effectiveness of the district's resources for improving student achievement.

The district should ensure that teachers have a common understanding of what constitutes high quality instruction and that teachers are provided with high quality professional development as well as targeted supervision to help them implement their new understanding.

When asked to define it, teachers in the district seemed in focus groups to lack a common understanding of what constitutes high quality instruction. Principals told the review team that they were unclear as to the instructional priorities of the district and that there was no real focus on instruction by the central office. These responses in interviews were consistent with observations in classrooms by the review team, which indicated inconsistencies and weaknesses in instruction that hinder efforts to improve student achievement.

After developing a shared, research-based vision of high quality instruction that is communicated and refined in district, school, and grade level teams that engage all faculty, the district can support its implementation through aligned supervision and evaluation practices and professional development to ensure that all teachers share this vision of research-based, quality instruction and develop their capacity to deliver it. Instruction based on quality professional development, with targeted supervision by trained staff with expertise in instruction, including instruction of ELL students and students with disabilities, will likely result in increased achievement for all students.

Assessment

The district should expand and strengthen its assessment system, build the capacity of leaders and teachers to analyze and use data, and promote a professional culture of accountability.

The district has made a good start in developing a balanced assessment system that measures student achievement and progress and uses data to make improvement decisions. When executed well, a balanced and comprehensive assessment system can help meet students' diverse learning needs by validly assessing their achievement and progress and by providing qualitative and quantitative information about strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction.

The components of Salem's assessment system are incomplete and a number of them are uneven in implementation. For example, common formative and summative assessments do not currently exist in all content areas and at all grade levels; although work continues to meet this goal. Also, benchmark and authentic assessments are not used often enough in many subjects to enable students to demonstrate what they know and can do in ways different from written quizzes and tests and to help teachers differentiate instruction.

Other important conditions do not exist throughout the district to guarantee that leaders and teachers are able to maximize the impact data can have by informing improvement. For example, not all leaders and teachers are highly skilled in analyzing, and interpreting data and using it to make better decisions. Not all leaders and teachers make use of the multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative information available in schools and classrooms, information that can be collected through walkthroughs and used to inform improvement efforts. In addition, the

curriculum is incomplete and not completely aligned, weakening the validity and value of assessments. And finally, the district needs to make the use of data to promote a higher level of accountability a part of its culture. To supply the missing conditions and build on its strengths, the review team recommends that the district take the following actions over time:

To strengthen and expand assessment models:

- Continue to develop—and implement consistently—a multiple-measures assessment system that includes
    - common summative assessments such as chapter tests, unit tests, and mid-year and final exams linked to the district's curriculum
    - interim formative assessments to assess students' strengths, weaknesses, and diverse learning needs; to monitor progress; and to determine remedial and enrichment opportunities for students
    - interim benchmark assessments, particularly at the secondary level, to gauge students' knowledge and skills in the context of a standards-based instructional model
    - additional, authentic assessments such as portfolios, rubrics, interdisciplinary projects, demonstrations, and student self- and peer-assessments

To build internal capacity:

- Provide ongoing professional development for leaders and teachers in how to gather, interpret, and use both qualitative and quantitative district-, school-, classroom-, and student-based data
- Ensure that each school has a trained data team to manage and communicate reports based on data analysis in a timely way, as well as a district data team (see first Curriculum and Instruction recommendation above)
- Provide regular and frequent common planning time during the school day at all three school levels for teams of teachers to meet to focus on the analysis and use of data (ideally more than once a week)
- Use data to focus discussions at nearly every meeting in the district
- Generate reports that provide an ongoing picture of aggregated and disaggregated student growth and proficiency in the district and communicate them frequently and publicly to all stakeholders

To promote a culture of accountability in which the habit of using data to improve education is ingrained:

- Set measurable goals in improvement plans to hold all stakeholders accountable for improvements in student achievement

- Use data at the policy, district, and school levels to guide decisions about allocating human and financial resources
- Use data to inform decision-making about curriculum, instruction, assessment, supervision, and evaluation
- Develop a multi-year process to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's curriculum and support programs and services based on evidence that includes data

When these components are more firmly in place, the district will be working within the framework of a balanced and comprehensive assessment system and will be able to sustain a districtwide culture of accountability.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district should seek out and hire qualified applicants with the demonstrated experience, competencies and skills to serve the educational needs of Salem students, particularly those from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in teaching and instructional support positions.

About four percent of all employees are non-white (see Table 11 under Student Support), compared with the approximately 43 percent of students in the Salem Public Schools who are non-white (see Table 1). It is clear from district data that the Salem Public School's student body is multi-cultural and has an increasing number of Hispanic/Latino students. Many Salem students live in homes where English is not the first language (1087 or 23.8 percent) and many recently arrived from foreign countries and cultures. According to some interviewees, the community has found it difficult to adjust to its changing population, particularly the increase in residents who speak other languages; cultural issues are not addressed in the schools; and some administrators and staff do not have high expectations for students, especially ELLs. A problem in raising achievement for all students has been the resignation of some staff to the idea that the school district does not have the capacity to address the problems of its diverse students, especially its ELLs, and their families.

The district has a need for staff members who have had previous success with student populations similar to Salem's. It would particularly benefit from a staff with these skills and competencies that was demographically representative of the student body. But it does not have a comprehensive recruiting plan to provide early contacts with able recruits with either the needed racial and ethnic diversity or records of success with similar student populations, and since the elimination of the human resources director position, it has also not had the capacity to carry out a recruiting program. In addition, the entry-level application materials reviewed onsite showed that the district seeks minimal authentication of their classroom skills or information about their previous success at promoting learning among students with similar needs to Salem's.

The district should address its lack of capacity in human resources and develop a recruiting program that will allow it to fill vacancies with qualified candidates who can serve as role models for underserved student populations, assist in outreach to their families, and help it build a culture of success with ELL students, students from different backgrounds and cultures, and all

students. Taking steps toward that culture of success will likely have the added benefit of altering attitudes of resignation among some current staff to what they perceive as the intractability of the problems of some of the district's students. The district should also develop common screening and interview protocols that promote investigation into the skills and relevant experience of potential new teachers and other candidates.

The district must provide teachers and administrators with fair, effective, and timely evaluation as it brings its evaluation procedures and instruments into compliance with the new state regulations for educator evaluation at 603 CMR 35.00.[29] It should also align its job descriptions with current job functions and institute clearly described and closely supervised evaluation systems for paraprofessional employees so that a culture of accountability is established for all employees who work with students.

The evaluation system for both teachers and administrators in effect at the time of the review was out of compliance with 603 CMR 35.00.[30] The district has not complied with the requirement of 603 CMR 35.06[31] that it evaluate all administrators at least annually, and evaluate teachers with professional status at least once every two years. Under its evaluation procedures, there is a four-year cycle for professional status teachers in which they can opt for a professional development or project year instead of a summative evaluation, meaning that they are only evaluated once in four years. One-third of the files of professional status teachers reviewed by the team did not have timely evaluations, and 12 of the 17 files for administrators who were not new hires did not contain any evaluations for the previous two years. Administrators in Unit B had not been evaluated and so had no evaluations in their files.

The evaluation form for administrators was not consistent with the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership as formerly required, and though the evaluation forms for teachers had all of the Principles of Effective Teaching, an analysis of the forms indicated that by meeting one of the Principles, the teacher could meet them all for the purposes of a final rating.[32] And 98 percent of the scores on teacher evaluation forms reviewed indicated the highest levels of classroom performance, in contrast to what the team found during its observations. Evaluations of professional status teachers included minimal instructive comments for improved practice, and no teacher evaluations reviewed contained recommendations for participation in professional development.

In addition, job descriptions in the district are not updated and some contain weak or optional descriptions of minimum qualifications. The job descriptions for paraprofessionals (a large number of whom are employed in the district compared to comparable districts) can be waived

[29] On June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations on Evaluation of Educators to replace the regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership adopted in 1995, at 603 CMR 35.00. The new regulations are available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html.
[30] As it appeared before the adoption of the new regulations in June 2011.
[31] Again, as it appeared before the adoption of the new regulations in June 2011.
[32] Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership accompanied the former regulations at 603 CMR 35.00.

by the supervisor with no district-approved rationale for doing so, and compensation and benefits for paraprofessionals are not linked to differences in work responsibilities. Though a provision of their collective bargaining agreement (Article XVI) provided that an evaluation instrument would be developed by 2005, none was. Paraprofessionals in the district are not evaluated, and under their collective bargaining agreement can only be disciplined or dismissed for "just cause." One administrator told reviewers, "It is impossible to dismiss a paraprofessional in Salem."

In June 2011 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new educator evaluation regulations to replace the previous regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership at 603 CMR 35.00. The district must take action to bring evaluation procedures and instruments for both teachers and administrators into compliance with the new regulations at 603 CMR 35.00. The district should not wait until it can implement the new procedures, however, to ensure that all teachers and administrators are given rigorous summative evaluations that are instructive and foster professional growth—once every two years for teachers with professional status and every year for teachers without professional status and all administrators.

The district should also ensure that qualifications and job requirements in job descriptions are aligned with job responsibilities and that those qualifications and requirements are not waived without district approval for good reason.

In addition, the language in the paraprofessional collective bargaining agreement should be clarified as to how paraprofessional competencies will be evaluated.

Once the district has revamped its job descriptions and established evaluation procedures for paraprofessionals and new evaluation procedures for teachers and administrators consistent with the new regulations at 603 CMR 35.00, it must then ensure that its job descriptions are reviewed and updated, that its new evaluation procedures are faithfully implemented, and that evaluations are monitored. These steps will help the district attain continual improvement in the practices of its educators, leading to improved student performance.

The superintendent should appoint a districtwide professional development committee to develop a professional development plan.

At the time of the review, the district did not have a published systemwide professional development plan or a committee to oversee professional development. The district had an array of professional development opportunities offered in a variety of ways, but these offerings were not part of a district-approved professional development plan aligned with district goals and priorities and there was no evidence that they were evaluated for their usefulness in achieving district those goals and priorities. No unified listing of projects, topics, and priorities was available to the review team.

The superintendent should appoint a districtwide professional development committee to produce a professional development plan. Its mission should be to draw training needs from the district strategic plan as well as from the DIP and SIPs, and, in consultation with the curriculum

steering committee recommended above, from the various programs and shelf-product curriculum initiatives; prioritize them and translate them into a professional development plan; plan how to schedule trainings within available funding and the provisions of the current collective bargaining agreement, oversee their presentation, and evaluate the impact of these trainings on the accomplishment of district goals and priorities.

Professional development in the district should be developed into a unified program. Professional development activities should be continued, revised, or dropped based on their evaluations with respect to whether they advance the district toward its goals and priorities. The program should be an important vehicle used to improve teaching, improve instructional support, bring essential information to its planners, and over time become a valued tool for improving student learning. The district's mentoring program should provide important foundational information for this effort. The kind of partnering that has helped veteran and novice teachers integrate their work as a functional learning community organized to improve instruction is on record in the district files in the feedback from mentored teachers. Aligning, prioritizing, systemizing, documenting, tracking, and evaluating the district's professional development offerings as a connected effort to align teaching with the changing learning needs in the district will take the school system a long way toward meeting those needs.

Student Support

The district should evaluate its existing support programs and services and use those evaluations to address supports for students in its new strategic plan, including supports for English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students from diverse backgrounds. It should consider whether strategies related to school climate and family involvement should be included.

As described in the Leadership and Governance section of the report, the district has not engaged in the strategic planning that is necessary to make its students more successful. As described in the Student Support section, it does not have a comprehensive vision for student support: its efforts tend to be sporadic. In addition, as described in the Assessment section, it conducts no systematic internal reviews of its programs and services.

As recommended under Leadership and Governance, the district's new strategic plan should address supports for students, including supports for diverse learners such as English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students from diverse backgrounds. The district should also consider whether strategies related to school climate and family involvement should be included.

It is particularly important to consider strategies related to school climate and family involvement given the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among Salem Public Schools staff and the cultural divide that the review team was told exists between the district and the Hispanic/Latino community and between the Salem community in general and residents who speak other languages. It appears that strategies to support all students will not be able to succeed without recognizing the divisions that exist and finding ways to bridge those divisions. For

example, 23.7 percent of Salem Public Schools Hispanic/Latino students and 39 percent of Salem High School Hispanic/Latino students were chronically absent in 2010.

As it develops strategies to support its students, the district should begin to conduct systematic internal reviews of its programs and services to determine their effectiveness using district data or comparative data from other, similar districts with the same academic programs. Effective programs and services should be replicated or expanded and ineffective ones discontinued.

Once the district has in place a comprehensive approach, grounded in evaluation of its existing programs and services, to supporting all students—including students who are English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from diverse backgrounds—it will be in a position to make progress in meeting all students' academic and socio-emotional needs.

The district should consider a systemwide focus on a "full service school model" as a way to support the learning and achievement of diverse learners, especially ELLs, and to bolster the impact of promising programs already operating in the district.

Salem does not have a comprehensive vision for student support, and the result is that efforts tend to be sporadic. The full service school model is an integrated understanding of student support that strengthens the relationship among schools, families, and community partners. This model is research-based and has proven successful in urban, high-poverty settings. This model is not a packaged program but a framework for a comprehensive vision for student support. The district is encouraged to consider the following questions when implementing a full service school model.

Health

- Do schools have governing bodies that address issues related to health awareness and preventive health care?
- Do schools connect students and their families to health services so that students are routinely screened for immunizations, vision, hearing, dental, and orthopedic concerns?
- Do schools provide healthy food choices?

Safety and Security

- Do school staff members work with families to develop behavioral expectations, rules, and routines?
- Do school staff members work with students and families to resolve discipline issues/conflicts using meeting structures that promote conversations and mutual understanding?

Student Engagement

- Do school staff members work with families to make explicit connections between the curricula and students' culture and language?
- Do school staff connect students to experiences outside of school (internships, community-based apprenticeships, project-based learning) to show students the connections between school-based learning and the world beyond school?

Community Support

- Are students connected to community members who can serve as mentors and role-models and who reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of students?
- Are students connected to adult mentors among the school staff?

High Academic Expectations

- Do all students have access to a coherent curriculum where different learning modalities are honored?
- Do students have access to integrated programs in visual arts, music, world languages, and technology?

There are various iterations of the full service model, and the district is encouraged to research, modify, and customize its own model to best address the needs of Salem students. Interviews with district and school administrators showed a tendency to adopt ready-made programs as opposed to developing ones that reflect the best thinking of stakeholders in the district.

The district is also encouraged to use the full service model as a vehicle to bridge the cultural divide between the district and the community indicated by interviews. The review team noted the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among administrators and school staff. The full service model is a potential bridge to the community that could serve as a way for administrators and staff members to more deeply understand the unique needs of its diverse learners and their families. In addition, the full service model can bolster the effectiveness and impact of existing programs, while helping to guide future decisions around student support and providing a more comprehensive grounding for future initiatives.

The district's new professional development plan should prioritize training in the instructional models currently in use and the district should provide follow-up support to ensure that practices are institutionalized.

(See also earlier recommendations on supervision and professional development—the second recommendation under Leadership and Governance and the second recommendation under Curriculum and Instruction.)

The district's curriculum accommodation plan does not outline how such instructional models adopted in the district as sheltered English immersion (SEI), Response to Intervention (RTI), and differentiated instruction (DI) are to be instituted or how schools are to be held accountable for instituting them. The review team heard in interviews that staff members who received training in these models do not receive any follow-up training. And principals do not conduct systematic walkthroughs to gather information, either to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning or to monitor the implementation of district instructional models. (See second Assessment finding.) The result is that the instructional models currently in use in the district like SEI, RTI, and DI have not been embedded in daily teaching and assessment practices. As

previously stated, the review team did not observe consistent use of effective instructional practices.

As it writes a professional development plan, the professional development committee recommended under Human Resources and Professional Development above should channel available professional development resources into districtwide trainings in SEI, RTI, and DI. To provide follow-up support after these trainings, the district should also consider training a cadre of coaches, coordinators, and/or teachers in how to provide such support. In addition, the district should consider making common planning time available throughout the district so that teachers can engage in Looking at Student Work (LASW) to determine whether the use of these instructional models is improving the quality of student work. This time could also be an opportunity for teachers to analyze formative assessments to determine the impact of instructional approaches and any adjustments that need to be made. Some urban districts also use peer observation protocols as a way for teachers to provide immediate feedback to colleagues who are beginning to use new instructional techniques.

As it takes immediate steps to ensure that all teachers and administrators are given rigorous summative evaluations that are instructive and foster professional growth and as it moves toward instituting new evaluation procedures that are consistent with the new regulations at 603 CMR 35.00, (see human resources recommendation above), the district should use evaluation to ensure that teachers are embedding effective practices into their instructional and assessment repertoire. In addition, the district should provide more support for principals in conducting systematic walkthroughs to determine whether practices are being institutionalized in the daily life of the school. By using evaluation and supervision to make the instructional and assessment practice of teachers more effective for diverse groups of students such as English language learners and students with different types of disabilities, the district will be providing a central component of the support these students need.

Financial and Asset Management

In making decisions to allocate staff and other resources to instructional and support programs, the district should assess the programs' effectiveness using both student achievement data and program operating costs.

The review team did not see evidence that the costs related to an instructional program are integrated into its budget, that programs are evaluated for cost-effectiveness, or that the allocation of budget resources is informed by student achievement data. The evidence was that the district had an assortment of new or continuing instructional initiatives operating somewhat independently, disconnected from each other and from a cohesive, aligned strategic plan.

When developing an annual school budget, rather than simply gathering line item information, district staff should calculate the costs of new and existing programs. To allow a 360-degree view of the district's programs, it is important for the business office to supplement a traditional proposed operating budget analysis with a summary of programs' staff and other costs based on best estimates by key administrators and instructional leaders. Estimates of a program's staff and other expenses are best formatted so that the business office establishes a connection between the

program and where the program "resides" on the line item budget. As a prerequisite to estimating active direct and allocated indirect program costs, the district needs to find a fitting program cost model. Some models tend to be purely academic while others are more functional. All models include staffing costs and a series of allocated costs and represent a best estimate for summarizing total program cost. An instructional program's estimated expense summary may then be included as a supplement to specific budget lines. All program factors, such as grades, subgroups or disciplines served, should be included in the cost summaries of district programs.

Program budgeting as a function of student achievement is not a new concept. Often, districts assign a low priority to the practice because of the time and money it requires, without realizing how valuable the use of relevant student data can be in making better decisions about program design and associated costs. Developing a matrix of interrelated programs and associated costs and viewing it in combination with student achievement data allows the district to:

1.) Assess the value of a program in terms of improving student learning and so estimate a program's cost-effectiveness, based on scores and achievement and in the context of all other initiatives.

2.) Analyze existing initiatives so as to be able to identify gaps within current programs, as well as possible overlaps in instructional initiatives that could show the way to cost savings.

Programs that are not cost-effective can then be eliminated and replaced as necessary or modified, as can initiatives that overlap with other more cost-effective ones. This will allow the district to make the most of its resources and to fill any identified gaps in its programs. By integrating program costs and student data with the cost of curriculum components to make decisions that make the most of resources to improve student achievement, the fiscal side of school administration will be transparent to families and taxpayers and the school administration can be held accountable.

The school business office should review the MUNIS chart of accounts (COA) and make a recommendation to the city to modify school codes to establish a structure closely compatible with the ESE COA, one that allows the budget to be viewed by specific categories and by individual programs or schools.

School budget formats presented to the general public, municipal officials, and district staff vary widely in the state. All incorporate staff and expense data ranging from marginally adequate to fully revealing. The district's budget format at the time of the review can be described as one-dimensional and opaque. "Fully revealing" budget formats mean that the administration has considered and selected a variety of perspectives from which to view the intricacies of the multiple categories and subsidiary accounts inherent in Massachusetts school budgets. Databases consist of fields of information, usually built horizontally, as well as individual records usually entered vertically. Those fields and records are a comprehensive representation of the information, both text and data, relevant to any school district. Both simple and complicated databases are capable of using any number of sort or filter criteria designed to reveal specific information that was entered about, e.g., students, staff, or budget. Accounting databases are sophisticated variations of the above.

When a district wants to display multiple types of school budget information to include administrative, instructional, athletic, insurance, tuition, and other costs, it does so by predetermining a format usually predicated on the state's standard educational categories. The Salem Public Schools should restructure its current COA to more closely resemble the ESE format. ESE's format allows for the fiscal analysis of educational expenses. Some of Salem's categories, on the other hand, are district non-instructional expenses, e.g., transportation, and should be isolated from educational groupings. In general, the structure of the district's budget does not allow for breaking large groups of line items down into a variety of useful subtotals.

The district should begin segregating costs by educational categories as well as by other categories: for example, supplies by school, paraprofessional salary expenses by school, tuition costs by private, public, or collaborative placement expense. Location (school) costs as well as costs of instructional programs can also be segregated by individual lines (regular education and special education, custodial, supplies, etc.). Several formats are available from other communities.

Subsequent budgets should be built using a format that isolates salient data and provides alternate views of the budget rather than the single and not very informative view currently presented. It is recommended that the school business manager search out a variety of formats by consulting the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) and other districts and decide on a format that provides the best fit for the district and that is closely compatible with the ESE COA.

Also, the district should start identifying those contractual expense line items in the approved budget which the district is certain will be fully expended or are very likely to be fully expended and ensure the practice of using the encumbrance control feature on the MUNIS accounting software.

Revising the format in the way suggested would make the budget process more transparent and help school leaders and the school committee better understand costs and the allocation of instructional and other expenses within the district. Making the district's COA compatible with ESE's would also assist the district in making required End-of-Year Reports to ESE and in translating comparisons to other districts' expenses based on End-of-Year Reports back into the terms of the Salem Public Schools' budget.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Salem Public Schools was conducted on January 10-11 and 18-9, 2011, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Magdalene Giffune, Ed.D., Leadership and Governance

Mary Eirich, Curriculum and Instruction

Linda L. Greyser, Ed.D., Assessment and Review Team Coordinator

Thomas Preston Johnson, Ed.D., Human Resources and Professional Development

Frank DeVito, Student Support

Richard Scortino, M.B.A., C.P.A., Financial and Asset Management

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Salem financial personnel: interim business manager, payroll clerk, grant writer, grant manager, city auditor/director of finance
- The review team conducted interviews with five members of the Salem School Committee:
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Salem Teachers Association: president, first vice-president, second vice-president, treasurer, assistant treasurer, recording secretary, correspondence secretary
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Salem Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of pupil personnel services, special education director
- The review team visited the following schools in the Salem Public Schools: Bates (K-5), Bentley (K-5), Carlton (K-5), Horace Mann (K-5), Nathaniel Bowditch (K-8), Saltonstall (K-8), Collins Middle School (6-8), and Salem High School (9-12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, teachers, and specialists, coordinators, team leaders, and coaches.
    - The review team conducted 75 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the eight schools visited.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
    - District profile data
    - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART)
    - Data from the Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
    - Latest Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report and any follow-up Mid-cycle Report
    - Most recent New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report
    - 2007 Report produced by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)
    - Teachers' contract, including the teacher evaluation tool
    - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status
    - Long-term enrollment trends by subgroup
    - End-of-year financial report for the district for 2010

- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile

- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
  - Organization chart
  - Draft of District Strategic Plan
  - District Improvement Plan
  - School Improvement Plans
  - Website of Salem Public Schools
  - Special Education Evaluation, May 2009
  - School committee policy manual
  - School committee minutes for the past year
  - Most recent approved budget
  - K-12 ELA, mathematics, and science curriculum documents
  - High school program of studies
  - Matrix of assessments administered in the district
  - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
  - 2010 MCAS/AYP presentation to school committee
  - MCAS letter explaining AYP to parents/families
  - Descriptions of student support programs
  - Student and Family Handbooks
  - Student Kindergarten Assignment information
  - Faculty Handbook
  - Current and past professional development program/schedule/courses
  - Teacher certification and qualification information
  - Teacher planning time schedules
  - Evaluation tools for central office administrators and principals
  - Job descriptions for central office and school administrators and instructional staff
  - Teacher attendance data
  - All administrator evaluations and certifications

- Seventy randomly selected teacher personnel files

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the review of the Salem Public Schools, conducted from January 10-11 and January 18-19, 2011.

Monday	Tuesday	Tuesday	Wednesday
January 10 Orientation with district leaders and principals; interviews with district leaders; interviews with district professional and non-professional staff; review of documents	January 11 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visits (Collins Middle School, Bates Elementary School); classroom observations; review of personnel files; teacher focus groups	November 17 Interviews with town or city personnel; school visits (Salem High School, Carlton Elementary School, Horace Mann Lab School); interviews with school leaders, principals, and classroom observations; teacher team meetings; school committee interviews; focus group with parents	 School visits (Nathaniel Bowditch School, Saltonstall School, Bentley Elementary School, Witchcraft Heights Elementary School, Collins Middle School); interviews with school principals and school leaders; classroom observations; follow-up interviews; team meeting; emerging themes meeting with district leaders and principals

District Staffing 2008-2010

District Staff (FTEs)	Salem			Waltham			Fitchburg			Somerville			Marlborough		
	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010
Number of schools in 2010			*10*			*9*			*9*			*11*			*6*
All students	*4,422*	*4,447*	*4,496*	*4,725*	*4,751*	*4,763*	*5,331*	*5,155*	*4,997*	*4,890*	*4,877*	*4,842*	*4,594*	*4,565*	*4,539*
District administrators	7.0	6.0	5.0	7.0	12.0	12.5	7.0	10.0	10.0	17.0	18.0	18.0	7.5	7.6	6.6
Students:staff	*632:1*	*741:1*	*899:1*	*675:1*	*396:1*	*381:1*	*762:1*	*516:1*	*500:1*	*288:1*	*271:1*	*269:1*	*613:1*	*601:1*	*688:1*
Other instructional leaders	3.0	3.0	3.0	10.0	10.0	10.5	3.0	3.0	4.0	8.0	12.0	10.0	9.2	9.0	8.2
Students:staff	*1,474:1*	*1,482:1*	*1,499:1*	*473:1*	*475:1*	*454:1*	*1,777:1*	*1,718:1*	*1,249:1*	*611:1*	*406:1*	*484:1*	*499:1*	*507:1*	*554:1*
School administrators	17.0	16.4	16.4	29.0	27.6	24.0	22.0	20.0	21.0	29.0	23.0	21.0	17.0	17.0	18.7
Students:staff	*260:1*	*271:1*	*274:1*	*163:1*	*172:1*	*198:1*	*242:1*	*258:1*	*238:1*	*169:1*	*212:1*	*231:1*	*270:1*	*269:1*	*243:1*
Instructional coaches	16.3	12.9	15.4	8.0	3.0	8.5	9.0	1.0	7.1	--	--	--	1.0	1.0	1.5
Students:staff	*271:1*	*344:1*	*292:1*	*591:1*	*1,584:1*	*560:1*	*592:1*	*5,155:1*	*704:1*	--	--	--	*4,594:1*	*4,565:1*	*3,026:1*
Teachers	421.8	400.6	408.2	415.4	443.4	424.0	381.9	379.0	347.7	394.3	393.4	389.1	356.6	369.0	350.7
Students:staff	*10.5: 1*	*11.1: 1*	*11.0: 1*	*11.4: 1*	*10.7: 1*	*11.2: 1*	*14.0: 1*	*13.6: 1*	*14.4: 1*	*12.4: 1*	*12.4: 1*	*12.4: 1*	*12.9: 1*	*12.4: 1*	*12.9: 1*
Long-term subs	6.9	3.0	--	11.0	9.0	9.0	--	2.0	1.0	--	--	--	--	--	5.2
Students:staff	*638:1*	*1,482:1*	--	*430:1*	*528:1*	*529:1*	--	*2,578:1*	*4,997:1*	--	--	--	--	--	*873:1*
Paraprofessionals	131.1	152.3	181.8	85.3	112.6	94.8	108.5	111.5	104.6	117.4	126.4	115.0	125.2	135.8	126.4
Students:staff	*34:1*	*29:1*	*25:1*	*55:1*	*42:1*	*50:1*	*49:1*	*46:1*	*48:1*	*42:1*	*39:1*	*42:1*	*37:1*	*34:1*	*36:1*
Tutors	0.7	0.7	0.5	--	2.8	--	--	--	1.0	--	--	--	--	--	--
Students:staff	--	--	--	--	*1,697:1*	--	--	--	*4,997:1*	--	--	--	--	--	--
Instructional support	23.4	22.2	26.3	30.2	34.4	41.6	29.0	25.5	21.5	16.0	24.0	29.0	20.5	22.6	21.6
Students:staff	*189:1*	*200:1*	*171:1*	*157:1*	*138:1*	*114:1*	*184:1*	*202:1*	*232:1*	*306:1*	*203:1*	*167:1*	*224:1*	*202:1*	*210:1*
SPED instructional support	4.5	9.0	8.5	19.0	7.5	1.0	5.0	5.8	3.3	13.0	13.0	14.0	9.1	5.0	3.0
Students:staff	*983:1*	*494:1*	*530:1*	*249:1*	*633:1*	*4,763:1*	*1,066:1*	*889:1*	*1,533:1*	*376:1*	*375:1*	*346:1*	*505:1*	*913:1*	*1,513:1*
SPED related staff	1.0	3.0	12.6	28.6	23.0	29.0	16.5	17.6	22.0	25.6	22.7	22.6	77.4	83.6	87.7
Students:staff	*4,422:1*	*1,482:1*	*357:1*	*165:1*	*207:1*	*164:1*	*324:1*	*293:1*	*227:1*	*191:1*	*215:1*	*214:1*	*59:1*	*55:1*	*52:1*
Medical/health	10.0	10.0	10.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	11.5	11.0	9.0	--	--	12.0	11.8	12.6	12.6
Students:staff	*442:1*	*445:1*	*450:1*	*394:1*	*396:1*	*397:1*	*464:1*	*469:1*	*555:1*	--	--	*404:1*	*389:1*	*362:1*	*360:1*
Clerks/secretaries	56.6	46.7	43.8	52.1	56.6	49.1	52.3	57.8	41.2	72.2	72.8	54.6	34.2	33.2	32.2
Students:staff	*78:1*	*95:1*	*103:1*	*91:1*	*84:1*	*97:1*	*102:1*	*89:1*	*121:1*	*68:1*	*67:1*	*89:1*	*134:1*	*138:1*	*141:1*
Technology support	4.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	4.1	1.0	2.0	3.0	6.0	6.0	7.4	2.7	12.2	12.2
Students:staff	*1,106:1*	*889:1*	*899:1*	*788:1*	*679:1*	*1,162:1*	*5,331:1*	*2,578:1*	*1,666:1*	*815:1*	*813:1*	*654:1*	*1,701:1*	*374:1*	*372:1*

Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

Finding Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The Salem Public Schools do not have a clearly defined philosophy or clear plan to raise student achievement, and not all staff have a strong conviction that all students can achieve at high levels.
2. The Salem Public Schools have not been operating from a strategic plan to improve student achievement; as a result, initiatives across the district have been fragmented and reactive.
3. The Salem Public Schools do not have the administrative capacity to effectively guide, supervise, and evaluate the staff to implement reform and improvement initiatives. There is too little communication between the central office and principals, principals reported having too little time to supervise teachers, and the numerous paraprofessionals are not evaluated.

Curriculum and Instruction

4. Though it has some curriculum guides and maps, the district lacks a fully developed curriculum that is vertically and horizontally articulated and consistently implemented. No curriculum guides or maps were complete for any subject for grades 9 through 12.
5. The district lacks a common definition of high-quality instruction.
6. During its classroom observations, the review team observed too little evidence of solid teaching practice to improve achievement for Salem students.

Assessment

7. Inconsistencies and lack of alignment in assessment have contributed to a stalling of the district's effort to have a balanced and comprehensive assessment system that could provide teachers and leaders with full information about curricular, instructional, and student needs.
8. The district's accountability system does not consistently demonstrate the characteristics of a highly effective system: a focus throughout the district on the analysis and use of data; districtwide guidelines for its presentation, analysis and

use; training for teachers and administrators in analyzing and using data; sufficient time for meetings to discuss data; and accountability based on data.

Human Resources and Professional Development

9. The district does not have a full-time human resource director and has no published procedures or standards to guide its recruitment, screening, interviewing, and hiring of new teaching staff or to connect them with whole-district needs. This is particularly a problem in Salem where administrator turnover has been significant and where there is a high need for instructional vacancies to be filled by candidates with the specific competencies and skills to meet the needs of the student population.
10. District job descriptions are not updated and do not always set non-negotiable minimum qualifications. Paraprofessionals are not evaluated, and their compensation rates are not set according to their various job duties.
11. Professional status teachers are required to be evaluated only once every four years, and many teacher and administrator evaluations were not in compliance with 603 CMR 35:00[33].The district's teacher and administrator evaluation systems have limited value in promoting employee performance and effectiveness.
12. Professional development opportunities in the district are available but are not centralized in their strategic priorities, planning, implementation, funding, or impact.

Student Support

13. The district does not have fully-developed, comprehensive, and targeted systems and practices to address the academic, emotional, and social needs of diverse learners, especially English language learners.
14. Effective instructional and assessment practices to support the learning and achievement of diverse learners (especially ELLs) do not appear to be embedded in classrooms.

Financial and Asset Management

15. There was no evidence that costs related to an instructional program are integrated into its budget, that programs are evaluated for cost-effectiveness, or that in

[33]As in force at the time of the review. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted on June 28, 2011, to replace the regulations at 603 CMR 35.00 with new regulations on the Evaluation of Educators.

developing the district's budget resources are allocated on the basis of student needs, such as those indicated by student achievement data.

16. The structure of the fiscal year 2011 budget is one-dimensional and opaque rather than strategic, multi-dimensional, and transparent. It does not allow stakeholders to see expenses other than by broad categories, and its MUNIS codes are not organized educationally in the way that ESE codes are.

Recommendation Statements:

Leadership and Governance

1. The Salem Public Schools must ensure the development by a wide range of stakeholders of a long-range strategic plan that includes specific strategies in a variety of areas to raise student achievement. The district should consider ways to improve staff members' understanding of the students they teach.
2. The district should bolster administrative capacity to supervise and evaluate instruction, to help it implement a new system of supervision and evaluation based on the new strategic plan.

Curriculum and Instruction

3. The district should develop a system for curriculum development and renewal, informed by data and supported by professional development, and use this system to complete its curriculum, aligned to the new Massachusetts frameworks.
4. The district should ensure that teachers have a common understanding of what constitutes high quality instruction and that teachers are provided with high quality professional development as well as targeted supervision to help them implement their new understanding.

Assessment

5. The district should expand and strengthen its assessment system, build the capacity of leaders and teachers to analyze and use data, and promote a professional culture of accountability.

Human Resources and Professional Development

6. The district should seek out and hire qualified applicants with the demonstrated experience, competencies and skills to serve the educational needs of Salem students, particularly those from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in teaching and instructional support positions.
7. The district must provide teachers and administrators with fair, effective, and timely evaluation as it brings its evaluation procedures and instruments into compliance with the new state regulations for educator evaluation at 603 CMR

35.00.[34] It should also align its job descriptions with current job functions and institute clearly described and closely supervised evaluation systems for paraprofessional employees so that a culture of accountability is established for all employees who work with students.

8. The superintendent should appoint a districtwide professional development committee to develop a professional development plan.

Student Support

9. The district should evaluate its existing support programs and services and use those evaluations to address supports for students in its new strategic plan, including supports for English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students from diverse backgrounds. It should consider whether strategies related to school climate and family involvement should be included.
10. The district should consider a systemwide focus on a "full service school model" as a way to support the learning and achievement of diverse learners, especially ELLs, and to bolster the impact of promising programs already operating in the district.
11. The district's new professional development plan should prioritize training in the instructional models currently in use and the district should provide follow-up support to ensure that practices are institutionalized.

Financial and Asset Management

12. In making decisions to allocate staff and other resources to instructional and support programs, the district should assess the programs' effectiveness using both student achievement data and program operating costs.
13. The school business office should review the MUNIS chart of accounts (COA) and make a recommendation to the city to modify school codes to establish a structure closely compatible with the ESE COA, one that allows the budget to be viewed by specific categories and by individual programs or schools.

[34] On June 28, 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations on Evaluation of Educators to replace the regulations on Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators and accompanying Principles of Effective Teaching and Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership adopted in 1995, at 603 CMR 35.00. The new regulations are available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr35.html.