

*How Is Your  
School District  
Performing?*



*A look at*  
**Saugus**  
Public Schools

2005-2007

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL  
*Office of Educational Quality and Accountability*

## **EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL**

Maryellen Donahue, Chairwoman

Irwin Blumer

Ethan d'Ablemont Burnes

Joseph Esposito

Alison Fraser

Joseph B. Rappa, Executive Director, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

## **VISITING EXAMINATION TEAM**

Paula Hutton, Coordinating Examiner

John Kulevich, Senior Examiner

Helen Apostolides, Examiner

James McAuliffe, Examiner

Frank Sambuceti, Examiner

Charles Valera, Examiner

*The five-member Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) and its agency, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EOA), were established by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2000 to examine public school districts in the commonwealth. The mission of the EMAC and EOA is to provide independent verification of schools' and districts' efforts to promote higher levels of academic achievement among their students, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.*

*The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Massachusetts Department of Education; the superintendent of the Saugus Public Schools, Dr. Edward Costa; the school department staff; and the town officials of Saugus.*

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	2
HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?	
Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results .....	4
WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?	
Overall District Management .....	8
Fidelity of Implementation .....	8
Leadership, Governance, and Communication .....	10
Curriculum and Instruction .....	12
Assessment and Program Evaluation .....	14
Human Resource Management and Professional Development .....	16
Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support .....	18
Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency .....	20
APPENDIX A:	
EQA's District Examination Process .....	22
APPENDIX B:	
Glossary of Terms Used in EQA Technical Reports .....	23
APPENDIX C:	
State and Local Funding, 1998–2007 .....	24

## INTRODUCTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Test scores provide one method of assessing student achievement, but a variety of factors affect student performance. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) was created to examine many of these additional factors by conducting independent audits of schools and districts across the commonwealth. The agency uses these audits to:

- Provide a comprehensive evaluation of each school district's performance;
- Publish annual reports on selected districts' performance;
- Monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and
- Provide the public with information that helps the state hold districts and schools, including charter schools, accountable.

In October 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Saugus Public Schools for the period of 2005-2007. The EQA analyzed Saugus students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and identified how students in general and in subgroups were performing. The EQA then examined critical factors that affected student performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

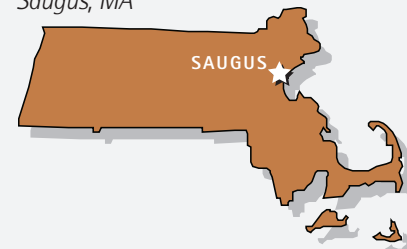
The review was based on documents supplied by the Saugus Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Education; correspondence sent prior to the EQA team's site visit; interviews with representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers; numerous classroom observations; and additional documents submitted while the EQA team visited the district. The report does not take into account documents, revised data, or events that may have occurred after June 2007. However, district leaders were invited to provide more current information.

The Town of Saugus relies heavily on a commercial tax base to support its schools with a rate almost triple the rate of residential taxes. Voters prioritize the low tax rate and school sports over the quality of education. The school district has experienced declining school budgets since 2004, and in FY 2008 it had to cut \$3.2 million from its budget.

From 2005 through 2007, the district eliminated 58 staff positions, significantly increased class sizes, reduced or eliminated programs and services, provided inadequate funds for supplies, textbooks and equipment, and did not fund professional development. The budget largely determined decision-making regarding instructional programs and student

## Putting the Data in Perspective

Saugus, MA



### DISTRICT

*Population:* 26,078

*Median family income:* \$65,782

*Largest sources of employment:* education, health, and social services, and retail trade

*Local government:* Board of Selectmen/Town Manager/Representative Town Meeting

### SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

*School committee:* 5 members

*Number of schools:* 6

*Student-teacher ratio:* 14.2 to 1

*Per Pupil Expenditures:* \$9,732

*Student enrollment:*

Total: 3,074

White: 87.9 percent

Hispanic: 5.5 percent

African-American: 2.2 percent

Asian: 2.9 percent

Native American: 0.2 percent

Limited English proficient: 0.8 percent

Low income: 14.1 percent

Special education: 15.0 percent

*Sources:* 2000 U.S. Census and  
Massachusetts Department of Education.

### EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings, with concerns, at its meeting on March 7, 2008.

support services. Despite an open and clear budget process that included input from all teachers and administrators, the final school budgets approved at town meeting did not reflect stakeholder participation, analysis of student assessment data, or the school committee's initial priorities. In effect, the town manager controlled the school district budget through recommendations to the finance committee and the town meeting.

The 10-year veteran superintendent has managed four years of contentious labor relations with the Saugus Educational Association (SEA). He had sought to stabilize the highly mobile work force by raising the salary range of professional school employees to be competitive with surrounding towns. Settling the teacher contract was contingent upon the SEA agreeing to accept the state's Group Insurance Commission (GIC) as the health insurance carrier, since the town's finances could no longer support self-insurance. Department of Revenue (DOR) intervention enabled the town to join the GIC as of January 1, 2008. These factors combined with a failed override and five years of administrative turnover and changes in most of the schools impeded progress in implementation of the goals in the strategic plan and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

The respective parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) now raise major funds for most schools, and while this once supported the funding of "extras like field trips," the money now supports needed essentials such as classroom furniture. The repeated budget cuts have undermined parental confidence in the district's ability to provide a well-rounded, supportive, and rigorous education, and as a result many parents are withdrawing their students from the Saugus Public Schools and opting to pay tuition in private schools.

The district operated as a system of autonomous schools lacking a coordinated administrative team effort and a systems approach to addressing common issues, program evaluation, data analysis, vertical articulation of curriculum, replacement of textbooks and equipment, professional development, school building maintenance, and capital improvements. Challenges facing the district include lack of K-12 assessments, missing curriculum alignment, lack of sufficient and effective professional development to improve instruction, no program evaluation, and lack of personnel evaluation. Budget cuts reduced common planning time for teachers to engage in discussions about curriculum, instruction, assessments, and transitions. In prior years, budget cuts primarily affected the elementary level. In FY 2008, budget cuts affected the chronically underperforming middle school. The budget cuts and resulting layoffs have left less than adequate personnel and time for teacher collaboration at the middle school for improving the quality of instruction.

## Recommendations

As a result of its examination, the EQA arrived at recommendations for the district, which were presented to the superintendent subsequent to the examination. They are as follows.

- Restore central office positions in the area of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Presently, the district has nobody working in these areas, which denies the district leadership and support in the most important areas of education.
- Restore support structure, grades K-12, in curriculum alignment, and place rigor back in the area of instruction.
- Institute an effective evaluation system compliant with state law to ensure the quality of instruction.

## HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?

### Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results

Students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 are required to take the MCAS tests each year in one or more specified subject areas, including English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE). Beginning with the class of 2003, students must pass the grade 10 math and ELA tests to graduate. Those who do not pass on the first try may retake the tests several more times.

The EQA analyzed current state and district MCAS results to determine how well district students as a whole and subgroups of students performed compared to students throughout the commonwealth, and to the state goal of proficiency. The EQA analysis sought to answer the following five questions:

#### 1. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2007 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Saugus participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

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

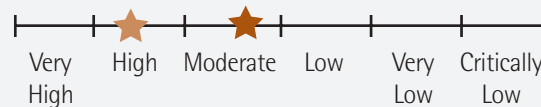
On average, over three-fifths of the students in Saugus Public Schools attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA) on the 2007 MCAS tests, nearly half of Saugus students attained proficiency in math, and approximately one-third attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Eighty-eight percent of the Class of 2007 attained a Competency Determination.

- Saugus' ELA proficiency index on the 2007 MCAS tests was 86 proficiency index (PI) points. This resulted in a proficiency gap, the difference between its proficiency index and the target of 100, of 14 PI points, the same as the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improvement in performance of two PI points annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).
- In 2007, Saugus' math proficiency index on the MCAS tests was 73 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 27 PI points, three points wider than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of nearly four PI points per year to achieve AYP.
- Saugus' STE proficiency index in 2007 was 69 PI points, resulting in a proficiency gap of 31 PI points, three points wider than that statewide.

### MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2007

	DISTRICT	STATE
<i>English Language Arts Proficiency Index</i>	86	86
<i>Math Proficiency Index</i>	73	76

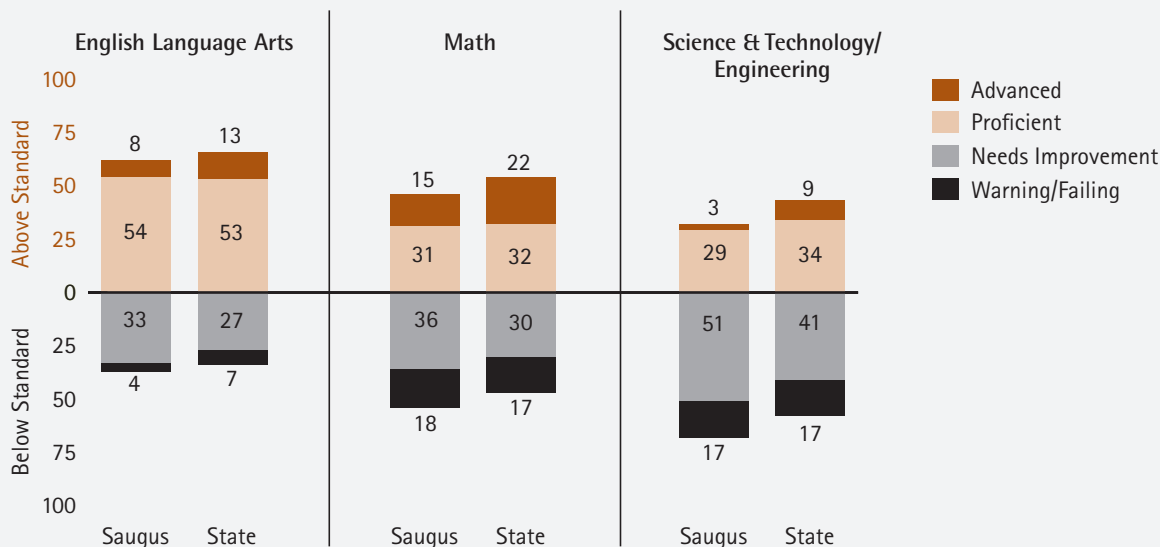
#### Performance Rating



The Proficiency Index is another way to look at MCAS scores. It is a weighted average of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, which means they have met the state's standards. A score of 100 indicates that all students are proficient. The Massachusetts DOE developed the categories presented to identify performance levels.

## SAUGUS SCORES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES, 2007

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



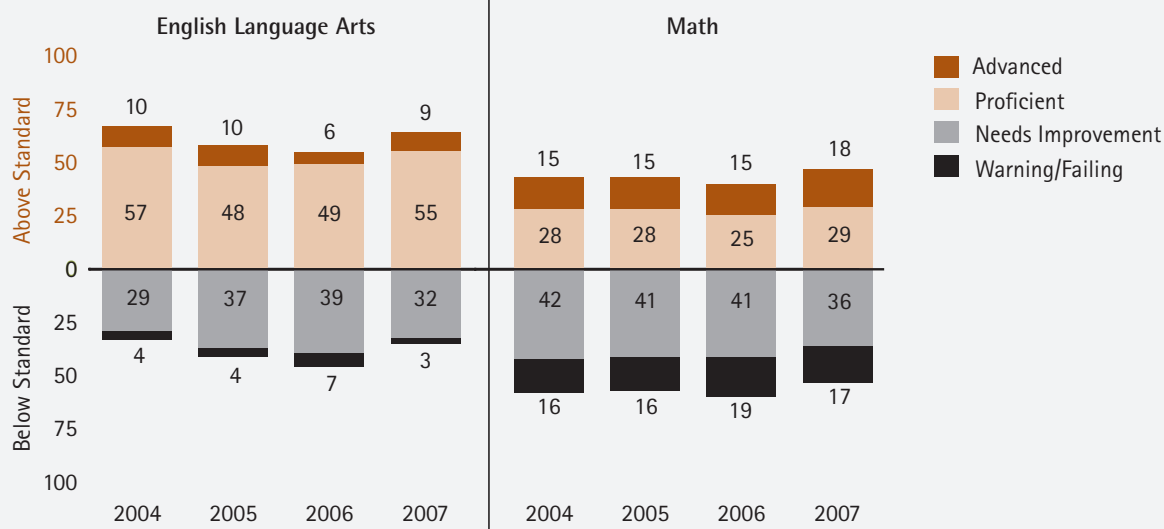
## 3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?

Between 2004 and 2007, Saugus' MCAS performance showed a slight decline in English language arts, slight improvement in math, and a decline in science and technology/engineering.

- Over the three-year period 2004–2007, ELA performance in Saugus declined slightly, by less than one-half PI point, which widened the proficiency gap by three percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in ELA decreased from 67 percent in 2004 to 55 percent in 2006 before increasing to 64 percent in 2007.
- Math performance in Saugus showed slight improvement over this period. Although there was no change in the proficiency index, the percentage of students attaining proficiency in math rose from 43 percent in 2004 to 47 percent in 2007.
- Between 2004 and 2007, Saugus had a decline in STE performance, at an average of two PI points annually over the three-year period. This resulted in a widening of the proficiency gap by 23 percent. The percentage of students attaining proficiency in STE decreased from 43 percent in 2004 to 32 percent in 2007.

## SAUGUS ELA SCORES COMPARED TO MATH SCORES

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



## 4. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2007 varied considerably among subgroups of Saugus students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Saugus, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 25 PI points in ELA and 32 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Saugus in 2007 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities, Hispanic students, and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program).
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students, White students, and non low-income students.



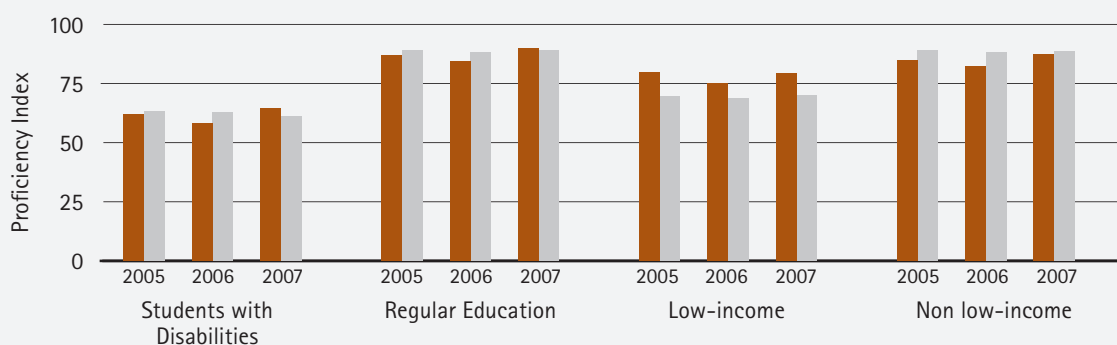
### 5. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?

In Saugus, the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA narrowed from 27 PI points in 2004 to 25 PI points in 2007, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math widened from 31 to 33 PI points over this period.

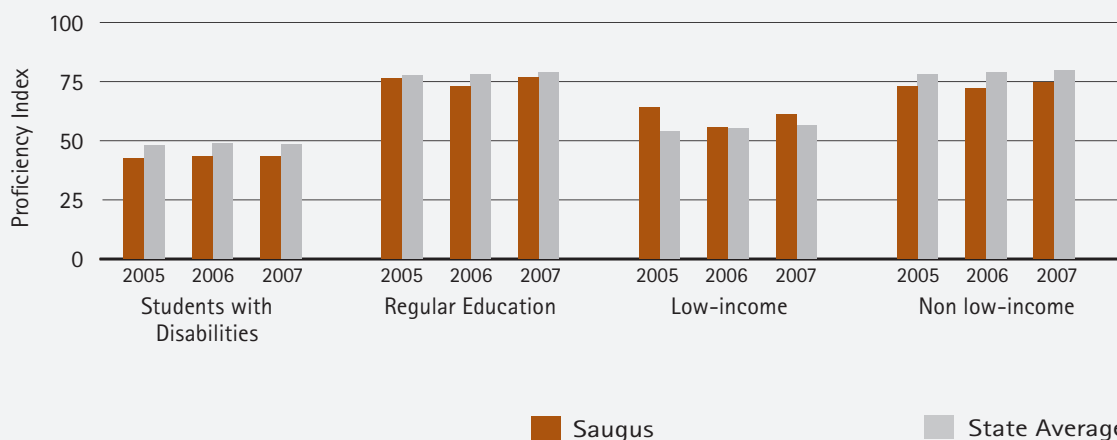
- Students with disabilities, Hispanic students, and low-income students had improved performance in ELA between 2004 and 2007. The more improved subgroup in ELA was Hispanic students, whose proficiency gap narrowed by 10 PI points.
- In math, the performance of Hispanic and non low-income students in Saugus improved between 2004 and 2007. The more improved subgroup in math was also Hispanic students, whose proficiency gap narrowed by close to nine PI points.

#### SAUGUS STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES

##### English Language Arts



##### Math



## WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

### Overall District Management

To better understand the factors affecting student scores on the MCAS tests, the EQA analyzes district performance on 67 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. Taken together, these factors are a measure of the effectiveness – or quality – of a district's management system. A score of 100 percent on the Management Quality Index (MQI) means that the district meets the standard and performed at a satisfactory level on all indicators. However, it does not mean the district was perfect.

In 2007, Saugus received an overall MQI score of 'Very Poor' (36.8 percent). The district performed best on the Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support standard, scoring 'Improvable.' It was rated 'Very Poor' on the Leadership, Governance, and Communication standard. During the review period, student performance declined slightly in ELA but improved slightly in math. On the following pages, we take a closer look at the district's performance in each of the six standards, as well as the fidelity of implementation of the district's goals, plans, and expectations.

### Fidelity of Implementation

A characteristic of effective educational organizations (schools and districts) is the strong alignment of goals, plans, processes, and actions—from the policy makers to the classroom. Therefore, the EQA has developed a protocol for assessing the alignment of these elements. The **fidelity of implementation** is an indicator of the consistency of execution of a district's expectations: its stated goals, plans, curricula, and various processes, down to the level of instruction. When these various components are consistent and highly aligned, a high level of fidelity of implementation exists. When these are inconsistent and poorly aligned, a low or poor level of fidelity of implementation exists. The classroom observation protocol is designed to collect evidence of district and school goals, plans, and expectations in the instructional setting.

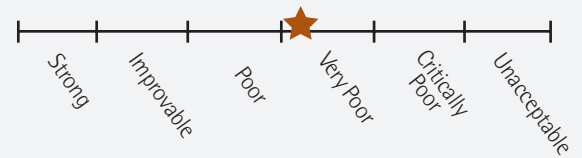
The examination visit determined that the level of fidelity of implementation in Saugus was low. The

## Performance at a Glance

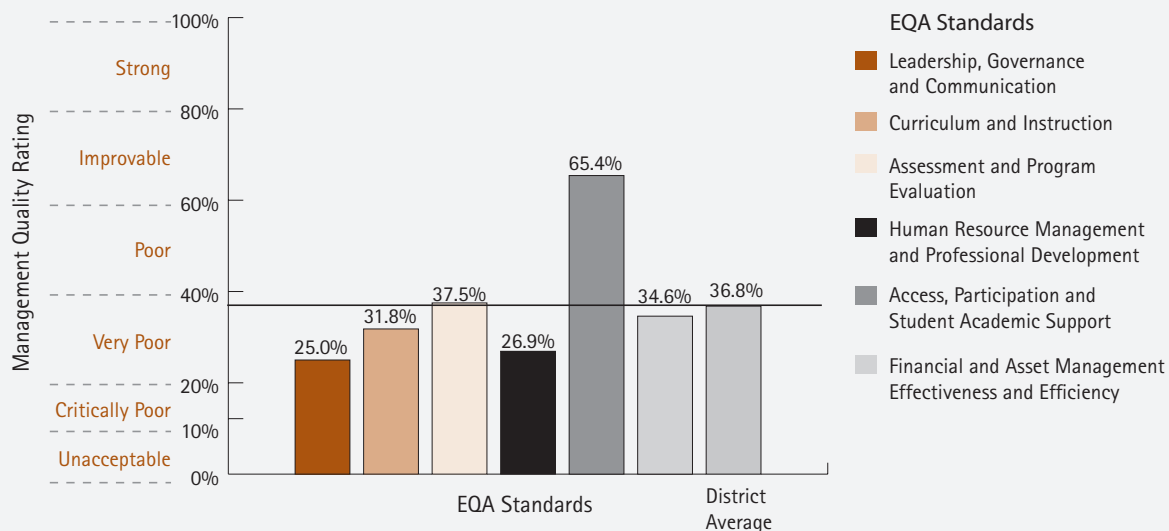
### Management Quality Index

The Management Quality Index is a weighted average of the district's performance on 67 indicators that measure the effectiveness of a district's management system. Saugus received the following rating:

### Performance Rating:



## A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

*Saugus, 2005-2007*

District's strategic plan and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) focused on raising student achievement, especially making adequate yearly progress (AYP) in math; restoring lost programs at the middle school; improving the use of technology; and improving the school climate in each school. Four years of contentious labor relations characterized by "work to rule," combined with a failed override, the necessity for an emergency transfer of health coverage to the state Group Insurance Commission (GIC), and administrative turnover and changes in most of the schools in the last five years were cited as major obstacles to the district's implementation of its goals.

The district is experiencing a low level of fidelity of implementation largely because most of the systems in the district are not working well enough to produce the desired results. Factors include lack of K-12 assessments, missing curriculum alignment, lack of sufficient and effective professional development to improve instruction, no program evaluation, and the lack of personnel evaluation. Contract negotiations, understaffed central administration, and insufficient financial resources place additional stress on the system, resulting in reductions of personnel and programs. The primary focus is on individual and organizational survival, not implementation.

### Leadership, Governance, and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. Saugus Public Schools is marked by student achievement that was 'High' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Moderate' in math, based on 2007 MCAS test results.

### Leadership and Communication

According to interviewees, the Saugus Public Schools seemed to lack a coordinated administrative team effort during the period under review. The district appeared to operate as a system of autonomous schools rather than as a school system. Administrators commented that until 2006-2007, the elementary principals met rarely, if at all, as a team to discuss common issues, concerns, and strategies. Throughout the EQA review process, leadership personnel and teachers provided information that indicated the district lacked a systems approach in areas such as program evaluation, data analysis, vertical articulation of curriculum, replacement of textbooks and equipment, professional development, school building maintenance, and capital improvements.

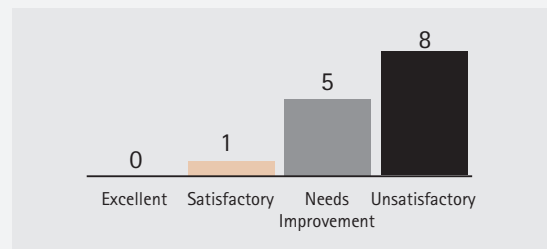
Some interviewees indicated that the superintendent had a passing familiarity with issues rather than being "on top of the issues." One example cited was the information that the superintendent requested from the principals after the development of their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The superintendent mentioned that he did not read the School Improvement Plans but instead had the principals share with him only those items they considered "out of the ordinary." Administrators stated that very little discussion about student assessment results occurred among them. In addition, the superintendent remarked that he did not include statements about MCAS test results or progress toward attainment of SIP goals in the few principal evaluations he wrote during the three years under review. Furthermore, the superintendent did not have the principals present any status reports to the school committee on progress made toward attaining the SIP goals.

### Planning and Governance

#### Performance at a Glance

##### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 14 indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



##### Area of Strength

- The district partnered with the Saugus Business Education Collaborative and received assistance and support from the North Shore Children's Hospital, the Essex District Attorney's Office, the Department of Social Services, and the Saugus Speaks Out organization.

##### Areas for Improvement

- Administrators acknowledged that the SIPs did not align with the Saugus Public Schools 2004-2009 Strategic Plan.
- Severe budget reductions resulted in staff reductions; larger class sizes; loss of programs and services; inadequate funds for textbooks, supplies and equipment; and no funding for professional development.
- An adversarial relationship existed between the school committee and the teachers' association, diverting administrators' attention and energy away from instructional leadership.
- For a district of its size and complexity, it lacked adequate staffing and support in central office, curriculum coordinators, a human resources director, and a staff member dedicated to data analysis and reporting.

Administrators reported that the superintendent established a volunteer committee to assist him with the development of the strategic plan. According to some interviewees, the committee was not representative of all key stakeholder groups and was inconsistent throughout the development process. This strategic plan was not standards based nor did it align with the School Improvement Plans of the district's six schools.

Interviewees expressed the need to improve vertical articulation of the curriculum across grades K-12. The interviewees stated that budget reductions resulted in the elimination of an elementary curriculum specialist and an increase in the teaching assignments, from part time to full time, of the grades 6-12 curriculum specialists. The interviewees also mentioned that the current schedule of the curriculum specialists, who teach at the high school, limited their availability to the teachers in their respective departments at the middle school.

Some interviewees stated that the school committee assumed a passive role rather than take a proactive leadership role as a strong advocate for the school department's budget. School committee members indicated that their regular meetings and budget work session were open to the public and received coverage from two local newspapers and from local cable television.

Interviewees periodically commented about the "perception of mistrust" the community had of its town leaders and the impact it had on both the school department and the municipal departments. However, the superintendent and the town manager spoke favorably about their working relationship with one another and the positive relationship between subordinate leaders in the schools (e.g., finance manager and principals) and municipal departments (e.g., police and fire). In contrast, members of the administrative team described an adversarial relationship between the school committee and the Saugus Teachers' Association, especially regarding the negotiations on the last collective bargaining agreement.

## Curriculum and Instruction

The Saugus Public Schools faced a number of challenges in the areas of curriculum development and instructional practice—essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

### Aligned Curricula

The documented curriculum in Saugus lacked a common format and many components to make it effective and complete. The curriculum was most complete at the high school level and least viable at the elementary level, where gaps existed in the mathematics sequence, the curriculum in English language arts (ELA) was not current, and the science curriculum consisted of the textbook publisher's program. At the middle school, the documented curriculum consisted of a course description in each domain at each grade level. In mathematics, pacing guides accompanied the descriptions. The grade 6 mathematics text was outdated and unaligned with the state framework.

Curricula in all tested areas did not align horizontally and vertically. Horizontal and vertical alignment was strongest at the high school level where curriculum documents were complete and accountability tools were in place. At the middle school level, content and expectations were uniform within a course at a grade level, and a sequential progression in knowledge and skills from course to course within a discipline existed. At the elementary level, curricula were largely undocumented, except for that written by the publishers of textbooks, and little existed to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment.

The district lacked infrastructure to enable vertical alignment of the curriculum at the junctures between the elementary and middle school levels and the middle and high school levels. The capacity for curriculum leadership in Saugus had eroded due to lack of funding. The principals were the curriculum leaders of their schools, but they performed this role with ever diminishing support. Saugus lacked a cyclical process for the regular and timely review of district curricula. Curriculum development was often ad hoc, fragmentary, incomplete, and dependent upon initiative, except for the high school.

### Effective Instruction

#### Performance at a Glance

##### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 11 indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



##### Areas for Improvement

- The district lacked a cyclical process and infrastructure for K-12 curriculum development and modification. In the last three years, the district has reduced or eliminated many curriculum leadership roles.
- Resources were not allocated according to need; although the white, special education, and low income subgroups failed to make AYP in grade 8 mathematics at the middle school, the district provided no additional resources to the school and allowed two effective mathematics teachers to transfer.
- The district lacked a plan and sufficient funds for the acquisition, replacement, and distribution of technology. The provision of technology resources was inequitable among the four elementary schools, and between the middle school and high school.
- Saugus enrolled a high percentage of special education students in full inclusion programs, but lacked the resources to sustain and support them. Achievement and graduation rates were significantly lower and the dropout rate was higher for special education students in comparison to the state averages.

Saugus used program requirements and summative achievement data to allocate instructional time. The time allotments for ELA and mathematics increased at the elementary level, and the district added a twice-weekly long block at the high school to accommodate lab periods and to permit more in-depth learning. A common understanding about high expectations for student work and mastery was not evident in Saugus. Elementary administrators defined high expectations as encouraging all students to exceed their own last efforts and not underestimating what students could do. Secondary administrators equated high expectations with the setting of higher standards for graduation and eligibility for accelerated programs.

At the district level, analysis of student achievement results, instructional monitoring, resource acquisition, and professional development were loosely linked, although integrated more systematically at the high school level, and at the K-3 grade span through implementation of the early reading program in 2004-2005.

Educational technology was obsolete, often in disrepair, inadequately provided, and inequitably distributed across the district. Saugus implemented a philosophy of inclusion, minimizing the separation of special education students from the mainstream program, but district support for this model was insufficient and dwindling, especially with budget reductions. Achievement and graduation rates were low for district special education students and the dropout rate was high.

## Assessment and Program Evaluation

Student assessment data include a wealth of information for district and school leaders on strengths and weaknesses in the local system, providing valuable input on where they should target their efforts to improve achievement.

## Student Assessment

The Saugus Public Schools lacked a systematic method to collect and analyze student assessment results across the district. The district leadership did not designate a person with statistical analysis skills to direct the data analysis effort. When MCAS data became available, building administrators used TestWiz to analyze the data and disseminated the analysis to the staff. Administrators learned how to use TestWiz on their own or with the help of other administrators. Building administrators and their teachers used MCAS test data and other internal assessment results to make changes in instructional programming.

At the elementary level, administrators focused on mathematics as an area of need. The math curriculum needed alignment to the state framework and consistency from grade to grade and school to school. A trend analysis of MCAS results in literacy revealed the need for an early intervention program. The district implemented a new reading program and adopted the DIBELS assessment program in grades K-3. Time allocations in literacy and math increased to 90 minutes to accommodate the implementation of new programs. Increases in time for ELA and mathematics resulted in less time for science and social studies.

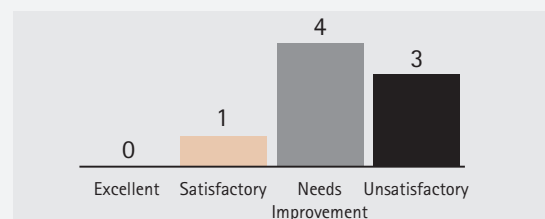
The middle school added "success blocks" to its programming. Due to staff reductions, students had fewer special subject teachers and the "success blocks" allowed the school to provide an extra quarter of each core subject area for students in grades 6 and 7. The high school changed to a modified block schedule where two long blocks per week accommodated lab periods, in-depth learning, and cooperative learning. High school administrators scheduled common planning time for staff members, developed pacing guides for all courses, and standardized midyear and final exams.

The district informed the community about test results through

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 8 performance indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



### Area of Strength

- The district annually communicated assessment results and shared other reports on student achievement to the parents, the school committee, and the community.

### Areas for Improvement

- To some degree, the district collected and analyzed aggregate data and used assessment results to improve student achievement, but only minimally used disaggregated data to improve subgroup achievement.
- Budget cuts curtailed the ability of administrators in the district to use formative and summative assessments at all grade levels and to make effective decisions in assigning staff, prioritizing goals, and allocating time and resources.
- The district had not designated a person responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, constraining its ability to conduct its own analyses of data and effectively and efficiently fulfill its data reporting and school improvement planning requirements. Responsibility for data analysis fell to the principals.
- The district lacked a formal or systemic process to evaluate programs. It did not engage in external or internal program audits other than those mandated by the state.
- The community lacked an understanding of the needs of the school system and the support it required to improve student achievement.



individual school report cards and the annual school report. Parents received individual quarterly progress reports and student report cards. Administrators shared annual MCAS test results with the school committee. Local newspapers publicized school test results and other information. The school district had a website and all schools had Connect-ED. Interviewees stated that the community did not trust the spending of the school department or the town, and did not support overrides or additional money for its schools. According to all interviewees, education was not seen as a top priority for the town.

### Program Evaluation

The district had no procedures to carry out any systematic, sequential, multiyear, or system-wide reviews to measure the effectiveness of its instructional or support programs. District leaders relied on assessment results, mainly those from the MCAS tests, to monitor student achievement and improve programs.

The budget largely determined decision-making regarding instructional programs and student support services. Budget cuts in art, music, and physical education affected the teacher preparation periods at the elementary schools. The reading support staff had to cover teacher preparation periods, which diminished the effectiveness of student support services. The loss of staff members changed teaming at the middle school from three teams per grade level to two. Budget cuts ruled out common planning time for teachers to engage in discussions about curriculum, instruction, assessments, and transitions. The middle school lacked basic resources such as textbooks and technology. The high school used grants and business partnerships to bolster its academic programs and technology.

## Human Resource Management and Professional Development

To improve student academic performance, school districts must recruit certified teaching staff, offer teacher mentoring programs and professional development opportunities, and evaluate instructional effectiveness on a regular basis in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

### Hiring, Certification, and Staff Deployment

The Saugus Public Schools lacked a number of effective systems in human resource areas such as supervision and evaluation, support for new and recently transferred teachers or those on waiver, and professional development, the latter due to lack of funding and time available within the school day and school year.

The district recruited most of the newer teachers locally or from the Department of Education website. Many had remarkably similar backgrounds in that they lived or grew up in Saugus, or knew many people there. Some had made a career change; often they attained a master's degree from a college offering credit for experience, and usually they had not yet student taught under the supervision of a college program.

All but two district administrators had appropriate certification. One of the two had completed the appropriate DOE requirements through an approved graduate program, and was finalizing paperwork to attain certification. Of the 38 teacher personnel files the EQA reviewed, 18 contained expired certifications, but the district determined through the DOE that the teachers had updated their certifications. The district administration had not updated the personnel files on a regular basis.

The district hired professional staff on waivers for unfilled positions, and reported that in FY 2008 it employed nine waived teachers. Usually teachers were granted more than one year of waiver if the superintendent determined that they were making effective progress.

Some elementary schools with extremely well organized and active PTOs or business partners had been better able to withstand

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



### Areas for Improvement

- The lack of a sustainable budget had negative implications for hiring and retaining qualified staff, updating textbooks and technology, providing training, and purchasing resources.
- Formal mentoring was available only to new teachers in their first year of service, not for teachers on waiver nor for those who had changed teaching positions due to budget reductions. No formal plan for mentoring new principals existed.
- Effective systems of supervision and evaluation were only evident at the high school. Very few evaluations were timely, and the information was not used to plan professional development.
- Time for collaboration within the school day was reduced at the middle school, relegating in-service to after-school hours, which negatively affected professional development, communication with parents, systems addressing student needs, and collaboration among teachers to raise student achievement.
- Administrators and teachers had limited access to ongoing professional development geared toward developing better systems for mentoring, evaluation, supervision, curriculum alignment, creating support programs, and sustaining programmatic changes.
- Equity between schools was lacking regarding staffing, facilities, access to technology, and the ability to raise funds from parents to procure needed resources.

the adverse effects of reductions in the school department budget, while others had not fared as well, resulting in a lack of equity among school buildings. Some elementary schools in more affluent areas of the town were better able to adapt to cutbacks in staffing and resources through fundraising efforts and through support from parent volunteers who supervised students in the library or lunchrooms. In contrast, the new school elementary school was well equipped and able to provide many opportunities that the other schools could not provide, even with successful fundraising efforts. It was staffed and resourced well with the exception that it had double the number of students but no full-time assistant principal. In addition, although the middle school was the only school in the district where students had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for a number of years and the school was in restructuring due to low math achievement, it was visibly the most lacking in the level of staffing and the stability of personnel.

### Professional Development

Despite employing new teachers each year, the district lacked an efficient and updated mentoring program and was unable to fund mentors for all staff members who needed one. Professional development programs were reactive and generally designed to meet mandatory requirements rather than the needs of each school or the district as a whole. Most teachers in Saugus had not received much professional development in MCAS data analysis, which was more participatory at the high school, where resident lead teachers led other teachers through an analysis of the data. Overall, very little disaggregated data analysis was evident in the district with the exception of grades K-3, where teachers were receiving ongoing in-service to learn to analyze and use the DIBELS data. In addition, professional development funding and time for collaboration was minimal across the district, providing little opportunity for teachers to discuss practices that would more effectively provide support structures for students in need or raise the rigor of academics.

### Evaluation

The school committee formally evaluated the superintendent four times in nine years. The superintendent did not evaluate the administrators annually. Administrators were not required to submit in writing the goals that they hoped to accomplish each year, nor were they evaluated on the accomplishment of those goals or SIP goals, and the improvement of student achievement had little or no impact on continued employment of the principal or administrator in that leadership position. Collegial relationships had just begun with the hiring of three of four elementary principals, who chose to work together as a team, which served to improve horizontal alignment in the district.

Many teachers had been in Saugus their whole careers although they were rarely evaluated. The EQA examiners found very few evaluations in teachers' files. Although the principals in Saugus had similar prior training, such as in Skillful Teacher methods, in the past the district lacked coordination in the supervision and evaluation of teachers. Furthermore, Saugus lacked supervision of new principals, who had the responsibility of completing many evaluations for the first time and were, according to interviewees, influenced by the ways things had historically been done in the district.

## Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

Students who are at risk of failing or dropping out need additional support to ensure that they stay in school and achieve proficiency.

### Services

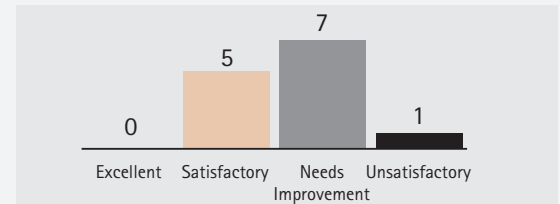
Although struggling with the detrimental effects of chronic budget cuts, the district endeavored to provide an adequate range of educational services and supplemental programs to meet student learning needs and improve academic achievement. A variety of early intervention services, remedial, and supplementary programs in both regular and special education were in use across the district. In some cases, however, staffing reductions and/or funding limitations affected the quality and/or timeliness of support services such as remedial/developmental reading and MCAS remediation. The district has increased the use, particularly in the elementary schools, of standardized diagnostic and formative assessments in reading (DIBELS). This has served to generate more and better student achievement data and to identify students performing below grade level. The district's limited English proficient (LEP) student population has grown steadily, and although the district has made efforts to develop an appropriate program, the need to continue expanding the quality and range of LEP support services remains, as indicated by the DOE Coordinated Program Review (CPR) and statements of administrators and staff members.

Administrators and staff members acknowledged that the district conducted little regular or systematic analysis of subgroup participation in advanced and/or accelerated academic programs. They could not accurately describe the degree to which subgroup enrollment or achievement rates paralleled those of the overall student population. A review of the data revealed that students from the district's two primary subgroups, the low-income and

### Performance at a Glance

#### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



#### Areas of Strength

- Despite budget limitations, by combining grant monies with some local funding, the district introduced the DIBELS literacy program in grades K-2 (adding grade 3 in FY 2008) and provided training in its administration and applications to staff members.
- The district prioritized efforts to increase communication with parents and enhance the involvement of both parents and community organizations in the schools.

#### Areas for Improvement

- The district used little data to assess program participation, analyzing aggregate data in the schools to varying degrees, but using little disaggregated data.
- The district has not yet analyzed its dropout, suspension, and attendance data enough to develop a successful plan for improvement in these areas.
- Severe budget cuts led the district to eliminate advanced and/or accelerated programs at the elementary level and substantially reduce them at the middle level. Entrance to honors classes and high school AP classes became more limiting with stricter qualifying criteria and grade prerequisites.
- Budget cuts and changes in programming resulted in reduced subgroup access to and representation in higher level academic programs.

special education populations, were significantly underrepresented in higher level programs. It was also noted that the elimination of gifted and talented programs in the elementary schools and the reduction of honors level courses at the middle school has adversely affected the ability of all students to access higher level programs.

### Attendance

All schools in the district had developed comprehensive attendance policies and accompanying implementation procedures. Each school's student handbook contained detailed attendance policies, enforcement practices, and academic consequences for exceeding absence limits. Administrators consistently followed procedures used by the schools to support student attendance and punctuality expectations, including notification letters, phone calls, and parent conferences. With the exception of the high school, average daily attendance rates in the district were at or just above state averages. In contrast, in 2007 the student attendance rate at Saugus High School was below the state average, and the average number of days absent and the percentage of students who were chronically absent from school in grades 7-12 were above the state averages. Disaggregated analysis of district attendance data indicated considerably higher absenteeism rates among the special education and low-income student populations at all grade levels.

### Discipline and Dropout Prevention

Comprehensive policies, procedures, and practices relative to student discipline, promotion, retention, suspension, and exclusion were presented in all student handbooks in a clear, detailed manner. School policies were annually reviewed, and student handbooks were distributed to all families served. The use of the Connect-ED telephone system, email, and expanded school websites enhanced communication between schools and parents. In addition, the high school used K-12 Planet (a school to home electronic portal) that greatly enhanced parent access to student information. Analysis of data revealed that Saugus High School's 2007 dropout and out-of-school suspension rates were both well above state averages. When questioned, school administrators responded that they were not aware of this. They indicated that the district lacked any formal dropout prevention policies or programs and instead attempted to deal with at-risk students on an individual case-by-case basis.

## Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effective districts develop budgets based on student needs, submit financial documentation in a timely fashion, employ staff with MCPPO credentials, and ensure that their facilities are well maintained.

### Budget Process

The budget process in Saugus was open and clear, and included input from all school teachers and administrators; however, this input did not survive the budget cuts as the budget development went forward. The resulting budget document was clear, current, and understandable but not complete as it did not contain revolving fund figures or future trends.

The decision-making in the budget review process did not appear to be based upon student assessment data, as the EQA examiners could find no evidence nor was any presented of the use of aggregated or disaggregated student assessment data in the development of the district's final budget approved at town meeting. Because of the cuts made during the period under review, the school district budgets did not reflect the school committee's initial priorities nor the district's consideration of student achievement early in the budget development.

### Financial Support

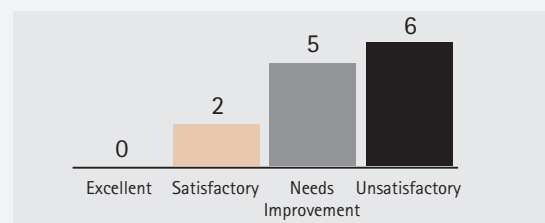
The town officials stated that the town was at its levy limit, and two override votes in the last five years had failed. In effect, the town manager, who felt that he had allotted the maximum amount of dollars possible to the school district, controlled the school district budget through recommendations to the finance committee and the town meeting.

The school district received approximately 37 percent of the town's revenues during the period under review. The increases in funds in the administrative and educational parts of the district's budget for the years under review did not allow for maintenance

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 indicators. Saugus received the following ratings:



### Area of Strength

- The school district business department provided accurate financial reports to the school committee on a monthly basis, and required local, state, and federal financial reports and statements were accurate and filed on time.

### Areas for Improvement

- Saugus Public Schools met its net school spending requirement for each year of the review period due to the town levies as a chargeback to the school district budget.
- School administrators and town officials said that the district budget was not adequate to provide the students with the education they needed; therefore, the school committee did not vote to approve the FY 2008 budget as appropriated at the town meeting.
- Five of the six district schools needed renovation or replacement in the informed opinion of interviewees, which they based upon the lack of sufficient electrical service and noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The school district and the town have been struggling with a central computer that dates from the 1980s, along with software from that same era. Interviewees told examiners that the town did not have money to update the system.
- Elimination of 58 positions during the period under review resulted in larger class sizes and a lack of program services and resources, hampering curriculum development and alignment throughout the school system.

of educational effort by the district. Educational services to students had been reduced during each of the years under review. School administrators and town officials told EQA examiners that attempted overrides had been defeated in a general election by a margin of more than two to one. Any grant funds received were mainly from entitlement grants as the district did not actively seek out competitive grants.

Budget reductions were a common concern expressed repeatedly to the EQA examiners. On several occasions interviewees stated that in the last three years the district eliminated 58 staff positions, increased class sizes to as many as 29 students in some classes, reduced or eliminated programs and services, provided inadequate funds for supplies, textbooks and equipment, and expended no budget monies for professional development. The FY 2008 budget was approximately \$3 million under maintenance of student services budget.

### Facilities and Safety

All maintenance of school facilities was under the control of the town manager, as requests for maintenance were forwarded to the head of a maintenance crew who reported only to the town manager. The district's schools were well lit and well maintained. The examiners were told that all six schools were deficient in the electrical service needed to support modern educational equipment. Five of the six schools did not have the facilities to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Belmonte Middle School has had a serious water problem in its school auditorium, which had been flooded at least twice. The school has had to install and keep four large water pumps operating constantly in order to keep groundwater out of the school. An abatement of a crawl space mold problem under the school involved filling the space with concrete; this has prevented installation of new technology in the school because of the impossibility of installing additional electrical lines through that space. Parents expressed to the examiners their perception that the mold problem still existed.

The district had developed a crisis plan, drafted by a committee that included representatives of the police and fire departments, a local hospital representative, and school personnel. The crisis plan covered fire, flood, intrusions into school buildings, and weather related emergencies. The plan was distributed to all school staff members, the police and fire officials, and local hospital administrators. Teachers were instructed to keep the plan in a prominent place in their classrooms, although few were observed by EQA examiners, except in the elementary schools. Three of the elementary schools were not locked when the examiners arrived. All of the schools had a remote entry system monitored by remote cameras.

## APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

EQA's examination process provides successively deeper levels of information about student performance. All school districts receive an MCAS data review annually, but they do not all receive the full examination every year.

Based on the MCAS results, Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) policy, and random sampling, approximately 60 districts statewide received a site review. Still other districts – those that do not meet certain performance criteria set by the state Department of Education – received an even more detailed review.

### *Data-Driven Assessment*

Annually, the DOE and EQA's staff assess each public school district's results on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests to find out how students are performing. This review seeks to answer five basic questions:

1. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on MCAS?
2. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students (such as minority and low-income students and students with disabilities)?
3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?
4. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?
5. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

### *Standards-Based Examination*

Districts with MCAS results that fall within certain thresholds of performance, particularly districts that score below average, may be selected to receive a site review. This review seeks to provide a more complete picture of why the district is performing at that level, examining district management, planning, and actions and how they are implemented at the building level. It focuses in particular on whether the district uses data to inform its efforts.

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. EQA examines a total of 67 indicators to assess whether the district is meeting the standards and provides a rating for each indicator.



## APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN EQA REPORTS

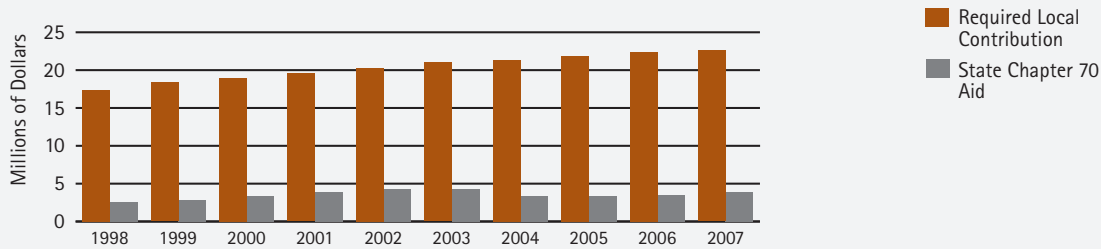
<b>ABA:</b> Applied Behavioral Analysis	<b>FTE:</b> Full-Time Equivalent	<b>MQI:</b> Management Quality Index — an indicator of the relative strength and effectiveness of a district's management system
<b>ADA:</b> Average Daily Attendance	<b>FY:</b> Fiscal Year	<b>MUNIS:</b> Municipal Information System
<b>ALT:</b> MCAS Alternative Assessment	<b>Gap Analysis:</b> A statistical method to analyze the relationships between and among district and subgroup performance and the standard of 100 percent proficiency	<b>NAEYC:</b> National Association for the Education of Young Children
<b>API:</b> Average Proficiency Index (of the English Language Arts Proficiency Index and Math Proficiency Index for all students)	<b>GASB:</b> Government Accounting Standards Board	<b>NCLB:</b> No Child Left Behind
<b>ATA:</b> Accountability and Targeted Assistance	<b>GMADE:</b> Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation	<b>NEASC:</b> New England Association of Schools and Colleges
<b>AYP:</b> Adequate Yearly Progress	<b>GRADE:</b> Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation	<b>NRT:</b> Norm-Referenced Test
<b>CAP:</b> Corrective Action Plan	<b>GRADU:</b> The graduation yield rate for a class four years from entry	<b>NSBA:</b> National School Boards Association
<b>CBM:</b> Curriculum-Based Measures	<b>IEP:</b> Individualized Education Program	<b>NSS:</b> Net School Spending
<b>CD:</b> Competency Determination — the state's interim Adequate Yearly Progress indicator for high schools based on grade 10 MCAS test passing rates	<b>Improvement Gap:</b> A measure of change in a combination of the proficiency gap and performance gap between two points in time; a positive improvement gap will show improvement and convergence between subgroups' performance over time	<b>Performance Gap:</b> A measure of the range of the difference of performance between any subgroup's Proficiency Index and another subgroup's in a given district
<b>CMP:</b> Connected Math Program	<b>IPDP:</b> Individual Professional Development Plan	<b>PI:</b> Proficiency Index — a number between 0–100 representing the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency
<b>CORI:</b> Criminal Offender Record Information	<b>IRIP:</b> Individual Reading Improvement Plan	<b>PIM:</b> Performance Improvement Management
<b>CPI:</b> Composite Proficiency Index — a 100-point index combining students' scores on the standard MCAS and MCAS Alternative Assessment (ALT)	<b>ISSP:</b> Individual Student Success Plan	<b>POA:</b> Program Quality Assurance — a division of the DOE responsible for conducting the Coordinated Program Review process
<b>CPR:</b> Coordinated Program Review — conducted on Federal Education Acts by the DOE	<b>LASW:</b> Looking at Student Work	<b>Proficiency Gap:</b> A measure of a district or subgroup's Proficiency Index and its distance from 100 percent proficiency
<b>CRT:</b> Criterion-Referenced Test	<b>LEP:</b> Limited English Proficient	<b>QRI:</b> Qualitative Reading Inventory
<b>CSR:</b> Comprehensive School Reform	<b>MASBO:</b> Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials	<b>Rate of Improvement:</b> The result of dividing the gain (improvement in achievement as measured by Proficiency Index points) by the proficiency gap
<b>DCAP:</b> District Curriculum Accommodation Plan	<b>MASC:</b> Massachusetts Association of School Committees	<b>SAT:</b> A test administered by the Educational Testing Service to 11th and 12th graders
<b>DIBELS:</b> Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills	<b>MASS:</b> Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents	<b>SEI:</b> Sheltered English Immersion
<b>DIP:</b> District Improvement Plan	<b>MAVA:</b> Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators	<b>SIMS:</b> Student Information Management System
<b>DOE:</b> Department of Education	<b>MCAS:</b> Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System	<b>SIOP:</b> Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol
<b>DPDP:</b> District Professional Development Plan	<b>MCAS-Alt:</b> Alternative Assessment — a portfolio option for special needs students to demonstrate proficiency	<b>SIP:</b> School Improvement Plan
<b>DRA:</b> Developmental Reading Assessment	<b>MCPPPO:</b> Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official	<b>SPED:</b> Special Education
<b>ELA:</b> English Language Arts	<b>MELA-O:</b> Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral	<b>STE:</b> Science and Technology/Engineering
<b>ELL:</b> English Language Learners	<b>MEPA:</b> Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment	<b>TerraNova:</b> K–12 norm-referenced test series published by CTB/McGraw-Hill
<b>EPI:</b> English Language Arts Proficiency Index	<b>MPI:</b> Math Proficiency Index	
<b>ESL:</b> English as a Second Language		
<b>FLNE:</b> First Language Not English		
<b>FRL/N:</b> Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/No		
<b>FRL/Y:</b> Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/Yes		

## APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1998–2007

A school district's funding is determined in part by the Chapter 70 program — the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to supporting school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of Saugus's funding that was derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute.

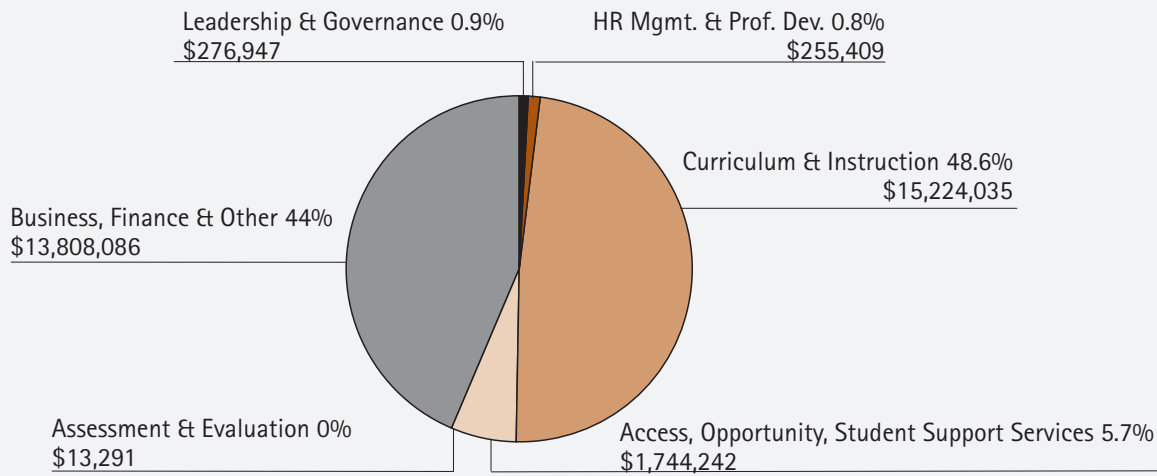
The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2005 to FY 2007, net school spending increased from \$26,715,129 to \$29,767,040; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$3,382,514 to \$3,844,289; the required local contribution increased from \$21,830,995 to \$22,578,923; and the foundation enrollment decreased from 3,228 to 3,151. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending increased from 12.7 to 12.9 percent over this period. From FY 2005 to FY 2006, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending increased from 59 to 60 percent.

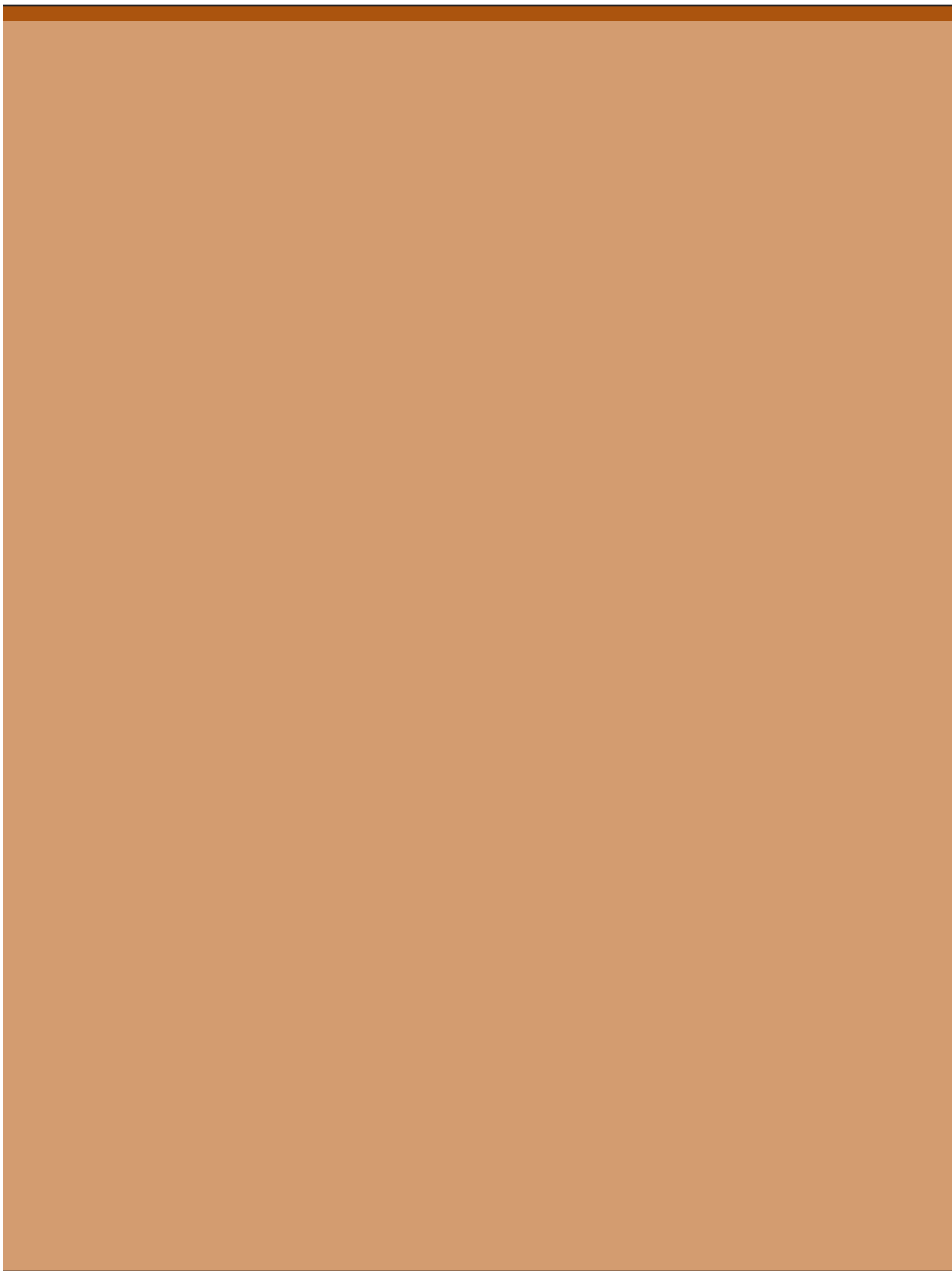
### WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR SAUGUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



### HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR SAUGUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

*FY06 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges)*





EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL

*Office of Educational Quality and Accountability*

One Ashburton Place, Room 1403, Boston, MA 02108 ■ (617) 727-2398 ■ Fax: (617) 727-0049

65 South Street, Suite 104, Hopkinton, MA 01748 ■ (508) 435-5126 ■ Fax: (508) 435-5249