



Southbridge Public Schools Level 4 District Review

May 2010



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

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Overview of Level 4 District Reviews

Purpose

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

Key Questions

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

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

Methodology

The review uses former district review reports, the district’s turnaround plan, an analysis of the district’s current systems and practices, and district and student data in order to assess the district’s progress and its capacity to sustain improvements. To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the Key Questions (see section on Content of Findings below). To answer Key Question 3, reviews collect evidence for each of the six standards to be reviewed: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management**. Team members previewed selected district documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a four-day site visit to the district and schools. The teams consist of independent consultants with expertise in each of the standards.

Southbridge Public Schools

The site visit to the Southbridge Public Schools was conducted from February 1 – February 4, 2010. The site visit included visits to the following district schools: Eastford Road School (pre-kindergarten–grade 1, Charlton Street School (grades 2-3), West Street School (grades 4-5), Wells Middle School (grades 6-8), and Southbridge High School (grades 9-12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile¹

The Southbridge Public Schools, in a town in south central Massachusetts, has a 2009-2010 enrollment of 2166, with a large Hispanic enrollment: the student population is 42.4 percent Hispanic. Before 2009-2010, when the enrollment increased by 46 students, the district experienced a steady decrease in enrollment after it was declared “underperforming” in 2004. Except for grade 8, 2009-2010 enrollment shows a decrease in the number of students in each successive grade from grade 6 (196 students) to grade 12 (70 students).

Of the 2009-2010 student population, 10.7 percent are limited English proficient—24.4 percent have a first language that is not English—and 18.7 percent are special education students. Earlier, the district had a budget deficit due to the large number of special education students in out-of-district placements. To address this, Southbridge has created programs to serve those students in-district and has been gradually bringing them back. The district’s budget for fiscal year 2010 is \$22,643,476.

The district has five schools, presenting elementary school students with a number of school building transitions. Schools operate for grades pre-K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. There is discussion around changing this elementary school configuration to reduce the number of building transitions.

Administrative staffing has been relatively stable, with the superintendent in place for the last five years. During her tenure she has assembled a group of able central office and school administrators. There has been turnover as the superintendent sought the right person for each position, but administrative staffing appears stable at the moment. However, the superintendent has announced her retirement in June 2010, and there is now some uncertainty as to the future direction of the district. At the time of the site visit, the school committee had not made decisions as to qualities it sought in the new superintendent and the nature of the search. Given the progress the district has made in establishing systems and processes to improve student achievement, the selection of the right superintendent to build upon this progress is crucial.

¹ Student demographic data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

Student Performance²

Student performance in Southbridge has shown signs of improvement, particularly between 2008 and 2009. In 2009 for the first time the Southbridge school district made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in the aggregate and for all subgroups. Also, 2009 MCAS results showed an increase from 2007 in the percentages of all students achieving proficiency on all but two of the grade level assessments. Some of these increases were sizable and some minimal. On 7 of the 14 assessments, however, there was a decrease in the percentage of proficient students in 2008 before the increase in 2009. Also, only a small percentage of special education and limited English proficient or formerly limited English proficient (LEP/FLEP) students achieved proficiency in 2009; instead large percentages of students in these subgroups were in the Warning/Failing category. Finally, using ESE's student growth model, data indicate significant student growth in ELA between 2008 and 2009 at the West Street School (including all students in grades 4-5) and at Wells Middle School (including all students in grades 6-8). The same growth is not evident in mathematics. Further exploration of student performance in Southbridge can be found under Key Question 2.

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

Findings

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

All but two of the action steps in the turnaround plan have been completed.

The Department of Education³ reviewed the operations of the Southbridge Public Schools in February 2003 and May 2004. In September 2004, the Board of Education⁴ declared the Southbridge Public Schools to be an underperforming school district. Following this declaration, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) conducted a fact-finding review in October 2004 to serve as a benchmark for the district's improvement and to inform improvement planning. The Department also issued a *Leadership Report* to identify priorities for action, evaluate the district's capacity to implement the changes, and to determine specific technical assistance to provide to the district.

The Southbridge Public Schools used the findings from the Department's *Leadership Report* to create its turnaround plan. The Board of Education accepted Southbridge's plan in December 2005, and the district and the Department agreed that the state would provide two former superintendents as consultants to Southbridge. These consultants are no longer in place. The turnaround plan contained six initiatives to address the district's needs. Those were: Initiative 1, Leadership; Initiative 2, Standards-based Curriculum; Initiative 3, Local Fiscal Support; Initiative 4, Communication and Outreach to Parents and Community; Initiative 5, District and School Vision, Mission, and Goals; and Initiative 6, Data-driven Action Plans.

The EQA revisited Southbridge in 2007 to determine the status of each of the action steps. The 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report: Southbridge Public Schools* indicated that in most cases the action steps for the six initiatives had been completed. This 2010 report revisits the 10 action steps that had not been completed, according to the 2007 report, in order to establish their current status.

As indicated below, some of the action steps are dated. Much has occurred since they were originally formulated. However, the two still not completed do point to areas in need of serious attention. First, as the district initiates a search for a new superintendent, it needs a clear statement of its performance expectations for that individual. And second, much remains to be done to bring the whole community into participation in school decision-making. As an examination of this entire report will show, however, the Southbridge school district has built the capacity to address future issues as they arise.

Initiative 1: Leadership

Action step 3: Identify roles and responsibilities for administrative positions.

³ Now the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE).

⁴ Now the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

A review of the documents provided by the district indicated that the district currently has job descriptions for the following administrative positions: director of instruction and assessment, director of special education, business manager, high school principal, elementary or middle school principal, high school assistant principal, and middle school assistant principal. The job descriptions include information such as responsibilities, qualifications, supervision, and reporting assignments. A job description for the position of superintendent of schools was not evident. The superintendent, when questioned by a member of the review team about her job description, stated that there was none. School committee members later remarked that they had been unaware that there was no superintendent job description, but that they would address that deficiency in preparation for the upcoming search for the new superintendent.

Status: Not completed

Action step 6: Provide leadership and support for the business manager.

The 2007 report stated that the superintendent worked closely with the business manager to provide the necessary leadership and support, but that some issues in business and financial management remained, including the timeliness of reports, procurement procedures, and communications with the town manager. The superintendent reported to the 2010 review team that inefficient business practices, the accuracy of reports, and confidence in the management of finances continued to be problems into 2008. For example, the superintendent and town officials stated that reports failed to inform them that circuit breaker funds had been underspent prior to 2008, resulting in a \$1 million unspent balance. In 2008 the business manager was replaced. The superintendent, school committee members, and town officials all indicated improvement in the accuracy of reports and in their confidence in the management of district finances since the new business manager had come on board.

Status: Completed

Action Step 8: Review the programs and budget with the special education director in order to identify a program that meets the needs of the students and is in compliance with state and federal guidelines.

The superintendent and special education director reported to the team that reviews of the special education program and budget continue on a monthly basis. Efforts to move out-of-district students into collaborative and in-house placements continue, with nine fewer out-of-district placements this year. End-of-Year and ESE reports confirm that tuition costs have continued to decline since 2007. ESE's 2009 Coordinated Program Review (CPR) Report indicated that nine special education criteria were "partially implemented" and none were "not implemented." The director indicated that those areas where there were findings of "partially implemented" would be in full compliance by March 2010.

Status: Ongoing.

Initiative 3: Local Fiscal Support

Action Step 1: Establish a working relationship with the town manager and town council members.

Review team members heard testimony from the superintendent, school committee members, and town officials that working relationships are now excellent. Details of the relationships are described below under Key Question 3.

Status: Completed and Ongoing

Action Step 5: Prepare a proposal for funding computer hardware and software for town council.

In 2007 the town council approved \$1,250,000 for school technology, but the 2007 report indicated there was “limited use and integration of technology into instruction.” The superintendent reported to this review team that all the technology has been purchased and installed over the previous three years, and that technology staff members have been hired to support the equipment and assist faculty in its use. Curriculum leaders and principals reported that technology-based curriculum components and assessment methods were in use, such as research projects and Galileo assessments. Review team members observed computers in classrooms and computer labs and observed some teachers using technology in their lessons.

Status: Completed

Initiative 4: Communication and Outreach to Parents and Community

Action step 1: Meet with new parent organization in town (Partners for Progress) to identify needs and concerns.

At the time of the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report*, the superintendent had begun initial conversations with the parent organization, Partners for Progress. ESE monitoring reports indicated that this partnership dissolved when members of the organization moved out of Southbridge after a proposed Proposition 2 ½ override failed to pass. To learn more about the needs and concerns of families in the Southbridge community, the superintendent has since then chosen to collaborate with a local community organization, CLEE (Citizens for Latino Education Equity) and most recently with ASPIRA, a national organization committed to improving educational and leadership opportunities for Hispanics. In October of 2009 CLEE became a local affiliate for ASPIRA and the superintendent arranged for representatives from both the local and national offices to share ideas about improving Hispanic student performance at a school committee meeting. A result of the ongoing conversations was the creation of parent liaison positions to improve communication between home and school. The superintendent is working with CLEE to find additional ways to engage the Southbridge community in addressing problems related to Hispanic student performance.

Status: Ongoing

Action step 2: Attend local speaking engagements (Lions, Rotary, hospital, senior citizens).

The superintendent stated that during the first couple of years in her position she was proactive in arranging to speak to local groups and organizations about the goals and needs of the school system. She commented, however, that recently her speaking engagements in the community have come at the invitation of local organizations. Further, she expressed a willingness to meet with business and community groups as the need arises. Some interviewees expressed a need for more communication between the school district and the community.

Status: Ongoing

Action step 3: Establish superintendent's advisory council to dialogue with the community.

The superintendent established a curriculum advisory council before the time of the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report* and held extended learning time (ELT) focus groups with the community before ELT was implemented in 2008-2009. However, the superintendent has not established an advisory council to create an ongoing dialogue with the community. She reported in interviews that the decision not to create an advisory council was based upon the district's lack of success in attracting Hispanic parents to attend district or school-based meetings. She explained that even with the aid of the community outreach group CLEE (Citizens for Latino Educational Equity), the district has not been able to increase Hispanic participation. The superintendent and principals reported that they rely upon parent liaisons to provide information about the needs of Hispanic families. Interviews with staff and parent groups indicated that the district needs to do more to engage the Hispanic community.

Status: Not completed

Action step 4: Establish a districtwide school council chaired by the superintendent to meet twice each year to discuss budget priorities.

The superintendent has established and chairs a districtwide school council which meets twice a year to discuss the priorities in the school department's budget. Other leadership personnel acknowledged the existence of this districtwide school council. According to the superintendent, discussions have centered on the priorities in the Level I-II budget proposals. Level I refers to level services, and Level II to additional staff, programs, or materials.

Status: Completed

Initiative 5: District and School Vision, Mission, and Goals

Action step 2: Work with school committee, administration, staff, and parents to write clear and measurable goals for the district.

Interviewees reported that the *Southbridge Public Schools Three Year Goals 2008-2010* were initially developed by the central office and school administrators and then shared with the school committee. The five goals focus on student performance, personnel, educational programs and initiatives, learning environment, and parent, family, and community involvement. Principals indicated that they align the goals in their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) with the district goals. They also noted that the superintendent incorporates some of the goals in her evaluations of the administrators. Administrators said that the district goals are reviewed each

year at a summer administrative council retreat. A review of the district goals, SIPs, and administrator evaluations substantiated the statements of the school and district administrators.

Status: Completed and Ongoing

Key Question 2: Is student achievement on the rise?⁵

While MCAS results show encouraging signs of student achievement on the rise, particularly between 2008 and 2009, in most cases the data does not yet indicate a trend.

The results from the 2009 MCAS assessments in Southbridge indicate that the district is far from the goal of having all students achieve proficiency. In English language arts (ELA), 48 percent of Southbridge students are at Proficient or above; in mathematics, only 36 percent have achieved proficiency. In the state overall, by contrast, 67 percent of students are at Proficient or above in ELA and 55 percent have achieved proficiency in mathematics.

Southbridge has seen an improvement in its Annual Yearly Progress status in 2009. For the first time, Southbridge has made AYP in both ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for all subgroups. In ELA, the performance rating was Moderate and the improvement rating was Above Target. In mathematics, however, the district's performance rating was Low and its improvement rating was Improved Below Target.

As Table 1 below indicates, there was an increase from 2007 to 2009 at most tested grade levels in the percentage of Southbridge students scoring at Proficient or above. Some gains are substantial, ranging from 10 to 15 percentage points, while some are at 2 to 3 percentage points. Grade 3 mathematics and grade 6 ELA are the exceptions. In these two instances, there was a decrease between 2007 and 2009 in the percentage of students achieving proficiency. For those assessments on which there was an overall improvement between 2007 and 2009, the pattern of improvement is not always steady. In the case of ELA in grades 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10 and mathematics in grades 5 and 10, there was a decrease in the percentage of students achieving proficiency in 2008 before the increase in 2009.

⁵ Data in the findings under Key Question 2 are derived from ESE's website, ESE's Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

**Table 1: Percentages of All Southbridge Students Achieving Proficiency 2007-2009—
by Grade**

Assessment	2007	2008	2009	points gained/lost 2007-2009
Grade 3 Reading	44	36	47	+3
Grade 3 Math	60	57	54	-6
Grade 4 ELA	27	20	29	+2
Grade 4 Math	20	35	35	+15
Grade 5 ELA	43	33	46	+3
Grade 5 Math	36	31	44	+8
Grade 6 ELA	40	39	36	-4
Grade 6 Math	24	33	26	+2
Grade 7 ELA	42	45	52	+10
Grade 7 Math	10	25	24	+14
Grade 8 ELA	53	48	63	+10
Grade 8 Math	16	16	24	+8
Grade 10 ELA	56	37	68	+12
Grade 10 Math	45	42	53	+8

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website.

Table 2 below shows the percentages of special education and LEP/FLEP students achieving proficiency or better on the MCAS in 2007-2009, compared to all students. Clearly, large percentages of students in these subgroups are scoring in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories. Over these years the percentages of special education students scoring Advanced or Proficient increased in both ELA and mathematics, though only by 5 or 6 percentage points, but the percentages of LEP/FLEP students scoring Advanced or Proficient decreased in both subjects. Most importantly, there is a significant gap in achievement between the overall student population and these two subgroups.

**Table 2: Percentages of Southbridge Special Education and ELL Students Achieving Proficiency on MCAS 2007-2009, Compared to Percentage of All Students—
All Grades**

	2007		2008		2009	
	ELA	Mathematics	ELA	Mathematics	ELA	Mathematics
Students with Disabilities	8% <i>(of 216 students)</i>	4% <i>(of 214)</i>	8% <i>(of 194)</i>	9% <i>(of 191)</i>	14% <i>(of 188)</i>	9% <i>(of 185)</i>
LEP/FLEP Students	22% <i>(of 72 students)</i>	22% <i>(of 70)</i>	17% <i>(of 84)</i>	25% <i>(of 86)</i>	9% <i>(of 113)</i>	12% <i>(of 113)</i>
All Students	42% <i>(of 1192 students)</i>	28% <i>(of 1187)</i>	37% <i>(of 1167)</i>	34% <i>(of 1160)</i>	48% <i>(of 1146)</i>	36% <i>(of 1149)</i>

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website and (for 2007 figures) other ESE sources.

In summary, in some cases the MCAS proficiency data shows student achievement on the rise, particularly between the 2008 and 2009 MCAS administrations. Most 2009 results show some gains, though not all do. However, in most cases there is not yet a pattern of continuous improvement, and only small percentages of special education and LEP/FLEP students achieve proficiency, with a significant achievement gap for these two subgroups.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) has developed a new measure that provides an additional perspective on MCAS results: student growth on MCAS. The Student Growth Model compares students' improvement from year to year to that of their peers statewide with similar test histories. Growth model data is available in ELA and mathematics for grades 3 through 8 for both 2008 and 2009. As a result, it is possible to compare levels of growth between the two years. At the high school level growth model data is available only for 2009, so comparisons are not possible yet.

The Student Growth Model data confirms what student proficiency levels indicate: there is a modest overall improvement in student achievement in the district, at least in ELA. Increases in

the median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) at a school of more than 10 points are educationally meaningful. The data shows that in ELA, there was an increase in median SGP between 2008 and 2009 at the West Street School of 24 points and at Wells Junior High School of 20 points. (The West Street School is made up of all of the district's 4th and 5th graders, and Wells Junior High School has all of its 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.) These increases are well above the typical school. In mathematics as well, there are increases in the median SGP, 5 points at West Street and 5.5 points at Wells. However, these increases are not educationally meaningful, since the average school saw its median SGP fluctuate by 10 points from 2008 to 2009. When the median SGP is over 50, it means that students are improving faster than over half of their peers across the state with similar test histories. This is true in 2009 for Southbridge students in ELA in grades 5, 7, 8, and 10 where the SGPs are 59, 71, 67, and 55.5, respectively.

AYP, most proficiency levels for all Southbridge students, and the Student Growth Model indicate a rise in student achievement. These positive indicators show improvement over one year, between 2008 and 2009. Establishment of a trend using the Student Growth Model is limited by the data since ESE did not measure SGP in 2007. But one year's improvement does not confirm a trend. It is not possible at this point to know whether the overall improvement in student achievement will continue.

A review of suspension, retention, attendance, and dropout and graduation rates presents some serious issues.

A review of suspension, retention, attendance, and dropout and graduation rates did show some recent progress, including a substantial increase in the grade 9 promotion rate in 2007 following the introduction of the Freshman Academy at Southbridge High School, from 61 percent in 2006 to 92 percent in 2007. In addition, there was a decrease in the out-of-school suspension rate from 7.1 to 6.3 percent between 2007 and 2008.

Attendance rates, on the other hand, remained relatively unchanged between 2007 and 2009; at the elementary level attendance rates went from 94.3 to 93.9; middle, 92.7 to 93; and high school, 90.8 to 89.7. These attendance rates need improvement since none of them meets the state standard of 94 percent.

Although the annual dropout rate decreased from 9.7 percent in 2007 to 7.3 percent in 2008, and then to 5.2 percent in 2009, this is a first sign of progress, since the district dropout rate has fluctuated up and down over the preceding years, from 6.2 percent in 2004 to 9.7 percent in 2005, to 8.3 percent in 2006, then 9.7 percent in 2007. The 2009 rate is extending the downward trend begun in 2007. However, also important is that the state dropout rate in 2009 was 2.9 percent, a great deal lower than the district's 5.2 percent.

Finally, the high school graduation rate of 57.5 percent in 2009 was both a decrease from the district 2008 rate of 64.7 and substantially lower than the state 2009 rate of 81.5 percent. The 57.5 percent graduation rate was among the lowest in the state. A closer look at the graduation rate reveals some disparities and fluctuations in subgroup graduation rates. In 2009, 67.6 percent of Hispanic students graduated, while only 44.6 percent of white students did so. By contrast, in

2008, the graduation rate for Hispanics was 59.6 percent and for white students the rate was 70.7 percent. Reasons for these changes and gaps are not immediately apparent.

The above data means that unacceptably low percentages of district students are attending school, with little overall change over the last three years. In addition, when compared with the state, higher percentages of district students are dropping out and considerably lower percentages of students are graduating from high school, putting Southbridge among the districts in the state with the most serious issues in these areas. Support programs to address these issues are not adequate to the task.

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

Leadership and Governance

The leadership in the district has developed and implemented systems and procedures to address the majority of concerns in the turnaround plan.

According to interviewees, the superintendent and other leadership personnel have brought about comprehensive changes to improve the district. The superintendent has hired or promoted a leadership team that includes the three other central office administrators—the director of instruction and assessment, the director of special education, and the business manager—and the five school principals. The school committee and the superintendent have identified five district goals for 2008-2010, with student performance as the #1 goal. The district goals form the nucleus for the School Improvement Plans, and then lead to principal, teacher, and student action plans. The first six-year cycle of curriculum guides will be completed when the arts guide is finished at the end of the current school year. To improve curriculum articulation, the district has instituted both systemwide and individual school teams such as the district curriculum council, curriculum revision committee, school leadership teams, professional learning communities, and subject area and grade level teams. A performance assessment system for students is now in place using instruments such as MCAS, Galileo, ELA and mathematics benchmarks, DIBELS, Lexia, FASTT Math, and RAZ Reading. Administrators and teachers acknowledge that they are becoming more comfortable with the use of this assessment data in their decision-making, especially with regard to the teaching/learning process.

Administrators and teachers spoke about a site-based budget development system that provides them with adequate resources. The school committee has committed \$150,000 in its annual budget for professional development to improve curriculum. The school committee and the superintendent have also obtained community support for a \$1.25 million technology initiative that has resulted in the hiring of technology staff and the purchase of new computers for both classrooms and computer labs. With the assistance of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Southbridge Policy Manual, which previously dated to 1994, was updated to August 2009. Job descriptions have been developed for all administrative positions except for the superintendent's. The district has implemented revised evaluation instruments and procedures for teachers, administrators, and the superintendent. The district has also expanded its student support systems by such means as parent liaisons, wrap-around programs, the Freshman Academy, the Grade 8 ½ program, and partnerships with the local hospital and local agencies. An architect has drawn conceptual views for a new Southbridge Middle and High School. At the time of the site visit, a vote of support by the town council for this project was expected. Also, a positive relationship is now evident among the superintendent, school business manager, town manager, and town accountant.

These new or updated systems and procedures have brought organization and accountability to the district. The systems and procedures developed and implemented by the superintendent and

her leadership team have resulted in a foundation that enables the district to move to the next level.

Stakeholders expressed anxiety and uncertainty about the pending retirement of the superintendent and the process for filling that position.

Central office administrators, principals, teachers, and parents interviewed by the review team stated their concern about who would be replacing the superintendent, who is retiring at the end of June. They used such terms as “anxiety”, “trepidation,” and “uncertainty,” and referred to the need for an “instructional leader,” “someone who will continue what we have already started,” “an individual with superintendent experience,” “a visionary,” and “a diplomat.”

In addition, interviewees indicated that they were unaware of any process or timetable to be used by the school committee to find a new superintendent. The interviewees stated that they hoped the process would be open and that they would have an opportunity to provide input through focus groups. A few interviewees gave review team members the impression that some school committee members may already have a candidate in mind. It is important that the district select a superintendent who is an educational leader and who will continue to increase pride in the school district and improve its image.

Negative community perceptions of the schools do not accurately reflect the climate in the schools.

Interviewees frequently commented on negative perceptions of the schools in the community. The recent history of decreasing enrollment, particularly at the higher levels, indicates parents’ unwillingness to send their children to the Southbridge schools. As this report indicates, however, the district now has strong systems in place to monitor and support student learning. Review team members noted the positive climate they themselves experienced when they observed classrooms, as well as the gap between the positive climate they observed and the negative community perceptions of the schools. Until parents’ and community members’ perceptions catch up with the reality of the schools, students will continue to leave the district to enroll elsewhere. The district is not adequately publicizing the good things happening in the school system.

The district does not adequately involve representatives from the whole community, including the Hispanic community.

Racial tensions in both school and town politics have been an ongoing problem according to interviews, the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report*, the superintendent’s *End of the Year Reports* (2006 – 2008), and ESE monitoring reports. The superintendent, school committee, school administrative leadership, and teachers spoke to the need to make sure all parts of the community, including the substantial Hispanic community, participate in school district decision-making. However, there is little evidence of movement in that direction. The superintendent has collaborated with a local community organization, Citizens for Latino Educational Equity (CLEE), and most recently with ASPIRA. In October of 2009 representatives from both groups presented to the school committee ideas about improving Hispanic student performance. The

creation of the parent liaison positions was a product of those conversations. As previously noted, however, one of the two action steps from the turnaround plan still not completed is Action Step 3: “Establish superintendent’s advisory council to dialogue with the community.” As also noted, the superintendent has recently become less proactive in arranging to speak to local groups and organizations.

When interviewed about the effectiveness of parent engagement activities at their schools, the elementary school principals reported that they have had success in bringing Hispanic parents to their schools by planning exhibitions and other activities that focus on student performance and events that celebrate the cultural diversity of the community. Interviews with the parent liaisons confirmed that the elementary schools have done more extensive work than the middle and high schools in cultivating collaborative relationships with Hispanic parents.

At present there are no Hispanics on the school committee and few on school, school district, or municipal committees, yet Hispanic students represent 42.4 percent of school enrollment. Also, school staffing levels show an underrepresentation of Hispanic members. Principals reported in an interview that they have made a concerted effort to recruit a diverse group of teachers, but have not had much success. The superintendent stated in an interview that she believed the issue was one of compensation—they cannot attract high quality candidates with current salaries. During interviews, school and district leaders seemed at a loss as to how to address this issue.

When the review team met with parents, there were no Hispanic parents present. Of the parents in attendance, a number expressed concerns about the school behavior of Hispanic students, as they perceived it, and what they perceived as the Hispanic parents’ lack of parenting skills. These generalizations confirmed the racial and ethnic tensions outlined in various reports and interviews and the fact that there was no Hispanic representation in the parent focus group also highlighted this tension. It was evident that extensive work needs to be done at the school and community levels to improve perceptions of Hispanic students and their families.

The district is exploring a new grade configuration for the three elementary schools. It appears likely that there will be one pre-K and K school and two schools for grades 1-5. In an interview the superintendent explained that some individuals on the school committee and in the community want the new elementary configuration to bring the district back to neighborhood schools. She said that if that were the plan one of the schools would be almost entirely Hispanic, which she regarded as unacceptable. The district has not articulated a strategy for ensuring the participation of the whole community in addressing this matter. In the team’s judgment, not having a plan to involve all groups in the community in the decision-making process is ill-advised.

It is evident from conversations with the parents in the focus group and with school staff and leaders that representation of all groups, especially Hispanics, in the conduct of the schools is an unresolved issue. Some staff as well as parents expressed the assumption that Hispanic community members will not participate even when invited to; however, the district has not fully explored possible ways to encourage and support that participation. The superintendent, school committee, administrative leadership, and teachers have expressed a strong commitment to

improving the performance of all students, but for the most part members of the Hispanic community have not yet been involved in making this happen.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has established sound systems and practices for developing and implementing a standards-based curriculum.

In 2005 there was no standards-based written curriculum in Southbridge. Instead individual teachers made their own decisions as to what should be taught. Over the last five years, however, the district has produced a basic curriculum guide in all content areas. In 2006, the district developed a basic standards-based curriculum in ELA and mathematics including standards, learning goals, and assessments. At the end of the 2010 school year, the district should have completed similar documents for all content areas. Importantly, the district budget now includes regular funding to support curriculum development and revision. Also, as the curriculum work has proceeded, funds have been made available for purchase of updated textbooks and resources.

In addition to these completed curriculum documents, ELA and mathematics curriculum staff and teachers have created curriculum maps that provide further guidance for teachers. There is no consistent format for these maps, with the result that the contents vary from grade to grade. Most include a timeline and resources. Some address instructional strategies and list specific assessments.

In the 2011 school year, the district plans to embark upon its scheduled second round of curriculum review. Interviews revealed that the district has not yet determined what the next round of curriculum development will involve. The expansion of curriculum guides to include components such as objectives, resources, instructional strategies, and timelines in a consistent format is needed.

To lead and manage this curriculum work, the district has established and funded positions for a curriculum director (now titled director of instruction and assessment) and a staff of four ELA and mathematics curriculum directors and coordinators, two for the elementary level and two for the secondary level. These individuals work with teachers to ensure the implementation of the curriculum and to model instruction. They also assist principals with the supervision and evaluation of teachers.

To assess students' progress with the mastery of the state standards, the district with the initial support of the state has adopted the Galileo software program. Galileo provides administrators and teachers periodic information on student achievement from formative assessments. This feedback is immediate, with the result that teachers have opportunities to re-teach and reassess areas of weakness.

This focused effort to develop curriculum documents and to implement an assessment system to measure student mastery of that curriculum means that instruction in the district can now be based upon state standards, and administrators and teachers can know during the course of the

school year how individual students are progressing toward mastery of those standards. The district now has a curriculum based upon state standards and a delivery system in place to implement that curriculum.

The district has in place many of the systems and processes needed to establish strong instructional practice.

Principals, members of the curriculum team, and the special education director share responsibility for promoting and monitoring effective instructional practice. To guide instruction, the district has established standards-based benchmarks in ELA and mathematics. With the MCAS and Galileo assessments, administrators and teachers have the tools to determine instructional needs as measured against the benchmarks. At the beginning of each school year, the district undertakes a thorough analysis of summative MCAS results. Following that analysis, each school develops principal, teacher, and student action plans to address the instructional weaknesses ascertained through the analysis. Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year and using test items from Galileo, each classroom in the school then administers formative assessments three times per year to determine the extent of student progress toward mastery of the benchmarks.

Additional factors enable the adoption of effective classroom practice. Principals have allocated ample time for ELA and mathematics instruction. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 have 90-minute blocks of instruction in ELA and mathematics. At the middle and high schools this time is reduced to 64 and 60 minutes respectively, as determined by the length of a class period. In addition, however, at-risk students at the middle school have additional ELA and mathematics “Safety Net” classes, and at the high school every 10th grader takes both an ELA and a mathematics seminar focused on MCAS preparation. In some cases, however, pull-out instruction for Title I, special education, and LEP students compromises students’ access to teachers with strong content backgrounds. As a result, while the time allocations are sufficient, effective use of this available time is not always clear.

The district also provides ample professional development time for teachers to learn about promising instructional practices. A significant amount of professional development time has been devoted to introducing teachers to a range of instructional strategies. The Collins Writing Program is an example of an instructional program successfully implemented. Teachers across content areas received professional development in the program, and administrators monitored classrooms for evidence of its use. Writing across the content areas is the district’s instructional focus for the 2010 school year. The review team saw the strategies in use and heard teachers in focus groups refer to the centrality of Collins Writing in their teaching. This particular set of instructional strategies had taken hold across the grades and content areas. And all principals have developed schedules that enable teachers to meet during the school day whether as departments, grade level teams, or literacy teams. A recent purchase of \$1.25 million in classroom technology has meant that each classroom from kindergarten to grade 8 has 4 to 5 computers for student use, and the high school has additional computer labs. Finally, the district has been able to purchase some up-to-date science materials and textbooks, as well as *Impact*

Mathematics textbooks for the 7th and 8th graders. A final key piece in this system is the implementation in the 2010 school year of a new teacher observation and evaluation protocol.

The result of the establishment of these comprehensive systems is that a broad representation of administrative staff has the responsibility to guide and monitor instructional practice, teachers have the time for the training and collaboration necessary to improve that practice, and the district has the instruments to hold teachers and administrators accountable for the improvement of student achievement. The district is poised to improve instruction.

Instructional practice at all levels is not yet of the quality to contribute significantly to the improvement of student achievement.

The team visited 44 classrooms from kindergarten through grade 12 and found the schools orderly and classroom management under control. Yet on some key indicators in the classroom observation protocol, the data revealed instruction in need of improvement. For example, in approximately 40 percent of the classrooms visited team members did not observe a range of instructional techniques such as modeling, direct instruction, and facilitating in use. In approximately 45 percent of these classrooms, students were not articulating their thinking and reasoning. In approximately 40 percent, higher order thinking skills such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were not in evidence. Finally, in approximately 45 percent of the classrooms observed, there was teacher-led whole group instruction only, and students did not have the opportunity to learn with one another whether in pairs or in small groups.

The district has a basic curriculum in place and powerful tools to determine which benchmarks specific students have or have not achieved. However, the percentages of the general student population achieving proficiency have not increased at all grade levels beyond what they were in 2007. (See first finding under Key Question 2 above.) The review team's classroom observations indicate that many teachers have not yet incorporated a full range of instructional strategies into their practice and so lack the ability to successfully address the needs of their students. Teachers' classroom practice is not yet powerful enough to lead students to a steady increase in achievement.

In particular, student achievement data shows the need to improve instruction for special education and LEP/FLEP students.

As Table 2 under Key Question 2 above shows, large percentages of special education and LEP/FLEP students scored in the Warning/Failing category in both ELA and mathematics in the years from 2007 to 2009. There is a significant achievement gap between these two subgroups and the overall student population in the Southbridge Public Schools, and the percentage of the district's LEP/FLEP students scoring Proficient or above decreased in both ELA and mathematics over these years. When visiting team members raised questions regarding the low achievement of special education and LEP/FLEP students, curriculum administrators reported that mainstream teachers are not yet equipped to work with subgroup populations in their classrooms. While there has been professional development on differentiated instruction for special education students, classroom observations indicate that teachers have not yet integrated it into their repertoire of skills. Also, coordination of the program for LEP/FLEP students is

shared by the superintendent and the principals, with the result that there is minimal central coordination of the program. So Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) training for teaching LEP/FLEP students, required by the state, is only now taking place in the district. At the time of the site visit a relatively small percentage of teachers had completed training in both categories 1 and 2. A final contributing issue is that both special education and LEP students receive a substantial portion of their instruction in pull-out settings. Under this system, these students are pulled out of some mainstream classes, although not necessarily ELA or mathematics.

Assessment

The district is making greatly improved and expanded use of data.

The superintendent of schools indicated that throughout her tenure, data-driven assessment and program evaluation have been among her highest priority objectives. The data is used to inform decision-making, develop and revise educational goals, modify academic programs and services, and improve instruction. The district presented the review team with considerable evidence to document the substantial progress that has been achieved since the Department's 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report*. New key district and school leadership appointments, including the creation of the position of director of instruction and assessment (K-12) as well as ELA and mathematics curriculum coordinators and directors for all grade levels, have served to support and promote the expectation that all professional staff regularly use aggregated and disaggregated achievement data to improve student performance. Review team members learned that administrators and teachers at all grade levels and in each of the district's schools work together regularly in formal collaborations to monitor student achievement and adjust instruction as indicated. At the elementary and middle schools, the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model has been established to serve as a primary vehicle through which principals, curriculum leaders, and classroom teachers work together toward this goal. At the high school, the departmental structure serves the same function. In numerous interviews, principals, curriculum leaders, and teachers consistently indicated that these formal and ongoing professional interactions serve to enhance their ability to understand and analyze student assessment results, districtwide and school-based reports, and other pertinent and timely data. Documentation showed that an increasingly comprehensive and integrated system of formative and summative assessments, now aligned with national, state, and local benchmarks, is used to continuously collect and evaluate student assessment results.

Review team members were provided many examples of instances when data has been used to drive decision-making, allocate resources, significantly modify existing programs, or introduce improved educational programs and services across the district. These included: (a) use of detailed instructional action plans at all grade levels and in all content areas generated by PLCs (K-8) and individual academic departments (9-12), which provide teachers with timely, specific, and continuous feedback, based on integrated assessment(s) of ongoing student assessment data; (b) districtwide introduction of the Collins Writing Program; (c) professional development programming that is better designed to provide training for both leadership and staff in student

assessment and data analysis; (d) Research for Better Teaching (RBT) training for teachers; (e) increasing use of local learning benchmarks to better monitor student learning progress; (f) the Freshman Academy at Southbridge High School, whose design and service delivery model are continually informed by relevant data from a range of sources; and (g) introduction of a number of new core courses and support programs in reading, writing, ELA, math, science, and MCAS preparation at all levels.

The review team noted the commitment the district has made to use assessment and program evaluation as essential tools to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Southbridge schools. There was general acknowledgement, particularly by teachers, that ongoing training in data analysis needs to remain a priority. Many teachers indicated that their training and skill in data analysis were still only at a basic level. They stated their hope that the district would offer ongoing and expanded professional development opportunities that would support and enhance their ability to use MCAS test data, Galileo benchmarks, and other pertinent academic assessments to accurately identify student learning needs and modify instruction. Nevertheless, it was clear to the members of the team that district and school leaders, together with staff and classroom teachers at all grade levels, share a growing belief that student achievement, instructional programs, assessment practices and procedures, and teacher supervision and evaluation can be improved through the systematic collection, careful analysis, and appropriate use of data. The assessment systems and practices that have been established in the district appear to have gained the growing support and confidence of the staff. Through the use of data, the district is building a comprehensive system for decision-making.

The district's assessment policies and practices have been increasingly characterized by the continuous collection, analysis, and timely dissemination of student data.

A balanced system of formative and summative assessments has been established that serves to inform and guide instruction and determine programmatic needs. In addition to MCAS testing, district and school leadership now use of a variety of other assessment tools and benchmarks to measure student progress and evaluate the effectiveness of direct instruction and support programs. Principals, curriculum leaders, and teachers uniformly cited their recently acquired Galileo system as the most significant and valuable tool supporting their student assessment and program evaluation efforts. Introduced during the 2008-2009 school year, Galileo has been adopted as the primary districtwide assessment system for grades K-12. It provides administrators and teachers with an effective and efficient way to integrate research-based assessment and curriculum and aligns online testing with district and school goals, as well as the state curriculum frameworks. Interviewees explained that the system provides easily accessible and detailed student performance data, in both aggregated and disaggregated forms, that informs decision-making and facilitates communication between school and family. School and district leaders detailed the Galileo's system's many valuable features. These include local control that provides individual schools and teachers with flexibility of curriculum content and assessment design—leading to local assessments that are reliable and valid—and a comprehensive online system for reporting student performance data in an understandable and useful way to educators, parents, and students. Most importantly, interviewees repeatedly stressed that in Galileo they

now have a tool that enables them to systematically and continuously monitor academic progress within and across grade levels, determine growth trajectories, and make ongoing adjustments to curriculum and instruction. Review team members learned that the district administers Galileo assessments to all students K-12 three times each year and that benchmark data is subsequently collected and carefully analyzed by PLCs and academic departments.

Principals and curriculum leaders presented review team members with assessment calendars produced by each of the district's schools that detailed a battery of other formative and summative academic assessments that are administered throughout the course of every school year. Among those cited by interviewees were assessments associated with: phonemic awareness, Lexia, RAZ Reading, FASTT Math, DIBELS, Collins Writing, the *Harcourt Trophies* reading series, and *Everyday Mathematics*. Several principals had taken steps to consolidate the data by creating spreadsheets that include all student performance data, in both aggregated and disaggregated formats. This has provided a rich and comprehensive resource for district leaders and classroom teachers that they use to make improvements in curriculum and instruction. The district is genuinely committed to the implementation of data collection and dissemination policies and practices that are coordinated, continuous, and timely. District and school leaders and faculty alike continually affirmed their belief in the value of data collection and analysis, and provided numerous examples of how data has been increasingly used to provide all students with enhanced learning opportunities and experiences, so as ultimately to improve their learning outcomes.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district has developed and implemented an evaluation system for teachers and administrators with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement; the cycle for evaluating teachers with professional teacher status, however, is three years rather than the two years required by law.

The 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report* noted that the district's supervision of instruction was not embedded in a system and that most observations and evaluations lacked specific recommendations for improving instruction. Since the November 2007 visit that resulted in that report, interviews and a review of district records by the current review team showed, processes, procedures, and tools for the supervision and evaluation of staff have been developed, negotiated with the teachers' union, and implemented. All evaluators have been trained, and all teachers are in the process of being trained in Research for Better Teaching (RBT)'s Skillful Teacher program. On March 4, 2009, the district adopted RBT's system and practices for evaluation of personnel. The system prescribes a clearly defined process designed to embed the standards of effective teaching and professional performance in the evaluative practices of the district in order to provide quality educational experiences for students. The district's statement of purpose and philosophy for its teacher evaluations indicates that continuous improvement in instruction and professional performance is the primary responsibility of the teacher, and that it is the responsibility of the evaluator to assist and support

in that effort. Toward that end, the district initiated Professional Growth Plans with the goal of assisting teachers with professional teacher status to improve their level of teaching to meet the district's standards of effective teaching. These growth plans are in effect for two consecutive years, however, which means that teachers with professional teacher status are evaluated every three years instead of every other year as prescribed by Mass. Gen. Laws. c. 71, §38, and 603 CMR 35.06. Many of these Professional Growth Plans were observed during the team's review of randomly selected teacher evaluations.

The district's recently implemented evaluation process includes formal observation guidelines and specified procedures for teachers with and without professional teacher status. The evaluation process requires the completion of a standardized district pre-conference form and a newly adopted (March 2009) classroom observation form. The evaluator assesses the performance of a teacher against Southbridge's Standards of Effective Teaching by using the rubric on the form. The rubric assesses teacher performance against each standard. Under each standard, the evaluator writes a narrative to inform the reader as to what transpired during the observed lesson. A summative narrative section speaks to strengths and weaknesses and cites any exemplary performance. A recommendations section follows. These recommendations are made in the context of the District Standards of Effective Teaching and include specific suggestions in areas of unsatisfactory performance. The evaluation form concludes with the evaluator's summative assessment as to whether the teacher meets or does not meet district standards, as well as the traditional signatures and dates.

A review of 35 randomly selected teacher personnel files by team members indicated that all but three evaluations were timely and that all were informative. All but one teacher were found to hold current and appropriate certification. That individual holds current and valid certification in another state and must receive appropriate Massachusetts certification by June 2010 as a condition of continued employment. The new classroom observation forms are in use and all but three of the evaluations reviewed were instructive and contained from one to six specific recommendations for improved performance.

At the same time as the new teacher evaluation system was adopted, the superintendent implemented a new goals-based evaluation tool for administrators. The superintendent meets annually with every administrator in a pre-evaluation conference to develop goals and in a post-evaluation conference to discuss performance as measured against those goals. A review of the evaluations of nine district administrators other than the superintendent revealed that all of the evaluations included mutually agreed-upon goals, student achievement data to support accomplishment of the goals, summary comments, and recommendations. Team members found that all the administrator evaluations were timely and informative. Most evaluations reviewed were instructive in that they contained from three to fourteen specific, clear recommendations for improvement. Further, a review of administrators' personnel files revealed that all held current and appropriate certification for their position.

The superintendent's evaluation was also reviewed and found to be timely, informative, and instructive, containing three recommendations for improvement. The superintendent, too, holds current and appropriate certification.

With these revised administrator and teacher evaluation instruments, the district can now use data to assess professional performance, though it does not perform this assessment often enough for teachers with professional teacher status. The new administrator and teacher evaluation tools are central to the district's efforts to improve instruction as a means of increasing student achievement.

The district continues to design and implement a professional development program that supports instructional improvements.

The 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report* noted that the district's professional development and planning supported instructional improvement. However, it remained an area of priority. During the review team visit, interviews and a review of district documents indicated that the district's professional development program continues to be designed to support instructional improvement. The school committee annually budgets \$150,000 for professional development. Each year the director of instruction and assessment designs a district professional development plan. And, while there is no formal professional development committee, professional development decisions are informed by discussions and data analysis at monthly meetings of the curriculum staff. The plan for the 2009-2010 school year calls for three full and six half days of professional development. The calendar of professional development for the year includes training in continuing district initiatives such as the Collins Writing Program, Research for Better Teaching's Skillful Teacher program, Galileo formative assessments, the Big6 research tool, and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) (categories one and two). Professional development also supports instructional uses of the newly available technology, particularly the use of smart boards, Galileo software, and the LCD projectors now in most classrooms. Evaluation of professional development is accomplished largely through surveys, questionnaires, and teacher feedback. The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan 2008-2011 specifies the areas in which professional development activities in the district will be offered.

In interviews and focus groups, district administrators and teachers separately told review team members that district professional development opportunities are aligned with district initiatives and are readily accessible. When asked if they perceived the need for additional professional development, none of these administrators or teachers indicated such a need.

Interviewees and district documents described the district's teacher and administrator mentoring programs as contributing to increased student learning and achievement by improving the quality of teaching. The district's induction/mentor program for teachers begins with a two-day orientation in late August. Mentors are trained through a three-day course which includes skills for effective mentoring, learning, teaching, and assessing in a standards-based environment; reading and writing across the curriculum; peer coaching; classroom observation; and positive feedback strategies. Mentors meet with mentees throughout the school year. In addition, beginning teachers participate throughout the school year in an eighteen-hour course that

incorporates instruction on teaching in a standards-based classroom, positive classroom discipline, parent communication, and assessment strategies. The superintendent plays a large role in orienting administrators new to the district. She meets with new principals for two weeks in the summer. During that time, the superintendent assists the administrator in developing an entry strategy and provides him or her with an administrators' orientation binder. This binder contains all contracts, sets of procedures, and other materials essential for the new administrator.

Student Support

The district has only recently established data-driven intervention and transition models at all levels to address the academic, emotional, and social needs of students.

Interviews with the superintendent, principals, a parent liaison, the social worker, and guidance counselors revealed that the district has established data-driven service models to address the needs of at-risk students. The middle school uses an attendance, behavior, and content mastery (ABC) protocol. Under ABC, a team of teachers, administrators, and support staff meet quarterly to examine the progress of high-risk students. The team uses available performance data such as attendance, MCAS, and Galileo. On the basis of this data, the team generates individual student action plans. To support high-need groups such as ELL students, the middle school has created data spreadsheets to place them within the appropriate language and content settings. These spreadsheets provide a summary of available MCAS summative data and Galileo formative data.

In a similar fashion, the elementary school principals reported that their teachers have developed data spreadsheets for at-risk students and engage in intensive analysis of available student performance data to provide appropriate safety net services. These services usually involve an additional learning block of approximately seventy minutes per day during which students receive tutoring or specific intervention services. Staff meet quarterly to determine the effectiveness of an intervention and to make appropriate adjustments.

To support at-risk eighth graders who have struggled in middle school and are not yet ready for high school, the district has created a "Grade 8 ½" where a small number of students receive intensive support from a teacher team, guidance counselor, and social worker. To support those students who are entering the high school, the district in 2006 established a Freshman Academy where students are placed in groups with the low student/teacher ratio of 14 to 1 and receive intensive support from teacher teams. The Freshman Academy has led to an improved 9th grade promotion rate: from 61 percent in 2006 to 92 percent in 2007. Also at the high school, an at-risk student support team meets every five weeks to review cases and develop student action plans. In addition, the high school has cultivated a number of partnerships to support the emotional and physical health of at-risk students: with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), Youth Opportunities Upheld (Y.O.U. Inc.), the G. B. Wells Human Services Center, and Harrington Hospital. In an interview, the superintendent and high school principal reported that the district has just established a partnership with Nichols College and Y.O.U. Inc., to provide an "Upward Bound" program that will give at-risk high school

students the opportunity to live and study on a college campus to prepare them for college entrance.

A full-time social worker provides additional intervention and transition support at the middle and high school levels. She works with the ABC team at the middle school and the at-risk team at the high school. The social worker is also the homeless coordinator; in this role she updates staff on homeless students and connects these students and their families with available social services.

The superintendent has established three parent liaison positions. Parent liaisons work primarily at the elementary level. They are bilingual in Spanish and English and are primarily responsible for serving as interpreters for parents and school staff; fielding phone calls from parents who have questions; providing accurate and timely translations of written school communications; informing parents of school regulations, procedures, and academic programs; encouraging parents to attend school-based meetings and events; notifying staff about the unique social, cultural, and linguistic needs of families; and conducting home outreach visits.

The elementary and middle school principals, who participated in the Extended Learning Time (ELT) grant in 2008-2009, said that they used the additional time to provide ELL and special education students with support. They claimed that the overall improvement in the district's spring 2009 MCAS scores could be at least partially attributed to the extended learning time available. They explained that the school committee chose to discontinue ELT because of parent concerns about the length of the school day for elementary school students. The principals explained that after the elimination of ELT they had to provide support and interventions through the use of enrichment blocs. This meant that in the 2009-2010 school year, to receive additional support, some students were being pulled out of their mainstream core classes.

The student support and transition models in place in the district are comprehensive. They are a reflection of the district's commitment to improving its students' achievement. However, with the exception of the individual student action plans, the Freshman Academy, the Y.O.U., Inc., program, and the social worker, all of these supports were instituted in about the last year before the review, in some cases replacing or revising earlier programs. The results from these recent initiatives may not yet be apparent; it is notable, too, that any effect of the Freshman Academy has not yet been seen in the district's graduation rates, since the first class of students to have experienced it is to graduate this year (2010).

Financial and Asset Management

The district has put systems in place to manage and monitor its finances effectively.

The turnaround plan cited the mismanagement of school funds and a \$2 million deficit for FY04 as major issues needing improvement. A new business manager was hired in 2004, and subsequent monitoring reports on the turnaround plan and the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report* noted improvements, especially regular budget and grant updates to the school committee and surpluses in school budgets at the end of 2005, 2006, and 2007. These

reports also cited the ongoing need for improvements in some areas: the accuracy and timeliness of financial reports, and procurement procedures.

A new business manager was appointed late in 2008, and administrators, school committee members, and town officials expressed confidence in the accuracy of her reports and her management of funds. She has a degree in public administration, is licensed, has experience in both municipal and school finance, and is working to complete Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official (MCPPO) certification. She continues to submit updates on the school budget to the school committee monthly and on grants and other funds quarterly, and the reports include encumbered payroll and operations expenses as well as the budget, expenditures, and balance for each account. She added information on transfers and projected balances to her reports in response to requests from the school committee. Principals can check their current account balances online and do not overrun accounts without her approval and transfers to cover the deficit. The End of Year report and some grant reports for FY09 were filed approximately one month late.

The business manager described tighter controls for the handling of athletic and school lunch cash receipts in response to findings in the town audit for 2008 and improvements in tracking payroll and grant expenditures. The review team examined payroll and accounts payable records and found systems in place for monitoring and approving expenditures, including detailed backup for payroll and invoices, appropriate bid and contract documentation, and a purchase order system requiring approval by the superintendent and town manager as well as appropriate school administrators and the business manager. A comprehensive spreadsheet of payroll obligations enables comprehensive forecasting of those expenses for current and future budgets. The business manager described collaborations with the French River Collaborative and the town on bids and purchasing in order to be more cost-effective. The superintendent and special education director described ongoing efforts to reduce tuition costs by bringing out-of-district students into less expensive collaborative and in-house programs, as mentioned previously. The business manager and town officials reported that student activity accounts have not been audited as required by statute, but stated that they plan to implement management systems and perform audits of those accounts.

The management of school finances has continued to avoid deficits. The FY09 school budget turned back a small surplus of \$55,303 to the town (after adjusting for last-minute stimulus funding). And grant reports indicated that expenditures were within revenues with \$442,226 (8%) unspent, and circuit breaker expenses exceeded revenue by \$133,464 as the district began to draw down the \$1 million balance. End of Year Reports show consistent declines in special education tuition costs since 2007. In addition, as noted, school committee members, the superintendent, and town officials stated that they have confidence in financial reports and the management of school funds.

Improved reporting, monitoring, and management of school budget funds have contributed to the efficient use of funds and effective financial planning. Forecasting has been effective, especially in the areas of payroll and special education. The town has supported adequate school budgets,

new technology, and a new middle/high school. The school budget has been sufficient to absorb new programs initially supported by ESE, such as a curriculum director position (now with the title of director of instruction and assessment), *Everyday Mathematics* textbooks, and Galileo software. The budgets have also enabled the district to fund unexpected needs such as additional science equipment and new middle school mathematics materials. And tighter controls and improved reporting for athletic, school lunch, and grant funds are expected to result in more efficient use of those funds.

School and town officials communicate effectively and work collaboratively on budget and financial matters, and the town has supported educational needs to the extent possible.

The turnaround plan and the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report* described a history of mistrust between school and town officials due primarily to a 2004 school department deficit of \$2 million and poor communication between school and town officials. Since 2007 a new school department business manager and a new town manager have been hired, and interviewees described both individuals as fair and equitable, collaborative, competent, and effective communicators. The town manager described his style as collaborative and stressed the importance of good schools in moving the town forward. School committee members said that one of their former colleagues now serves on the town council and that this has contributed to council support for the schools. The school business manager reported that she has experience in both town and school financial offices, and town officials cite her experience as an asset in understanding their needs as well as those of the school department. Review team members also learned from interviews with the superintendent, business manager, school committee members, and town officials that since 2005 the school budget has been agreed upon jointly in meetings of school and town officials before being presented to the town council and that the town council has supported the school budget with little discussion. Both town and school officials described the town as supportive and budget allocations as fair. For example, in 2009 the town had to make two rounds of budget cuts totaling \$1.7 million. After an initial allocation of 65% of these cuts to the schools the town manager and superintendent collaboratively agreed on 61% as a fair allocation; cuts for the schools were finally reduced to \$600,000 after adjustments for health insurance and federal stimulus revenues. Town officials and the business manager also reported collaborating on an agreement for the allocation of town charges for indirect school costs, on purchasing, and on contracts for HVAC and other maintenance services. The town manager reported that he served on the screening committee for the new school department business manager and on the school building committee in its successful proposal for a new middle/high school.

The schools have benefited from the improved communications with town officials and their support for school needs. School and town administrators reported that the town supported \$1.25 million for technology in the schools in FY08. The town limited the effect of reductions in state aid on the school budget and programs to the extent possible, as described above. According to administrators and faculty the approved budgets have been adequate to provide the resources needed for the turnaround plan and for instruction. Town and school officials alike expect

approval by the town council for the new middle/high school, now that Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funding has been confirmed.

The continuation of efforts to communicate and collaborate with town officials will result in support for school budgets and projects, and it will enhance the image of the town as well as the schools.

Key Question 4: Has the district built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own, without continued ESE Targeted Assistance support and intervention?

The Southbridge Public Schools have built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on their own, without continued assistance from ESE targeted to the district.

The current superintendent, with the assistance of her administrators and teachers, has developed and implemented much-needed systems and procedures for the district. These range from school goal-setting aligned with district goals, the empowerment of principals, and curriculum and assessment initiatives, to new administrator and teacher evaluations, data-driven decision-making practices, and participatory budget development. These systems and procedures are all now a functioning part of the school system. By and large, interviewees expressed optimism and support for these new or revised systems and practices. However, in the area of leadership, there is at least one uncertainty about the district's ability to maintain continuous improvement on its own. The individual hired to replace the retiring superintendent and the direction in which that individual and the school committee take the school system will determine whether or not this uncertainty will be resolved positively.

ESE has provided the district with key support since the implementation of the turnaround plan. The Department paid the salary when the position of curriculum director was established, purchased Everyday Math textbooks, and paid for the first year of implementation of the Galileo system. But the district has since absorbed these expenses into its own budget.

In curriculum the district has built the capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own. The combination of the standards-based curriculum with the formative assessment capability of the Galileo software is powerful. With the completion of additional curriculum components during the next round of curriculum review, it will be even more powerful. In instruction, there is a strong system in place—including benchmarks, assessments, analysis of assessment results, and instructional action plans, with ample time for instruction and professional development—but it is not yet bearing fruit. While implementing the turnaround plan, the district has demonstrated an admirable capacity to focus on areas that needed attention. Interviews indicated that consensus has not yet emerged on the need to focus on instruction. However, the district has the capacity to move in this direction.

The district has made student assessment and program evaluation a high priority and considerable progress has been achieved since the 2007 *Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report*. Expanded and coordinated collection and use of formative and summative student assessment results and data from numerous other reliable sources have been established in all schools and grade levels. Concurrently, the capacity of principals, curriculum leaders, and teachers to analyze, evaluate, and use data has been and continues to be expanded. As a consequence, relevant and timely data is now increasingly incorporated into the decision-making process across the district. Examples were numerous and substantial of appropriate data being used to evaluate curriculum, instruction, programs, and services more effectively, as well as to prioritize

goals and allocate resources. The data systems that have been established appear to have the genuine support and confidence of district and school leadership and teachers at all grade levels and are becoming an integral part of the professional culture of the Southbridge Public Schools.

The district has completed job descriptions for all of its advertised positions; has established a consistent and clearly defined hiring process that extends districtwide; and has developed and implemented consistent districtwide processes, procedures, and tools for the supervision and evaluation of staff along with the provision of appropriate professional development.

In the area of student support, the district has done extensive work in establishing data-driven intervention and transition models. Each school has an at-risk student support team of administrators and teachers to review student cases and generate timely reports based upon available summative and formative data. The district has also developed extensive partnerships with local hospitals, youth agencies, colleges, and community groups to provide ongoing support for at-risk students. It has provided innovative transition support with the “Grade 8 ½” program for students not yet ready to enter the high school, and the Freshman Academy, which offers intensive support to incoming ninth graders. The creation of three parent liaison positions as well as a social worker position demonstrates the commitment of the district to provide improved support for and communication with families.

Improved financial reporting and financial management procedures, along with the commitment to a working relationship with town officials, have led to significant improvements on the financial side, including the elimination of deficits and town support for school budget and capital needs. The ability of the district to improve systems when problems have been identified has been noteworthy: for instance, by monitoring the spending of circuit breaker funds and instituting controls for school lunch and athletic funds. The absorption of programs supported financially by ESE into the school budget, especially the position of curriculum director (now director of instruction and assessment) and the Galileo assessment program, has demonstrated the district’s ability to continue to progress without continued support from ESE. Continued monitoring of finances and support for continued financial improvements by the new superintendent and by the school committee will be critical to maintaining progress in this area.

Faithful implementation of these strong financial systems and processes, coupled with the improved budgeting processes, financial stability, and the vastly improved relationship with the town side of government, strongly support the finding that the Southbridge school district has built the necessary capacity to maintain continuous improvement on its own without continued assistance from ESE targeted to it.

Recommendations

The district should maintain the systems in place for leadership and governance, curriculum and instruction, data-driven assessment, supervision and evaluation, student support, and financial management.

Leadership and governance: The current superintendent, with the assistance of her administrators and teachers, has developed and implemented much-needed systems and procedures for the district in various areas, including the area of leadership and governance itself. The district should maintain the superintendent's leadership team, consisting of the central office administrators and the principals, as well as the system of identifying district goals that form the basis for the School Improvement Plans, which in turn form the basis for principal, teacher, and student action plans.

Curriculum and instruction: The leadership, in implementing the turnaround plan in the areas of curriculum and instruction, has created administrative positions, secured necessary funding, overseen the development of curriculum documents, begun use of a new teacher evaluation instrument, and expanded professional development time to equip teachers with the data and the instructional tools to improve student achievement. To support the future improvement of student achievement, the district must maintain and regularly refine the curriculum and instruction systems in place.

Data-driven assessment and decision-making: District and school leaders have made considerable progress in using student assessment results, local benchmarks, and other appropriate data to improve learning opportunities and student achievement and to inform decision-making within the Southbridge Public Schools. The district has implemented data collection and dissemination policies that are comprehensive, continuous, and timely. Review team members received copious evidence of coordinated and systematic assessments and ongoing program evaluation in place across the district. District and school leadership has increasingly used student assessment results and other relevant data to improve academic achievement and inform all aspects of decision-making. The district should maintain this commitment and continue to develop integrated data systems and practices, so as to further improve the identification of students' learning needs.

Monitoring of student achievement data in departmental meetings at the high school and PLCs at the lower levels in order to inform instructional decisions has increased teachers' ability to use data analysis to improve student achievement. The district should continue these opportunities and should also, as desired by many teachers interviewed, offer expanded professional development opportunities designed to further improve teachers' data analysis skills, particularly their capacity to use item analysis and disaggregated data to identify student learning needs and modify instruction. The district should take advantage of appropriate ESE resources that support this recommendation.

Supervision and evaluation of teachers and administrators: The district has put strong systems in place for the supervision and evaluation of personnel; primary among them are a new teacher evaluation tool and improved practices for the evaluation of administrative personnel. A review of randomly selected teacher observations and evaluations conducted since the implementation of the new system revealed that the standards of effective teaching and professional performance are embedded throughout. The review of teacher evaluations revealed specific recommendations for the improvement of instruction in all but a few cases. All evaluators have been trained, and all teachers are in the process of being trained in Research for Better Teaching (RBT)'s Skillful Teacher program. The district should continue to support these systems for the supervision and evaluation of administrators and teachers.

Support systems for students: The recently implemented data-driven intervention and transition practices are comprehensive. Many of these support systems are recent, however, and may not have had enough time to show results. While they have not yet led to a trend of improved student achievement, they should be maintained.

Financial management and reporting procedures: The effectiveness of improved financial management and reporting procedures was described in findings under Key Questions 1 and 3. These procedures include regular and accurate reports on the school budget, grants, and other funds together with forecasts and transfers as needed; purchase order approvals to prevent overspending; collaborative bidding and purchasing; and monthly reviews of the special education budget. Meetings and other collaboration with town officials have contributed to adequate budgets and support for capital projects, and they should continue to be a priority. It is essential that district leadership continue both its current support for financial procedures and its current collaboration with the town, while giving attention to new financial concerns as they arise, such as requested improvements in financial reports, the management and auditing of student activities accounts, and the management of funds for the new middle/high school construction project.

The support of ESE for curriculum leadership, materials, and assessments was critical to the district's ability to address curriculum and instruction issues quickly. At this time the district has absorbed those costs; such continued financial support for the district is no longer necessary.

The school committee should conduct an open, transparent, and inclusive process for the replacement of the retiring superintendent.

It is imperative that the school committee hire a superintendent who will continue to build upon the systems developed and implemented by the current superintendent and her staff and who will provide the leadership necessary to move the district to the next level. To accomplish this, the school committee should enter into a contract with an independent consultant with experience in superintendent searches for assistance with the process. The consultant could assist the school committee by such services as helping to identify the qualities and qualifications sought in the new superintendent, drafting a superintendent of schools job description, developing a brochure about the community and the position, advertising the position, preparing a timetable for filling

the position, seeking input from the various constituencies both in the school system and in the community, and assisting with the initial screening of applicants.

It is essential that representatives from each of the various stakeholder groups, such as teachers, parents, students, and citizens of Southbridge, be included in the interview process and that the interviews be open to the public. Furthermore, it is suggested that provision be made for a smooth and orderly transition by enabling both the retiring and the new superintendent to work together for a reasonable period of time.

For ESE: In addition, it would be most helpful if ESE monitored and supported the recruitment, screening, and interviewing process for the new superintendent, in order to help make sure that the candidate who best fits the needs of the district is selected.

The district should actively promote the community's knowledge of positive changes occurring in the schools.

Interviewees frequently commented on the community's negative perception of the schools. But review team members felt that these negative perceptions do not accurately reflect the positive changes taking place in the schools. Administrators and teachers should make every effort to bring the community's understanding of what is happening in the schools up to date. Cable television shows and newspaper articles about the schools will make a difference. But there is no substitute for inviting the community into the schools to "see for themselves." As these negative perceptions begin to erode and parents instead grasp the reality of the schools, they will begin to see the value of enrolling their children in them.

The district should aggressively pursue Hispanic representation on the staff and on school district advisory and decision-making committees.

While 42 percent of students in the district are Hispanic, there are few Hispanic staff members, no Hispanics on the school committee, and few Hispanics on school or school district advisory bodies. Racial tensions have been an ongoing problem in the district according to interviews and other sources. The team heard the view from some stakeholders that Hispanic community members will not participate even when invited to; some parents interviewed expressed concern about their perceptions of the behavior of Hispanic students and the parenting skills of their parents. The team found no evidence, however, of any set of strategies by the school district to ease these tensions and find a way to secure participation from the Hispanic community. This educational and political inequity remains a chronic issue and requires immediate attention and intervention from the district.

The district should consider partnering with external agents (ESE, colleges/universities or education organizations) to support the district in identifying and implementing research-based strategies for decreasing racial tensions, obtaining the participation of all groups in committees and district initiatives (including the elementary school reconfiguration), and recruiting a diverse staff.

The district should consider establishing representative teams of school staff and community members to visit schools and districts that have been successful in engaging families and the

community, especially Hispanic families. It should also consider building upon the success of the Southbridge elementary schools in engaging families by systematizing these practices across all grade levels.

It should institute the advisory council called for by the turnaround plan, and the number of speaking engagements by the superintendent and other outreach to the community should be increased. Only when the Southbridge Public Schools have been successful in creating a welcoming environment for the Hispanic community and pathways to ensure it is actively engaged in discussions and decisions about the school district's challenges and future will substantial progress be made in the improvement of all students' achievement.

The district should establish goals for the impending second round of curriculum development that include the expansion of the curriculum guides to include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, and timelines.

Curriculum guides produced over the last five years provide a basic shell, with standards, learning goals, and assessments. Teachers and administrators have understood the limits of this basic curriculum and expanded the shell by developing accompanying curriculum maps. These might include such elements as timelines or resources, but the components and format vary. Upcoming curriculum revisions should result in the establishment of the prescribed elements for every district curriculum document. The expanded curriculum documents should at a minimum include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and specific assessments in addition to the standards and learning goals. Such documents will provide teachers with the guidance and support they need to implement the curriculum.

The district should make the improvement of classroom instruction a priority by equipping teachers with the strategies necessary to raise the achievement of all students and by supporting and monitoring their use of these strategies.

During its classroom observations the review team determined that teachers do not have the instructional strategies required to address the needs of all students in their classes and thus improve their performance. There was little evidence of a range of instructional techniques, of promoting higher-order thinking skills, or of providing students with opportunities to explain their thinking and reasoning. These observations also indicated a need to raise expectations for student performance. To improve classroom instruction, the district must provide teachers with professional development regarding the range of instructional strategies that will address the needs of all students and then support and monitor the teachers as they practice and refine the use of these strategies in their classrooms. Interviews indicated that consensus has not yet emerged on the need to focus on instruction. It is imperative, however. With the improvement of instruction, the district will see a steady rise in student achievement.

As part of its improvement of classroom instruction, the district should provide teachers with further professional development on instructional strategies for special education and LEP/FLEP students, as well as support and monitoring as they practice those strategies. The district should also provide unified district leadership for ELL instruction.

In classroom observations, the team noted the absence of instructional strategies to support student subgroups mainstreamed into regular education classrooms. Though there has been professional development on differentiated instruction for special education students, teachers have not yet integrated it into their classroom practice. And the state-mandated training on Sheltered English Instruction is only now taking place in the district. In this connection, the team noted that coordination of the program for LEP/FLEP students is shared by the superintendent and the principals, with the result that there is minimal central coordination of the program. To include special education students properly, the teachers need to use differentiated instruction. To address the needs of limited English proficient students, teachers need to incorporate sheltered English instruction into their classroom practice, and they need unified leadership from the district for the LEP/FLEP program. The leadership for both programs needs to provide monitoring and support for teachers as they begin using these instructional techniques. Once subgroup student populations receive the instructional support they need, the district will see a steady rise in their proficiency levels.

The district should examine its LEP programs and special education continuum of programs and services to see whether and how they could be revised to help raise the achievement of these two subgroups.

Both special education and LEP students receive a substantial portion of their instruction in pull-out settings. Under this system, these students are pulled out of some mainstream classes, though not necessarily ELA or mathematics. As a result, students' access to teachers with strong content backgrounds is sometimes compromised. Also, as noted earlier, the district has in recent years been creating in-district programs to serve special education students who had previously been served in out-of-district placements. The district should study the LEP/FLEP program and the continuum of programs and services for special education students, 1) to determine in both cases the educational effects of the reliance on a pull-out system, and 2) to determine the educational effects of bringing special education students back into the district from outside placements. The district should use these studies to guide it in making any needed changes to the programs and services for these two subgroups, to help make sure that they receive the instructional support they need.

The district should evaluate its teachers with professional teacher status every two years as prescribed by statute and regulation.

The district's currently implemented Professional Growth Plans, designed to assist teachers with professional teacher status to improve their level of teaching, are in effect for a term of two consecutive years. This means that teachers with professional teacher status are formally evaluated only once in every three-year period instead of once every two years as prescribed by Mass. Gen. Laws. c. 71, §38, and 603 CMR 35.06. In order to restore compliance with statute

and regulation, the district should revise its Professional Growth Plans to limit the duration of each plan to a single year and restore the two-year formal evaluation cycle for teachers with professional teacher status. This will ensure that the district focuses more directly on teachers' classroom instruction, a need that clearly exists, as described earlier in the report. And it will provide teachers with a greater focus on their own growth.

For ESE: ESE should require that the district submit documentation that it has brought its evaluation system into compliance with Mass. Gen. Laws. c. 71, §38, and 603 CMR 35.06.

The district should conduct a formal evaluation of issues regarding attendance, dropout rates, and the graduation rate at the high school, and ensure that the evaluation engages all parts of the community.

Student attendance rates are below the state standard of 94 percent and generally not improving; dropout rates vary widely from year to year but are significantly above the state rate; and the district has one of the lowest graduation rates in the state. But the reasons for these problems are not clear. A formal evaluation that engages stakeholders from all of the various constituencies involved will lead to a better understanding of these matters. Only then will the district be able to formulate strategies and programs to address these concerns.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Southbridge Public Schools was conducted from February 1 to February 4, 2010, by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. William Contreras, Human Resources and Professional Development

Frank DeVito, Student Support

Dr. George Gearhart, Financial and Asset Management

Dr. John Kulevich, Leadership and Governance

Dr. Frank Sambuceti, Assessment

Patricia Williams, Curriculum and Instruction (review team coordinator)

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Level 4 Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Southbridge financial personnel: town manager, town accountant.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Southbridge School Committee: chair, vice-chair, four members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Southbridge Education Association: president, middle school building representative.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Southbridge Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, director of instruction and assessment, director of special education, business manager.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Southbridge Public Schools: Eastford Road Schools (pre-kindergarten-grade 1), Charlton Street School (grades 2-3), West Street School (grades 4-5), Wells Middle School (grades 6-8), Southbridge High School (grades 9-12).
- During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals and teachers.
- The review team conducted 44 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the five schools visited.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the ESE staff: associate commissioner, Center for Targeted Assistance.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - Comprehensive Annual District and School Data Review
 - District Turnaround Plan
 - District Progress Reports to ESE on the Turnaround Plan
 - ESE Monitoring Reports related to the Turnaround Plan
 - Coordinated Program Review Report 2009
 - *2007 Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report*
 - Staff contracts
 - Reports on licensure and highly qualified status

- Long-term enrollment trends
- End-of-year financial report for the district for 2009
- List of the district's federal and state grants
- Municipal profile
- The review team reviewed the following documents at the district and school levels (provided by the district or schools):
 - Organization chart
 - District Improvement Plan
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual
 - Curriculum guides
 - High school program of studies
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments
 - Copies of data analyses/reports used in schools
 - Descriptions of student support programs
 - Program evaluations
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional Development Plan and program/schedule/courses
 - Teacher planning time/meeting schedules
 - Teacher evaluation tool (Standards of Effective Teaching)
 - Classroom observation tools/Learning walk tools
 - Job descriptions (for central office and school administrators and instructional staff)
 - Principal evaluations
 - Randomly selected personnel files
 - Benchmark reports
 - Curriculum maps
 - Administrator evaluations
 - Educational Facilities Master Plan
 - Action plans

- ESE Chapter 70 Trends Report
- ESE Per Pupil Expenditure Reports
- Summary of Revolving Accounts
- Expense control reports
- Budget reports

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the Level 4 review of the Southbridge Public Schools, conducted from February 1-4, 2010.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
February 1 Introductory meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff and principals; review of documents	February 2 Interviews with district staff and principals; school visit (West Street School); classroom observations; interview with union and focus group with parents; review of personnel files	February 3 School visits (Wells Middle School, Southbridge High School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher focus groups; school committee interviews	February 4 School visits (Eastford Road School, Charlton Street School); interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; follow-up interviews; meeting with town personnel; team meeting; closing meeting with district leaders