



Worcester Public Schools Review of District Systems and Practices Addressing the Differentiated Needs of English Language Learners

October 2010



This document was prepared on behalf of the Center for District and School Accountability of the
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Overview

Purpose

The Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking a series of reviews of school districts to determine how well district systems and practices support groups of students for whom an achievement gap exists. The reviews will focus, in turn, on how district systems and practices affect each of four groups of students: students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students, and students who are members of racial minorities. Spring 2010 reviews aim to identify district and school factors contributing to relatively high growth for limited English proficient (LEP) student performance in selected schools, to provide recommendations for improvement on district and school levels to maintain or accelerate the growth in student achievement, and to promote the dissemination of promising practices among Massachusetts public schools. This review complies with the requirements of Chapter 15, Section 55A, to conduct district audits in districts whose students achieve at high levels relative to districts that educate similar student populations. The review is part of ESE's program to recognize schools as distinguished schools under section 1117(b) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which allows states to use Title I funds to reward schools that significantly closed the achievement gap. Districts and schools with exemplary practices identified through the review may serve as models for, and provide support to, other districts and schools.

Selection of Districts

ESE identified 36 Title I schools in 14 districts where the performance of students with limited English proficiency (LEP students) exceeds expectations. All Massachusetts schools receiving Title I funds were eligible for identification, with the exception of reconfigured schools or schools that did not serve tested grades for the years under review. ESE staff analyzed MCAS data from 2008 and 2009 to identify schools that narrowed performance gaps between LEP students and all students statewide. The methodology compared the MCAS raw scores of LEP students enrolled in the schools with the predicted MCAS raw scores of LEP students statewide. The methodology also incorporated whether LEP students improved their performance from 2008 to 2009. "Gap closers" did not have to meet AYP performance or improvement targets, but did have to meet 2009 AYP targets for participation, attendance and high school graduation, as applicable. Districts with gap closers were invited to participate in a comprehensive district review to identify district and school practices associated with stronger performance for LEP students, as part of ESE's distinguished schools program (described above), "Impact of District Programs and Support on School Improvement: Identifying and Sharing Promising School and District Practices for Limited English Proficient Students."

Methodology

To focus the analysis, reviews explore five areas: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, and Student Support**. The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that most likely contribute to positive results, as well as those that may impede rapid improvement. Systems and practices that are likely to contribute to positive results were identified from the ESE's District Standards and Indicators and from a draft report of the English Language Learners Sub-Committee of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Committee on the Proficiency Gap¹. Reviews are evidence-based and data-driven. Four-to-eight team members preview selected documents and ESE data and reports before conducting a two-day site visit in the district and a two-day site visit to schools. To collect evidence across all areas, the team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the five areas listed above, as well as English language learner education.

¹ *Halting the Race to the Bottom: Urgent Interventions for the Improvement of the Education of English Language Learners in Massachusetts and Selected Districts*, December 2009

Worcester Public Schools

The site visit to the Worcester Public Schools was conducted from May 25 – June 2, 2010. The site visit included visits to the following district schools: May Street (K-6) and Jacob Hiatt Magnet (Pre-K-6), both of which were identified as “gap closers” for their limited English proficient students, as described above. Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A.

District Profile²

The Worcester public school district serves approximately 23,988 students in grades Pre-K-12 at 45 schools: 34 elementary schools, 4 junior high schools, and 7 high schools. The district services a student body that is ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse. The following table illustrates the various student subgroups of the Worcester district for the academic year of 2009-2010.

Table 1: Worcester Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations, 2009-2010

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Total	Selected Populations	Percent of Total
African-American	13.8	First Language not English	41.3
Asian	8.1	Limited English Proficient	26.6
Hispanic or Latino	37.3	Low-income	71.8
Native American	0.3	Special Education	20.4
White	37.5	Free Lunch	64.2
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.0	Reduced-price lunch	7.6
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	3.0		

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

More than 67 languages are represented within the Worcester district. The prevalent languages spoken by limited English proficient (LEP) students include: Spanish (57%), Vietnamese (4%), Portuguese (4.6%), Albanian (4.4%), Niger-Congo (3.1%), and Patois (2.9%). The table on the following page presents more information on the district’s LEP students.

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

Table 2: Number of LEP students in Worcester, 2009-2010

	Jacob Hiatt Magnet	May Street	District	State
Limited English Proficient (LEP)*	137	87	6,388	59,158
LEP and Regular Education**	118	77	5,322	49,842
LEP and Special Education**	19	10	1,066	9,316

Sources: *School/District Profiles on ESE website; **ESE data generated from Student Information Management System (SIMS) data

Children identified as LEP are placed in one of the following programs:

- (1) Sheltered English immersion (SEI): Provides students with sheltered content and English as a second language (ESL) instruction.
- (2) Two-way bilingual program: K-2 dual-language immersion model, featuring 50% of instruction in English and 50% of instruction in Spanish, with the goal of developing student proficiency in both languages.
- (3) Transitional bilingual education (TBE): Provides Spanish-speaking students with transitional Spanish language instruction. The goal of transitional bilingual education is to help transition a student into an English-only classroom as quickly as possible.
- (4) New Citizens Center: For recently-arrived children who have interrupted formal schooling and speak little to no English. This program is housed at the Chandler Magnet Elementary School and is offered to children in grades 3-12.

In the 2009-2010 school year, the district employed approximately 1,716 teachers - 98% percent of whom were highly qualified, and 98.8% of whom were fully licensed in their teaching assignment. District leaders reported that all ESL teachers are fully licensed. The student/teacher ratio is 14 to 1.

In 2007-2008, the district's graduation rates for regular and special education students were exceeded by the state's graduation rates and the district's drop-out rates for both regular and special education students exceeded the state drop-out rates. The district offers school choice.

Student Performance³

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability status for the district is Corrective Action for subgroups in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The NCLB performance ratings for ELA and mathematics are moderate and low, respectively. In 2009, the district made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate for both content areas; however, the district did not achieve AYP in subgroups in ELA and mathematics.

Since 2007, the district has made AYP in the aggregate for ELA. In 2007 and 2009, the district made AYP in the aggregate for mathematics. However, the district has not attained AYP in subgroups in ELA or mathematics since 2007. In 2009, for example, for grades 3-5, the district did not make AYP in ELA for the following subgroups: White, special education, low-income, Hispanic/Latino, former limited English proficient (FLEP), and LEP. Similarly, in grades 3-5, the district did not make AYP in mathematics in any subgroup.

Examination of ESE warehouse data revealed that the district has performed at high levels on Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) assessments. In 2009, the district attained a Composite Performance Index (CPI) of 75.7 in ELA – a 2.4 point increase from 2008. In mathematics, the district made a CPI of 66.2 – a 2.3 point increase from 2008. The district's FLEP students have also performed at high levels, consistently surpassing the performance of their state peers. In 2008, for example, FLEP students attained a CPI of 77.7 in ELA, compared to the state's CPI of 75.8. Also, FLEP students made a CPI of 68.9 in mathematics, compared to the state's CPI of 68.8. In 2009, FLEP students made a CPI of 84.3 in ELA, compared to the state's CPI of 79.3; FLEP students made a CPI of 75.1 in mathematics, compared to the state's CPI of 70.8.

The district's LEP students have generally performed on par with their state peers. In 2009, for example, LEP students' CPI in ELA equaled the state's CPI at 57.2. Similarly, LEP students attained a CPI of 51.4 in mathematics, compared to the state's CPI of 53.1 for LEP students.

Conversely, the district's low-income students and students with disabilities subgroups have underperformed their peers in the state on MCAS exams. In 2009, the district's low-income subgroup attained a CPI of 59.9 in mathematics, compared to the state's CPI of 64.5 for the low-income sub-group. In the same time period, the students with disabilities subgroup made a CPI of 45.6 in mathematics, compared to the state's CPI of 56.9 for the students with disabilities subgroup. Similarly, in 2009, the district's low-income subgroup made a CPI of 70.6, compared to the CPI of 75.5 for the state's low-income sub-group. The students with disabilities subgroup made a CPI of 56.0 in ELA, behind the state's CPI of 67.8 for the students with disabilities subgroup during the same time period.

The table on the following page depicts AYP status and CPI scores for the Worcester district and the schools visited during the English language learner (ELL) review.

³ Data derived from ESE's website, ESE's Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

Table 3: 2009 District and School AYP Status

District/ School	ELA					Mathematics				
	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub	Status 09	CPI 09	CPI Chg 08-09	AYP Agg	AYP Sub
Worcester	CA	75.7	2.4	Yes	No	CA	66.2	2.3	Yes	No
Jacob Hiatt Magnet	RST1-S	85.1	4.8	Yes	Yes	--	81.5	6.2	Yes	Yes
May Street	II2-S	80.8	3.1	Yes	No	--	80.8	5.0	Yes	Yes

Note: A or Agg = Aggregate; CA = Corrective Action; CPI = Composite Performance Index; II1 = Identified for Improvement year 1; II2 = Identified for Improvement year 2; RST1 = Restructuring year 1; RST2 = Restructuring year 2; S or Sub = Subgroup

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

Findings

Leadership and Governance

District actions to fulfill legal settlement terms, comply with corrective action mandates, and address poor ELL student performance have improved the quality of services delivered to ELL students.

Worcester Public Schools (WPS) has 6,388 identified LEP students. More than 700 new ELL students were enrolled in the district in 2009-2010, with (according to focus group discussions) projections for approximately the same number of new students enrolling next year.

Documents and focus groups identified a series of factors, including the lack of identified ELL student growth in Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), and MCAS scores, the December 2008 Department of Justice settlement agreement, and corrective actions cited in the October 2009 ESE Coordinated Program Review, that pushed the district to adopt a series of initiatives to meet the needs of an expanding student population.

Under the leadership of the ELL department, the district has implemented the following initiatives to improve the quality of services delivered to its ELL students:

- **Drafting a comprehensive ESL curriculum aligned to the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO).** In 2009-2010, members of the district's ELL department and ESL licensed teachers developed a draft content-based ESL curriculum map aligned to the ELPBO for English language learners in grades 1-12. District staff members reported at the time of the site visit that the draft curriculum map was being reviewed and edited for submission to the WPS school committee. While the district's ESL curriculum is finalized, ELL staff members at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools reported using the ELPBO to develop unit plans, identify vocabulary, and set language and learning objectives for the day.
- **Increasing the amount of ESL instruction provided to ELL students.** In collaboration with ESE, the district launched the Massachusetts ESL Implementation Project (MESLIP) in April 2008. According to documents and focus groups, one of MESLIP's goals was to provide ELL students with the recommended number of hours of direct ESL instruction. To meet that goal, the district placed 27 ESL laboratory classrooms (ESL labs) in elementary schools across the district and, in 2008-2009, purchased the Hampton Brown *Avenues* reading series, materials, and equipment for the ESL labs. An additional 17 ESL labs were created in 2009-2010, bringing the total to 44. As a result, ESL labs ensure that the majority of the district's schools provide ELL students at MEPA levels 1 and 2 with sufficient ESL instruction.

- **Providing professional development training and support to ESL lab teachers.** Another stated goal of the 2008-2009 MESLIP was to provide comprehensive professional development for ESL teachers in support of their implementation of the ESL lab classroom curriculum and materials. The 2008-2009 program focused on building instructional capacity to effectively run the 27 inaugural elementary school labs and providing embedded support to ESL teachers through peer mentoring. In 2009-2010, the district continued to provide professional development training and peer mentoring to ESL teachers throughout the district.
- **Making sheltered English instruction (category) training for all staff a priority.** Extensive opportunities for teachers to receive category training are evident. A majority of Jacob Hiatt and May Street school instructional staff members have completed three of the four category training sessions, with plans for all teachers at the May Street and Jacob Hiatt schools to complete all four categories by September 2010.
- **Improving communication and collaboration between the district's special education and ELL departments.** Documents and interviews indicated that improving the special needs identification process for ELL students is a focus. ELL department staff members have outlined and documented procedures for ELL students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Interviews with district and school staff revealed district efforts to promote greater dialogue between special education and ELL staff.

In an interview, the superintendent acknowledged the significance of what the ELL director has accomplished in the past three years. There is evidence that supporting the ELL student subgroup will continue to be a focus for the district. According to the superintendent and members of the district educational leadership team, improving ELL student achievement is one of four key district priorities.

Data analysis drives the development of school improvement plans and site-based professional development across the selected schools.

District documents and focus groups revealed that instructional leadership teams (ILTs) in WPS elementary schools analyzed student assessment data to create current school improvement plans. Through this data analysis and improvement planning process, schools established the instructional focus and best teaching practices, and developed a targeted professional development plan to build teacher capacity to implement the teaching practices.

School improvement planning and implementation was evident at the school level. According to the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School SIP (or school improvement plan) and staff reports, the school selected reading and responding to open-response questions (claim, evidence and interpretation) as the instructional focus. The three practices that teachers at the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School and SIP identified were: dedicated instructional time to explicit teaching of open-response questions, modeling complete and accurate responses to open-response questions, and utilizing the T-chart as a schoolwide graphic organizer. The school's professional development plan indicates that teachers received 90 minutes each month on different aspects (e.g., assessment, mechanics,

structures) of open-response development. In one classroom visit, students were observed reading a non-fiction text, identifying a claim from the text and the evidence that supported the claim, and using a T-chart to organize their findings. Displayed in the room were T-charts indicating that the teacher had modeled the use of the graphic organizer.

According to focus groups at the May Street School, staff members identified 6+1 writing traits, vocabulary development, and open-response writing as areas for instructional focus. Staff members developed a common open-response prompt after selecting a common text (*The Lion and the Mouse*) for a schoolwide read-aloud. School staff reported that teachers scored the prompts and conducted a similar scoring of the writing in common planning time (CPT) sessions with the coach and also by working with their grade-level partners. Vocabulary instruction was evident in classroom visits.

In summary, there is evidence that school leaders and staff members review student assessment results to establish priorities and focus on increasing instructional capacity to address gaps in student performance. District documents and focus groups revealed that ILTs analyzed student assessment data to develop SIPs, establish a schoolwide instructional focus, and identify best teaching practices.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district's comprehensive ESL curriculum map is in its final stages of development. Teacher use of the ELPBO for lesson planning and instruction is evident.

In 2009-2010, members of the district's ELL department and ESL-licensed classroom teachers developed a draft content-based ESL curriculum map for grades 1-12. A review of documents and focus groups with district leaders indicated that the intended audience of the ESL curriculum map includes ESL teachers and tutors, bilingual teachers, and two-way program teachers. The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners (ELPBO) are clearly identified in the draft document. According to documents, district staff members were reviewing and editing the draft curriculum map for submission to the WPS school committee for approval.

The comprehensive ESL curriculum map is logically sequenced and clearly presented. A series of 10 interdisciplinary topics, or themes, that are aligned to the Massachusetts frameworks and district reading curriculum are identified for each grade level cluster (1-6, 7-8 and 9-12). The grades 1-6 topic for April, for example, is "animals"; the December topic for grades 7-8 is "character and conflict."

The 450-page document is further divided by grade span (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12). Curriculum maps for each grade span are separated by month and proficiency level (beginning, early intermediate, and intermediate), and identify learning goals, student learning outcomes across the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing), planned

assessments/work products, and key vocabulary. The curriculum maps feature authentic opportunities for students to develop English proficiency and access grade-level content.

The grade 3-4 curriculum map, for example, identifies the following sequence for April:

- Learning goal (connected to student learning outcomes and reflecting big picture student goals): Students will classify plants and animals according to the physical characteristics that they share to expand and demonstrate comprehension of academic vocabulary.
- Student learning outcome (aligned with the ELPBO): Writing.3.3. Select and use words to increase detail in writing.
- Planned assessment (measurement of student attainment of learning goals): (1) create a simple chart to classify plants and animals that are around the school area; (2) collect plants to identify and classify their structure and discuss it with a peer; (3) design a habitat for a small animal (e.g., butterfly, insect). Observe and document changes, etc.
- Content area vocabulary: habitat, classify, life cycle, characteristics, process, development.

Documents and focus groups at the district and schools revealed that school-based ELL staff members were introduced to, and received training on, using the draft ESL curriculum. The MESLIP agendas for June 24, June 26, and September 25, 2008 referenced an introduction to the ESL curriculum, updates on the status of its development, and – using completed components of the draft ESL curriculum map – training on unit planning. Documents indicated that the use of curriculum materials was a focus of the 2009-2010 MESLIP professional development meetings. ELL staff at the May Street School reported receiving and using components of the draft ESL curriculum document.

While the district's ESL curriculum is finalized and approved, school-based ELL staff members received training on the alignment of instruction to the ELPBO. According to the June 24, 2008 MESLIP agenda, using the ELPBO as a tool for lesson planning and English language development (ELD) assessment was one of the training topics covered in the six-hour session. On September 25, 2008 a discussion of the alignment between the Hampton-Brown *Avenues* series (the district's adopted ESL textbook) and the ELPBO was noted in the MESLIP agenda. Documents and focus groups indicated that as a core component of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 MESLIP implementation, the ELL department reviewed ESL lesson plans every week.

There is evidence that school-based ELL staff members plan instruction that provides ELL students with opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen to English at levels that correspond with their stage of English proficiency. District leaders reported that school-based ELL staff members are expected to post language objectives; the review team observed a posted language objective in the Jacob Hiatt ESL lab classroom. The review team examined lesson plans developed by school-based ELL staff; plans detailed in these documents were aligned to the ELPBO and Hampton Brown *Avenues* reading series. ELL staff members at both the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools reported using the ELPBO to develop unit plans, identify vocabulary, and set language and learning objectives for the day.

Focus groups and a review of documents indicated that the district has invested time and resources to develop a comprehensive ESL curriculum and train ELL staff across schools on components of the draft curriculum and the alignment of instruction to the ELPBO. Curriculum development and dissemination efforts currently targeting school-based ELL staff have provided district leaders with a strong base of effective instructional practices for ELL students.

Structures to provide mainstream classrooms with oversight and support on sheltered English instruction are being developed.

Focus groups revealed efforts in monitoring the implementation of sheltered English instruction in mainstream classrooms. District staff reported that ELL department heads conduct walkthroughs in classrooms with principals. However, it is not clear how walkthrough findings are captured or disseminated. Staff at the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School stated that district staff members do not debrief with the school's leaders after walkthroughs are completed.

There are gaps in district- and school-level monitoring of mainstream teachers' implementation of sheltered English instruction. In an interview, a district leader reported that approximately 30% of ELL department staff time is spent visiting schools and mainstream classrooms; it is expected that district administrators spend 50% of their time in classrooms. School leaders at Jacob Hiatt indicated that although some staff members are aware of the ELPBO, mainstream classroom teachers do not directly utilize the document in lesson planning. The review team found evidence of posted language objectives in only one of the 21 classrooms visited.

The ELL department is working to improve administrator capacity to understand, support, and monitor instruction for ELL students in the schools they lead. District staff members reported that WPS offers a training session for school administrators focused on sheltered English instruction. The 15-hour module provides an overview of the content covered in the four category training sessions. According to interviews, the purpose of this training is to improve principals' and assistant principals' supervision of ELL teaching and learning. A district leader indicated that the most recent administrator training was facilitated on June 29, 2010; Jacob Hiatt and May Street administrators participated in this session. The district leader reported that approximately 80-to-90% of the district's administrators have completed the training.

Current practices to monitor the implementation of instruction to facilitate language learning and provide ELL students with access to grade level content are basic and incomplete. The ELL department's initiative to train school leaders has the potential to create broader structures for shared oversight of ELL student instruction.

ESL lab classrooms ensure that the majority of ELL students at earlier stages of English proficiency receive sufficient ESL instructional time.

Across the district, ESL labs staffed by licensed ESL teachers ensure that the majority of schools provide ELL students at MEPA levels 1 and 2 with the recommended number of hours of direct ESL instruction. According to focus groups, the ELL department, in the fall of 2008, used an analysis of student data, school ELL student population distribution, and physical plant

configurations to guide the creation of the initial 27 ESL labs and the placement of ESL teachers and tutors. The Hampton Brown *Avenues* reading series, materials, and equipment were purchased for the ESL labs. District and school staff members stated that schools with the highest ELL student enrollment received ESL labs. In 2009-2010, the district opened an additional 22 ESL labs.

District documents indicated that students serviced in ESL labs receive between the minimum of 2.5 hours a day to a full day of English language development (ELD) instruction. District staff members reported that, as a result of this intensive and consolidated language learning support, ELL students placed in the ESL labs are advancing to higher levels of English proficiency. Focus groups indicated that as a result of this progress, ESL lab instruction has been extended to level 3 ELL students.

The table below summarizes the number of ELL students at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools across MEPA levels.

**Table 4: ELL Students according to MEPA level, Spring 2009:
Jacob Hiatt Magnet School and May Street School**

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Jacob Hiatt Magnet	2	12	24	41	36
May Street	5	7	20	30	11

Source: MEPA data on ESE website

The Jacob Hiatt Magnet School is the site of one of the district's ESL labs. In 2009-2010, 15 grade 1 students (that is, students at levels 1 and 2) received services in the school's ESL lab every morning between 8:00 and 10:30, coinciding with the school's literacy block. Level 3 and 4 ELL students in grades 3, 4 and 5 were serviced by the ESL teacher through pull-out instruction; there were no grade 6 ELL students in need of ESL support. School staff stated that ESL instruction provided to the Jacob Hiatt ELL students meets the time requirements; a review of the ESL lab teacher's lesson plans confirmed this statement.

District leaders reported that, due to a smaller ELL population, the May Street School did not have an ESL lab. ELL students at the May Street School are distributed across classrooms and taught by a part-time (19.5 hours a week) licensed ESL tutor and a full-time ESL instructional aide. School staff reported that the ELL tutor worked in May Street's two grade 1 classrooms during the literacy block and worked with the level 1 and 2 students in centers. The majority of the level 1 and 2 ELL students in grade 2 were pulled out of their classrooms for services. According to the May Street 2009-2010 ELL schedule, grade 1 ELL students received 40 minutes of direct ESL instruction each day, while grade 2 ELL students received 40 minutes of instruction three times each week. In the upper grades (where ELL students are level 3 or higher), the ELL tutor provided services in the classroom.

In summary, the district's creation of ESL lab classrooms has increased the amount of instructional time provided to ELL students by licensed ESL teachers. As a result, the majority of level 1 and 2 ELL students receive sufficient ESL instruction. However, without an ESL lab or a full-time ESL teacher, ELL students at the May Street School do not receive the same amount of direct ESL instruction.

Assessment

Faculty and staff at the two schools collect and analyze assessment data to monitor student performance.

District and staff members at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools stated that results from the following assessments are regularly analyzed: MCAS; MAP assessments in reading and mathematics (three times per year in grades 2-10); Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in grades K-1; the Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) in grades K-3; and Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math unit tests.

Focus groups at both schools confirmed that teachers receive ongoing support and training on how to analyze student data. A district partnership with an external vendor has provided schools with data analysis training and ongoing (monthly) embedded support. According to district focus groups, coaches also assist teachers with data analysis. May Street School staff members reported that the coach interprets and distributes the data, and leads data analysis discussions in monthly meetings. The Jacob Hiatt 2009-2010 targeted professional development plan documented 90 minutes of monthly training sessions on using data to inform instruction. The review team examined a staff development day handout that outlined questions to consider when examining data charts:

- On which assessments are students performing best? What instructional practices are being used in the areas assessed?
- On which assessments are the greatest number of students farthest away from the goal? What patterns appear concerning those students (e.g., gender, race, primary language)?
- What additional supports or interventions do students farthest away from the goal need?

Common planning time at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools is used to analyze data to monitor individual student progress. Leadership and teacher focus groups and a review of agendas show that each grade level has a weekly, 45-minute block of time to review data and discuss curriculum and instruction. During an observation of one grade-level meeting at the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School, teachers compared MAP results for the first two testing periods with the results of the third and final MAP test. The grade-level team reviewed student progress over time and discussed what teaching strategies appeared to be successful. School leaders at the May Street School stated that staff members constantly monitor student progress and use assessment results (e.g., Early Reading Intervention, Lexia, Headsprout) to identify students for interventions and place students into groups.

Review team members noted data boards at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools. Teachers reported that data boards display student growth during the year (for the three MAP test periods) in ELA and mathematics, DRA and DIBELS. However, MEPA scores are not posted on the data boards. Student results were displayed according to colors: red (Student is not showing growth and additional instructional time or tutoring in ELA and mathematics is needed.); yellow (Student is making progress but teachers need to keep focusing on the child and his/her academic needs.); or green (Student is performing at or above the expected target.). Teachers were observed carrying manila folders with post-it-notes indicating student levels (red, yellow, or green).

In summary, CPT at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street schools is used to review and analyze data and monitor the performance of individual students across a series of assessments. School staff members reported that data analysis results are used to examine effective teaching strategies, identify students for interventions, and group students. Currently, MEPA and Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) data are not integrated in school data analysis activities, limiting the capacity of schools to develop interventions that effectively address the distinct academic support needs of ELL students at different levels of English proficiency.

Under the leadership of the ELL department, key ELL data were integrated and analyzed to improve services and interventions for ELL students.

Under the leadership of the ELL department, the district has integrated key student data, examined ELL student performance trends across the district, and evaluated the effectiveness of language support programs.

The district's ELL department developed the SAGE system to integrate student attendance, demographic, and assessment data. The SAGE snapshot enables school staff members to monitor ELL student progress and make informed decisions on the basis of the results. Review teams examined SAGE data sheets at the Jacob Hiatt and May Street. One snapshot report reviewed by the team presented student assessment results (DIBELS, DRA, MAP); a growth and developmental indicator (Early Social Indicator scores); language assessment results (MEPA, IDEA proficiency test); and the student's enrollment history and attendance activity (absences, tardies, dismissals).

Staff at the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School stated that SAGE printouts are accessible and described how student SAGE reports were present during Jacob Hiatt student support process (SSP) and special education referral meetings. Jacob Hiatt teachers, support staff, and administrators referenced the SAGE data in every focus group. At the May Street School, focus groups indicated that the ELL tutor is the primary user of SAGE reports. The ELL tutor regularly examines SAGE snapshots to conference with teachers about the ELL students in their classes, determine when an ELL student is ready to exit the district's language support, and examine student data prior to SSP meetings. District staff reported that SAGE snapshots are used to monitor the academic progress of former limited English proficient (FLEP) students.

Interviews with district leaders and documents revealed that, at the ELL director's request, the testing and assessment director conducts statistical analyses to examine district trends in ELL student performance and to assess program viability. District leaders described how MEPA scores were correlated with 2009 ELA and mathematics MCAS scores to confirm that small numbers of level 3 students are able to pass the MCAS, while higher numbers of levels 4 and 5 students are able to do so. Charts examined by the review team confirmed this trend. For example, 2% of level 3 students in grade 4 scored at the proficient level of the ELA MCAS, compared to 7% of level 4 students and 33% of level 5 students. In an interview, a district leader stated that the purpose of this analysis was to increase school leaders' awareness of the diversity of performance levels within the ELL student subgroup, and improve school leaders' capacity to develop interventions that accurately target ELL students at different levels of English proficiency.

Additionally, grades 7-10 MCAS and MEPA results from 2007-2009 were used to compare the effectiveness of the SEI and TBE programs. This analysis demonstrated a 29-point difference in performance between students in the SEI and TBE programs, confirming that the SEI program was more effective than the TBE program. A district leader stated that as a result of the analysis, the ELL department reduced and restructured the TBE program with the goal of decreasing student tenure in the TBE program and increasing the effectiveness of the TBE program to provide rigorous and grade-level aligned instruction.

The ELL department is using a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and distribution and is driving the effective use of student data. As a result, district and school leaders are better able to understand trends in ELL student performance, assess the effectiveness of the district's language support programs, and improve services and interventions for ELL students.

Human Resources and Professional Development

The ELL department provides ESL teachers with ongoing professional development and embedded mentoring.

One of the three stated goals of the 2008-2009 MESLIP was to provide comprehensive professional development for ESL teachers to support their implementation of the curriculum, effective instructional strategies, and materials in ESL lab classrooms. District documents described an 11-session (42-hour) professional development program that was designed and delivered by WPS faculty and an ESE representative in 2008-2009. According to documents and interviews, MESLIP's professional development training sessions were continued in the 2009-2010 academic year, with training provided to new and veteran teachers in summer 2009, and ongoing professional development meetings every six weeks during the school year. Professional development provided though MESLIP has focused on building instructional capacity to effectively run the elementary school ESL labs.

The impact of professional development components was described by school-level ELL staff and evident in the ESL lab visited by the review team. ELL staff at the Jacob Hiatt Magnet School identified many aspects of the training that were very helpful in implementing the ESL labs. Identified aspects included the development of curriculum units aligned to the ELBPO, the effective use of the new Hampton Brown *Avenues* program, instruction in the seven dimensions of effective ESL instruction, and, as well, use of the new technologies and the many instructional materials purchased for the labs. The review team found evidence that the materials (e.g., Hampton Brown *Avenues* text, posted visuals, multimedia) and teaching strategies (e.g., use of authentic texts for read-alouds, instruction that addresses multiple language domains) cited in documents and interviews were used in the ESL lab.

Embedded support and assistance from experienced ESL teachers/peer mentors was another key professional development component provided to ESL teachers through MESLIP. According to documents and interviews, each ESL peer mentor was assigned five or six ESL teachers and visited labs every month for 40 to 50 minutes; substitute coverage was provided by the ELL department during this absence. These visits were designed to provide ESL teachers with regular feedback on their instruction and to address concerns regarding scheduling, logistics, curriculum, and materials. The review team examined an ESL program walkthrough tool; the tool documents language objectives, the lesson's focus, student grouping, observations, and questions.

District focus groups confirmed that five full-time teachers were identified as mentors for all ESL teachers in 2009-2010; focus groups indicated that the Jacob Hiatt ESL teacher mentored new ESL teachers. District and school staff reported that an ELL department staff member coaches the May Street ELL tutor.

Documents and focus groups corroborated that explicit and ongoing teacher professional development delivered over a two-year period has improved the capacity of new and veteran school-based ELL staff to support the language learning needs of ELL students.

Sheltered English instruction (SEI) category training for teachers is a priority.

District leaders described a shared understanding of the importance of sheltered English instruction (category) training and outlined efforts to ensure that all WPS teachers receive all four levels of category training. One district administrator reported that all new employees are required to sign up for category training sessions.

Extensive opportunities for teachers to receive category training are evident. The fall 2009, spring 2010, and summer 2010 professional development offerings catalogues list weekday and Saturday sessions and provide detailed descriptions for each of the four categories. There are separate sessions for elementary and secondary teachers. According to focus groups, grant funds pay for substitute teacher coverage for teachers who participate in training during the school day. There are 14 WPS teachers certified as category trainers.

A majority of Jacob Hiatt and May Street school instructional staff members have completed three of the four category training sessions (see Table 5). School leaders and district staff

reported that plans were set for all teachers at the May Street and Jacob Hiatt schools to complete the category training by September 2010. The following table provides a summary of staff participation rates for each of the four category training sessions, as noted in district records.

**Table 5: Summary of Instructional Staff Participation in SEI Training as of Spring 2010:
Jacob Hiatt Magnet School and May Street School**

	Category 1: Second Language Learning and Teaching	Category 2: Sheltering Content Instruction	Category 3: Assessment of Speaking & Listening	Category 4: Teaching Reading and Writing to LEP Students
Jacob Hiatt Magnet (Total = 27*)	24	23	24	2
May Street (Total = 20*)	15	5	17	17

*Total number of instructional staff participating; numbers in the category columns indicate the number who participated in the training for each category.

Source: Worcester Public Schools

In focus groups, mainstream classroom teachers described how they support ELL students in their classrooms. Teachers from the May Street School, for example, reported using MEPA and MELA-O information for each student. May Street School teachers also referenced a schoolwide focus on vocabulary instruction (with Isabel L. Beck's *Bringing Words to Life*) and the use of visuals to support ELL students in their classrooms.

The review team found solid evidence that the presentation of content was within the students' English proficiency and developmental level in 52% of the 21 classrooms visited. For example, the review team observed a grade 3 lesson on measurement. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher facilitated a discussion to launch the activity that drew on the different and varied vocabulary and language skills of the students in the class. The teacher asked students if they understood the term "comparison," and if they could think of some other words that meant the same thing. The teacher also prompted students to consider how measurement and comparison are similar and different. Students worked in pairs to conduct a number of measurements (e.g., the circumference of their heads, shoulder-to-fingertip length, wingspread – or fingertip-to-fingertip with arms extended out). Students were observed charting and recording their own, as well as their partner's, measurements in centimeters and inches, and making comparison statements about the differences between them. Throughout the lesson, the teacher periodically stopped and asked some clarifying questions or made observations: for example, "What do I mean by scale up or down – I'm not talking about a bathroom scale, you know! That's a different scale."

In summary, the district has focused on increasing mainstream teachers' capacity to support ELL students in the classroom by prioritizing teacher participation in category training. A majority of Jacob Hiatt and May Street school instructional staff members have completed three of the four

category training sessions. Focus groups and classroom visits provided evidence of the implementation of sheltered English instruction.

Student Support

There is evidence of greater communication and collaboration between the district's special education and ELL departments.

There is evidence that the relationship between the special education and ELL departments is improving. Noting the improvement in the working relationship between both departments, a district staff member stated, "Formerly [the special education and ELL department staff members] used to have all our hands tied down by our sides. Now we are holding hands."

Documents and interviews indicated that improving the special needs identification process for ELL students is a focus. ELL department staff members have outlined and documented procedures for ELL students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For example, one document recommended that special education teachers attend the ELL transition meeting and weigh in on the decision to transition a student receiving special education and language support services into a mainstream classroom setting. Another document indicated that the placement of ELL students in the special education department must be guided by the student's IEP; however, if the student meets the criteria of language instruction within the SEI class, services could be provided without interfering with the implementation of the IEP and the delivery of language support services. A teacher stated that the old way of thinking was that students identified for special education services could not receive ELL services. Now, district and school staff acknowledged that students can have learning difficulties and receive language support.

Interviews with district and school staff revealed district efforts to promote dialogue between special education and ELL staff. A teacher reported that special education staff members have participated in districtwide meetings as a part of a two-year initiative to clearly delineate and effectively coordinate the roles and responsibilities of staff serving ELL and special education students. In an interview, a district leader reported that a Spanish-speaking school psychologist is available to help assess ELL students for special education services and assist ELL department heads in understanding cultural issues. According to school focus groups, ELL staff members participated in SSP meetings. As previously described, school staff members reported bringing SAGE reports to SSP and special education referral meetings. In a focus group, a district leader indicated that the ELL department intended to designate a staff person to focus on special education/ELL issues and serve as a special education/ELL liaison at the Parent Information Center.

In summary, the district is moving from a bifurcated system of student support in which language support and special education services were mutually exclusive and the district's special education and ELL departments worked in isolation, to a system in which greater communication and coordination are evident.

The district's support services target ELL students and families.

Documents and interviews with district leaders indicated that the district encourages ELL students to participate in after-school programs. The district has focused on recruiting ELL students to receive Title I funded after-school support. As a result, 2008-2009 ELL student enrollment in this program doubled to 40% of the total number of students enrolled, up from 21% three years ago. (Data were not available for the 2009-2010 year.) At the May Street School, supplemental services (SES) funds were distributed for schools to use in supporting students who scored in the “needs improvement” and “warning” performance levels of the MCAS, a large percentage of whom are ELL students. According to an interview, the director of the SES after-school program at the May Street School specifically targeted ELL students.

WPS leaders discussed district efforts to connect with families. Parent informational forums are conducted during the school year. District administration and the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPEDPAC), for example, held an open forum for all parents to discuss school issues. Two hundred fifty parents, including parents of ELL students, attended the table-talk discussions. Translators were available to interpret for families.

There is evidence of district programs connecting families to educational and community resources. District staff, for example, described the WPS adult education program that offers ESL classes to parents. According to the program's website, the district's Adult Learning Center provides ESL classes every Monday through Thursday from 9:00-11:30 a.m., from September to June. Additionally, interviews revealed that a WPS community outreach liaison works with the ELL director to network with agencies to address parent needs for language and social services support.

Recommendations

Finalize the draft ESL curriculum map to reinforce the use of language acquisition and content instructional practices that support ELL students.

The comprehensive draft ESL curriculum map is logically sequenced and clearly presented, and features authentic opportunities for students to develop English proficiency and access grade-level content. Focus groups and a review of documents indicated that the district has invested time and resources to train ELL staff across schools on components of the draft curriculum and the alignment of instruction to the ELPBO.

The review team recommends that the district:

- Complete final revisions to the ESL curriculum map and submit it to the WPS school committee for approval, providing school-based ELL staff with a consolidated and effective tool to develop students' English language proficiency across all four language domains.
- Continue providing curriculum implementation support for school-based ELL staff members, building on 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 MESLIP ESL curriculum training and monitoring activities that foster effective instructional practices for ELL students.

Strengthen efforts to monitor the implementation of sheltered English instruction in mainstream classrooms.

Focus groups revealed efforts in monitoring the implementation of sheltered English instruction in mainstream classes. However, the review team noted gaps in district- and school-level monitoring of mainstream teachers' implementation of sheltered English instruction.

The review team recommends that the district:

- Continue to build administrators' capacity to support and monitor instruction for ELL students by providing professional development and technical assistance to all school leaders. Provide ongoing support and monitoring, and reinforce school leaders' skills and knowledge of the academic and language needs of ELLs. Improving school administrators' knowledge of sheltered English instruction will allow them to more effectively monitor classroom instruction.
- Clearly communicate instructional strengths and needs identified through ELL department walkthroughs in mainstream classrooms. Transparent and ongoing feedback provided to school leaders by the ELL department heads after ELL-focused walkthroughs are completed will strengthen school administrator capacity to monitor and evaluate sheltered English instruction in the classroom.

Ensure that all ELL students receive sufficient ESL instruction.

Across the district, ESL labs staffed by licensed ESL teachers ensure that the majority of schools, including Jacob Hiatt Magnet Elementary School, provide ELL students at MEPA levels 1 and 2 with the recommended number of hours of direct ESL instruction. District leaders reported that, due to a smaller ELL population, the May Street School does not have an ESL lab. Without an ESL lab or full-time ESL teacher, ELL students at the May Street School do not receive the same amount of direct ESL instruction.

The review team recommends that the district:

- Determine options to provide sufficient ESL instruction in schools with smaller ELL student populations and without ESL labs, ensuring that ELL students across the district receive the same, recommended amount of direct ESL instruction.

Continue to provide ESL lab teachers with ongoing professional development.

Through MESLIP, the ELL department has provided ESL teachers with ongoing professional development and embedded mentoring in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years. Documents and focus groups corroborated that explicit and ongoing teacher professional development delivered over the two-year period has improved the capacity of new and veteran school-based ELL staff to support the language learning needs of ELL students.

The review team recommends that the district:

- Continue offering professional development sessions for school-based ELL staff in 2010-2011, providing new and veteran teachers with regular and meaningful opportunities to deepen their knowledge of effective ESL instruction.
- Document the district's professional development initiative for school-based ELL staff, considering opportunities to replicate relevant components of MESLIP professional development activities when training mainstream teachers. Providing mainstream teachers with similar professional development and embedded mentoring will allow them to support their ELL students across all content areas.

Appendix A: Review Team Members

The review of the Worcester Public Schools was conducted from May 26-June 2, 2010, by the following team of educators – independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Cathleen Kral, Leadership and Governance

Dr. Nancy M. Spencer, Curriculum and Instruction

Carol Schraft, Assessment

Dr. Muriel Leonard, Human Resources and Professional Development

Patrick Jackson, Student Support

Dr. Muriel Leonard served as the review team coordinator.

Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

Review Activities

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

- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Worcester Public Schools central office administration: Superintendent of Schools, Chief Academic Officer, Director of English Language Learners, Director of Special Education, Manager of Staff and Curriculum Development, Quadrant Managers, ELL Department Heads, Director of Student Services, Director of Testing and Assessment, ELA and Mathematics Curriculum Liaisons, Manager of Federal Programs, Human Resources Manager.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Worcester Public Schools: May Street School (K-6), Jacob Hiatt Magnet School (Pre-K-6)
 - During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with the school principals, teachers, members of the Instructional Leadership Teams, school support staff (special education, SAC, LD, psychologist), ESL teachers, ESL tutors and instructional assistants, ELA mathematics and ELA coaches, kindergarten instructional assistants and parents.
 - The review team conducted 21 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the two schools visited.
- The review team reviewed the following documents provided by ESE:
 - District profile data
 - District and school data review
 - Latest *Coordinated Program Review* report
 - Any district or school accountability report produced by Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) or ESE in the past three years
 - The District Plan for School Intervention, June 2009
 - 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
 - School Improvement Plans
 - School committee policy manual updates
 - Content-based ESL curriculum map
 - Calendar of formative and summative assessments
 - Student and Family Handbooks
 - Faculty Handbook
 - Professional development offerings (fall 2009, spring 2010, summer 2010)
 - Teacher planning time/meeting schedules
 - Teacher evaluation tool
 - Classroom observation tools/walkthrough tools
 - Job descriptions for ELL department personnel and teachers
 - Principal evaluations
 - Procedures and assessments to identify LEP students and assess their level of English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening
 - CPT and grade-level meeting agendas
 - ELL department SEI training summaries
 - WPS ESL unit plan examples
 - Jacob Hiatt Magnet School descriptions of “Rounds” and “Protocols for Looking at Student Work”
 - Department of Justice Settlement Agreement between the United States and the Worcester Public Schools
 - *The Massachusetts English as a Second Language Implementation Project (MESLIP) Final Report of the Pilot Year 2008 – 2009*
 - Anonymous SAGE report sample
 - ESL lab locations and teaching staff
 - Reports from the superintendent for organizational realignment, school opening report, and the entry plan
 - District mentor and mentee manuals
 - MEPA and MCAS data comparison levels
 - TBE and SEI student performance comparison data
 - FY11 budget update (2/4/2010)

Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the onsite portion of the review of the Worcester Public Schools conducted from May 26 to June 2, 2010.

May 26	May 27	June 1	June 2
Orientation meeting with district leaders; interviews with district staff; review of documents	Interviews with district staff; review of documents	School visits to May Street School and Jacob Hiatt School; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; teacher and parent focus groups	Morning: School visits continued; interviews with school leaders; classroom observations; teacher team meetings; follow-up interviews. Afternoon: Closing meeting with district leaders