



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

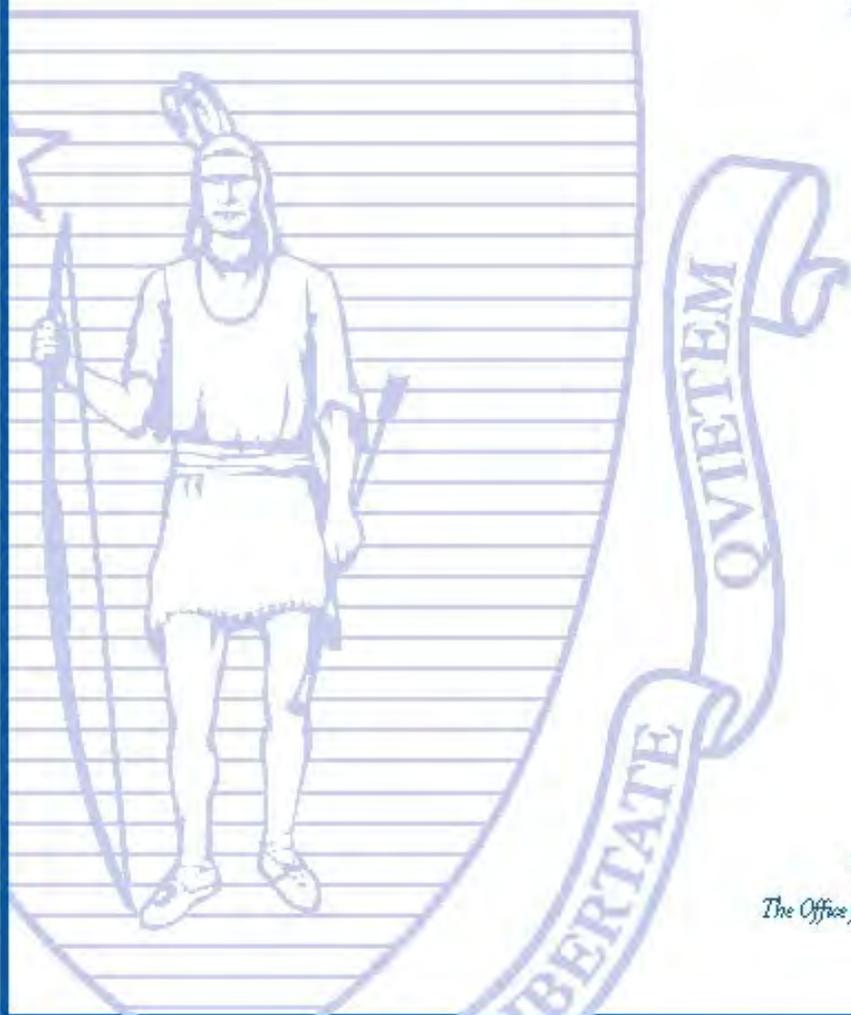
School District Examination Report: West Boylston Public Schools



data driven

standards based

learner centered →



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

April 2004

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Department of Education; the Superintendent of the West Boylston Public Schools, Thomas Kane; the school department staff of the West Boylston Public Schools; and the Town of West Boylston officials.

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Executive Summary

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) examined the West Boylston Public Schools in late January of 2004. During 2000-2003, it was among the 'High' performing school systems in the Commonwealth. The following provides a summary of the findings of the examination and the district's performance on the 2003 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test.

Proficiency/Achievement:

- West Boylston's Average Proficiency Index (API) was 83, which was based on the 2003 MCAS test results. The state average for the API was 75.7 in 2003. This placed West Boylston among the 'High' performing academic school districts in the Commonwealth. In ELA, the district's ELA Proficiency Index (EPI) was 92.7, and the state average for EPI was 82.2. In math, the district's math Proficiency Index (MPI) was 73.3, and the state average for MPI was 69.3.
- On the 2003 MCAS test, 60.9% of the students in West Boylston scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories. This figure was 9.1 percentage points higher than the state's average percentages.
- On the 2003 MCAS test, in ELA, 78.7% of the students in West Boylston scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories, 18.2 percentage points higher than the state's averages. In math, 43.2% of the students scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories, 0.4 percentage points higher than the state's average percentages in math.
- In 2003, in West Boylston the Proficiency Indices of 92.7 for ELA and 73.3 for math were 10.5 and 4.0 points higher than the statewide averages.
- On the MCAS retest administered in the spring of 2003, 97.5% of the West Boylston Class of 2003 earned a Competency Determination (CD), as compared to 95% of the statewide Class of 2003.
- On the MCAS retest administered in the spring of 2003, 100% of the West Boylston Class of 2004 earned a Competency Determination, as compared to 89% of the statewide Class of 2004.

Equity of Achievement/Proficiency:

- In West Boylston there were too few special education or FRL/Y students enrolled in 2003 to determine their performance relative to subgroups, regular education, and FRL/N students.

Improvement:

- Between 2000 and 2003, the trend in student performance on the MCAS test was virtually unchanged, with most of the improvement occurring in 2001 in increasing the students scoring in 'Advanced' category. This improvement trend only existed in ELA, and not math, where there was a decline.
- In West Boylston, 1.1% more students scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 1.0% fewer students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category.
- In ELA, performance ratings from 2000-2003 on the Proficiency Index increased by 5.1 points and, in math, decreased by 3.0 points.
- In ELA, 9.7% more students scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 2.3% fewer students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category.
- In math, 7.6% fewer students scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 0.5% more students scored in the 'Warning/Failing' category.

Equity of Improvement:

- In West Boylston, there were too few special education or FRL/Y students enrolled in 2003 to significantly determine their improvement relative to subgroups, regular education, and FRL/N students.

Participation and Access:

- In West Boylston, the eligible students were participating in both ELA and math assessments at the required levels.

Summary of Preliminary Findings by Domain:

Assessment and Evaluation:

- The EQA examiners rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on twenty-one on one of the twenty-one performance indicators in this domain.
- In West Boylston, for the majority of time under review, the district began to gradually collect data and used it to inform programmatic decisions.

- Between 2000-2003, the district focused on using a variety of assessments, including the MCAS test data, to identify solutions to issues related to student performance.
- The West Boylston Public Schools used school-wide rubrics that were aligned to desired student outcomes and outlined in the district's mission statement.
- For the time under review, the district did not have an attendance policy. However, the student attendance rate was consistently above the state average, as was the district's participation rate in state assessments.
- Between 2000-2003, although the district was small, clear and deliberate attention was given to a review of assessments in relation to the achievement gap among students.
- Between 2000-2003, the district used historical data to monitor the effectiveness of the student placement process.
- The district maintained a "Composite Profile" for its faculty and staff, including individual professional growth objectives, as well as district objectives for both administrators and teachers.

Curriculum and Instruction:

- The EQA examiners rated the district as 'Satisfactory' on twenty-two and 'Poor' on two of the twenty-four performance indicators in this domain.
- For the period under examination, in addition to ELA and math, the district maintained a curriculum guide for all core content areas, which was aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and had components to support daily instruction.
- Between 2000-2003, the curriculum implementation was a shared responsibility among all teachers and the school leadership teams.
- In the West Boylston Public Schools, the vertical alignment of the curriculum between the elementary, middle school, and high school was not as evident as the horizontal coordination within the given grade levels.
- In West Boylston, within each of the three levels of the district's schools, instruction was focused on meeting the academic needs of all students.
- Between 2000-2003, in the West Boylston Public Schools, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not provide guidance for teachers to address the student diversity present in its heterogeneous groupings.
- In the West Boylston Public Schools, there were high rates of attendance among both the students and the teachers.

- The district was proactive in its attention to at-risk students across all grade levels and the district had a dropout rate of less than 1% between 2000-2003.
- Between 2000-2003, although the school system maintained a professional development program, in its current form there was no systemic connection to the district improvement plan (DIP) or individual school improvement plans (SIPs).
- In the West Boylston Public Schools, the funding concern for professional development was reflective of other issues regarding funding for educational services within the district.
- For the period under examination, the professional development in the area of differentiated instruction was not sufficient to support the special education inclusion model at the classroom level.

Student Academic Support Services:

- The EQA examiners rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on six and ‘Poor’ on one of the seven performance indicators in this domain.
- In West Boylston, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan did not accurately reflect the district improvement plan and the programs and services that the district delivered to students.
- For the period under examination, although the district leadership had guidance in determining the scope and sequence of programs and academic services, the planning was to accomplish short-term objectives and did not reflect any long-term and systemic influence.

Leadership and Governance:

- The EQA examiners rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on sixteen of the sixteen performance indicators in this domain.
- In West Boylston, the lack of available revenue negatively impacted the district’s decision-making in relation to implementing its strategic goals.
- In the latter years under examination, the district was engaged in a long-range, strategic planning process to align its strategic plan, school improvement plans, professional development, and future curriculum initiatives.
- Between 2000-2003, the West Boylston Public Schools was characterized by an organizational structure that encouraged open communication among its faculty and staff with the common purpose of providing efficient and effective instruction for all its students.

Business and Finance:

- The EQA examiners rated the district as ‘Satisfactory’ on fifteen and ‘Poor’ on five of the twenty performance indicators in this domain.

- During the period under examination, approximately 50% of all the land in the Town of West Boylston was tax-exempt, which significantly limited its local tax base.
- In West Boylston, given the limited funding sources available from the Town, the district's School Choice funds became an integral part of the operating budget for the school district.
- Between 2000-2003, in West Boylston, there was no systematic analysis of student achievement data during the budget process.
- In the district, an analysis of the cost effectiveness of programs was used to determine the usefulness of programs.
- For the years under review, the Town consistently exceeded the state's Net School Spending (NSS) requirement.
- In West Boylston, the large student populations at both the elementary level and the middle/senior high school level in conjunction with the reliance on School Choice funds as an integral source of funding placed additional constraints on the adequate and effective use of instructional space.
- For the years under review, in the district, there was no evidence that the findings of the independent financial audits were addressed.

Part I: Overview of the EQA Review Process and the District

On January 21-23, 2004, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the West Boylston Public Schools for the period between 2000-2003. This examination applied the standards related to the EQA's five major domains of inquiry, which include: A, Assessment and Evaluation; B, Curriculum and Instruction; C, Student Academic Support Services; D, Leadership and Governance; and E, Business and Financial Management. The EQA's examination process for school districts involved two tiers of investigation and utilized twelve standards. The basis of this report is the result of the source documents, correspondence sent prior to the on-site visit, interviews with the representative from the school committee, district leadership team, school administrators, and additional documents submitted while in the district. The report does not include documents, revised data, or comments that may have surfaced after the on-site visit.

West Boylston is a suburban town located in east-central Worcester County in central Massachusetts. Education, healthcare, and social services are the largest sources of employment in West Boylston, followed by manufacturing. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, it has a population of 7,481 people and a median family income of \$69,100, while the median family income in Massachusetts is \$61,664. West Boylston has a Board of Selectmen/Executive Assistant form of government and a five-person school committee. The West Boylston Public Schools have two schools serving Grades PreK-12. The most recent Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) figures indicate that there were 1,175 students enrolled in the district in FY2002. The demographic/subgroup composition in the West Boylston Public Schools is: 97% White, 1.1% Hispanic-American, 0.8% Asian-American, 0.5% African-American, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), 0.0%; Free or Reduced Lunch/Yes (FRL/Y), 4.9%; and Special Education (SPED), 15.6%. During the ten years of education reform in Massachusetts, West Boylston's state Chapter 70 Aid increased by 308% from \$666,683 in FY1993 to \$2,650,051 in FY2002. For the fiscal years under review, 2000-2003, West Boylston received \$2,115,280; \$2,583,161; \$2,650,051; and \$2,723,155 for a total of \$10,071,647 in state Chapter 70 Aid.

This report finds the West Boylston Public Schools to be a 'High' performing school district, which is marked by student achievement that is 'Very High' in English Language Arts (ELA)

and ‘Moderate’ in math on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test. Since 2000, West Boylston has also demonstrated improvement on its ‘High’ MCAS test scores, and in the 2003 administration of the MCAS test, 60.9% of its students scored above standard.

Part II: Tier I Analysis of Student Achievement and MCAS Test Data

At Tier I, while particular attention was paid to the 2003 MCAS test, the EQA review of West Boylston’s MCAS test results (2000-2003) is framed by the following five essential questions:

- 1. Proficiency/Achievement: To what extent is the MCAS test performance of all of the district’s students meeting or exceeding state proficiency standards?**
- 2. Equity of Achievement: How does MCAS test performance vary among the district’s student subgroups?**
- 3. Improvement: How has MCAS test performance for all students in the district changed over time?**
- 4. Equity of Improvement: How has MCAS test performance for the district’s student subgroups changed over time?**
- 5. Opportunity and Access: Are all eligible students attending and participating in all required programs and assessments?**

In order to respond accurately to these questions, the EQA did several types of analyses on the most current test data: a comparative analysis of the MCAS test data using state and district results by grade, ethnicity, and student category, a school-based analysis, a “performance gap” analysis, and a series of analyses to determine whether the mean responses for students in the district differed significantly from those of the state and between student subgroups within the district. Descriptive analyses of the test results for 2003 MCAS test revealed significant

differences between students in the district and the average scores of students in Massachusetts. A discussion of the analyses follows.

West Boylston vs. Massachusetts:

- The aggregate of students in West Boylston scored *higher* than the aggregate of the state's students.

West Boylston's totals vs. West Boylston's subgroups:

- In West Boylston, there were too few special education and FRL/Y students enrolled in 2003 to determine their performance relative to those subgroups, regular education, and FRL/N students.

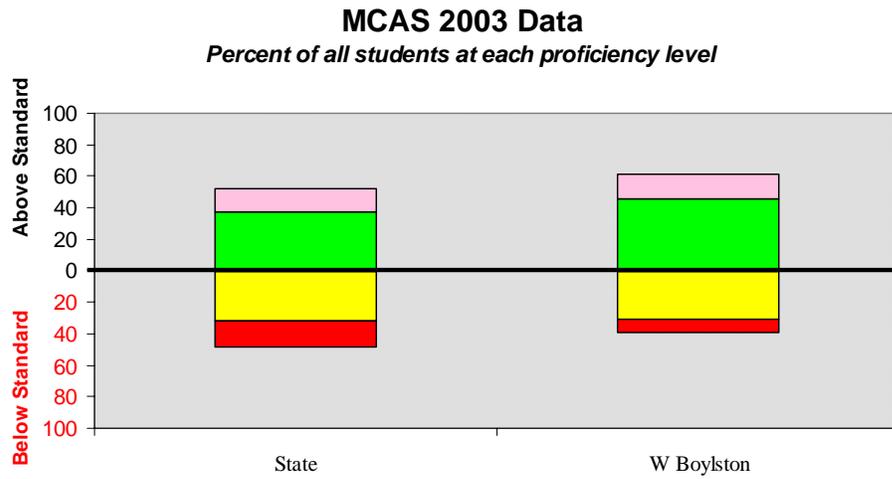
Assessment of MCAS Test Results 2000-2003

1. **Proficiency/Achievement:** To what extent is the MCAS performance of all the district's students meeting or exceeding state proficiency standards?

Preliminary Finding(s):

- On the 2003 MCAS test, 60.9% of the students in West Boylston scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories. This figure was 9.1 percentage points higher than the state's average percentages.
- On the 2003 MCAS test, in ELA, 78.7% of the students in West Boylston scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories, 18.2 percentage points higher than the state's averages. In math, 43.2% of the students scored in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories, 0.4 percentage points higher than the state's average percentages in math.
- In 2003, in West Boylston the Proficiency Indices of 92.7 for ELA and 73.3 for math were 10.5 and 4.0 points higher than the statewide averages.

Figure/Table 1:

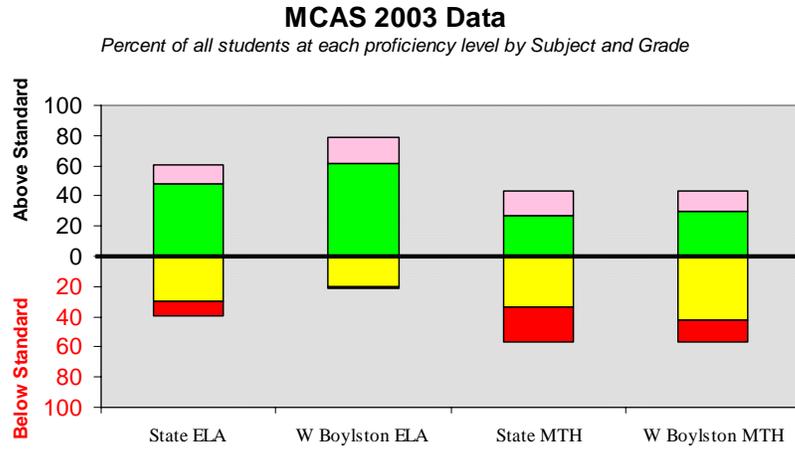


| | | | |
|--|-----------------|------|------|
| | Advanced | 14.2 | 15.3 |
| | Proficient | 37.6 | 45.6 |
| | Needs Improv. | 32.2 | 31.1 |
| | Warning/Failing | 16.0 | 8.0 |

Analysis of Figure/Table 1:

- West Boylston had 1.1% and 8.0% more students score in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.
- West Boylston had 1.1% and 8.0% fewer of its students score in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.
- West Boylston’s percentage of students scoring in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category was one-half that of the state’s students, 8.0% to 16.0%.

Figure/Table 2:



| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| | Advanced | 12.1 | 16.8 | 15.9 | 13.8 |
| | Proficient | 48.4 | 61.9 | 26.9 | 29.4 |
| | Needs Improv. | 30.2 | 19.8 | 34.1 | 42.4 |
| | Warning/Failing | 8.9 | 1.5 | 23.1 | 14.5 |

Analysis of Figure/Table 2:

- West Boylston had 4.7% and 13.5% more students score in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in ELA than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.
- West Boylston had 10.4% and 7.4% fewer of its students score in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories in ELA than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.
- West Boylston’s percentage of students scoring in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category in ELA was almost one-sixth that of the state’s students, 1.5% to 8.9%.
- West Boylston had 2.1% fewer and 2.5% more students score in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in math than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.
- West Boylston had 8.3% more and 8.6% fewer of its students score in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories in math than the state on the 2003 MCAS test.

Figure/Table 3:

Proficiency Index (MCAS 2003) by Grade

| | ELA | Math |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| WEST BOYLSTON | 92.7 | 73.3 |
| Grade 04 | 91.3 | 83.1 |
| Grade 07 | 92.6 | NA |
| Grade 08 | NA | 66.8 |
| Grade 10 | 94.3 | 70.2 |

Analysis of Figure/Table 3:

- On average, in West Boylston, the math PI was 19.4 points lower than that for ELA system-wide. (The statewide average for this gap was 12.8 Proficiency Index points).
- In ELA, the Proficiency Index in Grade 10 was 1.6 points higher than the district average and in Grade 4 it was 1.4 points lower and in Grade 7 it was 0.1 points lower than the district average.
- In math, the Proficiency Index in Grade 4 was 9.8 points higher than the district average and in Grade 8 it was 6.5 points lower and in grade 10 it was 3.1 points lower than the district average.

2. Equity of Achievement: How does a MCAS performance vary among the district's student subgroups?

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston there were too few special education or FRL/Y students enrolled in 2003 to determine their performance relative to subgroups, regular education, and FRL/N students.

Table 4:**N-values by category**

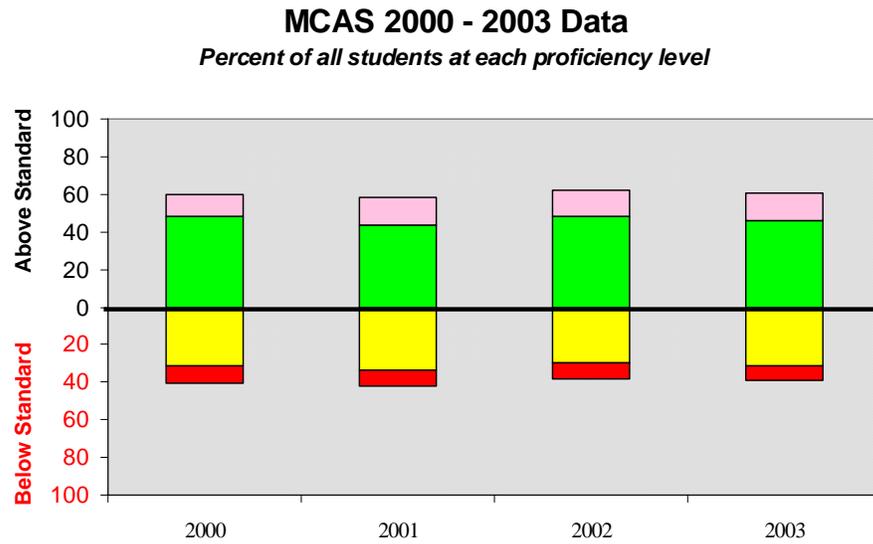
| | | ELA | Math |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| West Boylston | Advanced | 45 | 37 |
| | Proficient | 166 | 79 |
| | Needs Improv. | 53 | 114 |
| | Warning/Failing | 4 | 39 |
| Regular | Advanced | 45 | 37 |
| | Proficient | 158 | 77 |
| | Needs Improv. | 39 | 107 |
| | Warning/Failing | 1 | 28 |
| Disability | Advanced | 0 | 0 |
| | Proficient | 8 | 2 |
| | Needs Improv. | 14 | 7 |
| | Warning/Failing | 3 | 11 |
| Free Lunch/Y | Advanced | 1 | 3 |
| | Proficient | 7 | 2 |
| | Needs Improv. | 8 | 8 |
| | Warning/Failing | 0 | 3 |
| Free Lunch/N | Advanced | 44 | 34 |
| | Proficient | 159 | 77 |
| | Needs Improv. | 45 | 106 |
| | Warning/Failing | 4 | 36 |
| White | Advanced | 43 | 37 |
| | Proficient | 164 | 77 |
| | Needs Improv. | 52 | 113 |
| | Warning/Failing | 4 | 37 |

3. Improvement: How has MCAS performance for all students in the district changed over time?

Preliminary Findings:

- Between 2000 and 2003, the trend in student performance on the MCAS test was virtually unchanged, with most of the improvement occurring in 2001 in increasing the students scoring in ‘Advanced’ category. This improvement trend only existed in ELA, and not math, where there was a decline.
- In West Boylston, 1.1% more students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 1.0% fewer students scored in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category.
- In ELA, performance ratings from 2000-2003 on the Proficiency Index increased by 5.1 points and, in math, decreased by 3.0 points.
- In ELA, 9.7% more students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 2.3% fewer students scored in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category.
- In math, 7.6% fewer students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 than in 2000 and 0.5% more students scored in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category.

Figure/Table 5:



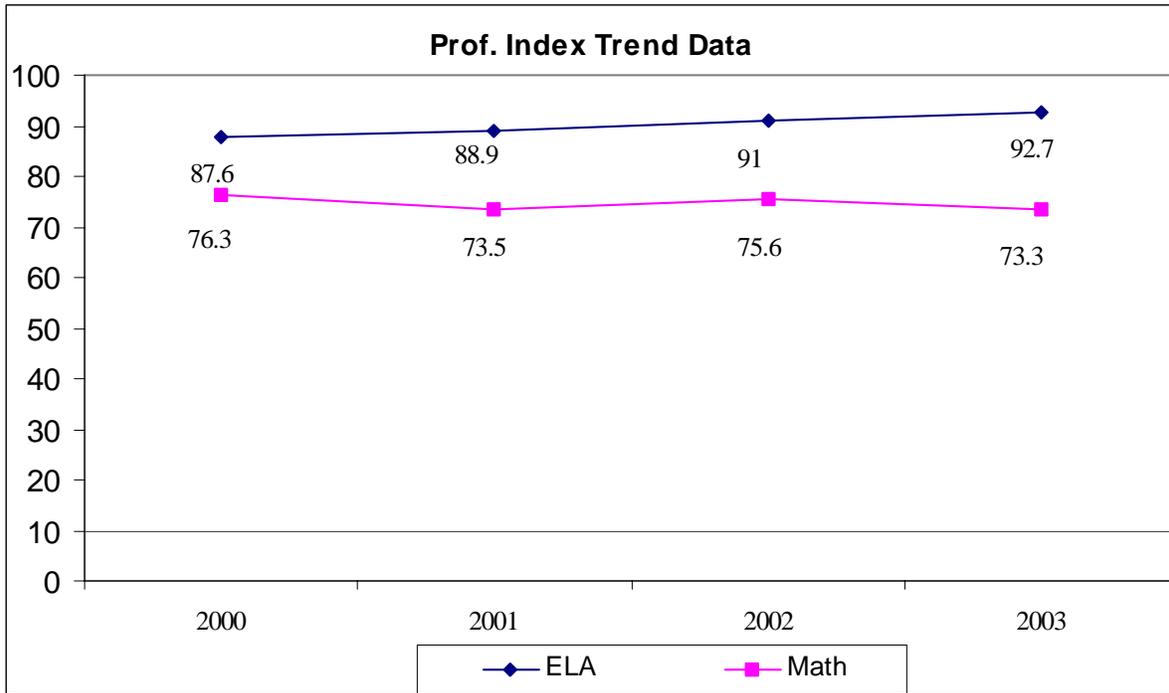
| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| | Advanced | 11.2 | 14.1 | 14.0 | 15.3 |
| | Proficient | 48.6 | 43.9 | 48.0 | 45.6 |
| | Needs Improv. | 31.2 | 33.6 | 29.7 | 31.1 |
| | Warning/Failing | 9.0 | 8.5 | 8.3 | 8.0 |

Analysis of Figure/Table 5:

- In West Boylston, 60.9% of all students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 59.8% of all students achieving these categories in 2000.
- In West Boylston, 39.1% of all students scored at the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 40.2% of all students scoring in these categories in 2000.

Figure/Table 6:

Proficiency Index Trend Data MCAS, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003



| | ELA | | | | Math | | | |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
| Advanced | 5.8 | 13.4 | 13.3 | 16.8 | 16.7 | 14.7 | 14.8 | 13.8 |
| Proficient | 63.2 | 59.8 | 61.9 | 61.9 | 34.1 | 27.9 | 34.4 | 29.4 |
| Needs Improv. | 27.2 | 22.6 | 22.9 | 19.8 | 35.2 | 44.5 | 36.3 | 42.4 |
| Warning/Failing | 3.8 | 4.2 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 14.0 | 12.8 | 14.4 | 14.5 |

Analysis of Figure/Table 6:

- In ELA, performance ratings from 2000-2003 on the Proficiency Index increased by 5.1 points, from 87.6 to 92.7.
- In math, performance ratings from 2000-2003 on the Proficiency Index decreased by 3.0 points, from 76.3 to 73.3.
- In ELA, 78.7% of all students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 69.0% of all students scoring in these categories in 2000.

- In ELA, 21.3% of all students scored at the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 31.0% of all students scoring in these categories in 2000.
 - In math, 43.2% of all students scored in the ‘Advanced’ and ‘Proficient’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 50.8% of all students scoring in these categories in 2000.
 - In math, 56.9% of all students scored in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories in 2003 in contrast to 49.2% of all students scoring in these categories in 2000.
- 4. Equity of Improvement: How has MCAS performance for the district’s student subgroups change over time?**

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, there were too few special education or FRL/Y students enrolled in 2003 to significantly determine their improvement relative to subgroups, regular education, and FRL/N students.

5. Participation and Access: Are all eligible students attending and participating in all required programs and assessments?

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, the eligible students were participating in both ELA and math assessments at the required levels.

Table 7:

| | ELA | Math |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| Tested | 98.89% | 99.63% |
| NTM | 0.37% | 0.00% |
| NTO | 0.74% | 0.37% |

Analysis of Table 7:

On the 2003 MCAS test, West Boylston's student test participation rates in ELA were 98.89% and 99.63% in math. These figures were 3.89% and 4.63% higher than the state's standard for test participation, which is 95%.

Part III: Summary and Preliminary Findings by Domain

Domain A: Assessment and Evaluation

| Standards ▼ | Indicators ► | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Total |
|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|-------|
| Domain A – Assessment & Evaluation | | | | | | | | | | |
| S1 - Student Assessment | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| S2 – Participation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | 7 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 |
| S3 - Evaluation Processes | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | N/A | 6 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 0 |

Standard 1. STUDENT ASSESSMENT: District and building administrators carefully administer statewide assessments and teachers regularly assess the performance of their students relative to state and local student performance standards, and analyze aggregate and individual assessment results to improve curricula, instructional practices, and supplementary and remedial programs.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, for the majority of time under review, the district began to gradually collect data and used it to inform programmatic decisions.
- Between 2000-2003, the district focused on using a variety of assessments, including the MCAS test data, to identify solutions to issues related to student performance.
- The West Boylston Public Schools used school-wide rubrics that were aligned to desired student outcomes and outlined in the district’s mission statement.

Indicators:

1. The district has clear assessment policies and procedures that direct the regular evaluation of classroom, school, district, and state assessment results.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: With the exception of assessment policies to direct the appropriate assessment and subsequent placement of special education students, the district had no formal policies governing assessment. However, practice determined that the district used final exams at the secondary level, grading reports, and report card district-wide. Most of the textbook series used by the district included pre-tests and post-tests administered at the discretion of teachers. The district's practice also dictated that the school system administer a reading assessment to all incoming Grade 6 students and any new students entering the district, regardless of their grade level. The district used school-wide rubrics that were aligned with the district's mission statement to outcomes, and content-specific, teacher-generated rubrics that were aligned with academic expectations to evaluate students' work.

2. District and building administrators carefully and accurately implement the "Principles of Test Administration" in their jurisdictions and provide complete and accurate information on student status and participation in accordance with the "Principles" in the administration of the MCAS test and system-wide tests.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The principals and other members of the staff responsible for assisting in the administration of the MCAS test attended the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) training sessions. Discussions with principals indicated that the district was conscious of test security, the need for consistency in its administration, and implemented the appropriate internal procedures to ensure and accurate test administration in West Boylston.

3. The district regularly employs criterion-referenced tests, norm-referenced tests, or other standardized tests in addition to the MCAS test to assess the progress of all student populations.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In addition to the MCAS test, the district administered evaluations and assessments in the following testing areas: psychological, educational, speech/language, occupational therapy, and Title I to assess the progress of all students.

4. Regular analysis of assessment results informs improvements to:
 - a. curricula,
 - b. instructional practices,
 - c. supplementary and remedial programs and services,
 - d. professional development, and
 - e. purchasing and provisioning for improved student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Part of the work of the district's curriculum committees was to conduct an annual review of the MCAS test results compared to the district's curriculum. These reviews resulted in, among other things, the addition of a composition course for freshmen and a daily problem-solving segment at Grade 5 in math and ELA. Further, the district's review of longitudinal MCAS test data prompted the district to adopt the *Everyday Mathematics* program at the elementary school level.

Also, the review of MCAS test results informed some changes in instructional practices that supported curriculum revisions. Teachers in West Boylston added more of a focused-approach to writing open-ended responses and expository writing and created more opportunities for inquiry-based problem solving in math. Professional development was then provided to support teachers in the implementation of the new math program that was focused more on developing problem-solving skills and less on rote skills. Further, consultants were used to provide the majority of the professional development. Interviewees

acknowledged that exiting software at the elementary level was underutilized, because teachers needed more professional development in its usage. Part of the problem, according to interviewees, was that time in the computer laboratory was difficult to schedule at the elementary level.

5. The district and each of its schools disseminate assessment analyses to appropriate staff at regular intervals.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: On a district level, the curriculum committees met to analyze assessment data according to test item and student. Elementary teachers met with the math and ELA committees to analyze the data. The data was then disseminated to staff. There was a day-long meeting at the secondary grade levels to review and distribute the MCAS test item analysis. If the district scored below the state average on any item, the district analyzed those particular questions to determine the extent to which that test item was covered in the curriculum. In addition, if 70% or more of the district's students missed a particular test item, that also would have prompted a review against the district's curriculum.

6. District administrators, building administrators, and teachers demonstrate that they have the skills to use aggregate and individual test analyses to improve instructional programs and services for all student populations.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The EQA team found that the district's administrators and teachers had the skills to aggregate and analyze data in order to improve instruction and services for students. The district maintained longitudinal student assessment data and used that data to plan for directing programs, including the Advanced Placement (AP) program, special education, and students influenced by frequent changes of math teachers at the middle level.

7. The district educates all of its students to meet or exceed the Competency Determination (CD) standard by their senior year.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Based on the progress report on students attaining the Competency Determination (CD), released by the DOE in 2003, 96% of the Class of 2003 earned a Competency Determination, and 98% of the Class of 2004 earned a Competency Determination. Further discussions with members of the leadership team indicated that all students of the Class of 2003 graduated, and three students were prepared to retake the test in 2004.

8. Classroom assessment standards, practices, and expectations for teachers and students are consistently linked with learning standards articulated in the state curriculum frameworks.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Between 2000-2003, the district implemented a formal, performance-based evaluation process for teachers, one of the components of which was currency in the curriculum, delivery of standards-based instruction. Informally, the district monitored the implementation of classroom assessment standards and practices through periodic walkthroughs in classrooms. Interviewees indicated that at the elementary and secondary levels (grades 6-8) teachers discussed classroom assessment standards and practices during the daily common planning time at grade-level meetings. At the secondary level (grades 9-12), discussions relative to classroom assessment standards and practices were part of the regular department meetings.

Standard 2. PARTICIPATION: The district and all of its schools have documented policies, procedures, and practices that meet federal and state participation and attendance standards. Data on participation in state and local tests are monitored and assessed to ensure participation and opportunity for all students and all subgroups.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- For the time under review, the district did not have an attendance policy. However, the student attendance rate was consistently above the state average, as was the district's participation rate in state assessments.
- Between 2000-2003, although the district was small, clear and deliberate attention was given to a review of assessments in relation to the achievement gap among students.

Indicators:

1. The district and each of its schools have clear policies, procedures, expectations, and practices that require all students to attend and participate in all mandatory and appropriate assessments.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In interviews with the EQA team, district administrators indicated that historically education had significant cultural value within the community. The district's practice dictated that school personnel sent notes home whenever students were absent. The district's expectations for student attendance at all grade levels were cited in student handbooks. Student attendance expectations were addressed in newsletters that were sent home once a month, the district had a televised bulletin board, and a school website, all of which conveyed information on the schedule and importance of the MCAS testing dates.

2. The district and all of its schools regularly monitor and evaluate data on student and staff attendance.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district monitored student attendance on a daily basis through the use of the Rediker system, a comprehensive student management system. Student attendance was above 95% for the time under review, but administrators reported that student attendance was also monitored on a semi-annual basis and evaluated on the basis of issues (due to the low incidence of absenteeism). Teacher attendance was not problematic in the district, but it was also evaluated, when needed, on a case-by-case basis. The district also monitored teacher attendance as it related to expenditures for substitutes.

3. The district maintains accurate records on attendance, suspensions, discipline, and dropouts by student subgroup populations and frequently:
 - a. analyzes these records;
 - b. uses the analyses to improve participation and involvement of all students;
 - c. tracks students who have ceased to participate in school programs

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district’s largest education subgroup was its special education students. Annually, the special education director conducted an internal evaluation of the special education program by reviewing student Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the SIMs, a comprehensive student management system, data. Since the student population in this particular subgroup was relatively small, the data was reviewed on an individual student basis. The district reviewed the data for possible trends. As a result of the internal evaluation data, the district added a new school psychologist and a series of professional development materials on classroom management. Historically, the district had a low incidence of student dropouts, so there was no formal tracking of students unless there had been a referral to an outside agency. In that case, the district did conduct a follow up on the implementation of the referral.

4. The district actively encourages student attendance in conformity with their policies and expectations.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees from the district indicated that historically the community had high expectations for students participating the district’s academic programs. A review of the district’s documentation and interviewees indicated that the district was proactive and offered nursing services, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and other community-related services.

5. The district collects and uses data on:
 - a. student attendance and evaluates the effects of student attendance on performance and achievement, and
 - b. staff attendance and evaluates the effects of staff attendance on staff performance and student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district’s attendance rate exceeded the state average and was not a concern in the district. The district used SIMs to collect data on student attendance and tardiness, in school and out of school suspensions, and other related discipline

issues. Informally, school administrators reviewed and analyzed this data relative to the linkage between student performance and attendance.

Staff attendance was not problematic for the district with the exception of the current year (2003-2004), when 25% of the absences for staff were due to long-term maternity leaves. Whenever instances occurred that were beyond the district's control, including an unexpected increase in enrollment, or a high turnover in one academic area, the district tracked the academic performance of those students and initiated the appropriate support.

6. The district maintains clear and accurate records on:
 - a. student waivers for LEP and ALT status for MCAS assessment;
 - b. waivers for staff regarding certification and progress toward certification.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district did not have significant populations of LEP or English Language Learner (ELL) students, or students eligible for the Alternative Assessment (ALT) on the MCAS test. However, when those instances occurred, the district provided for these students on a case-by-case basis. The district maintained records for teachers on waivers and information on the progress towards certification in their personnel files. Information was readily available and in good order.

7. The district focuses on and improves educational outcomes, including English language proficiency for all English language learners (ELL) and:
 - a. maintains clear, accurate, program and individual records of all English language learners;
 - b. annually reviews disaggregated data from standardized tests, attendance, suspension, discipline, and dropout records;
 - c. uses data analyses to review programs and services to English language learners and focuses on areas of needed improvement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: At the time of the on-site review, the district did not have an ELL student population. However, interviewees indicated that should the need arise, they were procedurally prepared to address those circumstances.

Standard 3. EVALUATION PROCESSES: The district uses student assessment data in its development, implementation, and analysis of school, program, and personnel evaluation. The evaluation process focuses on accountability for administrators, teachers, and staff, and one of the goals of the process is the improvement of achievement for all students.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- Between 2000-2003, the district used historical data to monitor the effectiveness of the student placement process.

- The district maintained a “Composite Profile” for its faculty and staff, including individual professional growth objectives, as well as district objectives for both administrators and teachers.

Indicators:

1. The district employs a system of:
 - a. school evaluation that focuses on accountability for administrators;
 - b. program evaluation that focuses on accountability for administrators and staff;
 - c. personnel evaluation that focuses on accountability for all administrators, teachers, and staff.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees at all levels and a review of the district’s documentation indicated that the MCAS test was the driving force for all forms of program and school evaluations district-wide. For example, the high school principal was required to revise the program of studies every year. Also, programs were evaluated as to their effectiveness in addressing the needs determined by the MCAS test results. At the Edwards Elementary School, the principal evaluated programs and the school. For example, based on the ELA MCAS test results, the school implemented the *Reading Recovery* program. The superintendent evaluated the

administrators on a two-year cycle. Curriculum and instruction were key components of the instrument used to evaluate the principals. However, student achievement was not a component of the principals' evaluation. Teachers were evaluated on a yearly cycle, as per the district's negotiated contract with teachers' union. Teachers who had achieved Professional Teacher Status were evaluated on a four-year cycle. The cycle consisted of four types of evaluation: Observation, Checklist, Project Evaluation, and Peer Evaluation. Non-Professional Teacher Status teachers had a more intensive four-year evaluation cycle that included more classroom observations. The end result of the evaluation cycle was a "Composite Profile," which highlighted commendations for the teachers, recommendations for improvement, and a section for recommendation to rehire, not-rehire, or rehire with reservation.

2. The results of the district's program evaluation are analyzed and used to inform needed changes or modifications in the district's programs and services that would most likely result in improved student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: As previously stated, in West Boylston, the MCAS test results were used to evaluate the district's programs and services. The analysis was done with all the teachers and departments. It was an item-by-item and question-by-question analysis. Modifications occurred based on these analyses. For example, the test scores showed a need to improve reading comprehension. This led to the introduction of the Links program, a program to address connections across the curriculum. In addition, a review of the MCAS math test scores resulted in an increase in time for math instruction district-wide. A review of the MCAS ELA test scores resulted in a mandatory class for incoming freshmen that was specifically focused on composition writing to improve the district's scores in open response-type questions.

3. There is an ongoing process to:
 - a. monitor, and
 - b. evaluate the quality, adequacy, and effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional programs.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In West Boylston, the MCAS test results consistently provided the focus for monitoring and evaluating curriculum and instructional programs within the district. At the high school level, the district also used Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), ACT, and Advanced Placement (AP) exam results to do an informal evaluation of the instructional programs. The high school also used an “Indicator Report” which contained historical data regarding all test results on the PSAT, SAT, MCAS, ACT, and AP exams. This report compiled all of these results in one document to aid in the analysis of curriculum and instructional programs. One specific example of the monitoring and evaluating of programs was the *Everyday Math Program*. It was determined that the math curriculum was not National Council for the Teachers of Math (NCTM)-based. The district took the state curriculum frameworks and revised their math curriculum to include the *Everyday Math Program*, which was in alignment with the state curriculum frameworks for math.

4. The district’s evaluation procedure for administrators is aligned with the requirements of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees and a review of the district’s documentation indicated that for the time under review, the previous superintendent evaluated administrators every two years. The components of the evaluation instrument were aligned with the “Principles of Effective Administration.”

5. The district’s evaluation procedure for teachers is aligned with the requirements of the Education Reform Act.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: As stated earlier, the teachers were evaluated on a four-year cycle with different evaluation instruments used in each year, the end result was a “Composite Profile.” Based on a review of 22 staff “Composite Profiles,” 19 of the evaluations sampled were completed in timely manner, one was a new hire for the 2003-2004 school year, one was a secretary, and one was a guidance counselor, while all were signed by the evaluator and the person being evaluated. The “West Boylston Teacher Performance Standard Form,” a document used in the evaluation process, was modeled after the “Principles of Effective Teaching.”

6. In order to improve achievement for all students, the district uses disaggregated assessment scores to:
 - a. evaluate specific aspects of achievement, so that data can be analyzed to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction,
 - b. set priorities for professional development, and
 - c. reallocate staff and resources to improve achievement levels for all student populations.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district did not use disaggregated data in a formal process to improve student achievement and to evaluate their curriculum and instruction. Due to the small size of the population of the district’s educational subgroups, any evaluation was done informally. All new students entering the high school were tested. The professional development offerings in the district focused on the Links program training and *Everyday Math* training. Surveys of the staff were conducted regarding professional development offerings that they might prefer. However, there was no systemic reallocation of resources to improve student achievement for all student populations. As stated earlier, the district’s practice was more informal and completed on an individual case-by-case basis. Interviewees, however, indicated that the lack of a formal process and the absence of significant populations did not preclude the district administrators from reviewing subgroup data on an individual basis.

Domain B: Curriculum and Instruction

| Standards ▼ | Indicators ► | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5aVoc. | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Total |
|--|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Domain B –Curriculum & Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S4 – Curriculum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 6 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| S5 - Instruction: Expectations & Policies | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 5 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| S6 - Access To Quality Education Programs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 6 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| S7 - Professional Development & Training | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | N/A | 1 | 1 | N/A | N/A | 5 |
| Poor | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | N/A | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 2 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 | 0 | N/A | N/A | 0 |

Standard 4. CURRICULUM: The district, each of its schools, and programs utilize curricula that are aligned with the state curriculum frameworks in the core academic subjects of English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, and world languages. The curricula are current, academically sound, and clearly understood by all who administer and teach in the district.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- For the period under examination, in addition to ELA and math, the district maintained a curriculum guide for all core content areas, which was aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and had components to support daily instruction.
- Between 2000-2003, the curriculum implementation was a shared responsibility among all teachers and the school leadership teams.

- In the West Boylston Public Schools, the vertical alignment of the curriculum between the elementary, middle school, and high school was not as evident as the horizontal coordination within the given grade levels.

Indicators:

1. A curriculum leader is assigned to and active in every school in the district.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district consisted of two physical facilities, an elementary school that served grades K-5, and a middle school/high school that served grades 6-12. The curriculum leadership was provided at the building level. For the period of time under review, there was a curriculum committee at the elementary and secondary grade levels. The principals from both buildings were on the committee. At the elementary level, the staff was assigned responsibility for a particular content area, and program leaders represented each grade level. Both buildings had representation from the special education department. At the secondary level, in conjunction with the principal, the department coordinators provided leadership in curriculum.

2. Teachers in all of the district's schools:
 - a. have access to the current curriculum,
 - b. are trained in their use, and
 - c. are expected to use them in planning and delivering instruction.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In the West Boylston Public Schools, there was a written district curriculum guide in all content areas for grades K-12. All teachers were provided with copies of the curriculum for the grades or content areas for which they were responsible. Since the district was small and most of the teachers had active involvement with actually writing, reviewing, and modifying curriculum, the district offered no formal training for using the curriculum guides. Teachers were expected to use the guides to construct lesson plans for instruction. Although the district did not collect lesson plans, both principals indicated that during classroom walkthroughs and observations they monitored for the implementation of the curriculum to ensure that it was being delivered as it was intended to be.

3. The district has an established, well-documented process that involves teachers in the annual review and/or revision of curriculum based on the analyses of results of standardized tests.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees in the district indicated that principals in both buildings annually disaggregated the MCAS test scores. At the secondary level, grades 6-12, the curriculum committee analyzed the test results item-by-item and student-by-student to identify strengths and weaknesses in student skills and potential gaps in the curriculum. The curriculum committee at the elementary level used a similar process. The curriculum committees developed revisions and/or changes informed by the gap analysis.

4. Modifications and/or revisions to curricula are:
 - a. evaluated for their effectiveness in improving equitable student achievement for all student populations, and
 - b. revised as necessary and disseminated to staff.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the period under review, the district's largest educational subgroup was special education students. The district used no formal process to evaluate curriculum modifications and/or revisions to the curriculum by subgroup. It did, however, review the MCAS test scores by student and test item, and because the district was small, this process included a review of the results of individual special education students.

The district curriculum was revised based on the work of the curriculum committees. Specific examples included the addition of a mandatory composition course for freshmen and a proposed math course for sophomores. As a result of the curriculum revisions, the middle school added enrichment periods in math and reading. The departments developed revisions to the curriculum and copies were disseminated to the appropriate staff and placed in the district's curriculum guide.

5. The district regularly implements an established, well-documented process to ensure:
 - a. horizontal instructional program articulation throughout the system, and
 - b. sequencing and alignment of learning goals and expectations from one Grade to the next – K-12.
 - c. alignment with the state curriculum frameworks across all Grades PreK-12.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees in the district and a review of the district’s documentation indicated that horizontal articulation across grade levels was facilitated at the elementary level by common planning time, and by teachers meeting regularly to discuss curriculum. At the secondary level, teachers met daily to work on curriculum and other academic issues.

The district’s curriculum alignment with the state curriculum frameworks was provided as a component in the district’s curriculum guide. At the secondary level, the curriculum guide included course expectations, course outlines, a district form that identified the alignment to the state curriculum frameworks, and a district-level pacing guide with a calendar. At the elementary level, the curriculum guide included sample strategies for teaching, instructional activities, sample assessments, and alignment with the state curriculum frameworks by strand. Interviewees indicated that there was no formal process that allowed for elementary and secondary grade levels to meet together to work on curriculum.

- 5a. VOC: In vocational schools and districts, the district implements an established, well-documented process to ensure:
 - a. integration of academic skills, particularly in ELA, mathematics and science and technology into each occupational area,
 - b. sequencing and alignment of learning goals, skills and expectations from one Grade to the next - 9-12.
 - c. alignment with the state curriculum frameworks across all Grades and occupational areas 9-12.

EQA Rating: N/A

Evidence: N/A

6. Staffing levels are adequate to deliver the district’s curriculum to all students and student subgroups.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees indicated that because the district was implementing an inclusion model at all levels, there were not a sufficient number of special education teachers to adequately provide support. Interviewees indicated that although there were a sufficient number of paraprofessionals, many of them were assigned to clerical work and did not directly support instruction. According to interviewees, the district had reviewed their staffing patterns and identified a number of areas where they could use additional staff.

Standard 5. INSTRUCTION: EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES: The district uses the analysis of student achievement data to develop policies and documents that express high expectations for student achievement, the employment of quality faculty and staff, and clear expectations of the use of effective instructional methods strategies and practices to teach all students.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, within each of the three levels of the district’s schools, instruction was focused on meeting the academic needs of all students.
- Between 2000-2003, in the West Boylston Public Schools, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not provide guidance for teachers to address the student diversity present in its heterogeneous groupings.

Indicators:

1. The district has implemented instructional programs that:
 - a. are designed to meet the assessed needs of its students, and
 - b. include the practices, resources and procedures needed to support the instructional programs.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees in the district indicated that, in general, instructional programs were designed to meet the needs of the district students, but administrators indicated that they saw room for improvement, specifically in the areas of differentiated instruction. The 2003 Mid-Cycle Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report, in ELA and math indicated that in the aggregate the district met both its performance and improvement targets. Interviewees also indicated that some teachers struggled with meeting the diverse needs of the district's heterogeneous groupings. In order to meet some of these instructional needs at the secondary level, the district provided a school to career program and reported approximately sixty to seventy students involved in internships.

2. Improving and/or sustaining student achievement is the shared responsibility of: the district, each of its schools, the students, their parents, and the community.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Between 2000-2003, the district offered a range of programs and services for grades PreK-12, among them: after-school tutorial programs, homework clubs, Saturday school, Title I programs in reading and ELA, and remedial math and reading programs. In addition, for special education students, the district offered extended day and/or summer programs. The district's new strategic planning initiative began in fall 2003, included membership of parents, students, community members, and district and school staff. In addition, the district had a private trust and a school trust, and both income sources were used to provide financial support to the academic programs.

3. The district has allocated sufficient instructional time in the core content areas to promote academic achievement and a level of proficiency for all students. Instructional time in each content area:
 - a. meets state requirements at each level, and
 - b. meets the educational needs of students as determined through an analysis of student achievement data.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees from the district indicated that a review of the MCAS test scores and general achievement levels prompted the district to allocate more time for math and visit districts with successful models. In 2003, at the secondary level, the district added a mandatory composition class for freshmen. Interviewees reported that the district was also considering the addition of a semester course for sophomores in math. Previously, the district tried offering an MCAS test review course after-school and during the summer, but because it was not well attended the district incorporated the review course into the schedule at the secondary level. Further, more time was added (225 minutes to 350 minutes) for math at the secondary level for middle school students. During the current school year (2003-04), the district increased instructional time in math at the elementary level from 45 minutes to 60 to allow more time for the implementation of the “Everyday Math” program.

4. The district employs highly qualified teachers, that are certified in the area(s) of their primary assignment or responsibility.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees in West Boylston indicated that the constraints of the budget resulted in the practice of first trying to hire potential candidates who would be placed no higher than Step 3 on the district’s salary schedule. Interviewees indicated that in cases where the positions were difficult to fill, including upper level science and math positions, the district was able to consider candidates who would place higher on the salary scale. Documentation provided by the district cited that there were 96 licensed teachers, ten of whom were not licensed, and six of whom taught one period or more outside of their fields. The district had six administrators, five of whom were licensed, and one who was not licensed.

5. District employment policies and practices identify, and encourage skilled, highly qualified personnel to be appointed to and remain in the district's employ.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district had a formal mentoring program where new teachers or teachers new to the district were paired with a mentor. The staff members interested in serving as mentors applied to the building principals who were responsible for pairing mentors and mentees by grade level and/or subject or content area. The district's salary schedule was a 12-step scale with more lucrative increases with more consistent years of service. Interviewees indicated that the Town offered a 90/10 split for teachers on the Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) offerings, and a 75/25 split on the Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) offerings.

Standard 6. ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS: District and school policies and practices require all faculty, staff and students to be in attendance. Retention, suspension, transition management, and dropout prevention policies and programs encourage and support equitable participation in quality educational programs for all students.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In the West Boylston Public Schools, there were high rates of attendance among both the students and the teachers.
- The district was proactive in its attention to at-risk students across all grade levels and the district had a dropout rate of less than 1% for the years between 2000-2003.

Indicators:

1. District and school policies and practices require all staff and students to be in attendance.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time period under review, the attendance rates among the professional staff and students were high. Inclusive of all reasons why a teacher could be on leave, including maturity and professional development, the rate of attendance was 95.4%. Although few in number, the administration, who could be the superintendent of schools or a building principal, would identify an individual teacher who demonstrated a trend of absences or tardiness and work out a correction plan for the individual teacher. In interviews, administrators indicated an awareness that there was an expectation on the part of teachers and administrators to model good attendance for students.

The rate of attendance of students was equally as high. The high school did not have a practice of connecting absences with loss of academic credit. However, it did have a process where students at risk and with demonstrated patterns of absence and tardiness were brought before a weekly meeting composed with the building principal, assistant principal, nurse, special education staff, and counselors. Since the cause or nature would be likely different from case to case, there was a separate meeting for targeted high school students and one for targeted middle level students. At the elementary level, student intervention teams (SITs) were formed to deal with the identification of students at-risk and the possible interventions that were needed to provide them with a successful school experience. The teams were deliberately comprised of teachers and support staff. Administrators joined them by invitation. According to district and building administrators and a review of the district's documentation, all students were made aware that an absence from school must be legitimate to be excused. Evidence indicated that there was a dialogue with parents over absences, and the decision of excused merit was heavily weighted on the honesty of the parents.

The director of special education reviewed the internal reason(s) for student absences or tardiness. Although not supported by evidence, the district expressed a theory that was discussed at weekly leadership meetings and with individual principals of the internal reasons for a student to be absent or tardy. Generally, interviewees believed that the at-risk student

might show signs of risk at the elementary level, but would begin to show signs of a behavior change at the middle school level grade. Within these latter grades, the absence and tardiness rates of students were low. Administrators reported that the primary reason was the intervention of parents, who would ensure that the student was on the school bus or was being transported to school by the student's parent. Interviewees reported that the more pervasive signs were seen in the upper grade levels. Administrators revealed that poor attendance was most likely when some students began to reflect levels of frustration and disconnect with the academic and social environment of school. Based on the interview discussion with administrators, older students might have had a learning disability that exacerbated problems, but they were clear that the pattern could be characteristic of students without a disability as well.

2. The district has well-documented policies and practices that support equitable participation in quality educational programs for all students. The policies, procedures and practices address:
 - a. transition management.
 - b. dropout prevention.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district's incidence of student mobility was low. The only evidence that reflected that students were entering the district and leaving prematurely was related to School Choice students. One district official did indicate that the district has a small population of homeless students (three cases in 2003), and that the district worked with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS). Although these numbers were small, the district was responsive to the needs of these students. A similar responsive behavior on the part of the district held true for students who had dropped out of the high school. There was an intervention counselor to identify the reason(s) and information was shared with students and parents regarding the alternatives to high school. Within reasonable limits, the special education coordinator at the high school remained in contact with both these student and their families.

3. The district has well-documented policies and practices that support equitable participation in quality educational programs for all students that address:
 - a. high expectations for all students,
 - b. participation in challenging courses,
 - c. support for students to remain in and succeed in quality programs, and
 - d. equitable participation in advanced and AP-type courses.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The counselors at the secondary level ensured that students were aware of the opportunities and the expectations underlining the process of course election at the high school. The department heads and teachers targeted students who, in the opinion of the department heads and teachers, should consider more challenging courses. There was evidence, confirmed by the director of special education, that students with disabilities were not precluded from taking challenging courses, such as advanced placement programs. Administrators were able to cite examples of students who had been successful in the honors and advanced placement programs.

An examination of data on advanced placement participation since 1998 revealed that approximately 80% of the students in the program earned a qualifying grade (a score of three or higher) on one or more advanced placement examinations. Interviews with representatives from the school committee indicated that the school committee as a whole supported the continuity of the advanced placement programs as a challenging opportunity. Although for the period under review, student enrollment was low in some courses, the school committee remained consistent with their policy of providing all students with opportunities to maximize their individual potential, despite the small numbers of enrollees.

Interviews with administrators indicated that the classroom support and an effective inclusive environment were key reasons for the success of students in challenging programs. Interviewees reported further that the size of the district that decisions related to students in need of academic support were characterized by a more personal connection. The high

school administration maintained data on the success rate of students in advanced placement courses who achieved a score of three or higher.

The EQA examiners considered the following as indicators of equitable participation: historically, a low dropout rate; high initial competency determination (98% in 2004, with two students not meeting the competency determination in the spring 2003, but who did meet the graduation requirement at the time of this review; and the consistent, above state average, performance of students on the College Boards (a combined score of 1,052 in 2001, compared to the state combined average of 1,026 for the same year). The secondary administrators maintained cumulative and longitudinal student data.

4. The district has well-documented policies and practices that respond to student behavior and support student needs in an equitable manner. The policies, procedures, and practices address issues in the areas of discipline, retention, suspension, and exclusion.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, there was little or no incidence of a system-wide policy for the retention of students. For example, there was no school committee policy on retention. However, there was secondary school policy on student retention due to a deficiency of academic credit to move from one grade to another. Discussions with district administrators revealed that students with special needs were able to earn their credit status as any regular education student, because of the interventions and supports that were available for these students. At the middle level, the grade-level team meetings played an essential role to ensure the success of students. The teams met daily to discuss a student's progress, coordinate activities or supports for a student, and to work with parents and other specialized personnel, such as Title I targeted assistance staff. Although the evidence presented was anecdotal, administrators revealed through discussion that the grade K-12 interventions provided an environment of personalization between the teacher and student and were integral to the success of students.

The administrators interviewed reported that programs at the elementary level, such as the after school tutorial program, homework clubs, and the Saturday school had an on-going

effect on students when entering the middle school grade levels. These elementary school-level programs were designed to reduce the achievement gap that existed for students who were considered at-risk in the basic skills of ELA and math.

5. The district has policies and programs in place to address the needs of transient or mobile students. These policies, and programs promote transient student involvement in high quality and challenging programs.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: District administrators offered longitudinal student data to the EQA team that revealed a consistently high level of stability in each recent graduating class. An examination of the data for the Class of 2004 indicated that 56% of the graduating class was students within the district since Kindergarten; 60% had been enrolled since Grade 1; 68% since Grade 3; and 83% since Grade 5.

6. The district has policies and practices that assign faculty to students and courses that maximize all faculty talents and skills and promote high levels of student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees at both the district and building levels indicated that the assignment pattern of teachers was equitable. A review of schedules indicated, for example, that the teacher assigned to the math MCAS test course, during semester one of 2003-2004 school year also taught other math and physics courses. This pattern also held true for other teachers as well.

Standard 7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING: The district has adopted and implemented a Professional Development Plan developed through the analyses of data for all administrators, teachers, and other professional staff, paraprofessionals and teacher assistants, and professional support teams.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- Between 2000-2003, although the school system maintained a professional development program, in its current form there was no systemic connection to the district improvement plan (DIP) or individual school improvement plans (SIPs).
- In the West Boylston Public Schools, the funding concern for professional development was reflective of other issues regarding funding for educational services within the district.
- For the period under examination, the professional development in the area of differentiated instruction was not sufficient to support the special education inclusion model at the classroom level.

Indicators:

1. The district ensures that every school in the district has identified its professional development needs. The district has developed and implemented a professional development plan to address these identified needs for all:
 - a. principals,
 - b. teachers, and
 - c. other professional staff, including paraprofessionals and teacher assistants.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: Interviewees and a review of the district's professional development plan indicated that the district's current professional development plan was not aligned with the initiatives identified in the district improvement plan (DIP). Initiatives in the current professional development plan were more likely to support individual needs or preferences rather than a need that was identified district-wide. The district's current plan offered some professional development for paraprofessionals and professional status teachers in student

restraint training and technology, but interviewees indicated that these offerings were selected to comply with special education regulations. The district was aware of the need for district-wide strategic planning and was engaged in long-range, strategic planning, goal-setting, and identifying critical issues. Part of the strategic planning included a model for professional development to sustain long-range planning and district initiatives.

2. The district updates its Professional Development Plan annually and sets forth a budget for professional development within the confines of the foundation budget.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the period under review, the West Boylston interviewees indicated that the district's professional development plan was reviewed and updated annually. Professional development committees consisting of principals and teachers across content areas and subgroups were in place at both levels; however, the committees did not meet as a group. For the years under review, 2000-2003, the district did not meet the required professional development spending in 2000, but it did meet the required professional development spending in 2001 and 2002. According to the superintendent, the district did not meet the required professional development spending in 2003. The district's School Choice funding was used to supplement what the school committee could not provide to meet professional development spending requirements under the requirements of the foundation budget. The DOE was informed of the district's problems meeting the expectations for funding professional development through the school committee budget and the necessity of using School Choice funding to meet the state's requirements.

3. The district's Professional Development program is informed by the following:
 - a. analysis of student assessment data disaggregated by student subgroup populations,
 - b. evaluation results of programs and services, and
 - c. evaluations of professional staff and administrators.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district’s largest educational subgroup was special education students, while there was a small subgroup of FRL/Y students. The district’s professional development program was based on the mission of the district to provide a sound education and to meet the needs of all students. In the past, the process of the development of the district’s professional development was informal and based on discussions and suggested areas of concentration for program development and academic needs. The analysis of student assessment by student subgroups was anecdotal rather than specifically data-driven. District-wide, interviewees indicated that some professional development was provided by a consultant in the area of differentiated instruction; however, the district acknowledged that there was an additional need for professional development in this area, specifically to support the special education inclusion model.

The district conducted no formal program evaluations with the exception of an internal evaluation of its special education program. This consisted of a review of Individual Educational Plan (IEP) data, and a survey of staff, students and parents that led to professional development in regulatory issues for teachers. Information from surveys prompted a review of the roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals, in order to provide them with professional development in support strategies.

Interviewees in the district indicated that under the former teachers’ contract (1996-2002), the district provided some training in Jon Saphier’s *Skillful Teacher*. However, this requirement was negotiated out of the current contract. Interviewees acknowledged that the current professional development plan was not aligned with needs identified through professional evaluations of staff and administrators.

4. The district’s Professional Development programs include training in the teaching of the curriculum frameworks, participatory decision-making, community and parental involvement, and other skills required for the effective implementation of education reform.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district provided no formal training in the state curriculum frameworks. However, the district was small, and most teachers were directly involved at some level in the development of the district's curriculum guide, which was aligned to the state curriculum frameworks. Principals provided training to Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) and the school councils relative to their rights and responsibilities under the Education Reform Act, regulatory issues, and consensus building. Principals also provided copies of previous school improvement plans to school councils

5. The district's Professional Development Plan and programs include: data analysis skills for staff, accommodations for diverse styles of learning, and are aligned with the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) report recommended that the district develop a process to evaluate its academics objectives. The current District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not identify suggestions for diverse learning styles and data analysis. Interviewees indicated that the district's current professional plan addressed initiatives more on a short term basis, and did not reflect any long-term implications for sustained improvement initiatives. All interviewees, however, reported the view that the current strategic planning process would yield a professional development plan that would be aligned to the district's strategic goals.

6. Administrators and Teachers advance their knowledge and skills on a regular basis by enrolling in courses that are directly related to their professional assignments.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviewees indicated that upon the approval of the superintendent, administrators and teachers had the opportunity to take professional seminars, workshops, conferences, and coursework related to their assignments. However, any connection to district and/or school improvement goals was not the result of a careful and deliberate planning process.

7. The district's Professional Development Plan is implemented to address and sustain the goals identified in the District Improvement Plan and individual School Improvement Plans.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Interviews with district officials revealed that the district's professional development plan was not aligned with the district improvement plan and/or the school improvement plans. However, the district was engaged in a long-range strategic planning process that included, among other things, the alignment of both plans and professional development to support long-range planning and/or improvement initiatives.

Domain C: Student Academic Support Services

| Standards ▼ | Indicators ► | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Domain C - Academic Support Services | | | | | | | | | | |
| S8 - Academic Support Services | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Excellent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 |
| | Satisfactory | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | N/A | 6 |
| | Poor | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 1 |
| | Unsatisfactory | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | N/A | 0 |

Standard 8. STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES: The district provides appropriate academic support services in ELA, math, and other core content areas for students that are not meeting state performance expectations. The district engages in a comprehensive analysis of the results from student performance assessments and student needs in order to determine the content and scope of academic support services that are offered.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) did not accurately reflect the district improvement plan (DIP) and the programs and services that the district delivered to students.
- For the period under examination, although the district leadership had guidance in determining the scope and sequence of programs and academic services, the planning was to accomplish short-term objectives and did not reflect any long-term and systemic influence.

Indicators:

1. The district has adopted and is implementing a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP), which may be a component of the District Improvement Plan (DIP), to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students’ needs in regular education.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district curriculum accommodation plan articulated a range of services that were available to students in regular education. It identified pre-referral strategies that were effective in decreasing the number of students referred to special education. Principals and

district administrators indicated that in a two-year period of time, the influence of pre-referral interventions and options on the reduction of referrals to special education decreased by approximately 50%. The DCAP suggested that a majority of teachers were “encouraged to complete Jon Saphier’s program of *Understanding Teaching*.” District administrators indicated that although teachers were provided with some professional development that focused on the use of differentiated instruction an internal review of the special education program indicated that, in general, the regular education teachers needed more professional development in incorporating differentiated instruction techniques into their daily curriculum and instruction.

2. The district has a DCAP that is designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in:
 - a. analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all students in the regular classroom, and
 - b. providing appropriate services and support within the regular education program.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: Interviewees indicated that principals were “intuitively aware” of the needs within their respective schools and the services that their students needed. Due to the lack of a DCAP prior to 2002, the district teachers were not provided with the guidance to make connections between the services that were available and the diverse needs of students. Through further discussions with the EQA team it was found that prior to 2002 the supports and services that the district had available to students with special needs were never viewed as being available to regular education students.

3. Components of the DCAP include the following:
 - a. direct and systematic instruction in reading;
 - b. provision of services to address the needs of students whose behavior may interfere with learning;
 - c. provisions encouraging teacher mentoring and collaboration and parental involvement; and
 - d. assistance to classroom teachers, such as professional development, to help them analyze and accommodate the needs of students.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Since the development of the district's first DCAP (2002-2003), the plan identified services to assist students who were at-risk either academically or behaviorally. It also was designed in a general way to serve students with health and wellness services. Although the components of systemic instruction in reading, provisioning for behavior modification to prevent interference with learning, provisioning a mentoring program with expectations to deal with the curriculum and instructional objectives related to teachers' assigned positions, and a professional development plan that provided adequate support were not systemically connected, they existed. However, administrators viewed them as stand alone programs and/or supports.

4. The district engages in a formal, comprehensive analysis of the results from student performance assessments and student needs to determine the content and scope of academic support services that are offered.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Although the DCAP assisted administrators and teachers in the implementation of curriculum and instruction, it was a stand-alone document that did not have a clear foundation regarding its fit within the educational structure of the system. Interviewees indicated the belief that the current strategic goal planning process would provide the guidance for the future direction of the district. Missing from the process before was data that supported strategic goals. In 2003, however, the current superintendent made it clear that

even though he respected the “intuition” of principals, the expectation was that the underpinnings of future decisions would be student assessment data. The Mid-Cycle Adequate Yearly Progress Report for 2003 cited that the district in the aggregate met both its performance and improvement targets in ELA and math.

5. Beginning at the Kindergarten level, the district uses data available from classroom teachers and standardized tests to*:
 - a. identify all students who are not meeting grade-level performance expectations; and
 - b. provide these students with sufficient supplementary and/or remedial services.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: During the period under review, the district administered a variety of assessments in determining the readiness and grade level expectations of students who were to transition from Kindergarten to Grade 1. These assessments were designed to translate the anecdotal understandings that teachers developed of students’ abilities in Kindergarten to an initial placement in reading and math at Grade 1. As the child began his/her experience in Grade 1, further observations and assessments occurred that allowed for regrouping at a later time within his/her grade. Supplementary and remedial services were available through Title I that supported the ability of early childhood teachers to develop transition plans for individual students.

6. Early intervention reading programs are provided at the primary level to ensure that by the end of Grade 3 students are reading at the Proficiency level on the MCAS test. *

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district’s reading program consisted of the following components: phonemic awareness in grades PreK-2 that concentrated on the technical aspects of sounds and cues in reading; a more formal phonics program; the Harcourt series as a basal reader in grades PreK-3, and workbooks and trade books. There was software to support this series, but interviewees indicated that this was an “untapped resource,” because more training was needed to use the software more effectively.

The district implemented the Rebecca Sitton spelling program that focused on the recognition of high frequency words. In Grade 1, the Reading Recovery program required a running record of student progress, and was coded to analyze question-by-question and word-by-word areas of student difficulty.

In grades 2-5, the district implemented a standardized reading program. Further, there was a Saturday school program designed to re-teach basic reading foundational skills in grades 1-5. The program had 50 students currently in attendance. These classes ran from January through April. There was also a homework club, and remedial reading was available in the after school program from October through spring.

The *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading* (Riverside Publishing Company) was a silent reading comprehension subtest used with all Grade 6 students and students who were new to the district. When further assessment was warranted, subtests of the assessments were administered in a one-to-one setting with individual students. The STAR math test, a computer generated test, was expected to be in use at the end of 2003-2004 as a retest.

7. The district develops Student Success Plans for all students who qualify for them, and the Plans contain the components required by statute.

*These indicators are not applicable to secondary and vocational schools and districts.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district had a student success plan which was submitted to the DOE in 2000-2001. The DOE responded that the plan addressed all of the required components. A review of sample Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) identified the concerns, services, and strategies as to how to address student needs. At the middle level, ISSPs were designed to track remediation over a three-year span. All of the measures indicated in the state curriculum frameworks were listed in the plan and used as the basic criteria for tracking.

Domain D: Leadership and Governance

| Standards ▼ | Indicators ► | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Total |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Domain D - Leadership, Governance, & Organization | | | | | | | | | | |
| S9 - Organizational Leadership: Direction, Goal Setting, Policies & Planning | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Excellent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Satisfactory | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| | Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Unsatisfactory | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| S10 - Organizational & Human Resource Management | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Excellent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Satisfactory | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| | Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Unsatisfactory | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Standard 9. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP: DIRECTION, GOAL SETTING, POLICIES AND PLANNING: The district and each of its schools and programs implement improvement plans that are based on the analysis of recent and long-range student performance data. The district provides and maintains thorough, complete, and informative documentation on past and current initiatives, practices, policies, procedures, and achievements of the district and its students. District leaders provide clear direction for student, school, and district performance. Implementation of improvement plans is consistently assessed and modified based on ongoing analyses of student achievement data.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, the lack of available revenue negatively impacted the district’s decision-making in relation to implementing its strategic goals.
- In the latter years under examination, the district was engaged in a long-range, strategic planning process to align its strategic plan, school improvement plans, professional development, and future curriculum initiatives.

Indicators:

1. The district provides and maintains thorough, complete, and informative documentation on past and current initiatives, practices, policies, procedures, and achievements of the district and its students. This documentation is accessible and well organized.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The West Boylston School Committee maintained a policy (Policy #AD/E) that established a clear direction for the school system. It stated that the primary purpose of the district was public education and defined the type of environment in which learning should occur. In particular, the school committee articulated that its school district would be an environment which would challenge and motivate each individual student towards academic progress that was compatible with his/her abilities, needs, desires, and potential. Although the district leadership's past practice focused on short-term goals, the district leadership was in the process of establishing long-range strategic goals that were identified through the use of data and were results oriented. In 2003, an eighteen-member task force, composed of professional staff and community members, was established to restate the strategic goals of the district into specific outcomes and measurable terms. Separate interviews with the superintendent of schools and the principals of the elementary and middle/high schools revealed that a focus of the future direction of public school education in the Town of West Boylston was evolving from the strategic planning process.

2. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) incorporates the district's vision and mission statement, and the analysis of student achievement data drives the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs, services, and practices.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Although it was an interim plan, the district improvement plan stated the goals that the district leadership used to provide guidance to staff. Interviewees all indicated that a major goal was the alignment of curriculum, instructional programs and assessments activities that would enable students to achieve the knowledge, skills and level of proficiency in the Massachusetts state curriculum frameworks. The plan also focused on using multiple measures beyond the state assessments. Writing prompts in ELA and locally developed

measures to supplement standardized testing programs, as well as standardized testing measures were used to shape the strategic goals. It also provided the basic format for principals and school councils to use in the development of school improvement plans. Although it clearly emphasized the need for highly qualified teachers as defined by *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, it placed a comparable emphasis on providing all paraprofessionals in the district with the necessary support to meet the level expectation required under the *NCLB Act*.

Parent and school council input were reflected, especially with regard to the concern expressed for the maintenance of safe schools. Underlining the basic premise of the strategic goals was the school committee's policy that acknowledged the district's responsibility to provide a public school education for all children. The goal of the current plan reflected the longitudinal approach of the district where the elementary and middle/high school were functioning effectively but separately.

3. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) for every school is aligned with the district's mission statement, and the analysis of student achievement data drives the development, implementation, and modification of educational programs, services, and practices.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The school improvement plans (SIPs) followed the format established by the district improvement plan. The school committee maintained a policy (# BCF) that defined the components of a school improvement plan as follows: class size and its impact on student performance, professional development, enhancement of parental involvement, school safety and discipline, school climate, extra curricular activities, and other areas determined by the principal in consultation with the council. Although the format was consistent, neither the middle/high school nor the elementary school improvement plans reviewed by the examiners reflected in their entirety the components articulated by school committee policy. The district leadership concurred that the current strategic planning process was expected to include the longitudinal approach that was implicit in the school committee policy. It was clear that the current plan reflected short-term objectives, expectations for higher students achievement in

mathematics, peer-to-peer respect, and student acceptable behavior. There was evidence, especially at the elementary level, that the student performance levels in math shaped the modification of curriculum and instruction in the classroom.

4. District leaders monitor student achievement data throughout the year, considering the goals identified in the DIP and individual SIPs and implements programs, policies, and services that are most likely to result in improved student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district's leadership reported that multiple sources of data should be considered in order for the strategic goals to be representative of the district and not simply an individual school. During the latter part of the period under review, the district was becoming more and more engaged in the process of developing strategic goals that had pervasive influence throughout the district and were shaped by the analysis of data.

5. All of the district's administrators are appropriately certified.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district had five administrators: a superintendent of schools, three building-level principals, an assistant principal, and a director of special education, all of whom were certified. The district had the position of coordinator of administrative services/business manager (as per the individual's contract). However, the person in that position was not a certified school business administrator. The superintendent of schools assumed the responsibilities normally associated with this position. The financial coordinator had responsibilities that ordinarily would have been held by a school business administrator, but the position did not fall within the district's definition of an administrative position.

6. The leadership reports annually to the school committee, staff, and community concerning the extent to which the implementation of the DIP and SIPs have or have not resulted in improved student achievement.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The superintendent of schools periodically reported to the school committee regarding time-sensitive information. In addition to the normal business conducted by the school committee, the superintendent of schools focused a portion of the agenda on a current issue or topic. For example, the committee discussed the 2003 Adequate Yearly Progress Mid-Cycle Report in the fall, followed by individual school reports by principals, and preliminary information discussion on enrollment projections and School Choice projections in October, 2003 (reviewed the school committee minutes of October 15, 2003), prior to the start of budget preparation for the next fiscal year. An examination of other school committee minutes and handouts, along with a focus interview with school committee representatives, confirmed this mode of communication.

7. The superintendent is evaluated annually on the district's state assessment results and implementation of the DIP. This performance evaluation serves as the basis for improving the future job performance of the superintendent.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: An examination of the school committee minutes of August 27, 2003 and September 10, 2003, revealed the process that was used by the school committee in establishing their targets as required by a school committee policy (Policy# AFB/CBG), which guided the district within a given school year. The targets were annually assessed and modified. The targets for 2003-2004 aligned with the district improvement plan, as well as with objectives specific to the interaction between the school committee, the schools, and Town officials.

The superintendent of schools submitted district goals that were consistent with the direction established by the school committee. However, the superintendent's goals were more focused

with defined outcomes and were aligned with the district improvement plan. Once approved by the school committee, these goals became the basis of the superintendent of schools bi-annual performance review. By policy, the evaluation of the superintendent of schools contained the following: a job description, leadership qualities, managerial style, and client evaluation. An examination of the leadership targets for the superintendent of schools revealed a clear connection with the leadership targets for the other five members of the leadership team.

8. Principals are evaluated annually on school state assessment results and the implementation of their respective SIPs. These performance evaluations serve as the basis for improving future job performance of the principals.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In a similar manner to the school committee, the superintendent of schools held the principals accountable for implementing the objectives in the individual school improvement plan, that were aligned with the district improvement plan and the targets that the school committee set. The superintendent of schools further identified the objectives that were specific to the respective schools with the principals.

Standard 10. ORGANIZATIONAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: The district has organizational structures, policies, collective bargaining agreements, procedures, and practices with clear lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability. Teacher retention/turnover rates are within reason. Together, these elements promote efficient and effective district operation and facilitate achievement for all students.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- Between 2000-2003, the West Boylston Public Schools was characterized by an organizational structure that encouraged open communication among its faculty and staff with the common purpose of providing efficient and effective instruction for all its students.

Indicators:

1. The superintendent, in regular meetings with administrators and members of the school committee, develops a coherent vision or mission statement and DIP designed to achieve it.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Although interviewees indicated that a number of informal meetings occurred as often as necessary, the superintendent of schools met formally (once per week) with the district's leadership team. That team was composed of the two building principals, the assistant principal at the middle/high school, the director of special education, and the coordinator of administrative services. An agenda, into which administrators had in put, was prepared for each meeting. The district leadership team was expected to deliver a report at each school committee meeting, which were publicly televised on local cable. The superintendent of schools reviewed the school committee agendas with the district leadership team to ensure that topics were properly presented. Although members of the leadership team may have addressed other topics of a more generic nature, they were expected to present on topics such as student performance, enrollments, class size, and facilities. A review of several minutes of the school committee minutes revealed an open discussion of a variety of items that reflected a good exchange of comments between the leadership team and the school committee.

2. The superintendent effectively delegates the educational and operational management of the schools to the building principals and program directors.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The superintendent of schools indicated that he held the district's principals in high regard and had confidence in their professionalism. The principals were expected to have clear understandings of the objectives discussed with the superintendent of schools prior to communicating those understandings to teachers, parents, or member of their respective school councils. The superintendent of schools was not concerned with the principals having autonomy in their positions, as long as their objectives were consistent with the district's strategic goals. The superintendent of schools further indicated that he did not consider

disagreement unhealthy, as long as it was open for discussion and parties were focused on a solution to a common problem.

3. The district leaders ensure that:
 - a. all principals are aware of and understand published policies and district improvement plans; and
 - b. the district uses system-wide and intra-district communication systems to keep all faculty and staff well informed and to provide avenues for response.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The superintendent of schools established a working environment that maintained a balance between change brought about by a necessary dictate of the district policy-making team and fostering an environment of open discussion among other members of the leadership team. Interviews with the members of the leadership team indicated that the current superintendent's practice of cultivating open discussions created a comfortable, professional environment for school and building personnel that resulted in the staff's view that the superintendent was approachable and valued their input.

4. The district publishes a current organizational chart that indicates clear lines of responsibility. Job descriptions for all personnel on the organizational chart are current, published and available to all faculty and staff.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In the West Boylston Public Schools, the organizational chart for the district was clear. The lines of responsibility were clearly directed to an immediate supervisor, with the superintendent of schools having the ultimate authority over the operation of the school district under the direction mandated by the policies of the school committee.

5. The district has a process for the recruitment and hiring of staff that involves appropriate administrative and staff participation. The process is perceived as fair and open and focuses on identifying and acquiring the most qualified individuals for each position.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the superintendent of schools, in conjunction with the district leadership team, established the personnel needs for the district. Once the school committee approved the funding of these needs, the principals and the director of special education (when appropriate) played a major role in the recruitment and hiring of personnel. Interviewees in the district indicated that the superintendent of schools valued the opinions of the principals and the director of special education in interviewing and hiring highly qualified personnel to fill vacant positions. The superintendent of schools interviewed the final candidate(s) before any contracts were issued. If there were any concerns, the superintendent of schools followed up in discussion with the appropriate administrator for resolution before a final decision was made on a candidate. The school committee maintained a policy (#GCD) that set expectations that the district would hire highly qualified staff with the required preparation and experience, based on broad base screening of candidates and in compliance with Title IX and Section 504.

6. The district ensures that all personnel records are carefully compiled, maintained, and available to all appropriate faculty and staff.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: As stated earlier, the teachers were evaluated on a four-year cycle with different evaluation instruments used in each year, (a written component in every second year) the end result was a “Composite Profile.” Based on a review of 22 staff “Composite Profiles,” 19 were timely, one was a new hire for the 2003-2004 school year, one was a secretary, and one was a guidance counselor. The evaluator and evaluatee signed all of the evaluations, and the “West Boylston Teacher Performance Standard Form,” a document used in the evaluation process, was modeled after the *Principles of Effective Teaching*.

7. The district actively undertakes efforts to provide teachers new to the district and to the profession with coaches and mentors in their respective roles.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The DCAP stated that new teachers would participate in a mentoring program. Mentors were trained within the district and compensated with a stipend. Their mentoring program was modeled after the DOE-proposed mentoring program. The West Boylston mentoring program was established and implemented in 2000.

8. The district routinely recognizes the accomplishments of its professional and support staff and has low rates of employee turnover, especially among qualified staff with professional status.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the time under review, the district did not experience a high rate of staff turnover. Salary levels were not commensurate and as competitive as they were in neighboring communities. However, interviewees reported that the teachers who remained indicated to district leadership that the small, personalized community and collegiality were reasons for teachers wanting to stay in the West Boylston Public Schools. As reported by the district leadership, the elementary level had the most veteran staff, and the secondary level had a combination of veteran and younger staff members. The greatest rate of staff turnover was at the middle level, which also had younger and newer staff members. Although a survey form was available for principals to use to survey teachers leaving the district, the district did not collect data to explain the trends at specific levels.

Domain E: Business and Financial Management

| Standards ▼ | Indicators ► | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Total |
|--|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| <i>Domain E - Business & Financial Management</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S11 - Budget Planning & Development | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Poor | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| S12 - Financial & Capital Asset Management | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Excellent | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Satisfactory | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Poor | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Unsatisfactory | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

West Boylston’s Chapter 70 Funding and Net School Spending FY1993 to FY2003: For the 11-year period since the Massachusetts Education Reform Act, FY1993 to FY2003, West Boylston met the state mandated Net School Spending Requirement. For the period between FY1993 and FY2003, Chapter 70 Aid to West Boylston increased 308.5% (from \$666,683 to \$2,723,155). West Boylston’s Required Local Contribution increased 38.7% (from \$3,312,016 to \$4,593,776). However, West Boylston’s Actual Local Contribution to meet the Net School Spending Requirement for the same time period increased 120.9% (from \$3,312,016 to \$7,316,931). For the period since the Education Reform Act, West Boylston received a total of \$16,192,264 in Chapter 70 Aid and was required to raise locally \$43,532,518. From 2000 to 2003, Chapter 70 Aid was \$10,071,647 and the Required Local Contribution was \$17,145,011. For the period between FY1993 and FY2003, West Boylston’s foundation enrollment increased 36.3% and its student headcount increased 29.7%. Between FY2000 and FY2003, its foundation enrollment increased 1.7% and its student headcount decreased 0.4%.

Standard 11. BUDGET PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT: The district has a budget preparation and development process that ensures full consideration and effective use of available resources essential for district and school operations focused on student achievement. The school committee, superintendent, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and members of the community meet their responsibility to ensure that the school budget and appropriation meet the educational and achievement needs of all students.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- During the period under examination, approximately 50% of all the land in the Town of West Boylston was tax-exempt, which significantly limited its local tax base.
- In West Boylston, given the limited funding sources available from the Town, the district's School Choice funds became an integral part of the operating budget for the school district.
- Between 2000-2003, in West Boylston, there was no systematic analysis of student achievement data during the budget process.
- In the district, an analysis of the cost effectiveness of programs was used to determine the usefulness of programs.
- For the years under review, the Town consistently exceeded the state's Net School Spending (NSS) requirement.

Indicators:

1. There are clear, well-documented procedures for the development of the district's budget to ensure input from all staff.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In West Boylston, the budget development process began each year in November. The superintendent met with the building administrator to discuss budget parameters. The principals discussed programs and school needs with the teachers and custodial staff to develop their proposed budgets. These budget requests were presented to the district leadership team along with other new programs proposed by individual district-level administrators. The leadership team developed the proposed budget after analyzing these new programs and any and all existing programs within the district.

A review of the budget documentation indicated that the budget document itself was well organized. For example, it had supporting documents and details regarding personnel

expenses, including longevity, stipends, and coaching salaries. In the details of the budget, there was a section available for comments regarding individual salary and operational expense accounts. The budget document also stated educational goals that served to focus the document, as well as documented specific changes from previous years.

2. Relevant budget decisions are premised on a clear, well-documented, systemic analysis of student performance data as well as other pertinent information.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: The district administration made their budget decisions with the overarching goal of “maintaining the quality of our educational program.” To accomplish this, the budget decisions in West Boylston focused on: 1) maintaining class size, 2) offering a wide-range of programs including advanced placement classes, 3) aligning curriculum with the state frameworks, 4) providing support programs to address the MCAS test, 5) meeting the learning needs of their students, and 6) maintaining the non-academic learning opportunities, including athletics, clubs, and after-school programs.

The budget document addressed the goal of maintaining the quality of educational programs. The pursuit of this district goal was supported in the minutes of the school committee meetings that documented discussions that were held with the superintendent of schools on the budget. Despite these goals and discussions, there was no systematic analysis of student performance data used to support budget requests.

3. The district’s budget process is clear and well-documented and integrates district and school improvement plans, long-term goals, and action plans.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The school committee maintained a policy that defined the process and the timeline for budget development. The timeline allowed for dialogue within the district between the school committee, the superintendent of school, central office staff and with municipal officials. The budget document did not clearly reference school improvement plans, and the minutes did not reflect the school committee referencing any long-term goals.

Interviewees indicated that this latter area was a motivating factor for the district's current initiative with strategic planning process. The FY2004 budget document cited five budget goals: maintenance of quality education (and stated criteria to be used as indicators), new programs, professional development, maintenance of facilities, and strategies to attract and retain high quality staff.

4. The district allocates its resources to accomplish targeted initiatives and objectives at the district and school levels to improve student achievement for all student populations.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: There was evidence within the budget documentation that the school committee allocated its resources to accomplish targeted initiatives and objectives. For example, the district used the School Choice funds it received to fund a counselor position to deal with the therapeutic needs of students. The district also pursued grants, including private grants, to address initiatives both at specific buildings and district-wide. The district's coordinator of administrative services communicated with the district leadership every two weeks regarding the availability of grants.

5. The district, as part of its budget process, implements a review process to determine the cost effectiveness of all of its programs, initiatives, and activities.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: There was evidence in the school committee minutes that the school committee reviewed the cost effectiveness of programs and activities. For example, the school committee's budget subcommittee, at their January 29, 2003, meeting, directed the superintendent to review the tuition costs to the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical School, as compared with other vocational-technical programs. In addition to this review, at their February 21, 2003, meeting, the superintendent presented the budget subcommittee with a recommendation to increase the athletic user fee to \$120.00 per sport to replace the \$60.00 athletic transportation fee. Ultimately, the school committee adopted this recommendation, as it was perceived to be a more equitable means to supplement the budget.

At the time of the on-site review, the special education department began to examine the out-of-district tuition placements to determine if any programs could be developed within the district, specifically for children with autism. In FY2004, the district became a member of the FLLAC Educational Collaborative, a regional alliance of schools with the goal of obtaining services through collaborative purchasing.

6. The district's budget document is clear, complete, current, and understandable and provides accurate information on all fund sources as well as previous history and trends.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: In West Boylston, the budget document was well organized. The supporting details were provided regarding personnel expenses, including longevity, stipends, and coaching salaries. In the details of the budget, there was a section available for comments in individual salary and operational expense accounts. The document also stated the educational goals that were points of focus within the district. It also identified specific changes from the previous fiscal years. The budget document presented the appropriations for the previous fiscal year, the request of the superintendent for the current fiscal year, and the school committee's approved appropriation to recommend to the Town Meeting for the current fiscal year. The supporting comments were clear, and the supplemental information provided any necessary history and trends.

7. The budget and district's expenditures are adequate to provide for appropriate levels of staffing, professional development, materials, supplies, and equipment.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The criteria used as indicators to determine the quality of programs were stated in the document and were as follows: 1) class size, 2) course offerings, 3) alignment of curriculum to state frameworks, 4) academic remedial support for the MCAS test, 5) meeting the needs of diversity for special education students, and 6) extra-curricular activity. The superintendent, at a public meeting with the board of selectmen and the finance committee, indicated that the budget reflected the educational needs of a quality program. The budget requests reflected the personnel and operational supplies, materials, and facilities to maintain

quality programs, but it did not lose sight of the availability of funding. Given this premise established by the superintendent and the school committee, the budget request reflected appropriate levels of staffing, professional development, materials and supplies, and equipment. In the budget deliberations, the professional development account was reduced from \$50,000 to \$25,000. The School Choice funds were used to make up as much of the difference as possible. School Choice resources also funded all of the operational expenses for maintenance and utilities, excluding water bills.

8. The community provides sufficient financial resources to ensure an educational program of quality, as evidenced by a sufficient district revenue levy.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: An analysis of the Town’s funding sources revealed that the Town of West Boylston had approximately 49% of its land classified as tax exempt. The school department provided the following chart of West Boylston’s tax-exempt properties:

| OWNERSHIP: | ACREAGE: |
|---|-----------------|
| DCR-Land | 2,751.50 |
| Wachusett Reservoir (GIS Estimate) | 579.60 |
| I-190 (GIS Estimate) | 237.90 |
| County and State | 389.40 |
| Churches and Charitable Organizations | 109.70 |
| Railroads | 68.40 |
| Municipal | 214.30 |
| TOTAL: | 4,350.80 |
| Area of W. Boylston (Mass GIS) | 8,836.40 |
| Tax Exempt Land (Exclusive of Agricultural Land) | 49.20% |

The lack of taxable property in the town has resulted in the school district’s reliance of the School Choice funds as a significant funding source for education. Discussions with municipal and school officials indicated that there was an evolving relationship between the available tax base and the amount of funding to be used to support programs and services

within the community. This created a major focus on the sources of funding rather than a focus on the integrity of town-wide funding requests, including the schools.

Despite the lack of available funding sources for education, the community appeared to support the education programs within the district. The school committee budget exceeded the Net School Spending (NSS) requirement for the years under review, exclusive of indirect costs. Given the criteria for quality of educational programs, the per-pupil expenditure for regular day students for FY2003 was \$6,400, and for special education students approximately \$13,000 as reported on the district’s End of Year Pupil and Financial Report. In both situations, it was below the state’s averages. For the years under review, the budget was approved by the community on the premise that the amount of money that followed students into the district through School Choice was allocated accordingly, regardless of category (School Choice was used to fund personnel, as well as utilities). In FY2003, the district brought in approximately \$457,000 in School Choice funds. An examination of the budget development process revealed that in the district School Choice funds had a long-standing association as an auxiliary funding source. Further, these funds were integrated into the financial plan and were allocated to cover reoccurring costs. A comparison of local appropriations needed to fund all programs with the use of School Choice funds as an allocated funding source revealed the following:

| FY2001 Budget | FY2001 Choice | FY2002 Budget | FY2002 Choice | FY2003 Budget | FY2003 Choice |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$6,946,221 | \$330,554 | \$7,640,850 | \$422,015 | \$7,940,850 | \$401,026 |
| %Choice of total Budget | 4.5% | | 5.23% | | 4.8% |

Analysis of the FY2004 budget revealed that School Choice funds were 5.8% of the total funds used for education in West Boylston. The previous year’s School Choice funds were used for operating expenses. In the current fiscal year, it was used for operating expenses and salaries. Another example was the increase in health insurance for the Town, including the school department, was approximately 50% for FY2004. This was significant because the increase in dollars exceeded the amount that was raised through the tax levy.

The district lost approximately \$53,000 from students who left the district for School Choice purposes. The school committee and district leadership employed practices to maintain the number of School Choice students entering grades K-5.

The district obtained approximately \$27,600 of Medicare funds for FY2003. This was the first year that the district solicited these funds. The Medicare funds receipts remained in the Town as a general fund receipt. The district also received funds from two private endowments for specific items, such as computers and equipment for the art/theater department.

9. Financial and audit reports are prepared and submitted in a timely manner to appropriate agencies.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: For the years under review, the Town of West Boylston contracted with Melanson, Heath, and Company as independent accountants to audit the application of DOE compliance steps to the End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Reports. These reports were submitted to the state in a timely manner. In the findings of the audit reports for fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002, the auditors cited that there was a need to have a written document that defined the allocation methods of school expenses paid by the Town. There was no evidence that the Town and the school department addressed this finding. For the same fiscal years, there were several findings to variances in reconciliation between the Town's general ledger and the school department's records. The auditors consistently cited that these variances made it difficult to test the accuracy of the allocations. The reports showed no evidence that the Town Accountant or the school department had moved towards any corrective action steps until the FY2003 audit.

10. Decisions resulting in changes in budget appropriations are made based on the analysis of student data to maximize the opportunities for the achievement of all students.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: There was no evidence in the minutes of the school committee meetings, budget subcommittee, joint meetings with the selectmen and the finance committee budget, or within the current budget document itself that changes were made based on the analysis of student data. Likewise, there was no indication in the same sources that the criteria for the quality of educational programs were incorporated into the budget document.

Standard 12. FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT: The district maintains adequate accounting and financial reporting procedures. This is done to: inform district-level and school-level decision-makers; to ensure effective and efficient managerial control over the use of all funds; to acquire and efficiently manage supplemental funding; and to promote student achievement and accountability to the public. The condition, management, and maintenance of facilities encourage public support for education and are conducive to promoting high levels of student achievement.

Preliminary Finding(s):

- In West Boylston, the large student populations at both the elementary level and the middle/senior high school level in conjunction with the reliance on School Choice funds as an integral source of funding placed additional constraints on the adequate and effective use of instructional space.
- For the years under review, in the district, there was no evidence that the findings of the independent financial audits were addressed.

Indicators:

1. School committee policies and administrative procedures are clear regarding the processes and expectations for expenditures, transfers, and investment of funds with the district's budget and the expenditure of any district funds.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: School committee's policy (DB) defined the procedures of developing the annual budget. It also established the timeline for budget development. Policy (DBK) described line-item transfer authority for the district. The school committee gave the transfer authority to the superintendent within the budget codes. Only when a transfer had to occur between accounts set up by the Town Accountant did they require school committee approval. For the years under review, the school committee budget was only one line item. Therefore, the school committee practiced bottom-line authority regarding transfers. Policy (DFE) described how the district would handle gate receipts and admissions. Policy (DIF) was the policy for student activity accounts. This policy was consistent with Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 71, Section 47. Policy (DJC) was the district's procurement policy under the requirements set by MGL Chapter 30B. Policy (DJF) described the purchasing procedures. Policy (DN) described the disposal of school properties.

2. Regular, timely, accurate, and complete financial reports are made to the school committee and the public.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The accounting system produced financial reports for the school committee, and those were made available to the public at school committee meetings. Principals and school building administrators received monthly reports as well. Several line items presented had deficit balances, yet the overall budget was not operating in a deficit.

3. Required local, state, and federal financial reports and statements are filed in a timely and accurate manner.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The compliance reviews of the End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Reports were completed in a timely manner. For FY2003, the End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Report was filed by December 1, 2003. This was not by the October 1, 2003, required deadline, but it was before the extension granted by the DOE.

4. The district uses efficient accounting technology that integrates district-level financial information with the financial information of each school, and allows financial managers and principals to accurately track spending against the budget on a regular basis.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The West Boylston Public Schools used *Fundware* for the accounting technology. The district upgraded to *Intuit American Fundware*. This program was the same program used by the Town's finance department. The business office and the Town finance department were not connected until FY2004.

5. The district reviews student achievement data and the reviews are reflected in its financial decisions.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: There was no evidence in the district's documentation of the use of student assessment data in the use of financial decision-making. As stated previously, the criteria used for financial decision-making was to maintain a measure of quality in educational programs.

6. The district regularly employs:
 - a. certified business officials,
 - b. purchasing agents with MCPPO credentials,
 - c. appropriate independent financial auditing services and implements their recommendations to ensure efficient and quality financial systems.
 - d. Objective and independent treasurers and auditor.*

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: Within the school department's organizational chart were the positions of business manager/coordinator of administrative services and a financial coordinator. At the time of the on-site review, the persons in those positions were not certified. The coordinator of administrative services was in the process of completing certification as a school business administrator. Data from the DOE indicated that there was not a certified school business administrator. Purchasing was handled by the coordinator of administrative services who was not a MCPPO certified official. The school department followed MGL Chapter 30B regarding all purchases. The district hired auditing firm of Melanson, Heath, and Company as the independent auditing firm hired by the district to review its End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Report. The findings in these reports for the years under review were prominent due to the turnover in the business office and the Town Accountant's Office. The Town Accountant's Office hired a consulting firm in December 2003 to manage the Town's financial operations. Based on interviews with the consultant, the school department made significant improvements in addressing the findings in these reports.

7. The district uses reliable forecast mechanisms and control procedures to ensure that spending is within fiscal budget limits.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: Based on interviews with the central office administrators, the district forecasted payroll expenses for the entire school year for each year under review. This was reviewed on a regular basis regarding changes due to maternity leaves, changes in personnel, and other related issues. The coordinator of administrative services and the business manager projected the use of fuel in the district based on use in the prior years. In FY2003, the Edwards Elementary School over-expended its budget by \$119,857. The major components of this deficit were professional salaries, substitutes salaries, utilities, and technology. The auditors cited in their report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2000, that the school department established a methodology for allocating expenditures to grade levels that accurately reflected the cost associated with the various grade levels and programs. In the same report, the auditors recommended that the school department change reporting procedures to ensure accuracy of substitute salary expenditures. For the years under review, the auditors found

inconsistencies in reporting revenues and expenditures. These inconsistencies interfered with the auditor's ability to verify the accuracy of the data.

8. The district has a system in place to:
 - a. ensure that that state bidding laws are followed;
 - b. monitor special revenue funds, revolving accounts, and fee structures related to them to ensure that they are well-managed and efficiently used;
 - c. monitor and track instructional assets such as texts, materials, supplies, and equipment to ensure efficient and maximum utilization; and
 - d. track its assets in accordance with GASB No.34.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The school committee maintained two policies governing the bidding requirements and the purchasing procedures (DJC and DJF). The coordinator of administrative services was responsible for all bidding and procurement for the district. The central office monitored the special revenue funds and revolving accounts. For example, the district operated and maintained its own school lunch service. This program was self-supporting for the years under review. The assets of the district were monitored and catalogued to ensure that they were utilized effectively. For example, the high school's technology program was incorporated into a computer repair segment to be used as a repair and maintenance operation for the district's technology resource. The district implemented the GASB No. 34 requirements internally, while the district was waiting for the Town to complete the implementation.

9. The district implements preventive maintenance programs for buildings and equipment that are reviewed on a regular basis and are related to the district's long-term capital needs.

EQA Rating: Satisfactory

Evidence: The district had a maintenance plan for each year under review that contained the following components: 1) Annual Reviews (completed each summer to address any and all facility-related needs); 2) Periodic Reviews (completed monthly from September to June by the principals (or a designee) to conduct health and safety inspections in accordance with

school committee policy (EB)); 3) Areas Requiring Daily Attention (details the daily duties to be completed by the custodial staff). For example, cleaning outside entrances, cleaning and sanitizing bathrooms and shower areas, floors, carpets, and windows; 4) Areas Requiring Frequent Attention (detailed the weekly, semi-annual, quarterly, and yearly basis maintenance areas); and 5) Areas Requiring Periodic Attention (detailed the maintenance issues that are done on an as needed basis).

10. Educational and program facilities are of adequate size, clean, safe, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to promoting the learning process.

* This portion of indicator 12-6 is applied to regional academic and vocational school districts.

EQA Rating: Poor

Evidence: The West Boylston Middle/Senior High School was constructed in 1956, and its most recent renovation was in 1997. This renovation brought the capacity to 655 students within 102,425 square feet of space. The Edwards Elementary School was constructed in two phases, one in 1937 and a second phase in 1954. The most recent renovation was done in 1995. This recent renovation brought the capacity of the building to 492 students within 60,125 square feet. The West Boylston Middle/Senior High School had one full-time custodian during regular school hours and two full-time custodians for after school hours. Based on a walkthrough of the building, the size of the classrooms was adequate. However, the occupancy rate for the use of classrooms at both levels was high. Therefore, it was difficult to find appropriate instructional space. It was observed that at both levels that the instructional spaces used for special education were not adequate for the level of instructional expectations for those students. There was evidence at the high school demonstrating that classroom spaces had been converted to science laboratories. This conversion limited the type of instructional activities that could be integrated into the delivery of the curriculum.

The building hallways and classrooms were well lit. The storage of educational supplies was an issue in the district. The main issue at the middle/senior high school was the school's roof. A rubberized roof was in need of repair. When there was snow and/or rain, it leaked throughout the building. The roof had been a problem since the last renovation of the building. It was supposed to be addressed in the current renovation cycle, but it had been

deferred due to lack of funding. In October 2003, Haynes, Lieneck and Smith Incorporated, an architectural firm, issued a report regarding the roof issues. It detailed the issues of deterioration, brittleness, and shrinkage on various sections of the roof. The plan of the school system was to address this report with support from the Town. During a walkthrough of the Edwards Elementary School, it was perceived to be in good shape. The district was utilizing the space as efficiently as possible. Some painting was needed in this building. The older section of the building appeared to be at capacity regarding the usage of educational space. The long-range maintenance plan for the school district was influenced by the availability of funding in any given year. When a priority was placed on maintenance, there was a cause and effect relationship in other areas of the operating budget.

Appendix A: Proficiency Index

The Proficiency Index is a metric used to measure and compare all schools and school districts regarding their performance on each of the MCAS tests. There are three indices: The Average Proficiency Index (API), the English Language Arts Proficiency Index (EPI) and the Math Proficiency Index (MPI). The index is developed as follows:

The Proficiency Index is a measure of the level of achievement a district, school, grade, or subgroup has made in relation to the proficiency achievement level on the annual MCAS test. The Proficiency Index is calculated as follows:

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

The Proficiency Index (PI) equals the sum of $A + B + C + D + E = PI$

Example: The Governor Ambrose High School had the following results for the 2001 MCAS test:

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

The Proficiency Index is calculated by adding: $0 + 3.75 + 10.5 + 25.5 + 18 = 57.75$

The Proficiency Index for the Governor Ambrose High would be: 57.75
The MPI would use the same calculation for all students taking the math exam.
The EPI would use the same calculation for all students taking the ELA exam.

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

Appendix B: West Boylston Chapter 70 Funding and Net School Spending FY1993-2003

| FY | Foundation | Pct | Foundation | Pct | Required | Chapter 70 | Pct | Required | Pct | Actual | Pct | Dollars | Pct |
|------|------------|------|------------|------|--------------|------------|------|----------------|------|------------|------|-------------------|-------|
| | Enrollment | Chg | Budget | Chg | Local | Aid | Chg | Net School | Chg | Net School | Chg | Over/Under | Over/ |
| | | | | | Contribution | | | Spending (NSS) | | Spending | | Requirement Under | |
| FY93 | 796 | | 3,985,374 | | 3,312,016 | 666,683 | | 3,978,699 | | 3,978,699 | | | |
| FY94 | 827 | 3.9 | 4,132,835 | 3.7 | 3,572,710 | 708,013 | 6.2 | 4,280,723 | 7.6 | 4,227,726 | 6.3 | -52,997 | -1.2 |
| FY95 | 850 | 2.8 | 4,322,213 | 4.6 | 3,724,469 | 762,390 | 7.7 | 4,486,859 | 4.8 | 4,542,730 | 7.5 | 55,871 | 1.2 |
| FY96 | 883 | 3.9 | 4,585,688 | 6.1 | 3,857,433 | 840,086 | 10.2 | 4,697,519 | 4.7 | 4,809,376 | 5.9 | 111,857 | 2.4 |
| FY97 | 925 | 4.8 | 4,887,276 | 6.6 | 3,968,719 | 914,588 | 8.9 | 4,883,307 | 4 | 5,025,869 | 4.5 | 142,562 | 2.9 |
| FY98 | 936 | 1.2 | 5,104,305 | 4.4 | 4,165,171 | 979,661 | 7.1 | 5,144,832 | 5.4 | 5,228,359 | 4 | 83,527 | 1.6 |
| FY99 | 994 | 6.2 | 5,616,102 | 10 | 3,786,989 | 1,249,196 | 27.5 | 5,036,185 | -2.1 | 5,904,148 | 12.9 | 867,963 | 17.2 |
| FY00 | 1,067 | 7.3 | 6,090,925 | 8.5 | 4,058,427 | 2,115,280 | 69.3 | 6,173,707 | 22.6 | 6,608,645 | 11.9 | 434,938 | 7 |
| FY01 | 1,141 | 6.9 | 6,745,078 | 10.7 | 4,161,917 | 2,583,161 | 22.1 | 6,745,078 | 9.3 | 7,413,903 | 12.2 | 668,825 | 9.9 |
| FY02 | 1,075 | -5.8 | 6,742,696 | 0 | 4,330,891 | 2,650,051 | 2.6 | 6,980,942 | 3.5 | 8,300,498 | 12 | 1,319,556 | 18.9 |
| FY03 | 1,085 | 0.9 | 7,058,260 | 4.7 | 4,593,776 | 2,723,155 | 2.8 | 7,316,931 | 4.8 | 8,605,914 | 3.7 | 1,288,983 | 17.6 |

Chapter 70 Aid
as

| FY | Dollars per Foundation Enrollment | | | Percentage of Foundation | | | Pct of Actual NSS |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Fnd Budget | Ch 70 Aid | Actual NSS | Ch 70 | Required NSS | Actual NSS | |
| FY93 | 5,007 | 838 | 4,998 | 16.7 | 99.8 | 99.8 | 16.8 |
| FY94 | 4,997 | 856 | 5,112 | 17.1 | 103.6 | 102 | 16.7 |
| FY95 | 5,085 | 897 | 5,344 | 17.6 | 103.8 | 105 | 16.8 |
| FY96 | 5,193 | 951 | 5,447 | 18.3 | 102.4 | 105 | 17.5 |
| FY97 | 5,284 | 989 | 5,433 | 18.7 | 99.9 | 103 | 18.2 |
| FY98 | 5,453 | 1,047 | 5,586 | 19.2 | 100.8 | 102 | 18.7 |
| FY99 | 5,650 | 1,257 | 5,940 | 22.2 | 89.7 | 105 | 21.2 |
| FY00 | 5,708 | 1,982 | 6,194 | 34.7 | 101.4 | 109 | 32 |
| FY01 | 5,912 | 2,264 | 6,498 | 38.3 | 100 | 110 | 34.8 |
| FY02 | 6,272 | 2,465 | 7,721 | 39.3 | 103.5 | 123 | 31.9 |
| FY03 | 6,505 | 2,510 | 7,932 | 38.6 | 103.7 | 122 | 31.6 |
| FY04 | 6,660 | 2,344 | 8,251 | 35.2 | 100 | 124 | 28.4 |