

*How Is Your
School District
Performing?*



A closer look at

*Hudson
Public Schools*

2002-2005

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL

Robert B. Schwartz, Chairman

Maura Banta

Jeffrey P. Howard

Kathleen Madigan

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

VISITING PANEL

Dolores Fitzgerald, Coordinating Examiner

John P. Kulevich, Senior Examiner

Charles F. Valera, Examiner

Kahris White-McLaughlin, Examiner

William Contreras, Examiner

William S. Wassel, Examiner

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

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Massachusetts Department of Education; the superintendent of the Hudson Public Schools, Sheldon H. Berman; the school department staff; and the town officials of Hudson.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?	
Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results	3
WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?	
Overall District Management	7
Leadership, Governance and Communication	8
Curriculum and Instruction	10
Assessment and Program Evaluation	12
Human Resource Management and Professional Development	14
Access, Participation and Student Academic Support	16
Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency	18
CONCLUSION	20
APPENDIX A:	
EQA's District Examination Process	21
APPENDIX B:	
Glossary of Terms Used in EQA Technical Reports	23
APPENDIX C:	
State and Local Funding, 1997–2005	24

INTRODUCTION

Test scores provide one method of assessing student achievement, but a variety of factors affect student performance. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) was created by the state Legislature in July 2000 to examine many of these additional factors by conducting independent audits of schools and districts in Massachusetts. The agency uses these audits to:

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

In January 2006, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Hudson Public Schools for the period of 2002–2005. This school district was selected for Tier I and Tier II reviews. In the Tier I review, the EQA analyzed Hudson students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test and identified areas where students were performing significantly better or worse than the state average. In Tier II, the EQA examined critical factors that affected student performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

The review was based on source documents supplied by the Massachusetts Department of Education and Hudson Public Schools; correspondence sent prior to the EQA team's on-site visit; interviews with a representative from the school committee, the district leadership team, and school administrators; and additional documents submitted while the EQA team visited the district. The report does not take into account documents, revised data, or comments that may have been supplied after June 2005. However, district leaders were invited to provide more current information.

Putting the Data in Perspective

Hudson, MA



DISTRICT

Population: 18,113

Median family income: \$70,145

Largest sources of employment:

Manufacturing and educational, health, and social services

Local government: Board of Selectmen, Open Town Meeting

SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

School committee: 7 members

Number of schools: 6

Student enrollment:

Total: 2,820

White: 90.5 percent

Hispanic: 5.5 percent

African-American: 1.9 percent

Asian-American: 1.8 percent

Native American: 0.3 percent

Limited English Proficiency:

4.4 percent

Low income: 12.9 percent

Special education: 19.7 percent

Sources: 2000 U.S. Census and

Massachusetts Department of Education.

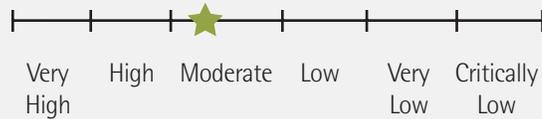
EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council accepted its findings at its meeting on June 9, 2006.

MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2005

	DISTRICT	STATE
<i>Average Proficiency Index</i>	78	78
<i>English Language Arts Proficiency Index</i>	86	83
<i>Math Proficiency Index</i>	70	72

Performance Rating



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

HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?

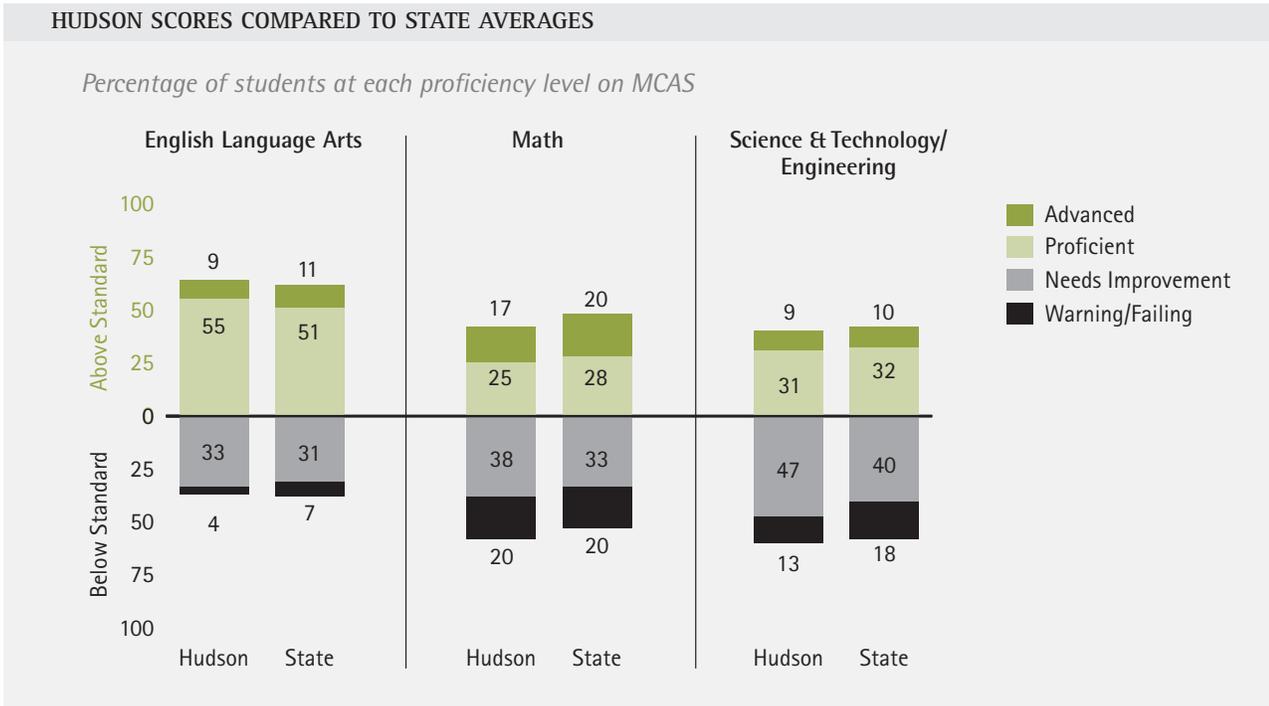
Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results

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

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

1. Are all eligible students participating in all required programs and assessments?

- On the 2005 ELA, math, and STE tests, eligible students participated at required levels in Hudson.
- Hudson's 96 percent participation rate on the 2005 MCAS ELA tests was 1 percentage point higher than the state's 95 percent requirement.
- Hudson's 98 percent participation rate on the 2005 MCAS math tests was 3 percentage points higher than the state's 95 percent requirement.
- Hudson's 98 percent participation rate on the 2005 MCAS STE tests was 3 percentage points higher than the state's 95 percent requirement.

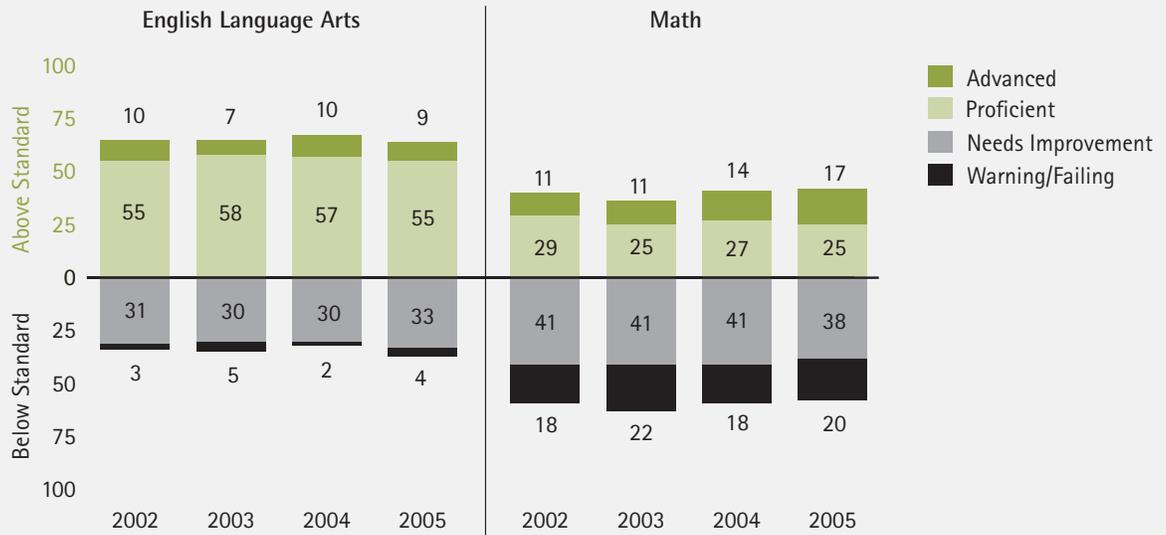


2. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on the MCAS examination?

- Approximately half of all students in Hudson attained proficiency on the 2004 and 2005 MCAS tests.
- Approximately two thirds of all students in Hudson attained proficiency on the 2005 MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) tests and less than half attained proficiency on the math and science and technology/engineering (STE) tests.
- Hudson's proficiency gap in ELA was 14 Proficiency Index (PI) points; in math, this gap was 30 PI points; and in STE, it was 27 PI points.
- In 2005, the proficiency gaps in grades 4, 7, and 10 ELA, Grade 10 math, and Grade 5 science were narrower than those gaps statewide at those grade levels. In Grade 8 science, the proficiency gap in the state and Hudson were the same.

HUDSON ELA SCORES COMPARED TO MATH SCORES

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



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

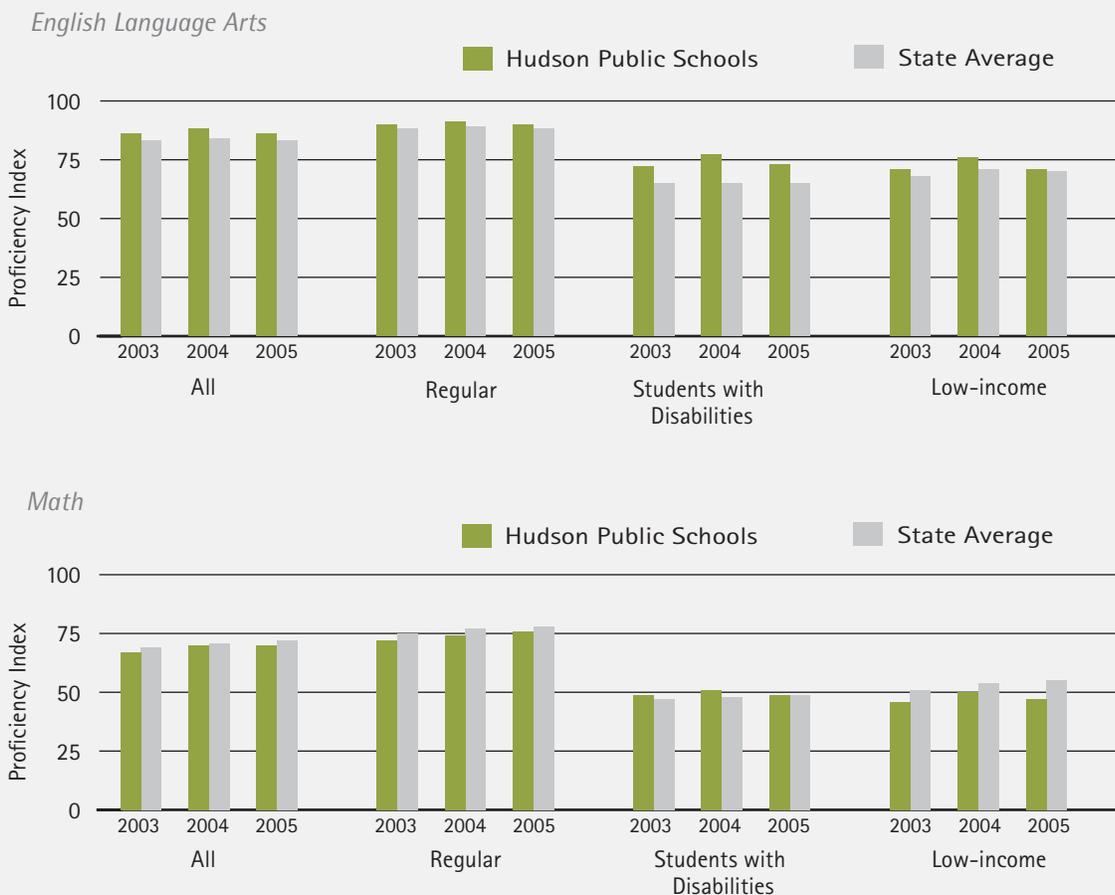
Between 2002 and 2005:

- In ELA, the proficiency gap was 1 PI point wider in 2005 than in 2002, for an improvement rate of negative 3.7 percent.
- In math, the proficiency gap was the same in 2005 as it was in 2002.

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

- The performance gap in ELA was 27 PI points in Hudson; in math, the performance gap was 51 PI points.
- For Hudson's students with disabilities, the proficiency gaps in both ELA and math were wider than those of all Hudson students in 2005. However, the achievement gap for student with disabilities has been consistently smaller in Hudson than in the state both for ELA and math in the 2003-2005 period.
- Less than one third of students with disabilities in Hudson attained proficiency on the 2005 MCAS tests, lower than that of regular education students in Hudson.
- For Hudson's students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch (FRL/Y), the proficiency

HUDSON STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES



gaps in both ELA and math were wider than those of all Hudson students in 2005. However, the achievement gap for low income student has been consistently smaller in Hudson than in the state both for ELA and math in the 2003-2005 period, with the exception of math in 2005.

- Less than one third of FRL/Y students in Hudson attained proficiency on the 2005 MCAS tests, lower than that of students not eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch (FRL/N) in Hudson.

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

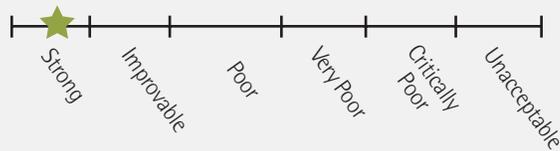
- The improvement gap in ELA was 1 PI point narrower in 2005 than in 2003 in Hudson.
- The improvement gap in math was 2 PI points wider in 2005 than in 2003.
- The performance gap in ELA was the same in 2005 as it was in 2003 in Hudson.
- The performance gap in math was 5 PI points wider in 2005 than it was in 2003.

Performance at a Glance

Management Quality Index

The Management Quality Index is a weighted average of the district's performance on 64 indicators that measure the effectiveness of a district's management system. Hudson received the following rating:

Performance Rating



WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Overall District Management

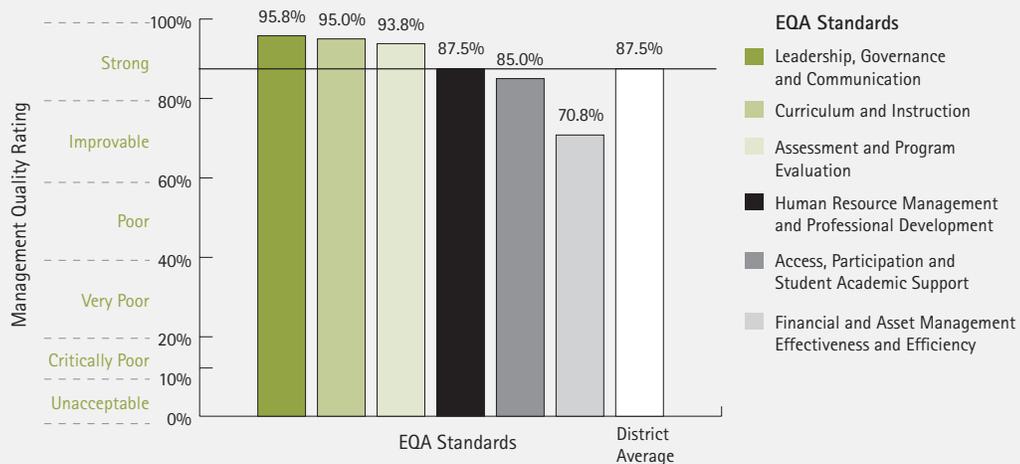
To better understand the factors affecting student scores on MCAS, the EQA analyzes district performance on 64 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. Taken together, these factors are a measure of the

effectiveness – or quality – of a district's management system. A score of 100 percent on the Management Quality Index (MQI) means that the district meets the standard and performed at a satisfactory level on all indicators. However, it does not mean the district was perfect.

In 2005, Hudson received an overall MQI score of Strong (87.5 percent). The district performed best in the areas of leadership and governance; curriculum and instruction; and assessment and program evaluation, scoring at the Strong level. It received its lowest score (Improvable) in the area of Financial and Asset Management. Given these ratings, the district's regular education students are performing as expected on the MCAS ELA tests, but not on the MCAS math and STE tests. The district has not improved performance among its students with disabilities and low-income subgroups. On the following pages, we take a closer look at district performance in each of the six areas.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

Hudson, 2002–2005



Leadership, Governance and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. Hudson's performance rating was 'Moderate,' with 'High' performance in ELA and 'Moderate' performance in math on the MCAS tests. Approximately half of all Hudson students scored above standard on the 2005 administration of the MCAS test.

Planning and Communication

For each of the years under review, the Hudson Public Schools had a District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP included a mission statement, goals, and strategies focused on improving student achievement; the plan was shared with the school committee and the staff, and made available to the community. In addition, all of the schools had School Improvement Plans (SIPs), prepared by school councils, and aligned with the DIP. Both the DIP and SIPs were presented to the school committee and were monitored throughout the year by leadership personnel

Governance

The leadership of the Hudson Public Schools consisted of the superintendent and the seven-member school committee. The superintendent led the district with the assistance of the superintendent's advisory team which consisted of district directors, principals, and curriculum directors.

From a review of the district's documents and from interviews with school committee members, administrators, and teachers, it was evident that the school system gathered, analyzed, and used a significant amount of data to support the decision-making of its educational leaders.

Some examples of modifications to educational programs and services which resulted from the analysis of student achievement data include: at the elementary level, the adoption of the McGraw Hill Reading program and the relocation of units of the Connected Math Program from Grade 6 to Grade 5; at the middle school level, the implementation of the Connected Math

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 12 performance indicators. Hudson received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- For each of the years under review, the Hudson Public Schools had a DIP with a mission statement, goals, and strategies focused on student achievement. The plan was shared with the school committee and staff, and made available to the community.
- The superintendent delegated to principals and curriculum directors educational and operational responsibilities for the schools and programs, and held them accountable for accomplishing agreed upon goals and improving student achievement.
- Progress toward attainment of the goals in the DIP and SIPs was reported at school committee meetings and faculty meetings throughout the year.

Areas for Improvement

- An examination of the personnel files of the leadership personnel indicated that some administrators did not have annual evaluations written by the superintendent for each of the years under review.

Program II and the Flex Curriculum; and at the high school level, the implementation of the Academic Skills Building Block, the Write Source program and the MCAS test preparation class.

School committee members who were interviewed understood their roles and responsibilities under Education Reform from attending Massachusetts Association of School Committees workshops and from information provided periodically to them by the superintendent. In addition, the school committee's budget was unanimously approved at the town meeting, due in large part to the extensive and detailed preparation of the budget document by the superintendent. The school budget focused on improving student achievement, class size, equity, contractual obligations, safety, security, technology, and building maintenance.

Although the school system had instruments and processes for the yearly evaluation of the superintendent and all the other administrators, an examination of the personnel files of the leadership personnel indicated that some administrators did not have annual evaluations for each of the years under review.

Curriculum and Instruction

The Hudson Public Schools performed well in the areas of effective curriculum development and instructional practice – essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

Aligned Curricula and Effective Instruction

The Hudson Public Schools developed and implemented the curricula and instructional practices to closely align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The district established grade-level benchmarks and assessments at all grades and in all disciplines.

The four district-wide curriculum coordinators who worked very closely together and in conjunction with the building principals coordinated the curricula both horizontally and vertically. Their combined leadership provided the teachers of the district with an effective and ongoing instructional strategies program whose primary goal was to improve student achievement. The program included a process in which teachers and administrators alike reviewed and revised their curricula to meet the needs of their students, particularly their at-risk population. The district's two subgroups, special education and low-income students, showed little progress during the period under review, and neither subgroup met adequate yearly progress (AYP) in either ELA or math.

The EQA examiners found that the district undertook a comprehensive analysis of assessment data on an annual basis and changes in the curricula were made throughout the review period, based on that analysis.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Hudson received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- Examiners rated the district's teachers high on classroom management skills and the creation of a positive learning environment.
- The leadership of the district-wide curriculum coordinators and the building principals supported the district's teachers in providing effective instructional strategies focused on improving student achievement.
- The district made a strong commitment to using technology in its instructional practices especially at the new state-of-the-art high school.

Areas for Improvement

- The district's two subgroups, special education and low-income students, showed little progress during the period under review, and neither subgroup met adequate yearly progress (AYP) in either ELA or math.

Examiners also found that the district made a strong commitment to integrating the use of technology into its instructional practices especially at the state-of-the-art high school, which opened its doors in 2003.

Although the district did not require its teachers to keep plan books, district administrators felt confident that they knew what was occurring in the classrooms by frequently visiting classroom and regularly scheduling meetings with their respective staffs.

The EQA examiners observed a total of 48 classrooms in the district's six schools during their visit. Examiners rated the district's teachers high on classroom management skills and the creation of a positive learning environment. In addition, the district had provided their teachers with sufficient resources and teaching materials so that effective lessons could be planned and executed.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

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

For each of the years under review, the Hudson Public Schools' site-based MCAS test data and program analysis practices were consistent and effective as a result of strong leadership, effective policy development, SIPs that were aligned to the DIP, and a commitment to analyze areas of concern and to change practice, curricula, and programs when necessary.

Improving Student Achievement

The Hudson Public Schools used an array of testing and assessment analyses to develop the instructional programs for its students. Commitment to collecting a factual base of student data was the basis for the recent hiring of a full-time statistician, the director of assessment and evaluation. This administrator analyzed the results of programming, testing, and academic progress of all of Hudson's students and subgroups. The superintendent's advisory team, which included the superintendent, administrative staff, principals, and curriculum directors, then reviewed and discussed the results. The principal and the curriculum directors delivered the data to the classroom teachers. The principal then notified the parents about their children's academic results.

Analysis conducted by the director of assessment, along with the curriculum coordinators and principals, consistently determined academic weaknesses and strengths of the school district's student population. Educational suggestions for remediation on all levels influenced changes in the curricula and academic program that were designed to improve student academic progress. During the review period, the Hudson Public Schools analyzed academic data and made curricula changes when necessary.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



Areas of Strength

- During the review period, the Hudson Public Schools analyzed academic data and made curricula changes when necessary.
- The hiring of a full-time statistician, the director of assessment and evaluation, improved the collection and analysis of student performance.
- Educational suggestions for remediation on all levels influenced changes in the curricula and academic program that were designed to improve student academic progress.
- The district hired three employees who were fluent in Portuguese to assist students who were Limited English Proficient during the period under review.

Areas for Improvement

- Despite the district's innovative interventions in testing, curriculum, and programming, too many of its students failed to score in the 'Proficient' or 'Advanced' categories on the MCAS test.

In the effort to educate all students equitably, the district hired three employees who were fluent in Portuguese to assist students who were Limited English Proficient during the period under review. Further, a comprehensive system of analyzing subgroup student achievement data, particularly special education, low income, and Portuguese-speaking students, provided for the development of innovative educational programs to enhance educational offerings.

However, despite these innovative interventions in testing, curriculum, and programming, too many students did not score in the category of 'Proficient' or 'Advanced' on MCAS testing. A review of the district's MCAS test scores showed flat scores for the district over a period of four years. In 2002, 49 percent of the students scored in the 'Needs Improvement' and 'Warning/Failing' categories; in 2003 the percentage remained at 49 percent; in 2004 the percentage decreased to 46 percent; and in 2005, the rate increased to 48 percent. The district did not demonstrate consistent improvement for all students for the years under review. While aggregate scores for the entire district remained flat and some subgroups did not achieve AYP in ELA and math, aggregate student scores improved in grades 7 and 10 in ELA and in Grade 10 math.

The district reported its testing results to the general community through yearly presentations to the public at large, through school committee meetings that were televised through cable television, and through presentations to the town's finance committee. The school district also used the community newspaper and individual school report cards as a further means of communication.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

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

Hiring Practices and Certification

Between 2001 and 2005 the Hudson Public Schools had policies and practices in place relative to the employment of personnel in the school district. Employment practices were consistently applied throughout the review period, with each hiring culminating in a lengthy personal interview by the superintendent for each teaching vacancy in the district. During the review period, the district did not renew 12 percent of the newly-hired teachers.

Most of the district's professional staff, 96 percent, held appropriate certification. Some individuals were not required to have Massachusetts licensure as they taught under a collaborative agreement between the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) and the Portuguese Ministry of Education. The remaining six individuals were all teaching under valid waivers from the DOE and were actively pursuing certification.

There were a total of 90 staffing changes during the review period. Over half of the teacher changes, 55.6 percent, were attributed to retirement. Teachers new to the district were provided trained mentors; and the human resources manager provided assistance in a variety of ways, but largely through obtaining waivers, as well as monitoring and collaborating with the individual's immediate supervisor through consistent and constant reminders of the need to obtain appropriate certification. Mentors were assigned to new staff early in the summer months prior to the beginning of employment and provided ample orientation at the start of the school year.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 12 performance indicators. Hudson received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- Most of the district's professional staff, 96 percent, held appropriate certification.
- In SY 2005, the district received in excess of \$2.7 million dollars in competitive and entitlement grant revenues to support district activities including professional development.

Areas for Improvement

- The superintendent's contract did not specify any linkage between his compensation and improvement in student performance.
- The district's practices for professional-status teachers were not in statutory compliance, as the district's six-year evaluation cycle did not prescribe a summative evaluation every other year.

Professional Development

The structure of the district's professional development plan was intended to set an expectation for collegial collaboration for improving teaching. Through focusing on data and student work, the district anticipated that the staff could achieve a better understanding of student achievement. This goal was addressed through an expansive set of professional development offerings. Further, whenever a new program was introduced in the district, appropriate professional development was always offered in concert with that introduction. District professional development activities were adequately supported during the period under review, primarily through grant-funding sources and limited budget funding. In SY 2005, the district received in excess of \$2.7 million dollars in competitive and entitlement grant revenues to support district activities including professional development.

Evaluation

The evaluations of the superintendent were timely, signed, and aligned with the requirements of Education Reform. They were mostly informative, instructive, and contained approximately eight recommendations each year. The superintendent's contract did not specify any linkage between his compensation and continued employment to effectiveness or improvement in student performance. A review of the district's evaluations for district administrators other than the superintendent found that they were not in complete alignment with the requirements of the Education Reform Act. Individual administrative contracts did not hold the superintendent or administrators specifically accountable for improving student achievement and did not directly link compensation to the results of student achievement. However, administrators were evaluated on the accomplishment of goals, and a district goal was to "improve student achievement across the district as reflected in standardized test results, portfolio assessment, and other measures of student progress."

The district's evaluation practices for teachers with non-professional status were in compliance with statutory requirements; however, the district's practices for teachers with professional status were not in statutory compliance, in that the district's six-year evaluation cycle did not prescribe a summative evaluation in alternating years. The district believed that the DOE "would review the evaluation positively." They stated that the reports filed in years three and five of the professional status teacher evaluation cycle, would "meet the Department of Education's requirement" of a summative evaluation. The superintendent stated that evaluation procedures were used in the district as a "central element of improvement." He had led a seminar during the period under review to "improve consistency" in evaluations and to strengthen their promotion of teachers' "professional growth and improvement of student achievement."

Access, Participation and Student Academic Support

Students who are at risk of failing or dropping out need additional support to ensure that they stay in school and achieve proficiency. Well-managed school districts provide comprehensive student support services, encourage subgroup access and participation, and implement discipline and attendance policies and practices.

Services

The district provided a number of supports for students who were at-risk from the Pre-K to the high school level in both reading and math. The high school provided a variety of support programs including MCAS test preparation.

A high percentage of the district's ELL students were Portuguese speakers who came to the district from either the Azores or Brazil. At both the middle and high school, support was provided by staff within the classroom. At the elementary level, an immersion program was housed at one of the elementary schools with English and Portuguese speaking teachers in the classroom.

The district had early intervention programs to ensure that all students would be reading at the 'Proficient' level at Grade four. In 2005, 47 percent of all Grade four students scored at the 'Proficient' and 'Advanced' level of the MCAS tests.

The district had transition programs in place at each level. These ranged from the jump-start program for Kindergarten students to "Fly-Up-Day" for students in Grade one. The middle and high schools provided orientation activities for new students.

Documents presented to the EOA team indicated that the Hudson Public Schools had been recognized for its work in character education and community service. The district's commitment was evidenced by the fact that there was a full-time director of community relations and character education.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Hudson received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The district had a director of community relations and character education, and received recognition for this program.
- The district had transition programs at each level. These included the jump-start program and "Fly-Up-Day" for grades K-1 students.
- The district had programs in place that addressed the needs of its ELL students who were predominately Portuguese.

Areas for Improvement

- The district had a high rate of chronic absenteeism; this was compounded by 'transient' students from abroad, who resided in Hudson for a short duration.

Discipline, Retention, and Suspension

The district had practices in place that reduced discipline referrals, grade retention, suspension and exclusion at all levels. For the entire period under review, the district had a learning center program at the elementary level. This separate program met the social and emotional needs of students not able to function in a regular classroom. The district received a positive outside evaluation for the effectiveness of this program.

Attendance

In information provided to the EQA examiners by the DOE, the attendance rate for all schools was 95 percent in 2005; for the high school the 2005 average attendance rate was 93.3 percent and the chronic absentee rate for students in grades 8 through 12 ranged from 14.5 percent at Grade 8 to 29.0 percent at Grade 12. The district disputed this data and contacted the DOE. The DOE acknowledged that the attendance rate for the high school should have been 93.4 percent. The district provided the EQA examiners with student-by-student attendance and according to the district data, the chronically absent rate decreased for students in grades 8 through 12. The district's data showed a 9.6 percent absentee rate at Grade 8 and a 19 percent rate at Grade 12. The district said, "Hudson's chronically absent rate was significantly increased by students who were 'transient' and were in Hudson for a short period of time. Many of these students came to Hudson from other countries." Staff attendance was not a concern in the district.

The district did not have serious issues with dropouts. Students who were identified as potential dropouts were discussed at weekly meetings at the high school. The district's ELL coordinator worked with parents, students and, if the student was working, the coordinator made contact with employers to make sure that work hours could be arranged in order to make it more convenient for students to remain in school.

Subgroup Participation

Data provided by the district showed that at the high school level, the percentage of students who belonged to at least one subgroup who were enrolled in accelerated or advanced courses had increased from 20 percent in 2003-04 to 29 percent in 2005-06.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

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

Budget Process

The Hudson school district's budget was clear, understandable, and reader friendly with an explanation of every line item. Although there was clear evidence of the district's examining, aggregating, and disaggregating the MCAS test assessments as well as disseminating those assessments to the classroom teachers, there was no evidence found that those assessments were used directly in budget development.

Financial Support

The town made an effort to supply the school district with the funds to maintain an education that would sustain and improve student achievement, as evidenced by the fact that 67 percent of total town spending went to support the schools.

There were statements from both town officials and district administrators that while in the past attempts were made to come to an agreement on town charges to the school budget, no agreement was reached; and town officials stated they did not think that the lack of an agreement had a significant effect on school spending. The accounting software for the town and the school were not integrated. Forecasting of budget line items was difficult for the school business office, and extra time was needed in the preparation of required reports.

One important weakness in the budgetary process involved central oversight of the district's revolving accounts by the business office. Although all monies were deposited to accounts under the control of the town treasurer,

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 12 performance indicators. Hudson received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The district budget was open, understandable, and included grant funding and an explanation of the use of each line item amount.
- 67 percent of total town spending went to support the schools.

Areas for Improvement

- The district's budget development process was not influenced by student needs.
- The town procurement officer did not have MCPPO credentials and the finance officer was not certified.
- The accounting software for the town and the school were not integrated.
- The middle school was over-crowded.

there were no redundant measures to assure that deposits were complete or accurate.

The town procurement officer did not have MCPPO credentials and the finance officer was not certified during the period under review; although the finance officer stated that the certification was now pending. However, the Director of Buildings and Grounds was MCPPO certified and was involved in reviewing procurement for the district.

Facilities

The school district's preventative maintenance plan and capital plan were formal, up to date, and reviewed annually by the appropriate stakeholders from the town and school district. With the exception of overcrowding at the middle school, the EQA team found the educational and program facilities of Hudson to be clean, safe, well-lit, well-maintained and conducive to promoting student learning and achievement.

CONCLUSION

The Hudson Public Schools is a 'Moderate' performing school district, marked by 'Strong' management, and student achievement that is 'High' in ELA and 'Moderate' in math on the MCAS tests. Approximately half of all Hudson students scored above standard on the 2005 administration of the MCAS test.

This district performed well in the areas of leadership and governance, curriculum and instruction, and assessment and program evaluation. The school committee's budget was unanimously approved at the town meeting, due in large part to the superintendent's extensive and detailed preparation of the budget document. The school budget focused on improving student achievement, class size, equity, contractual obligations, safety, security, technology, and building maintenance.

Hudson Public Schools had a District Improvement Plan that included a mission statement, goals, and strategies focused on improving student achievement, which it shared with the school committee, staff, and the community. The superintendent delegated educational and operational responsibilities for the schools and programs to principals and curriculum directors, and held them accountable for accomplishing agreed upon goals and improving student achievement. Examiners rated the district's teachers high on classroom management skills and the creation of a positive learning environment.

The district's leadership took a very aggressive approach in the pursuit of both entitlement and competitive grants, receiving over \$2 million to support professional development and other activities. Mentors were assigned to new staff early in the summer months prior to employment and provided orientation early in the school year. The district created the position of director of assessment and evaluation, responsible for the analysis of both aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data, and provided many examples of modifications to educational programs and services resulting from this analysis.

The most significant challenges facing the Hudson Public Schools include improving elementary and middle school math performance, and the performance of the special education and low-income subgroups, which did not make AYP in either ELA or math. To address the lack of progress in improving math scores at the elementary and middle school levels on the MCAS test, the district created a comprehensive program in both math and science in grades K-8, funded by a National Science Foundation Grant. The district also offered programs and services to assist its special needs and ELL students, and hired three employees who were fluent in Portuguese to assist LEP students.

APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

EQA's three-tier examination process provides successively deeper levels of information about student performance. All school districts receive a Tier I review annually, but they do not all receive the full three-tier review every year.

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

Tier I: Data-Driven Assessment

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

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

Tier II: Standards-Based Examination

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

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. EQA examines a total of 64 indicators to assess whether the district is meeting the standards and provides a rating for each indicator.

Tier III: District Diagnostic (Fact-Finding) Review

While the Tier II review looks at how district policies are implemented at the building level, the Tier III review goes a level deeper and looks at what is happening in the classroom and how that affects school performance.

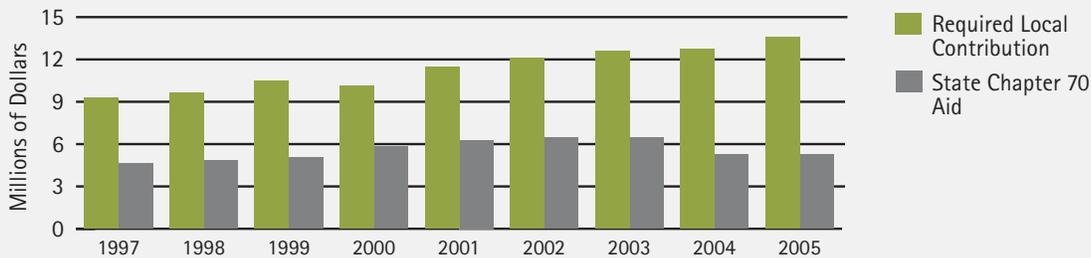
APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN EQA TECHNICAL REPORTS

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

APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1997–2005

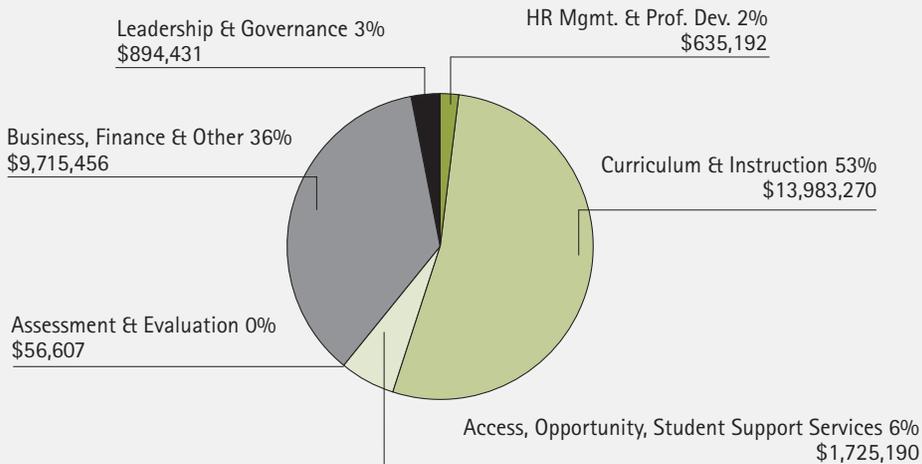
The vast majority of a school district's funding is determined by the Chapter 70 program – the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to providing state aid to support school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of Hudson Public Schools' funding derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute. For the nine-year period, FY1997 to FY2005, Hudson met the state-mandated Net School Spending Requirement. For the period between FY1997 and FY2005, Chapter 70 Aid to Hudson increased 13.1 percent (from \$4,635,009 to \$5,242,895). Hudson's Required Local Contribution increased 47.1 percent (from \$9,234,239 to \$13,583,322). Since FY1997, Hudson received a total of \$50,022,802 in Chapter 70 Aid and was required to raise locally \$101,759,007.

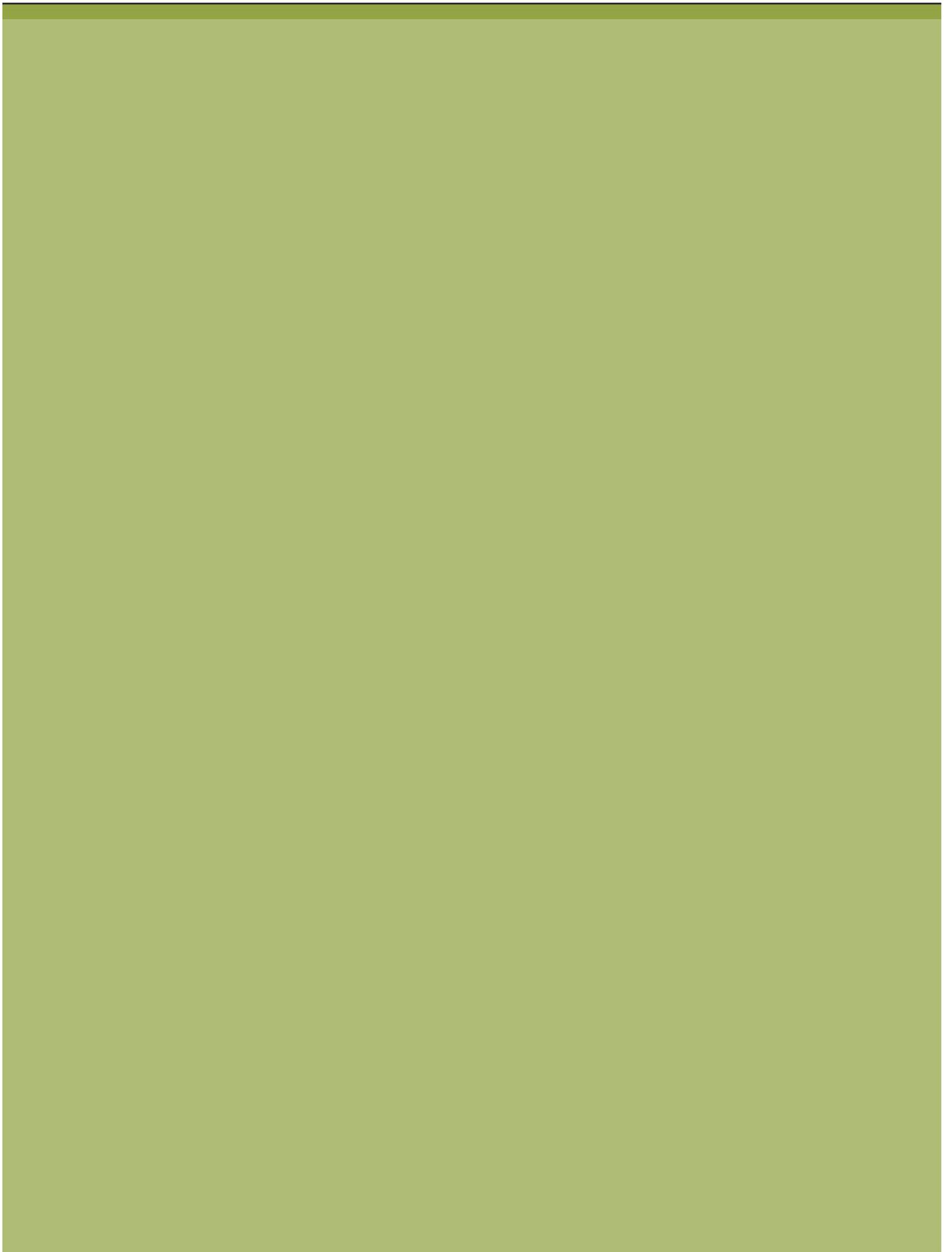
WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR HUDSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR HUDSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

FY04 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges)





EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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