

*How Is Your  
School District  
Performing?*



*A closer look at*

*Westfield  
Public Schools*

2002-2005

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

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*The five-member Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) and its agency, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), were established by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2000 to examine public school districts in the commonwealth. The mission of the EMAC and EQA 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 Westfield Public Schools, Thomas Y. McDowell; the school department staff; and the city officials of Westfield.*

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## 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 districts' performance;
- Monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and
- Provide the public with information that helps the state hold districts and schools, including charter schools, accountable.

In June 2006, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Westfield Public Schools for the period of 2002–2005. This school district was selected for an on-site review. The EQA analyzed Westfield students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test and identified areas where students were performing significantly better or worse than the state average. During the on-site visit, 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 Westfield 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

Westfield, MA



## DISTRICT

*Population:* 40,072

*Median family income:* \$55,327

*Largest sources of employment:*  
Educational, health, and social services,  
and manufacturing

*Local government:* Mayor-Council

## SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

*School committee:* 7 members

*Number of schools:* 14

*Student enrollment:*

Total: 6,482

White: 87.8 percent

Hispanic: 8.9 percent

African-American: 1.3 percent

Asian-American: 1.1 percent

Native American: 0.1 percent

Limited English Proficiency:  
3.9 percent

Low income: 29 percent

Special education: 19.1 percent

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

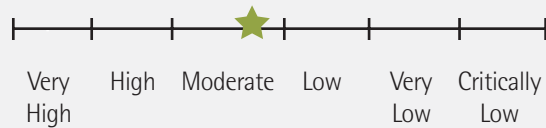
## EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings on December 1, 2006.

## MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2005

	DISTRICT	STATE
Average Proficiency Index	73.5	78
English Language Arts Proficiency Index	81	83
Math Proficiency Index	66	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.

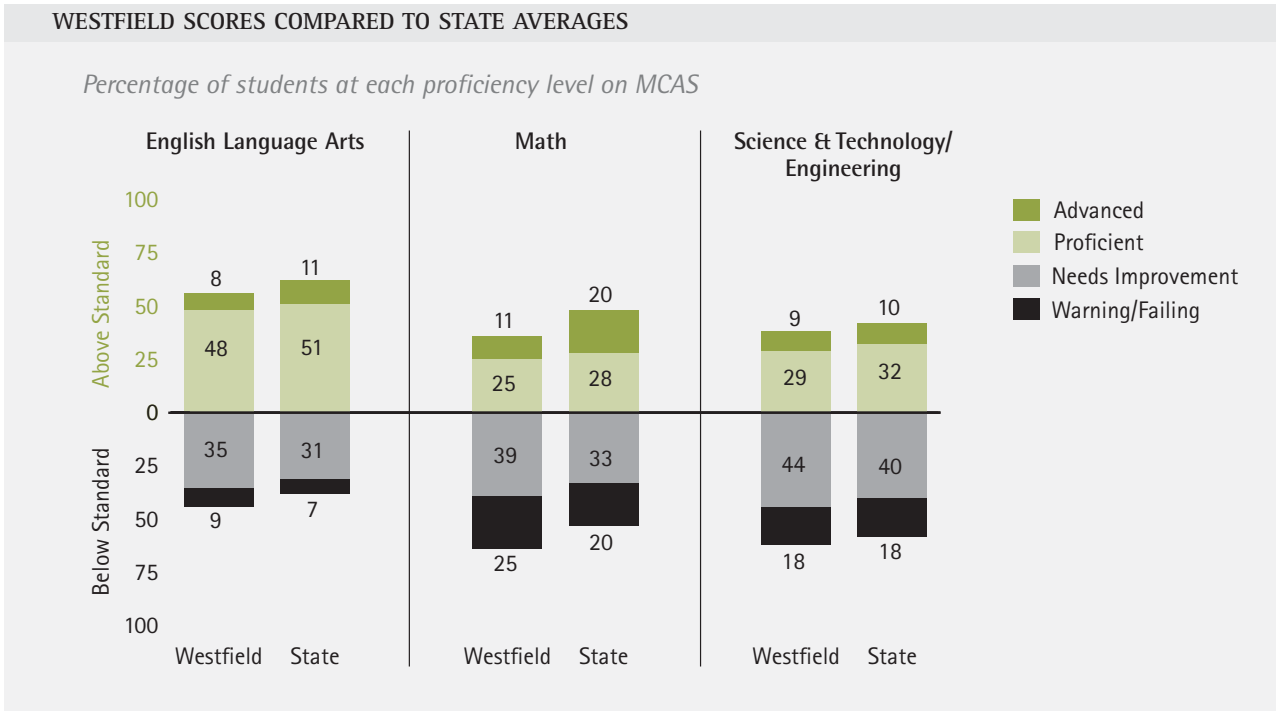
The EQA analyzed current state and district MCAS results to determine how well district students as a whole and sub-groups of students performed compared to students throughout the commonwealth. The EQA analysis sought to answer the following five questions:

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

On the 2005 MCAS tests in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE), eligible students in Westfield participated at levels which met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

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

On average, nearly half of all students in Westfield attained proficiency on the 2004 and 2005 MCAS tests. This proportion was slightly lower than that of the state on the MCAS tests for both years. More than half of all students in Westfield attained proficiency on the 2005 ELA tests, and more than one-third attained proficiency on the math and STE tests.

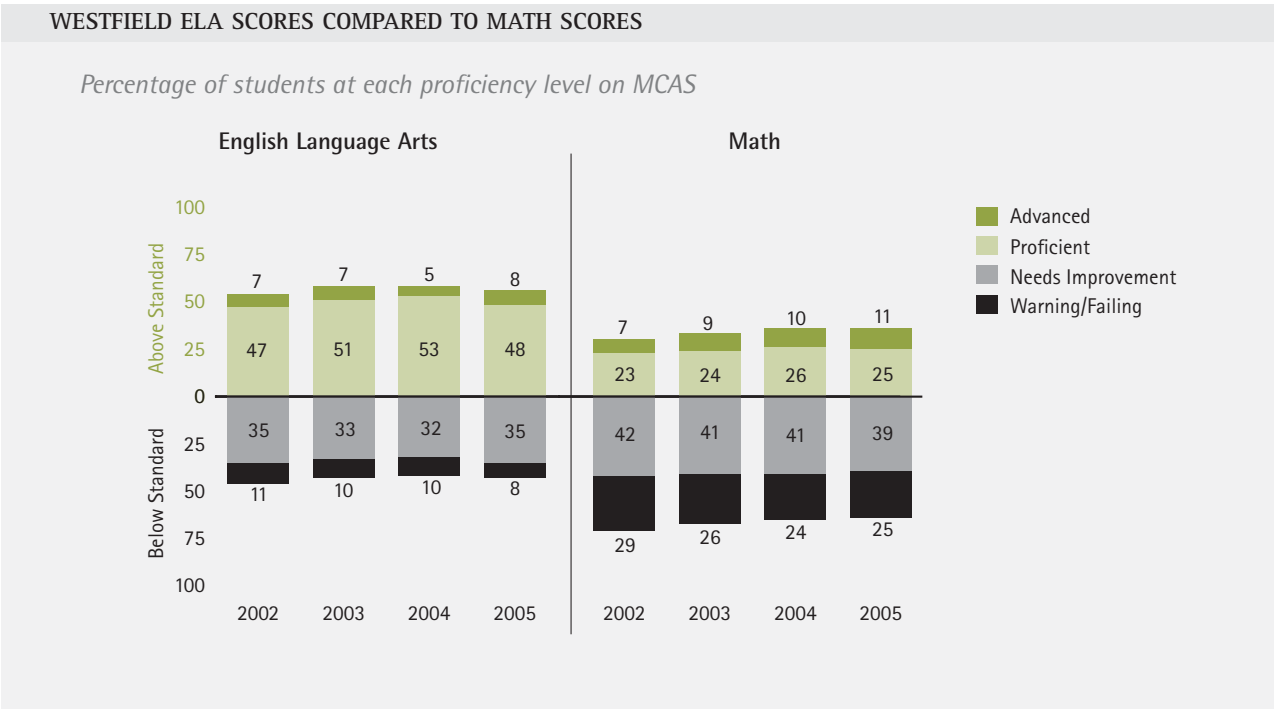


- In 2005, Westfield's proficiency gaps were 19 Proficiency Index (PI) points in ELA, 34 PI points in math, and 30 PI points in STE. These gaps were wider than the average respective proficiency gaps statewide, and they would require an average annual improvement in performance of approximately two PI points in ELA, more than three and a half PI points in math, and more than three PI points in STE to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP).

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

Between 2002 and 2005, Westfield's MCAS performance showed some improvement overall and in math, while the district had little improvement in ELA.

- The number of Westfield students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by seven percentage points between 2002 and 2005, while the number of students at the 'Warning/Failing' performance level decreased by four percentage points.
- Over the four-year period 2002-2005, Westfield showed little improvement in ELA performance, improving an average of less than one PI point per year for this period. This resulted in a closing of the proficiency gap of 10 percent, a rate lower than that required by AYP.



- Math performance in Westfield improved by five PI points between 2002 and 2005, or almost two points annually. This resulted in a closing of the proficiency gap of 13 percent, a rate also lower than that required by AYP.

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

MCAS performance in 2005 varied substantially among subgroups of Westfield's students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Westfield, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 29 PI points in ELA and 33 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- In Westfield, the proficiency gaps in 2005 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for the following subgroups: students with disabilities, students participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs, and Hispanic students. Less than one-fifth of students with disabilities attained proficiency, and approximately one-fourth of Hispanic students and students participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs did so.
- The proficiency gaps in both ELA and math were narrower than the district average for Westfield's students in 2005 for the following subgroups: regular education students,

WESTFIELD STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES



students not participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs, and White students. For these subgroups, approximately half the students attained proficiency.

- The proficiency level of Hispanic students in Westfield was higher than the state average for that subgroup.

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

Westfield's students with disabilities and students participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs showed slight improvement in ELA between 2003 and 2005, while almost all subgroups of students showed a little improvement in math. Students with disabilities was the most improved subgroup.

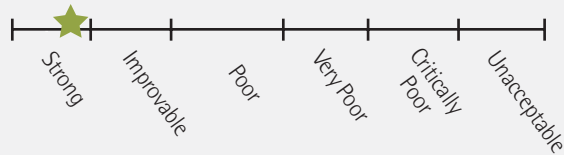


Performance at a Glance

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. Westfield received the following rating:

Performance Rating



WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Overall District Management

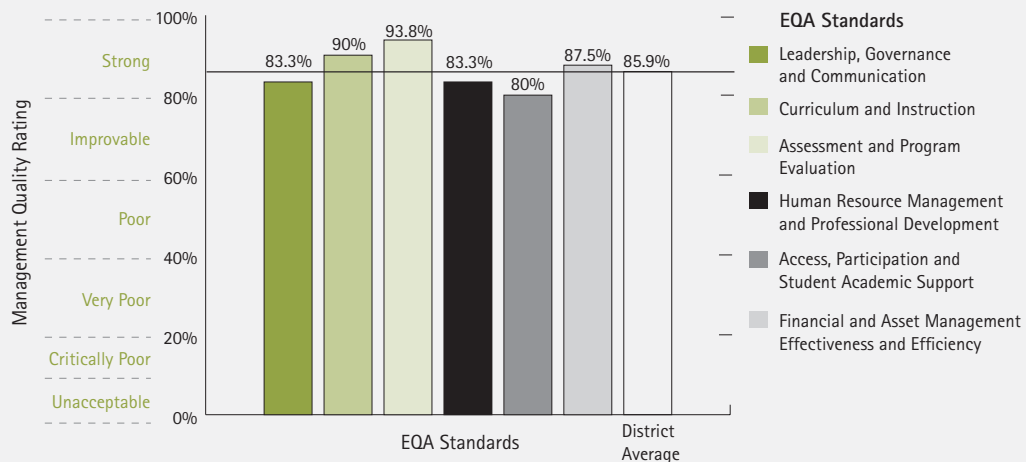
To better understand the factors affecting student scores on MCAS, the EQA analyzes district performance on 64 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, 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, Westfield received an overall MQI score of 'Strong' (85.9 percent). The district earned its highest rating, 'Strong,' in the area of assessment and program evaluation, and its lowest rating, 'Improvable,' in access, participation and student academic support. Given these ratings, the district did not perform as well as expected on the MCAS tests. Those scores have indicated some improvement in math, but little in ELA, while subgroup gaps persist. On the following pages, we take a closer look at district performance in each of the six areas.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

Westfield, 2002–2005



## Leadership, Governance and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. Westfield Public Schools was among the 'Moderate' performing school districts in the Commonwealth, with MCAS test scores that were 'High' in ELA and 'Low' in math.

### Leadership and Communication

A culture of collegiality and cooperation was present throughout the district. The efforts of the superintendent and administrators to be open and communicative to all of the community, as well as the support of the mayor and the city council, were largely responsible for this atmosphere of cooperation.

All school committee members regularly attended Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) district meetings and interviewees indicated that all new members received packets of information and tours of the schools from the superintendent. Members also stated that the newly elected members attended the MASC new member workshop. The school committee received assessment information from the administrators to inform their decision-making. Assessment information was also given to the director of curriculum and instruction for interpretation and then provided to school principals and other administrators for transmittal to the teaching staff.

The city supported the district schools. For example, the schools were allotted approximately 65 percent of total city revenue when all charges were included. The city also issued bonds to support modern equipment at the vocational school. However, other than in the grant process, funds were neither provided nor transferred to schools or students with greater needs.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- The district's School Improvement Plans were aligned with the District Improvement Plan. School council and teacher input were used in the development of goals in the School and District Improvement Plans.
- The administration provided regular and timely reports to the school committee, community, and staff.
- The superintendent delegated the educational and operational leadership to the principals and assessed their success through monthly walk-throughs in each of the schools and oral reports during monthly meetings.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district did not allocate additional monies or resources to schools or students with greater needs based on an analysis of student achievement data, as indicated in a review of district budgets and in interviews with administrators.
- For the period under review, evaluations were not done annually for all of the leadership team including the assistant principals.

## Governance and Planning

The district had a clearly understood vision as evidenced by the integration of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) with the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The plans had measurable goals, timelines for completion, and personnel responsible for implementation. The DIP was developed with input from all stakeholders, parents, teachers, administrators, and the school committee. SIPs were developed in the same manner and were integrated into the DIP. The superintendent and all principals made periodic reports on progress toward the goals in the DIP and SIPs to the school council members.

The administrative staff had regular and systematic practices to ensure that all staff regularly used aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data to improve instructional programs and services, according to evidence provided. Based on student assessment results conducted throughout the year, instructional programs were modified. Examples included an increase in mathematics instruction at the elementary level and adjustments in the sequence of mathematics instruction at the middle and high school levels to conform to the timing of the MCAS tests.

Evaluations of administrators in general were not based upon student achievement, but upon professional, school, and personal goals. The superintendent effectively delegated authority for the operation of the schools to the principals, although student achievement was not used to evaluate the effectiveness of that delegation.

## Curriculum and Instruction

The Westfield Public Schools performed effectively in the area of effective curriculum development and instructional practices – essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

### Aligned Curricula

The district had curricula for all grade levels in tested core content areas, aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, and containing these components: mission statements, philosophy, district goals, scope and sequence, mastery objectives, resources, instructional strategies, and activities. The curriculum guides did not contain timelines, articulation maps, or assessments. Interviewees reported that the district had practices to assess the coverage of the mastery objectives, and that the principals and/or supervisors monitored the pace of instructional delivery.

Curricula in all tested areas were aligned horizontally and vertically for grades K-12. The district had established K-12 linear curriculum committees for the purpose of auditing and revising the district's curriculum. They analyzed the MCAS test scores, looking at student results in the aggregate, by subgroups, and at the individual level, to determine areas of strength and weakness in curriculum and instruction.

The district analyzed student achievement data and allocated instructional time in the tested core content areas to focus on improved rates of proficiency. For example, after analysis of the MCAS test scores showed weakness in mathematics performance, the superintendent mandated 60 minutes of mathematics instructional time at the elementary level so that all students at grades K-5 had consistent, uninterrupted mathematics instruction daily.

Interviews with district administrators and the mayor indicated that one of the district's challenges was the aging technology. The district had power interrup-

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- The district used formative and summative student assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of its curriculum and instruction. The district provided administrators and staff with professional development in formative and summative assessment.
- The district had linear curriculum committees for grades K-12 dedicated to the regular and timely review of the written curriculum.
- The vocational high school had an award-winning manufacturing technology program.
- The district had uniform and detailed curriculum guides for all grades in the tested content areas of ELA, mathematics, and science that addressed all the components of the state curriculum frameworks and were aligned both horizontally and vertically.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district's technology was aging. Hardware to support the use of the newer technologies was limited.

tions and problems with the servers. Older computers did not support the newer software that the district wanted to use. Furthermore, new technology purchases were limited due to budget restraints. Interviewees indicated that the high school had limited technology. At the high school, the classes that the EQA examiners observed had one or no computer. The 2004-2005 DOE data indicated that the district had 5.4 students per 'modern computer' compared to the state rate of 4.9 students.

At the vocational high school, the examiners observed the manufacturing technology program. The city issued bonds to equip this program with over \$3 million of modern computer-aided drafting and computer-aided manufacturing machines. Interviewees indicated that the program was a premier operation, and it had won the Brown and Sharp Metrology Award three times. The program advisory committees at the vocational high school ensured that the curriculum of each program reflected current industry trade practices or initiatives to emphasize high standards for students.

### Effective Instruction

The district provided resources, professional development, and support to improve instructional quality and delivery. The district devoted one year of professional development to Assessment Literacy. Teachers were trained on how to develop formative assessments. The district used summative data, standardized tests, and teacher-generated tests to monitor student mastery of subjects, but not the effectiveness of teachers' instruction.

Observations revealed that good classroom management was present in 92 percent of the classrooms observed. Varied instruction was found in 70 percent of possible instances, and high expectations for student work were also found in 70 percent. Seventy-five percent of the classrooms had evidence of positive student activity and behavior; students were actively engaged in the learning process and showed clear understanding of the objective of the lesson. Eighty-two percent of the classrooms visited had a climate conducive to learning; the classrooms were welcoming, and the teacher was an active listener and treated students with respect. The EQA examiners observed classroom resources such as computers, calculators, cassettes, overhead projectors, classroom libraries, and manipulatives. The data indicated that classroom management, climate, student activities and behavior were strengths for the district.

## 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.

### Student Assessment

The Westfield Public Schools' district and school leadership used student assessment results, local benchmarks, and other pertinent data during the period under review in order to improve student achievement and inform selected aspects of district decision-making. District leaders encouraged students to participate in all assessments, and they collected, analyzed, and utilized a variety of the test results. These results were communicated to all appropriate staff and community members regularly.

During 2005–2006, steps were taken to relate student grades to the curriculum benchmarks being developed. Some interviewees indicated that, although achievement data were being collected, reviewed, and analyzed, the process was not standardized districtwide, and improvement in student achievement was limited, according to a review of the MCAS test results.

Administrators interviewed described varied applications of student assessments. Central office officials and school-based officials aggregated and disaggregated the MCAS test results. These administrators produced a variety of reports for classroom teacher use. Student assessment results often defined professional development opportunities. The parallel curriculum provided to special education students was eliminated based upon analyses of student assessment data. PIM team members utilized student assessments in conjunction with the PIM process to develop SIPs during the period under review.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- Assessment reports were communicated to all appropriate staff and community members quarterly, and, during the 2005–2006 school year, steps were taken to relate student grades to the curriculum benchmarks being developed.
- District and school leadership used assessment tools and benchmarks to measure student achievement.
- District leaders reviewed student assessment results and other pertinent data to maximize effectiveness in assigning staff, prioritizing goals, and allocating time and resources.

### Areas for Improvement

- Despite district leaders' efforts to collect, analyze, and utilize student assessment results, student improvement was limited.
- Internal and external audits did not focus on the effectiveness of the district's program implementation and service delivery systems.

At the elementary school level, student assessments and other data were used to initiate full-day kindergartens in 2003-2004. The Literacy Collaborative initiated in some elementary schools engaged in progress monitoring and benchmark testing using the DIBELS data to monitor the effectiveness of the program. The schools initiated standards-based lesson planning aligned with the curriculum in 2005-2006, according to principals and other administrators interviewed.

The middle and high schools initiated several forms of MCAS test remedial work. Administrators interviewed said the Title I program supported remedial math classes during the school day; after-school ELA and mathematics programs were introduced successfully at the middle school level and unsuccessfully at the high school level; the Bridge Program was initiated at the WVTHS; a new two-year Algebra I class was introduced at grades 8-9; and a new physical science class, offered at different levels of complexity, was initiated at the high school level.

### Program Evaluation

Both the school committee policy and the DIP called for implementation of systematic procedures to test students and to evaluate programs and services during the period under review. Procedures were initiated to do this work; however, an assessment/evaluation system, focused upon instruction as well as programs and services, was not in place during the three years under review.

District and school leadership regularly engaged in internal and external audits. These audits focused primarily upon students' academic achievements, and secondarily upon the effectiveness of the district's program implementation and service delivery systems.

District leaders reviewed student assessment results and other pertinent data to maximize effectiveness in assigning staff, prioritizing goals, and allocating time and resources. As a result, district efforts focused on MCAS test remediation for the middle and high schools and literacy initiatives at the elementary schools. Three years prior to the year of the review, full-day Kindergarten was instituted based on student achievement data. The district also received grant funding from multiple sources to focus instruction on the needs of at-risk students.

## 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

Policies and practices were in place in the district for the identification, recruitment, and selection of an effective teaching staff. In addition, school committee policies were in place for the evaluation, assignment and transfer, resignation, retirement, and suspension and dismissal of professional staff. All but four teachers were appropriately licensed, and two administrators in the district were unlicensed. The district had not applied for any waivers. A mentoring program for new teachers was in place.

Interviewees indicated that staff worked and remained in the district for a number of reasons. Examples provided by interviewees were the per diem retirement benefit, a pro-education mayor who supported the district financially, good health insurance plans, and the fact that the district had no recent layoffs.

### Professional Development

Professional development was embedded in the district and was primarily supported by grant revenue. During the period under review, the teachers' union and the district agreed to waive approximately \$300,000 per year in professional development appropriations to save teaching positions and limit class size. Unit B administrators also agreed to a similar waiver in professional development appropriations. Reimbursement was not formally provided

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- Policies and practices were in place for the identification, recruitment, and selection of effective teaching staff, and the district provided opportunities for professional growth.
- Professional development was a coordinated, institutionalized process across the district, mostly funded through grants.

### Areas for Improvement

- Four teachers and two administrators were not appropriately licensed and the district did not apply for waivers for them to the DOE.
- Teachers and administrators were not explicitly held accountable for student achievement in their evaluations.



for graduate school courses.

Training in data-based decision-making was provided to at least 100 teachers as part of the professional development efforts within the district. Professional development also focused on support for elementary student literacy, students with limited English proficiency, curriculum implementation, and vocational program implementation.

Westfield was also successful in retaining personnel through its professional development offerings and other benefits. One such benefit was the school district's collaboration with Westfield State College in which students in the education field did their practica in the school district, and faculty were allowed to teach or attend courses at the college.

Promotional opportunities were available for teachers and administrators, such as supervisor and principal positions. A number of extracurricular stipended positions were available and teachers could apply for mentor and mentor coordinator positions.

### Evaluation

Teacher and Unit B administrator evaluations were not performed in a timely fashion, and teachers and administrators were not explicitly held accountable for improving student achievement in their evaluations. Evaluations of principals did not follow the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership, but were performed annually. Evaluations of teachers did not consistently address the Principles of Effective Teaching. Teachers and administrative staffing were stable during the period under review, and the district provided appropriate levels of funding to support programs that would improve the performance of teachers and other professional staff.

## Access, Participation and Student Academic Support

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

### Services

The district and school leadership conducted aggregated and disaggregated analysis of achievement data; however, analysis of achievement data was not consistent at all schools across the district. Based upon the analysis of data, several support programs were instituted for at-risk students. An alternative high school located at the vocational high school for behavioral-needs students was created, and a summer program for at-risk students was instituted at the vocational school. Title I services were in place in reading and math for five elementary schools and one middle school. MCAS remediation was common at the high school. Early intervention programs in literacy were in place, but did not ensure that all students were proficient in ELA by the end of grade 4. Programs such as Reading First, BayState Reader, and the Literacy Collaborative were in place and in use for early learners, but practitioners hoped for better results than were obtained.

The district did not have policies, procedures, and practices in place to increase subgroup representation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. While no student was excluded from such courses, active recruitment did not occur.

The district did have practices, but not written procedures, in place to address the needs of homeless and transient students and to help students transition from grade to grade or school to school. The Bridge Program, designed to provide summer academic instruction to students not meeting expectations, was a successful initiative.

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- Student attendance was above the state average.
- The district tracked staff attendance and made provisions to ensure the continuity of instruction when teachers were absent.

### Areas for Improvement

- Analysis of achievement data was not consistent at all schools across the district.
- Less than half Westfield's Grade 4 students were proficient in reading in 2005.
- The district did not have written policies or consistent practices for all students transitioning between schools and grades, though informal practices were used across the district.
- 282 students dropped out from 2002 to 2004, and suspension rates were high during the latter part of the period under review.

## Attendance

Westfield's average student attendance rate exceeded the state's average. According to interviewees, administrators collected and analyzed student attendance data. A review of attendance data provided to the EQA team showed that the attendance rate was 94.5 percent in school year 2003-2004, and 94.9 percent in 2004-2005, both higher than the state average for the same period.

Students who had undocumented absences in excess of 10 percent could be subjected to denial of course credit or promotion. Student attendance was tracked in the aggregate using Star Base and SIMMs software. The school committee policy was restated in each school's student/parent handbook.

Staff attendance was monitored and practices were in place to ensure that students had access to qualified instruction at all times. Teachers averaged 9.73 days absent during school year 2004-2005, excluding absences to attend professional development activities.

## Discipline and Dropout Prevention

Procedures and practices to reduce suspensions and dropouts were in place during the period under review. Programs such as the alternative high school, located at the vocational school, and the locally developed Reconnecting Youth were put in place to assist in minimizing dropout numbers. According to data provided to the Department of Education, 282 students dropped out from 2002 to 2004. While policies and practices were in place to decrease the number of students dropping out of school, no practice was in place to encourage them to return to school.

A review of DOE suspension and retention data for the period under review indicated that Westfield's rates exceeded the state averages. Out-of-school suspensions exceeded the state average in 2005. In-school suspension rates exceeded the state average in fiscal years 2003 and 2004. DOE data indicated that district retentions for the 2003-2004 school year totaled 346 students, of which 190 retentions occurred in grades 9-12. In all years, the district retention rate was below the state average. Westfield High School utilized the Team Plus Program for at-risk students, which was later replaced with Foundation for Excellent Schools. One hundred freshmen were assigned mentors who were upper-class college preparatory students. During the period under review, both high schools utilized the interim alternative education setting as an alternative to suspension.

## 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 district's budget was developed through an open, participatory process. Budget documents were clear, comprehensive, and complete. The business manager provided accurate information on all fund sources as well as budgetary history and trends. Aggregated and disaggregated student data were used to a limited degree to develop the budget; however, analysis of student achievement data was not consistent during the period under review. Some district practices were in place to analyze student data and allocate budget resources.

The district's accounting technology integrated district-level financial information of each school and program. Payroll and purchasing protocols ensured spending was within fiscal budget limits. The district aggressively pursued and acquired state and federal competitive grants, which allowed the district to supplement and implement a number of programs. The business manager monitored all revolving accounts to ensure they were managed efficiently. A review of financial documents indicated that the district had systems in place to ensure all state procurement laws were followed. The business manager was not certified, but was involved in a DOE certification program. Interviewees indicated no one in the district was MCPPO certified.

### Financial Support

The community annually provided sufficient financial resources to ensure educationally sound programs, as evidenced by a sufficient district revenue

## Performance at a Glance

### Ratings on Performance Indicators

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



### Areas of Strength

- The district had a clear, comprehensive budget document that was developed through an open, participatory process and that reflected the DIP and SIPs.
- The district aggressively pursued and acquired state and federal competitive grants.
- The district had a preventative maintenance program that interfaced with the district's long-term capital plan.

### Areas for Improvement

- The district had no written agreement with the city related to 603 CMR 10.0 for calculating indirect charges.

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levy and the level of local spending for education. During the period under review, the mayor provided for supplemental revenues to offset deficit budget areas that allowed instructional staff to remain with the district. In addition, no evidence was found of a written agreement related to 603 CMR 10.0 that detailed the manner for calculating the amounts for indirect charges levied by the city. The district met or exceeded net school spending during the period under review. The financial documents indicated the district made monthly financial reports to the school committee, administrators, staff, and the public. All required local, state, and federal financial reports were accurate and filed on time.

### Facilities

The district had a preventative maintenance program to maximize the effective use of the capital and major facilities assets. According to the EQA examiners, the district's facilities were clean, safe, and well maintained. The long-term capital plan accurately reflected future capital development and improvement needs, and it was reviewed and revised as needed with input from all appropriate stakeholders.

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## CONCLUSION

The EQA examination found the Westfield Public Schools to be a 'Moderate' performing district, marked by student achievement that was 'High' in ELA and 'Low' in math on the MCAS tests. Less than half of all Westfield students scored above standard on the 2005 administration of the MCAS test. The district earned a Management Quality Index score of 'Strong', scoring highest in the area of assessment and program evaluation, and lowest, though still 'Strong', in access, participation and student academic support.

In school year 2005-2006, the district had 14 public schools ranging from an early childhood center through Grade 12: one pre-school program, eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools including a vocational high school, and a small school serving special needs students in grades 4-8. During the review period, the district was governed by a school committee and managed by a superintendent, a director of special education, a director of curriculum and instruction, a director of human resources, a business manager, and numerous principals, assistant principals, and other administrative personnel.

The relationship between the school district and the city was stable and strong. The EQA examiners found through interviews with district staff that a culture of collegiality and cooperation existed, and administrators credited the superintendent and the mayor with creating this culture. The mayor was strongly committed to the schools, and approximately 65 percent of the city's budget was designated for the district. The city exceeded its Net School Spending requirement. During the review period, the teachers' union and the district jointly agreed to waive approximately \$300,000 per year in professional development appropriations to save teaching positions and limit class size in an effort to improve student achievement. This waiver was not in place for the FY07 budget. Although aging technology was a concern in the district, the city issued bonds to equip the vocational high school with over \$3 million of modern computer-aided drafting and manufacturing machines.

The district succeeded in obtaining competitive grants. District documents indicated that grants received by the district totaled \$5,829,998 in FY03, \$6,481,270 in FY04, and \$5,975,173 in FY05. This grant revenue allowed the district to supplement and implement a number of programs, including a major venture with a local college to help faculty teach ELL students in the district. Services to the ELL population were concentrated at the South Middle, Highland, and Franklin Avenue schools in an effort to steer the grant services to that population.

The EQA examiners found that the Westfield Public Schools were managed effectively, for the most part. The superintendent delegated authority for the operation of the schools to the

principals, although student achievement was not used to evaluate the effectiveness of that delegation. Schools had SIPs aligned with the DIP, and these plans were oriented toward improved achievement.

Curricula in all tested areas were aligned horizontally and vertically for grades K-12. The district had established K-12 linear curriculum committees for the purpose of auditing and revising the district's curriculum. The administrative staff had regular and systematic practices to ensure that all staff regularly used aggregated and disaggregated student assessment data to improve instructional programs and services, according to evidence provided. Based on student assessment results conducted throughout the year, instructional programs were modified. Examples included an increase in mathematics instruction at the elementary level and adjustments in the sequence of mathematics instruction at the middle and high school levels to conform to the timing of the MCAS tests.

Teachers were provided professional development and mentoring. Training in data-based decision-making was provided to at least 100 teachers. Professional development also focused on support for elementary student literacy, students with limited English proficiency, and curriculum implementation. Yet, officials expressed frustration that despite financial commitment by the city and the focus on achievement, assessment, and curriculum in the district, improved student achievement during the period under review was limited.

Teacher and Unit B administrator evaluations were not performed in a timely fashion, and teachers and administrators were not explicitly held accountable for improving student achievement in their evaluations. Additionally, interviewees cited programmatic and financial challenges facing the district, such as the physical condition of some schools, population growth, the need to better serve bilingual populations, and aging technology. The district had power interruptions and problems with servers, and new technology purchases were limited due to budget restraints.

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## APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

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

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

### *Data-Driven Assessment*

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

1. Are the district's students reaching 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?

### *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 an on-site review. This review seeks to provide a more complete picture of why the district is performing at that level, examining district management, planning and actions and how they are implemented at the building level. It focuses in particular on whether the district uses data to inform its efforts.

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and 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.



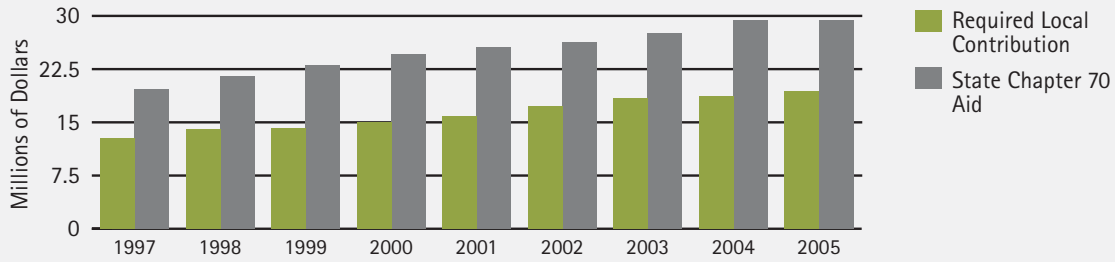
## APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN EQA TECHNICAL REPORTS

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

APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1997–2005

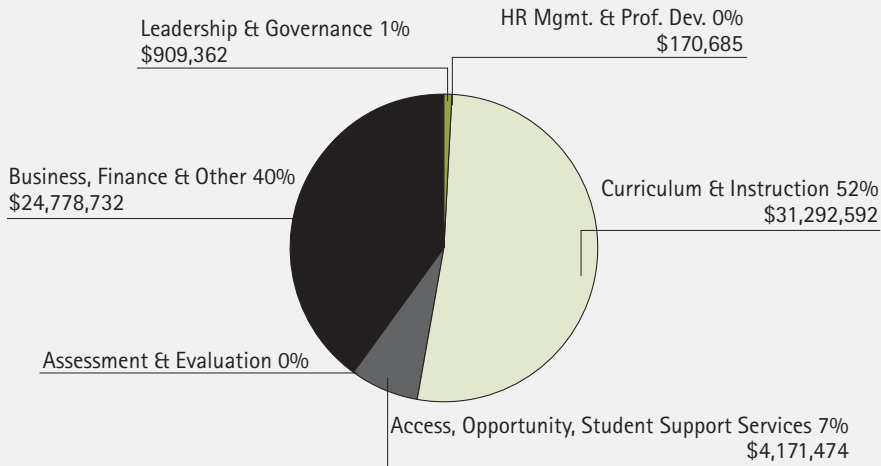
A school district's funding is partly determined by the Chapter 70 program – the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to providing state aid to support school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of Westfield Public Schools' funding derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute. For the nine-year period, FY97 to FY05, Westfield met the state-mandated net school spending requirement. During the same period, Chapter 70 aid to Westfield increased 49.3 percent (from \$19,643,731 to \$29,328,636). Westfield's required local contribution increased 51.5 percent (from \$12,810,576 to \$19,402,210). Since FY1997, Westfield received a total of \$226,895,546 in Chapter 70 aid and was required to raise locally \$145,611,483.

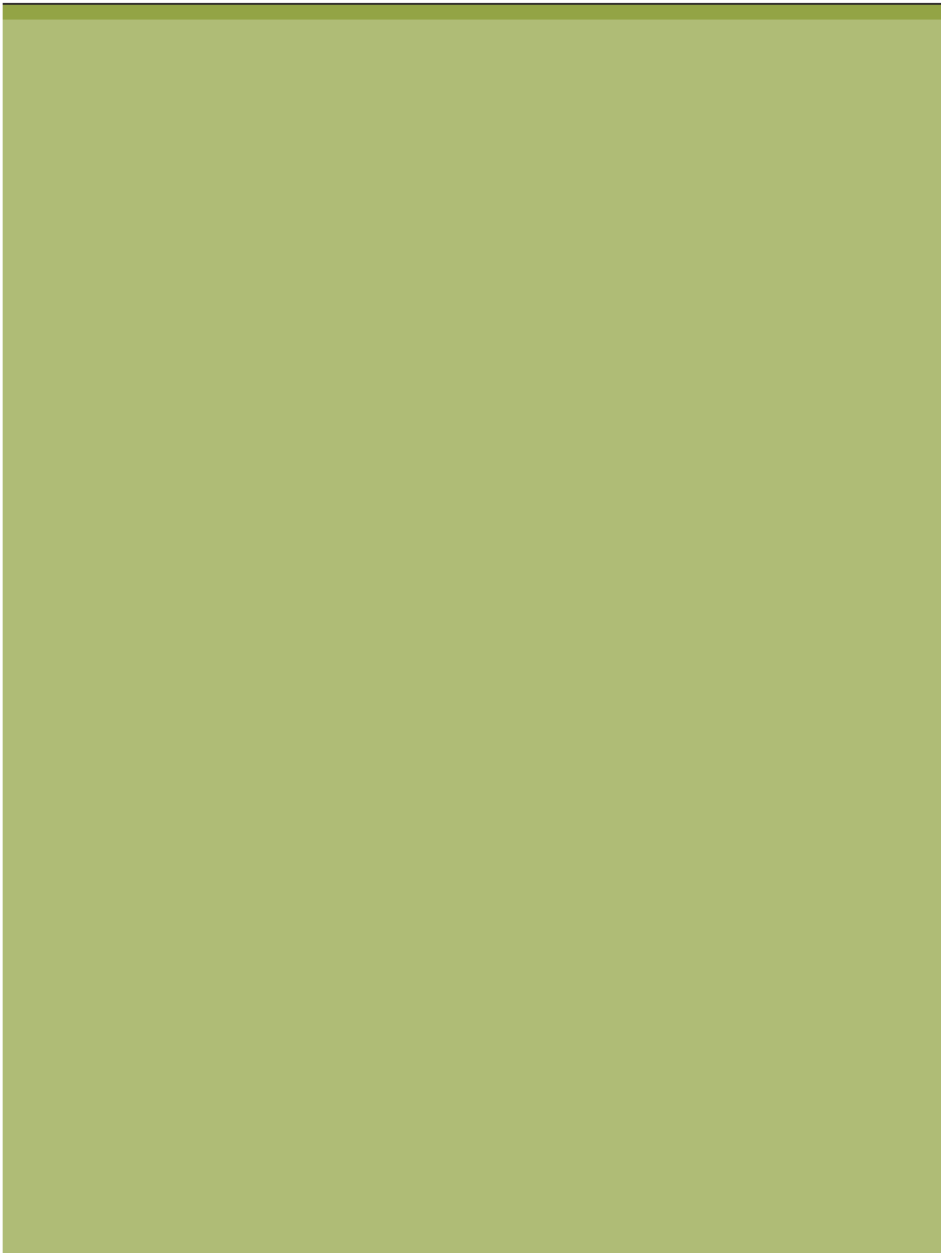
WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

FY04 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges), based on the district's submission to the DOE at the time of the EQA's on-site review.





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