**Timeline: Holyoke Public Schools History as an Underperforming/Level 4 District**

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| **2003-Early 2007** |
| **Reports/Analyses** |
| **District Reviews of Holyoke Public Schools (HPS)*** **May 2003**: Tier II School District Examination Report is completed by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) in partnership with The Education Management Audit Council (EMAC). The report recommends HPS to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for a “declaration of underperformance.”

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/technical/03\_0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html)* **April 2004**: Tier III School District Examination Report is completed by EQA in partnership with EMAC. The report provides HPS with more details to inform the district’s turnaround plan[.http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/technical/04\_0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html)
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| **Responses/Assistance** |
| **District Accountability Designations and Planning*** **November 2003:** BESE designates HPS as an “underperforming” district as a result of the EQA review.
* **August 2004**: HPS submits a turnaround plan to BESE.
* **September 2004**: BESE accepts HPS’ turnaround plan.
* **2005-2007:** Turnaround partnership is established to support the implementation of the turnaround plan.
* The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) provides HPS with a partner, *America’s Choice*, to build on the district’s capacity to implement the turnaround plan and establishes a turnaround partnership team with *America’s Choice*, HPS, and ESE.[[1]](#footnote-1) The resulting partnership focuses on supporting district-wide initiatives, building district leadership team capacity, and providing targeted school- based interventions.
* ESE helps HPS update the turnaround plan with clearer progress benchmarks and student performance goals that could be tracked and monitored.
* ESE funds a full time *America’s Choice* leader to work directly with HPS to support implementation of key partner strategies.
* *America’s Choice* provides school-based training for literacy programs and interventions in elementary schools and Grade Nine.
* ESE provided funding for additional district positions, including a data analyst and positions for an alternative program for newcomers. ESE also funds work with benchmark assessments.
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| **Late 2007-2009**  |
| **Reports/Analyses** |
| **Ongoing Feedback for Improvement** * **May 2007:** A Turnaround Plan Benchmarking Report is completed by EQA in partnership with EMAC.

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/turnaround/07\_0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html)* The report states that HPS improved its capacity and instructional program through greater alignment of district activities, with central office staff and principals better organized and resourced to promote consistent curriculum delivery, coaching and professional development. Resources available to schools were increased and more equitably distributed across HPS schools.
* In addition, the report concludes that HPS is in the early stages of the implementation of its turnaround plan, and many improvements have not yet been deeply embedded. Student achievement remains consistently low, with insufficient improvement. (In 2006, HPS performance on the MCAS was “low” in English language arts (ELA) and “very low” in mathematics).
* **May 2008:**  ESE contracts *The Meristem Group* to evaluate HPS’ turnaround initiative to document progress and develop recommendations. Its Evaluation Report on HPS’ Turnaround Initiative includes the following statements:
* “After three years of operation, the Holyoke turnaround initiative has succeeded in creating consistent and widespread changes in some areas of teaching and learning…”
* “America’s Choice provided a…powerful framework for conducting instructional changes that was broadly adaptable to the needs of the district… but more emphasis needed to be placed on the needs of English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD).”

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/turnaround/08\_0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html)* **June 2009:** ESE conducts a District Plan for School Intervention Review (DPSI). The findings include the following key recommendations:
* Provide more support in the upper grades for ELLs and SWDs, and in all grades in mathematics
* Expand existing teacher recruitment to hire candidates qualified to work with HPS’ student population
* Improve and increase support provided to new teachers
* Develop formalized expectations and tools for principals to frequently monitor teacher practice and provide specific feedback on improving instruction
* Build the capacity of teachers to use student achievement data to make informed instructional decisions. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html>
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| **Responses/Assistance** |
| **Turnaround Partnership Support Continues** * **2008 and 2009**: ESE continues to fund the *America’s Choice* partnership plus additional training and positions focused on the following initiatives:
* Teacher evaluation training with *William Ribas & Associates* and mathematics content training for teachers through *Lesley University*
* English Language Development (ELD) curriculum and program development
* Development of a cohort of trained mentors
* Support for Resource Development position
* Leadership training
* *Reading First* coaching support at three schools
* *Transient Opportunity Program* (TOP) to provide support to mobile student population
* Two case managers leading the *One Family at a Time* project
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| **2010-Present**  |
| **Reports/Analyses** |
| **More District Reviews of HPS*** **October 2010**: ESE conducts a Level 4 District Review.[http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/level4/11\_0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html)

The resulting report states, “While there are positive initiatives in the district to address some of the issues that placed it in Level 4, the district has not completely and systematically carried out any of the initiatives in the turnaround plan.” Systems related to leadership, accountability, human resources, assessment, student support, and professional development were not sufficient to improve student achievement. The report noted that there was variation between schools in curriculum implementation and the use of achievement data.* **January 20-23, 2015:** ESE staff conducts a District Review of HPS.
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| **Responses/Assistance** |
| **Actions in HPS as a Result of an Act Relative to the Achievement Gap[[2]](#footnote-2)*** **April 2010:** HPS is “grandfathered in” as a Level 4 district under the new *Framework for Accountability and Assistance.*
* **June 2010**: Two of HPS’ schools, Morgan Elementary School and William J. Dean Technical High School (Dean THS), are designated Level 4 in the state’s *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance*. HPS becomes the first district designated Level 4 as a result of both ineffective district systems and having Level 4 schools.

**HPS’ Level 4 and 5 Schools*** **July 2011**: Morgan Elementary School is approved for School Redesign Grant (SRG) funding.
* **July 2011 - 2013**: Dean THS is approved for SRG funding to restart with turnaround operator, Collaborative for Educational Services (CES).
* **July 2013**: New turnaround operator, Project GRAD USA (GRAD USA) partners with the district to support Dean THS.
* **October 2013**: Morgan Elementary School is designated Level 5 in the state’s *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance*; Dean THS remained Level 4.
* **January 2014**: GRAD USA is appointed receiver for Morgan Elementary School.
* **June 9, 2014:** State Board approves a final turnaround plan for Morgan Elementary School.
* **January – June 2014**: ESE monitors progress and partnership at DVTHS using benchmarks and quarterly monitoring visits.
* **September 2014:** ESE provides grant funding to support *Teach Plus* partnership at Dean THS for teacher leadership recruitment and training for school year 2014-15.

**Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) Process*** **2011-Present:** ESE has provided guidance, assistance, and monitoring through the AIP process. This process continues and is ongoing. The HPS final 2014-15 AIP was submitted with updated benchmarks on December 19, 2014 and has not yet been approved.
* HPS has created an AIP annually based on findings from the 2010 Level 4 District Review and other weaknesses identified by the district.

 Year 2 AIP (2012-13):<http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html> Year 3 AIP (2013-14): [http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/review/district/reports/aip/2013-0137.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/level5districts.html) * ESE has provided feedback on and subsequently approved each plan.
* ESE has funded a Plan Manager team to assist HPS with AIP planning, coordination, and implementation. The District Management Council (DMC) has been hired for this work.
* ESE funded a plan monitor (independent consultant) to determine the extent to which the district has met its AIP targets and to provide quarterly reports to the superintendent and school committee.
* ESE has provided ongoing support to the district, plan manager, and plan monitor, to calibrate expectations and guide a continuous cycle of improvement.
* **September 2014:** ESE provides grant funding to HPS to hire DMC to conduct a thorough staffing analysis to inform best practices in staffing and budget allocation, including a "deep dive" into special education spending, general education staffing, outside vendor requirements, and federal grants management.
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1. *America’s Choice* worked in partnership with HPS and ESE through 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In April 2010, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted comprehensive new regulations for underperforming schools and districts consistent with the January 2010 *Act Relative to the Achievement Gap.* The *Framework for Accountability and Assistance* placed districts in underperforming status as a result of (1) systemic *district weaknesses* identified by a district review, and/or(2) inadequate *school performance* – having at least one school that is placed in Level 4 because of low levels of absolute achievement, annual growth rate, and/or improvement trend. Holyoke’s underperforming status, Level 4 schools, and weaknesses identified by district review led to its Level 4 status. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)