



Evaluation of Massachusetts Reading First  
**Targeted Assistance Grant Program**

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## Introduction

Massachusetts was awarded a Targeted Assistance Grant (TAG) as a supplement to its federal FY 2004 Reading First award. The only State Educational Agency (SEA) to qualify for the TAG funds, Massachusetts received the entire sum – over \$3 million. Massachusetts then distributed those funds among the three Reading First Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that met the necessary eligibility criteria. LEA eligibility within the state was derived directly from Reading First TAG legislation. Specifically, each LEA had to meet *all* of the following criteria:

- It had met the requirements of its original Reading First sub-grant and could ensure that it would carry out TAG requirements
- It would work with other LEAs in the state that did *not* receive TAG money with the goal of helping them increase the reading achievement of their students
- It could demonstrate an increase in the percentage of first through third grade students in its Reading First schools performing at the proficient level in reading for the most recent two consecutive years
- It could demonstrate an increase in the percentage of the third grade students in its Reading First schools (in *each* of the following categories) performing at the proficient level in reading for the most recent two consecutive years:
  - Economically disadvantaged students
  - Students from each of the major racial and ethnic groups
  - Students with disabilities
  - Students with limited English proficiency

Each of the three eligible LEAs submitted a detailed proposal outlining potential activities to be funded with TAG money. All three eligible LEAs were awarded TAG sub-grants and all funded activities were aligned with the goals of Reading First. The three LEAs that received TAG funds were: Boston Renaissance Charter School, Plymouth Public Schools, and Westfield Public Schools. Together these three LEAs comprise six TAG-funded schools ranging in size from fewer than 150 to almost 1,000 kindergarten through third grade students. Table 1, below, provides the dollar amount that each LEA was awarded.

**Table 1: TAG Awards by LEA**

LEA	Number of RF Schools	Number of K-3 Students (FY07)	TAG Award
Boston Renaissance Charter School	1	926	\$823,600
Plymouth Public Schools	2	799	\$1,053,600
Westfield Public Schools	3	460	\$1,163,600

As the external evaluator of Massachusetts TAG activities, the UMass Donahue Institute conducted semi-structured phone interviews with several key individuals, including district coordinators, reading specialists, and principals in each of the TAG-funded schools. The results of those interviews are provided in this report, which summarizes the ways in which TAG funds were used by the three LEAs and what the perceived impact of those additional funds was on districts, schools, teachers, students, and the wider community.

## Collective Use of TAG Funds

Massachusetts Reading First is committed to wide dissemination of professional development and best practices. In keeping with this theme, some of the TAG monies were used to fund statewide events, open to all Reading First schools. Each of the three TAG-funded LEAs allocated a portion of their award to fund several statewide professional development activities.

Most prominently, TAG districts contributed funding toward the August 2006 statewide conference. In addition, representatives from each TAG-funded LEA worked closely with the Massachusetts Department of Education (MADOE) and The Title I Dissemination Project to plan the event. The TAG-funded statewide conference was different from previous conferences because classroom teachers were allowed to attend. Convening such a large number of people had never been possible with Reading First money alone. Prior conferences were targeted toward district coordinators, principals, and reading specialists, who were then tasked with bringing the information back to their classroom teachers. To accommodate the very large number of attendees, the day-long statewide conference was held twice, on August 16 and 17, 2006 in Sturbridge.

The conference offered sessions covering a wide variety of topics and presented by a vast array of speakers. Dr. Timothy Shanahan provided the keynote address on the topic of research-based instruction. Over 2,000 individuals attended the conference and the reaction to the event was overwhelmingly positive.<sup>1</sup> The following are just a few examples of how well-received this event was. Of the 1,295 individuals who completed feedback surveys:

- 74% rated the overall quality of the conference as good or excellent
- 80% indicated that the information presented would be useful to them in their daily work
- 84% rated the clarity of the presentations as good or excellent
- 76% found Dr. Timothy Shanahan's keynote address to be of good or excellent quality
- 70% found the information delivered via the keynote address to be useful

The primary criticism of the event was that it was so well attended that some individuals could not get into the sessions of their choosing. An interview with Stuart Peskin of the Title I Dissemination Project revealed that a substantial number of individuals who had not registered for the conference did in fact attend, which explains the unanticipated crowds and the "standing room only" situation at some of the more popular sessions. Another testament to the success of this statewide event is the fact that Mr. Peskin has been receiving calls from individuals wondering whether there will be a similar conference held in August 2007. Interviews for the purpose of this report revealed that West Elementary, in Plymouth, surveyed its teachers upon their return from the statewide conference and found the response to be thoroughly positive. Those teachers appreciated the opportunity to talk across districts and they expressed interest in attending similar conferences in the future.

In addition to the statewide conference, TAG districts used their funds to sponsor various trainings across the state, including Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) trainings<sup>2</sup>, VoyagerU trainings<sup>3</sup>, and Leadership trainings. Previously, MADOE offered these trainings to a limited number of people, primarily reading specialists. The use of TAG money, however, allowed these events to be opened up to many more teachers and staff from Reading First schools. And the response was highly positive. According to an

<sup>1</sup> For a thorough examination of the feedback gathered at this conference, please see Technical Report MRFP-045.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough examination of the feedback gathered at the various LETRS trainings, please see Technical Reports MRFP-044, 048, 051, 052, 053, 055, and 056.

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough examination of the feedback gathered at the VoyagerU training, please see Technical Report MRFP-058.

interviewee from South Elementary in Plymouth, those who attended the LETRS trainings found it to be some of the most useful professional development they had ever received.

TAG funding also allowed for the inclusion of classroom teachers at Reading First regional meetings. Prior to the receipt of TAG funding, these meetings had been largely restricted to reading specialists, who were then tasked with bringing the information back to their classroom teachers. Overall, the response to the regional meetings has been positive.<sup>4</sup> For example, of the 242 survey respondents at the September 2006 regional meetings, 95% rated the overall quality of the event as either good or excellent and 94% felt the same way about the usefulness of the information presented. Similarly, of the 158 survey respondents at the November 2006 regional meetings, 97% rated the overall quality favorably and 92% found the information presented to be useful.

Interviews with TAG-funded schools, as well as the feedback gathered at the regional meetings, demonstrate the importance of allowing classroom teachers to attend these events. One Westfield interviewee emphasized the importance of welcoming classroom teachers to attend the meetings and gather the information firsthand. Comments written on the feedback surveys from the September 2006 regional meetings also point out the value of allowing teachers to participate. Below are a few examples:

*Thank you for inviting teachers to this workshop. It was very helpful.*

*Please continue to allow the additional two teachers to come! It was great.*

*I want to thank you for the opportunity of allowing classroom teachers to attend this session. It is very empowering.*

Overall, it is clear that TAG funding impacted individuals across the state through the various professional development opportunities it funded. Most specifically, the TAG money afforded classroom teachers the unique opportunity to attend both the statewide conference and the regional meetings.

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough examination of the feedback data gathered at the regional meetings, please see Technical Reports MRFP-046 and 050.

## Individual LEA Use of TAG Funds

After funding statewide professional development activities, each LEA spent the remainder of their TAG award on materials, personnel, and activities as outlined in their sub-grant proposals. This section of the report provides some details on how each LEA made use of their TAG funds and how the impact of the grant is perceived by those working within the LEA.

### Boston Renaissance Charter School

Boston Renaissance Charter School (BRCS) focused the use of their TAG award largely around dissemination of best practices. To that end, they created a partnership with Boston Public Schools and worked particularly closely with the Tobin School, which is funded by Reading First. As a result of this partnership, individuals from the Tobin School were invited to learn about BRCS's use of assessments and interventions. Tobin faculty members were encouraged to periodically observe BRCS classrooms and talk with the BRCS reading specialist.

In February 2007, BRCS held a "Reading First Intervention Showcase" to which they invited MADOE staff members as well as Boston Public School employees. This showcase involved classroom observations and discussions about the use of DIBELS and specific intervention programs.

BRCS also focused their dissemination efforts on the wider community through the production of the *It Takes a Village* television series. They taped six episodes that are now airing on a local cable channel. The shows addressed a variety of topics including Reading First, Study Skills, Media Literacy, and MCAS.

BRCS also reached out beyond the local community to spread their message statewide, nationally, and internationally. They had proposals accepted by and made presentations at the Massachusetts Reading Association Conference and the National Reading First Conference, as well as a reading conference in Israel. Finally, BRCS received a visit from *60 Minutes* in preparation for a possible story on Reading First. At the time of the interviews it was still unclear whether the story would make it to air, but Cleopatra Knight-Wilkins, of BRCS, said in her interview for this evaluation that the reporter spent the entire day at the school and was clearly impressed with what he observed.

In addition to their obvious focus on dissemination, BRCS also used their TAG award to hire personnel, purchase technology, and institute new programs all designed to improve their students' reading ability. BRCS hired several part-time reading specialists to work directly with small groups of students. A new instructional technology lab was also put in place by fall of 2006, which allows a greater number of students to access interventions such as *Read Naturally*. The part-time reading specialists also spend time working with students in the new computer lab. Finally, BRCS instituted a summer program for new students. According to Ms. Knight-Wilkins, students who are just entering BRCS tend to perform at lower levels than veteran BRCS students. So, to help the new students catch up, they created a four-week summer program focused on the five components of literacy.

It should be noted here that in addition to carrying out all the plans outlined in their sub-grant proposal, BRCS also went to great lengths to document the work they did. They compiled a binder that details every aspect of their use of the TAG award, including meeting agendas, press releases, and a DVD of *It Takes a Village*.

When asked to discuss the impact of the TAG award, BRCS interviewees spoke most frequently about benefits to teachers, increased reading ability among students, and collaboration with other schools.

Teachers at BRCS benefited from the TAG award in three distinct ways. First, the TAG money allowed BRCS to purchase additional supplies and materials, which meant that teachers no longer had to share across classrooms. Second, the summer program for new students doubled as a training event for new BRCS teachers. Having the opportunity to be trained over the summer gave them a “leg up” when the school year started. The third benefit to BRCS teachers was an emotional one. Interviewees indicated that BRCS teachers are now taking more pride in their work and they truly appreciate having been recognized for their hard work by being awarded the TAG money. In addition, working closely with, and being observed by, faculty from other schools has boosted teacher confidence. In short, BRCS teachers feel good about what they are doing.

Students at BRCS were also impacted by the TAG award. Interviewees indicated that DIBELS scores have increased, showing a general improvement in reading ability. BRCS interviewees also noted specific increases in the areas of comprehension and fluency. In addition, those students who participated in the summer program showed improvement.

BRCS’s focus on collaboration with other schools also had an impact. Interviewees reported that the Intervention Showcase opened up the channels of communication between Reading First and non-Reading First schools in Boston and that these new relationships should endure long after the TAG money is gone. BRCS staff also appreciated the opportunity that this award gave them to work with the other two TAG-funded LEAs. They found value in talking with those other LEAs to plan events and bounce ideas off each other.

When asked whether the TAG award had any negative effects, BRCS interviewees could think of none. One individual did indicate that being a TAG recipient meant additional time and effort on her part, but that that was an expected result of participating, so she did not actually qualify it as a negative effect of the grant. The only other “downside” to the TAG award that was mentioned was that it, like all good things, must come to an end.

At the time of the interviews, BRCS did not have any solid plans in place for sustaining its TAG-funded activities or personnel once the funding is gone. But interviewees did point out that much of what BRCS spent its award on is long-lasting. Technology, materials, and the newly-forged relationships with other schools should endure well past the life of the grant.

## Plymouth Public Schools

Plymouth Public Schools (PPS) did not focus their use of TAG funding in any one specific area, but addressed a number of important issues including direct support for students, professional development, acquisition of technology and materials, and outreach to parents.

PPS used TAG money to provide direct support to students by instituting both an extended day program and an extended year program and also hiring a part-time interventionist to work directly with small groups of students. PPS’s extended day program consisted of before-school tutoring for first through third graders two mornings a week. Students were selected to participate in this extended day program based on their DIBELS scores and teacher recommendations. The tutoring itself was done using Houghton Mifflin’s extra support materials. Both RF-funded schools within PPS also ran extended year programs using Houghton Mifflin’s Summer Curriculum. These “Summer Reading Camps” ran for four weeks and served a total of about 100 students. In addition, South Elementary used some of its TAG money to hire a part-time interventionist to work directly with third grade students using *Soar to Success* and other programs.

The TAG award enabled PPS staff to take advantage of numerous professional development opportunities during the course of the grant. In addition to sending about 90% of its staff to the statewide Reading First conference, PPS sent five individuals to the National Reading First Conference. PPS staff also attended regional meetings, LETRS trainings, and *Read Naturally* trainings. Finally, PPS created its own professional development series that brought a different speaker to the district each month.

PPS purchased 46 new computers and upgraded their *Lexia* software. They are also using their new computers to visit the Houghton Mifflin website and take advantage of the complementary materials provided there. West Elementary also purchased a photocopier just for Reading First-related use as well as digital cameras and a bookbinding machine. West Elementary also used a portion of their TAG money to buy new library books and to renovate a section of their library once used for storage into a comfortable, well-lit reading space now known affectionately as the “Book Nook”. South Elementary purchased Palm Pilots for DIBELS administration and replenished their reading closet with updated materials.

In order to reach out to parents, PPS improved their parent workshops, instituted a Family Literacy Night, published a literacy newsletter, and created both a parent resources library and a parent resource section in the Plymouth Public Library. Pre-existing parent workshops were given an extra boost by TAG funding. For example, PPS used TAG funding to create kindergarten literacy bags that were handed out to parents attending the kindergarten orientation. These bags contained a variety of materials that parents were shown how to use to promote literacy, encourage oral language skills, and aid motor development. West elementary held its First Annual Literacy night, which was attended by about 90 students and their parents. Families were given the chance to hear school staff read classic literature and then have milk and cookies with folks dressed up like characters from those stories. PPS also published a literacy newsletter that was sent out to all eight elementary schools in the district. The audience for the newsletter was both teachers and parents. West Elementary created a parent resource library that resides in the main hall of the school. It contains books and games intended to help promote literacy, which parents are encouraged to check out to use at home with their children. Letters have been sent home to parents reminding them about the library and how to use it. Finally, parent resource books, educational games, DVDs, and audio books were purchased for a new parent resource section in the Plymouth Public Library.

PPS interviewees noted several tangible impacts of the TAG award on teachers, students, and parents. The first effect of the grant was that teachers in the TAG-funded schools were initially very proud to have “won” the money. PPS gave each teacher \$900.00 to spend on materials for their classroom, as they saw fit. This autonomy helped teachers feel as if the TAG money was truly a reward for their hard work and also contributed to the boost in teacher morale. Once the TAG programming was underway, teachers benefitted from the professional development opportunities. West Elementary surveyed teachers upon their return from the statewide conference and found the response to be overwhelmingly positive. They particularly enjoyed having time to talk across districts, and all expressed interest in attending another conference in the future. Those who attended LETRS trainings were also impacted. Teachers at South Elementary found the LETRS trainings, which were tailored to them and their core program, to be the best professional development they’d ever had. Further proof of the impact of TAG-funded professional development is that teachers in non-funded schools within Plymouth are seeking out similar opportunities for themselves. Also, according to interviewees at South Elementary, teachers are now making even better use of assessment results and teachers throughout the entire district are adept at implementing the three tier model.

PPS students were also impacted by the TAG award. The extended day program appears to have made a difference, as some of the students who participated in that tutoring program were able to move out of intervention. Similarly, students who participated in the extended year program have shown progress. Their DIBELS and GRADE scores tended to either maintain over the summer or, in some cases, increase. In addition, the third grade students who have worked with the new part-time interventionist are also improving their

assessment scores. According to one interviewee, many of those students have improved enough to hit benchmark. PPS interviewees also reported that their total number of Special Education students is down and that a greater percentage of first grade students are now being promoted as “readers” than were prior to Reading First. PPS students are also being impacted in more subtle ways. For example, students who participated in the extended day program were really excited about the opportunity and were pleased to receive awards and prizes at the end. PPS students are also motivated by their own assessment scores. PPS teacher share assessment results with students and the students take pride in monitoring their own improvement over time.

Finally, interviewees at both schools indicated that parents of students in the TAG-funded schools were clearly impacted by the grant. PPS parents are genuinely appreciative of the direct services to students that came out of the TAG award, such as the extended day and extended year programs. At the end of the extended year program, a parent survey yielded very positive responses and many parents have called the schools asking if their child can participate again next summer. Some parents have contacted the district asking for a program that does for math what Reading First does for literacy.

PPS respondents could think of just two drawbacks to having received the TAG award. The first is that such a small number of schools were able to participate. Although PPS was thrilled to have won the award, at least one interviewee felt a little guilty because so many other schools could have benefitted from the money. The only other drawback was the brief duration of the TAG grant. Given more time, PPS could have made more thoughtful decisions about how to spend the money. In addition, spreading out the professional development opportunities over a longer period of time might have made it more effective and prevented staff burnout.

For PPS, staffing will be the largest issue after the grant ends. At the time of the interviews, PPS was looking for a way to retain the part-time interventionist after the TAG money runs out. The extended year program will take place again during summer 2007 and will be funded with Reading First money. But interviewees did not have any plans for sustaining the extended day or extended year programs past the end of Reading First. Fortunately for PPS, the use of assessments is institutionalized and will continue as long as the principals and reading specialists remain committed. The entire district, including non-Reading First schools, already administer DIBELS and every school will also be using GRADE beginning in the fall of 2007. Principal Ellen Gunning of South Elementary indicated that future hires at that school must be individuals who are committed to the goals of Reading First. This will ensure that the principles of TAG, and of Reading First, will continue to be emphasized in Plymouth long after the funding is gone.

## Westfield Public Schools

Westfield Public Schools (WPS) structured their use of TAG funds very similarly to Plymouth Public Schools. Like Plymouth, WPS also used their TAG funding in a wide variety of ways, including direct service to students, acquisition of new technology and materials, and outreach to families.

WPS used TAG funding to put both extended day and extended year programs into place. The extended day programs provided students with additional interventions and also helped third grade students prepare for MCAS. The extended year program consisted of a five week summer session that provided both classroom instruction and additional interventions. Because they were open for those five summer weeks, the Franklin Avenue School was also able to keep their library and computer room open for students to use during that portion of the summer break. Even students not participating in the extended year program were able to come to the school, use the computers, and check out library books. WPS also hired nine additional interventionists to work in the three TAG-funded schools, which enabled the schools to provide a wider variety of interventions. These individuals worked directly with students and were considered highly valuable by interviewees at all three TAG schools.

WPS used TAG money to purchase 45 new computers across the three funded schools, as well as upgraded *Lexia* licenses. The Franklin Avenue School also purchased numerous Leap Pads for use in the classrooms. This enabled them to hold their Leap Frog Game Nights (see below). Some TAG money was also used for other materials and supplies. For example, the Moseley School purchased supplies for eight classroom libraries, Franklin Avenue purchased their student assessment materials, and all three schools purchased LETRS training materials for their teachers.

WPS also focused some of their TAG activities on reaching out to the families of their students. The Read to Your Child Program brought students and parents together at the Moseley School library for information on family literacy. Franklin Avenue held three successful Leap Frog Game Nights, during which parents and students competed for prizes using Leap Pads. Classroom teachers at Franklin Avenue also welcomed parents to come watch their children take part in interventions and learn how to work with their children at home. WPS also held a series of parent meetings in which teachers shared important information with parents about the five components of literacy, as well as an orientation for parents of children entering kindergarten that addressed the importance of family literacy. Finally, the WPS parent volunteer group focused some of their efforts on the five components of reading, though their manual was never revised, as originally outlined in the WPS sub-grant proposal.

When asked about the impact of the TAG award in their district, WPS interviewees spoke at length about the effect the grant has had on both teachers and students. Teachers in all three TAG-funded schools are now using both assessment data and interventions more effectively. Because they now have several interventions available to them, teachers are able to be more diagnostic and selective in addressing their students' reading difficulties.

Classroom teachers in the TAG-funded schools are also now able to be much more specific in thinking about their students' problems with reading. As one interviewee put it, instead of claiming that the students "just can't read," teachers are now able to say that a student is, for example, having trouble decoding and that leads them to try a specific intervention. WPS interviewees also credited the TAG award with increased teacher collaboration. Teachers are now using grade level meetings that were funded by TAG to discuss their students' reading difficulties and to share ideas and strategies for solving those problems. Highland School interviewees pointed out that their teachers are all speaking a common language when it comes to discussing student reading ability.

WPS classroom teachers are genuinely appreciative of the additional interventionists that were hired with TAG money. As one example of this, teachers at the Franklin Avenue School wrote their reading specialist a letter indicating that without the additional interventionists they would not be able to devote enough time to assessing students and carrying out interventions. At the Highland School, having additional interventionists allowed classroom teachers to focus on implementing the core program while the interventionists executed the other aspects of the three tier model.

Having the opportunity to attend statewide trainings and the regional meetings has empowered classroom teachers and made them feel more connected to Reading First. Carol Glynn, reading specialist for the Moseley School, emphasized during her interview the importance of having teachers hear firsthand the information disseminated at these meetings.

WPS students were also impacted by the TAG award. First and foremost, interviewees noted that GRADE scores have steadily increased and that more students are now reaching benchmark on DIBELS. In addition, third graders are moving from the Warning category into Needs Improvement on the reading MCAS. WPS interviewees have also noticed that student scores on the hearing and recording words and sounds sub-test of Clay's Observation Survey have increased. Students who participated in the extended year program were found to have either maintained or improved their skills over the summer. Moseley School interviewees noted that this

was particularly true for students in between kindergarten and first grade; students who participated in the summer program entered first grade at a higher level than those who did not. WPS interviewees also noted that special education referrals have been reduced by one-third in the past two years.

Because so many additional interventionists were hired throughout WPS, their assessment and intervention process became much faster and smoother. When new students enter a school, they can be assessed immediately and placed in any necessary interventions right away. As one interviewee from the Franklin Avenue School put it, “We’re getting to kids a lot faster” and “We’re uncovering hidden disabilities much quicker.” The students are also enjoying their work with the interventionists. One interviewee observed that there does not appear to be any stigma attached to working in the small groups and some students who are not in the interventions are asking to join in.

Finally, the students at the TAG-funded schools in Westfield know they are doing better because the teachers share assessment results with them and let them know when they are improving. Student growth is a particular focus at the Moseley School. As one interviewee put it, the students enjoy watching their progress over time and they really “rise to the occasion.”

Although incredibly appreciative of the opportunities afforded by the TAG award, WPS interviewees were able to come up with a few negative aspects to having received the grant. One reading specialist said she felt a bit of added pressure to keep student scores increasing. She was worried about receiving such a generous award and then not demonstrating student growth as a result. Other interviewees noted the added work the TAG grant meant for district and school staff, particularly since the very large amount of money had to be spent in a short period of time.

The district coordinators in Westfield would have liked to roll out Reading First and TAG activities to other schools in the district, but they were restricted from using TAG funding for that purpose. They are concerned that those schools in their district that are *not* funded by Reading First are not headed on as positive a path as the funded schools when it comes to MCAS scores. Along these same lines, one interviewee noted the jealousy from other Westfield schools as a drawback to having received the TAG award. Non-Reading First schools were jealous of the TAG schools’ resources, in particular their ability to hold extended year programs over the summer.

But by far, the most pressing concern among WPS interviewees was how to sustain the TAG activities after the additional funding is gone. At the time of the interviews, WPS was working on a sustainability plan and thinking creatively about how to continue some of the key activities that were funded by TAG money. While the materials and technology purchased with TAG money will continue to be useful for years to come, the additional interventionists and the extended day and year programs cannot continue without some source of funding.

The TAG-funded schools in Westfield are each hoping to maintain some aspects of the interventionist model they have used for the duration of the TAG grant. For example, The Highland School is looking at ways of creatively using their current staff instead of hiring new interventionists—they are considering using the library assistant and perhaps others as part-time interventionists in the future. Similarly, Franklin Avenue may decide to increase its historically small class sizes in order to free up one or two classroom teachers to act as interventionists. Franklin Avenue has also applied for an extended learning time grant as a way to continue to offer their extended day program. The Moseley School took the approach of making it clear to its teachers at the start of the TAG grant that the additional interventionists were temporary and that when the TAG funding ran out the burden would fall back on the classroom teachers. Luckily, those teachers have seen such positive results from the extra interventions that they are now “bought in” and willing to take on the extra work.

## Cross-Site Summary

Although the individual TAG-funded LEAs each decided on their own how to spend their awards, there were several similarities across all three. All three LEAs used TAG money to allow teachers and others to take advantage of numerous professional development opportunities, such as the statewide conference, LETRS trainings, and regional meetings. All three LEAs also spent TAG money on providing direct services to their students. In some cases, this involved hiring additional staff to work with students. In addition, all three LEAs instituted extended year programs to serve students in need of additional help (and two of the three LEAs also created extended day programs). All three LEAs took the opportunity to purchase new technology, most commonly additional computers and upgraded *Lexia* licenses. Finally, each LEA allocated part of their TAG award for some type of outreach. BRCS focused their efforts on collaboration with other schools in the Boston area, while Plymouth and Westfield reached out primarily to the parents of their students.

The TAG awards had a marked impact in all three LEAs. Interviewees in all three locations were readily able to discuss the effects of the grant on their teachers, students, and the surrounding community. The most tangible impact of the grant is the observed increases in student assessment scores that was noted by interviewees in all three LEAs. Teachers have also been affected by the grant in numerous ways, including increased morale, improved skills, and better use of assessment data and interventions.

Interviewees from all three LEAs spoke glowingly of the TAG funding and the opportunities it afforded their teachers and students. Below are some quotes from interviewees expressing their appreciation for the TAG award and the impact it has made on their students:

*It truly benefited our building and our kids.*

*[TAG was a] tremendous benefit to our kids.*

*[I'm] going to miss the funding ... happy to be associated with it. It's done wonders for our school.*

*[TAG] is really working.*

*[TAG] intensified and expanded the existing Reading First program...*

When asked to discuss any drawbacks to having received a TAG award, most interviewees were at a loss. The two negative aspects to the grant that were mentioned across LEAs were: (1) the difficulty of managing a grant of such magnitude in a short amount of time, and (2) the issue of how to sustain their new activities once the TAG funding is gone.

The problem of sustainability was mentioned by nearly every interviewee across all three LEAs. While appreciative of the TAG funding and the opportunities it afforded, interviewees were concerned with how to continue operating at the same level once the funding runs out. Specifically, the issues of retaining new staff members and continuing to provide extended day and extended year programs were causing much concern across the three LEAs. Each LEA had its own approach to the issue of sustainability, ranging from merely accepting the fact that some programs would stop and that more work would fall to the classroom teachers once the new personnel were no longer around, to applying for additional grants in an effort to continue providing an extended day program for students.