



Report to the Legislature: *Intervention and Targeted Assistance Efforts*

Line Item 7061-9408
March 2010

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this *Report to the Legislature: Intervention and Targeted Assistance Efforts* pursuant to Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2009, line item 7061-9408:

“For targeted intervention to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, schools and districts which have been placed in the accountability status of identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring pursuant to departmental regulations, or which have been designated Commonwealth Priority Schools or Commonwealth Pilot Schools pursuant to said regulations....”

This report outlines recent efforts and outcomes in regard to intervention and targeted assistance as funded by this line of the state budget. We continue to refine our approach to incorporate lessons learned from past efforts, promising practices, and new state and federal statutory tools.

During FY09 and FY10 the Department has focused its targeted assistance efforts on building the capacities of the 10 Commissioner’s Districts and the 4 Underperforming Districts in order that they may more effectively support their schools, particularly targeting the 182 schools in these districts that meet the criteria for Commonwealth Priority School status in 2009-10. Current funding levels have enabled us to partially address these top priorities. No school-level targeted assistance has been available for the 76 other schools across the state that meet the criteria for Commonwealth Priority School status.

While the body of the report focuses on the activities funded by this line item, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you highlights of the exciting work and steps forward as a result of recent legislation. The Department’s Division of Accountability, Partnerships and Assistance continues to evolve with the passage of Chapter 311 of the Acts of 2008 *An Act Relative to School District Accountability* and Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010 *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*. In this letter I would like to provide an update on these changes.

In FY09 the legislature enacted Chapter 311 of the Acts of 2008 (<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw08/sl080311.htm>) which changed the statute on school and district accountability and assistance. That new legislation dissolved the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and the Education Management Audit Council and shifted the responsibility for review of district performance to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It further directed the Department to create separate offices of accountability and assistance based on a deliberate clarification of roles and expectations and mandated the appointment of a senior level administrator to oversee both areas. The legislation set out clear expectations for the Department to conduct no fewer than 15 district reviews in the 2008-2009 school year as Department leaders worked to revise and clarify school and district accountability and assistance structures.

The Department has been very engaged with the newly established Advisory Council on School and District Accountability and Assistance in presenting to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education recommendations for a new Framework for District Accountability and Assistance. The *Framework* defines the Department’s approach to engaging with districts to improve student performance. District

accountability and Department assistance and intervention must be closely linked in order to produce sustainable improvement.

Four key principles have guided the development of the *Framework* (See diagram at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/framework/diagram.pdf>):

1. The district is the entry point for the Department's accountability and assistance work; the focus of state assistance will be on building district capacity to support and guide improvement efforts in individual schools; therefore, a district's placement in one of the *Framework's* five accountability levels is determined by the designation of its lowest performing school.
2. A strong accountability system will not, by itself, result in continued improvement. A parallel system of assistance and intervention is necessary to secure continued, strong improvement.
3. Levels of accountability and intensity of assistance and intervention need to match the severity and duration of any identified problems.
4. The number of districts identified for Levels 4 and 5 will be determined based on statute, regulations and ESE capacity to provide appropriate levels of assistance; placement at Levels 4 and 5 will be independent of NCLB designations.

The *Framework* defines the roles and expectations of the district and the Department based on the performance of the district's schools. Every district in the Commonwealth is represented in one of five "levels": districts requiring the least state intervention will be in Level 1 while districts requiring the most intervention will be in Level 5. At each level, the *Framework* distinguishes the Department's role with respect to "accountability" and "assistance and intervention" as well as districts' responsibilities.

The Department will provide a range of assistance to districts based on their *Framework* level. Resources will include the results of a Department-generated Annual District Data Review that reports on more than 40 quantitative indicators; online models and self-assessment tools for district and school improvement that are aligned with the Department's "*District Standards*" and "*Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness*"; and access to targeted technical assistance.

Late last spring the Department completed the last of the 15 district reviews required by law for 2009-2010. The reviews are posted on the Department's website. Reviews of 21 districts are underway for 2010-2011. They include reviews of Level 3 and 4 districts, as well as several districts where performance of English Language Learners suggests there may be evidence of district and school "best practices" that need to be identified, documented, and disseminated.

Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*, was signed into law on January 18, 2010 and took effect immediately. Its purpose is to foster education innovation and turn around underperforming schools forthwith. Among other things, the new law makes sweeping changes to the statutes on underperforming schools and school districts, Mass. General Laws chapter 69, sections 1J and 1K.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) has proposed revisions to current Regulations on Underperforming Schools and School Districts, 603 CMR 2.00, to carry out the purpose and intent of the newly amended statutes and advance the new system of accountability and assistance for schools and districts. The proposed Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools will replace the current regulations, which were last updated in 2006.

One section of these proposed regulations, concerning placement of schools in Level 4 ("underperforming schools"), was released for review and public comment as of January 26, 2010. (See

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/proposed/603cmr2.doc>.) The public comment period on that proposed regulation ended on March 12, 2010. Following review of comments and after making any necessary revisions, the Board voted on the regulation at its regular meeting on March 23, 2010.

The Board invited public comment on the full proposed regulations through April 9, 2010. Following review of comments and after making any necessary revisions, the Board is expected to take a final vote on the Regulations on Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools at its regular meeting on April 27, 2010.

I am looking forward to this challenging work to close the achievement gap. The Department and school districts have new tools to accomplish this important work. I thank you for your hard work and deliberations for the students of the Commonwealth in providing these supports. While I am grateful for the federal support from Title I for much of this ongoing work, I do also strongly support the Board's FY11 budget request of \$6.9 million which represents level funding (taking into account the approximately 25 percent decrease in the FY10 request due to 9C cuts) of this line item. The Board has recommended the \$6.9 million in order to ensure that the Department will be able to maintain current levels of support, but has sent a strong signal that its FY10 request of \$9.6 million, before 9C cuts, is a more realistic budget request for the challenges that lie ahead of us.

I would be remiss, too, if I did not bring to your attention the previous funding level of the former EQA at \$2.974 million, the FY10 transition year funding appropriation of \$1.373 million for not less than 15 reviews, and the statutory requirement of not less than 40 school district audits annually beginning in FY11. The current funding level of \$1.19 million is insufficient to conduct comprehension reviews in 40 districts.

If you would like to discuss this report in greater detail or have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Overview	2
I. State System for Identification of Underperforming Schools and Districts	4
Identifying Accountability Status under NCLB	4
II. Targeted Assistance and Intervention in Commonwealth Priority Schools	6
Reviewing Progress of Implementation.....	7
Targeted Assistance to Support District Improvement Strategies	8
Instructional Leadership Training and Support	8
III. Chronically Underperforming Schools	10
Commonwealth Pilot Schools.....	13
IV. Intervention in Underperforming Districts.....	16
V. Identification and Recognition of Schools Showing Significant Improvement.....	18
VI. FY10 Intervention and Targeted Assistance Initiatives.....	19
VII. Update on Accountability Initiatives.....	21
VIII. FY10 Budget Recommendations.....	25
IX. Appendix I.....	26
Attachment A: 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data – Massachusetts School and District Accountability Status	27
Attachment B: Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) District Report for Chelsea and Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) School Report for Clark Avenue School in Chelsea.....	28
Attachment C: Evaluation of Holyoke Turnaround Initiative (2008-2009): Executive Summary by the Meristem Group	38
Attachment D: Regulations on Underperforming Schools and School Districts.....	45
Attachment E: FY 09 School and District Intervention Account Spending by Initiative.....	57
X. Appendix II.....	58
Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2009	58

Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature on: Intervention and Targeted Assistance Efforts pursuant to Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2009, line item 7061-9408:

“For targeted intervention to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, schools and districts which have been placed in the accountability status of identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring pursuant to departmental regulations, or which have been designated Commonwealth Priority Schools or Commonwealth Pilot Schools pursuant to said regulations; provided, that no money shall be expended in any school or district that fails to file a comprehensive district plan pursuant to the provisions of section II of said chapter 69 of the General Laws;..... provided further, that the department shall issue a report, no later than February 2, 2009 and annually thereafter describing and analyzing all intervention and targeted assistance efforts funded by this item; provided further, that such report shall include but not be limited to: the number of school and school districts eligible to receive such assistance, the number of students attending school in said districts, the nature and type of intervention activities funded through this item, by school and school district, the number of teachers in professional development funded in part through this item, the number of districts with curricula or professional development systems aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, and the number that are undertaking that effort with grants funded by this item, the number of outside vendors with whom the department has contracted to provide intervention and turnaround services, the amount each vendor has received, and the results obtained in each instance, the number of students who have passed the MCAS assessment and obtained a competency determination through these programs, before, and during the period of intervention and turnaround, and any other data relative to the successes achieved or challenges faced by the effort to turn around schools, along with any legislative or budgetary recommendations for improving the initiative and increasing the success of all intervention efforts; provided further, that said report shall include an analysis of the number of districts with curriculum plans not aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, along with any legislative and regulatory recommendations to address the issue; provided further, that said report shall indicate the number of schools which have accepted the Commonwealth pilot school model, the reforms which they have undertaken, and the number which have expressed interest in the pilot school option; provided further, that said report shall be provided to the secretary of administration and finance, the senate president, the speaker of the house, the chairs of the house and senate ways and means committees and the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education;”

Overview

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Department for Accountability, Partnerships and Assistance maintains and manages the state's School and District Accountability System. Results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) are used to identify public schools and districts that are likely to require state intervention in order to ensure improvements in student performance, and to identify schools with exemplary performance and improvement. Schools and districts that fail to meet state performance and improvement standards for four or more consecutive years are identified as underperforming schools and are provided with targeted assistance to support district-led improvement efforts. State intervention in underperforming schools and districts is a multi-step process described in this report.

Since the inception of the Education Reform Act 15 years ago, the Department's work with low performing schools and districts has informed our thinking about the time, support and effort it takes on the part of a school, a district and the state agency to make progress. We have begun to reexamine our state policies, practices and procedures to understand how our actions are supporting improvement and/or whether state or district systems are impeding those efforts. Our work is evolving based on a more collaborative approach; our interest is in taking the state system of accountability and targeted assistance to a new level of coherence and transparency in order to meet the goal of all students in all schools reaching proficiency and beyond.

On January 18th of this year, Governor Patrick and Senate and House leaders enacted landmark education reform legislation to intervene in underperforming (Level 4) schools. With passage of *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap* and significant federal funding to target struggling schools, Massachusetts has an unprecedented opportunity to turn around the Commonwealth's 35 lowest performing schools. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is announcing a process to support 9 districts to intervene successfully in 35 "Level 4 Schools" and ensure that the 17,000 students the schools serve graduate ready for college and career success. The following describes the new law and federal grant, and explains how these schools were identified and what it means for the students in them.

- Level 4 schools will be targeted for aggressive intervention through a plan developed in collaboration with the superintendent, the school committee, the local teachers' union, administrators, teachers, community representatives, and parents. The plan is implemented by the district superintendent with support and assistance from the Commissioner.
- Intervention powers include the ability to reassign or replace teachers and administrators and dismiss those with a track record of poor performance, as well authority to reopen and amend collective bargaining agreements.

Federal School Turnaround Grants

In February 2010, the US Department of Education (USED) finalized regulations for the use of competitive grants to intervene in each state's lowest performing schools. Massachusetts will be awarded \$76 million over three years to provide competitive grants to districts.

- A district will be eligible to apply for \$500,000 or more per year for up to three years on behalf of each of its Level 4 schools.
- A district applying for a School Turnaround Grant will be required to choose one of four prescribed intervention models and demonstrate its capacity to implement that model effectively over three years.

The Department has been working with a wide range of stakeholders including superintendents, school committee members, union representatives, and state legislators to determine how to identify the lowest performing schools that are showing the least improvement. Selection is being based on four years of student achievement and trends in academic improvement. At its January 2010 meeting, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved and released for public comment regulations to guide the identification process. In February, the Board reviewed modifications recommended by key stakeholders and voted on regulations to identify Level 4 schools at its March 23, 2010 meeting.

These actions mark the beginning of a several-month process of work to engage stakeholders in redesigning these 35 schools to promote rapid improvement in learning for all students. Per the law, the superintendents and Commissioner will set rigorous but realistic annual goals that each school must meet. If, after three years, these schools are not improving rapidly, the Department will intervene to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.

With clear authorities, stronger accountability, and increased funding to support the work, this announcement marks a historic opportunity for Massachusetts students.

I. State System for Identification of Underperforming Schools and Districts

Identifying Accountability Status under NCLB

On an annual basis, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) issues Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations for Massachusetts public schools and school districts. The performance and improvement data for each school and district, together with data on MCAS participation, student attendance, and graduation rates is compiled and analyzed to determine, for each school and district, whether students in the aggregate and student subgroups within the school have made adequate progress toward the achievement of state performance targets in English language arts and mathematics. AYP determinations are used to assign each school an “accountability status.” The category to which a school is assigned is based on its AYP determinations over multiple years and determines the course of action a school, district and/or state is expected to take to improve student performance. Accountability status categories include *Identified for Improvement*, *Corrective Action* and *Restructuring*. Schools that make AYP in a subject for all student groups for two or more consecutive years are assigned to the *No Status* category. A district or school may be placed in an accountability status on the basis of the performance and improvement profile of students in the aggregate or of one or more student subgroups over two or more years in English language arts and/or mathematics.

In 2009, 1,721 schools received AYP determinations. Of the 1,721 schools receiving determinations, 929 schools (54 percent) were identified for improvement, corrective action or restructuring, as indicated in the table below.

SCHOOLS	Identified for Improvement	Corrective Action	Restructuring	Total
Aggregate	157	50	191	398
Subgroups	254	91	186	531
Total	411	141	377	929

Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ayp/2009/>

Additional detailed information is available in [Attachment A](#).

In the fall of 2009, 386 districts received AYP determinations. Of the districts receiving determinations, 106 were *identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring*, as indicated in the table below. One-hundred-forty-five of the 386 districts operate a single school only. For districts operating multiple schools, Massachusetts issues separate district-level adequate yearly progress (AYP) determinations at the elementary, middle, and high school grade spans. Under this approach, districts are identified for improvement when they fail to make AYP in the same subject area in all grade spans. Districts that operate only one school receive AYP determinations based on the results of all tested grades served by the school; only districts comprising a single school may be labeled for *Restructuring*.

DISTRICTS	Identified for Improvement	Corrective Action	Restructuring	Total
Aggregate	11	6	6	23
Subgroups	40	39	4	83
Total	51	45	10	106

Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ayp/2009/>

Sample district and school AYP reports are found in Attachment B.

Lists of schools identified for improvement, corrective action and restructuring for 2009 can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ayp/2009/>.

Based on 2009 AYP determinations, 266 schools in 59 districts met the criteria for underperforming school status. One hundred ninety of these schools are located in the ten Commissioner's Districts (Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester) and the four underperforming districts (Gill-Montague, Holyoke, Randolph, and Southbridge).

II. Targeted Assistance and Intervention in Commonwealth Priority Schools

The Commissioner's Districts are believed to be large enough to sustain an infrastructure to manage, oversee, and support the improvement of standards-based teaching and learning for all students in their districts. Since 2007-2008, the Office of Urban and Commissioner's District (UDA) has been charged with providing customized support to the Commissioner's Districts to enhance their capacity to support high-need schools, in addition to all other schools in the district. To this end, UDA assistance, activities, tools, and resources are purposefully designed to complement and strengthen district capacity to guide and monitor school improvement.

When a school is identified as a Commonwealth Priority School (CPS), the Department offers targeted assistance that is focused at the district level. Key methods for delivering the state's system of support to CPSs in Commissioner's Districts include:

1. ***Memoranda of Understanding*** – Each year UDA enters into an agreement with each Commissioner's District that outlines resources and assistance to be provided in order to strengthen district capacity to lead and monitor improvement. Focused attention is paid to strengthening those systems and structures that will accelerate the implementation of strategies in the district improvement plan that are aimed at improving outcomes, particularly at low performing schools.
2. ***Assistance Liaisons*** – A dedicated staff member is assigned to each Commissioner's District to:
 - ✓ Serve as a central Department point of contact for the district;
 - ✓ Facilitate the alignment and delivery of agency-wide resources and assistance in support of the strategies and action steps outlined in the district's improvement plan;
 - ✓ Develop and model use of activities, processes, and tools for assessing school and district assets and needs to inform the improvement planning process;
 - ✓ Support districts in developing applications for state and federal school improvement grants that are focused on building district systems and structures to support school improvement;
 - ✓ Assist districts in establishing and monitoring benchmarks toward achieving outcomes in the district improvement plan;
 - ✓ Identify, introduce, and coordinate services of supporting partners and consultants; and
 - ✓ Conduct cross-district networking opportunities for the districts to support sharing of practices and collaborative problem solving.
3. ***Urban Superintendents Network (USN)*** – The USN meets monthly and consists of superintendents from the Commissioner's Districts in conjunction with 14 superintendents from smaller urban districts. Agendas focus on:
 - ✓ Briefing superintendents on developing initiatives, policy, legislation, and regulations;
 - ✓ Soliciting superintendent input and feedback on developing Department work;

- ✓ Engaging in collaborative problem solving relative to common concerns and challenges.

Reviewing Progress of Implementation

In the spring of 2008, nine of the Commissioner's Districts developed District Plans for School Intervention using a Department developed framework. The nine districts (Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester) had over 80 percent of the new Commonwealth Priority Schools identified in the fall of 2007 in their districts. The plans documented each district's analysis of the needs of its Commonwealth Priority Schools and identified the priority actions it would take as a district to address the schools' major programmatic and systemic barriers to improved student performance. Each district presented its plan to an independent review panel composed of highly experienced educational leaders in the state. The review panels made recommendations to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education concerning each district's plan in May 2008, and they all received approval in June 2008.

Once a district's plan for improving student performance in a Commonwealth Priority School has been accepted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the school has two years to implement the plan to improve student performance. The Department enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with each of the nine districts, and through a collaborative process with district leaders, jointly identifies priority needs and focuses resources on supporting district capacity to meet them. A combination of federal and state resources is made available to help support the priority initiatives.

During that time, Department staff and consultants are assigned to provide oversight and support, making periodic visits to the district to meet with leaders and staff. Department staff providing support included experts in intervention, leadership, reading, mathematics, science, and English language learners, depending on district needs. The assistance from Department staff consists of:

- ✓ Providing guidance, training, and specific data collection tools focused on instructional leadership, instruction and teaching practices, and teacher collaboration;
- ✓ Delivering targeted professional development in support of improvement strategies; and
- ✓ Collaborating with school and district leaders to identify resources and strategies to address areas of concern.

Follow-up support and assistance activities take place throughout the 24-month period after a district's plan for school intervention is approved by the Board.

In the spring of 2009, one full year after districts began to implement their Board approved District Plans for School Intervention in Commonwealth Priority Schools, the Center for Accountability conducted reviews on the status of implementation. The reviews were designed to provide each district and the Department with feedback through answering the following questions:

- 1) What capacity to support school intervention efforts has the district demonstrated to date? To what extent have these efforts impacted student achievement?
- 2) To what extent has the work of the Department impacted and supported the district in implementing improvement initiatives?

Targeted Assistance to Support District Improvement Strategies

At the start of the 2009-2010 school year, a joint team of Department accountability and assistance liaisons met with district leadership teams, including union presidents and school committee chairpersons, to review and confirm the findings and recommendations in the District Plan for School Intervention Review report. These discussions led to the formulation of a refined set of targeted improvement strategies designed to accelerate improvement in each Commonwealth Priority School. District leaders then prioritized financial and targeted assistance needs which, in turn, formed the basis for the current year's Memoranda of Understanding with the Department. A combination of federal and state resources, as well as direct site-based assistance, was made available to districts to support these priority improvement initiatives.

Instructional Leadership Training and Support

Instructional Leadership Training

In 2005, the Department launched a partnership with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), a subsidiary of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), to provide high quality training and support for selected Massachusetts principals in the tenets of instructional leadership. This effort began with the participation of two specific cohorts of educators: the first was a group of 55 state-selected principals, superintendents and consultants working in urban districts. This group completed the 18-month training program and members were certified as NISL trainers.

To date, NISL has served 31 school districts, trained 875 leaders, and impacted 278,736 students throughout the Commonwealth. Since the first 10 cohorts of educators have completed their NISL training, a program evaluation process by the Meristem Group included:

- Documentation of the content, nature, and variability of NISL training sessions across different units and different cohorts;
- Identification of unique training practices, strategies, or tools created or adapted by local NISL training teams;
- Identification of successful training practices, strategies, or tools and the conditions under which they have been successful;
- Documentation of implementation of NISL concepts and tools by participating administrators in their schools and districts and the interaction between NISL and other school change initiatives;
- Documentation of practices used by district administrators in an effort to support and facilitate implementation of NISL concepts and tools by participating administrators in their schools, while identifying those practices which have been successful and the conditions under which these practices have been successful; and
- Assessment of the impact of NISL training on (1) knowledge and behavior of participating administrators, (2) school culture and teaching practices, and (3) student academic performance and school engagement.

In 2009, further evaluation research results suggested that there has been a slight increase in student achievement (MCAS scores) in schools with NISL-trained leadership as compared to schools with similar demographic profiles with non-NISL-trained leadership, and/or increased leadership time focused on instructional practice.

More information about NISL is available at <http://www.nisl.net>

Instructional Leadership Support

With 875 school principals and leaders trained in NISL, principals and superintendents have reported the need for support when implementing the training in their schools and districts. The Commonwealth Coaching Program was developed through a pilot led by the Education Leadership Alliance. The group funded a two-year initiative that provided every superintendent and principal in five adjacent districts in Northern Worcester County with a NISL-trained coach.¹ Leadership coaching is designed to build the capacity of school and district leaders to guide and direct large scale, sustained improvement of teaching and learning and the conditions in which they occur by:

- Supporting school principals and other district-level administrators to more effectively implement the instructional leadership concepts presented under the NISL Training Program;
- Facilitating the creation of strong action plans by superintendents and school principals to promote their own leadership development and improve their school or district;
- Providing a context that encourages superintendents and school principals to reflect upon and improve their own leadership practices; and
- Encouraging the alignment of district and school improvement goals through the facilitation of high-performing district leadership teams consisting of, but not limited to, the superintendent, district leaders, and principals.

¹ Leominster, Fitchburg, Ashburnham-Westminster, Athol-Royalston, and Winchendon.

III. Chronically Underperforming Schools

When a school fails to demonstrate significant improvement in student performance within two years of acceptance of a remedial plan by the Board, the Board may declare the school to be *chronically underperforming*. To date, three schools have been identified as chronically underperforming; two schools in Fall River and one in Holyoke.

School	District	Date of Determination	# of Students	Cost
Matthew Kuss Middle School	Fall River	October 2004	576	\$150,000 + principal hiring bonus of \$10,000
Henry Lord Middle School	Fall River	September 2005	606	\$150,000 + principal hiring bonus of \$5,625
William Peck Middle School	Holyoke	October 2005	Closed in 2008	—

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Matthew Kuss Middle School – Fall River

The Kuss Middle School was initially identified as *underperforming* in 2000 and was determined to be *chronically underperforming* by the Board in 2004. The Department recruited an experienced principal who was hired by the district and began her leadership work at the Kuss Middle School in the 2005-2006 school year. At the same time, the Department initiated the services of America’s Choice as the school’s turnaround partner and implementation of the school reform model began.

In 2007, the Kuss Middle School made AYP in both ELA and mathematics for all students in the aggregate and for all subgroups, but was unable to sustain this improvement in the next year. In 2008, the Kuss Middle School did not make AYP in either ELA or mathematics for students in the aggregate and subgroups.

In 2009, however, the school made AYP in math in the aggregate but not for all reportable subgroups. The school achieved increases in the combined Proficient/Advanced category in all grades for mathematics. Taking all grades into account, the increase in the Proficient/Advanced category in mathematics was 33 percent. The school has not made AYP for subgroups in any year from 2003 through 2009. Nevertheless, making AYP in the aggregate in 2009 marks an improvement over 2008 performance.

In addition, the school made AYP in 2009 for ELA in the aggregate, but it did not achieve adequate progress for the special education subgroup. However, the low income, African American/Black, Hispanic, and White subgroups did make AYP. Kuss experienced across-the-board increases in the combined category of Proficient/Advanced on the ELA MCAS between 2008 and 2009. Overall, combining the percentages of students in the Proficient/Advanced category in all grades served by the school, there was an increase of 39 percent between 2008 and 2009. The school had not achieved AYP in 2008, so its achievement of AYP in the aggregate for ELA marks an improvement in progress.

		Adequate Yearly Progress History									NCLB Accountability Status
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	-	-	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	

2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

English Language Arts	Participation	Performance	Improvement	Attendance	Overall
Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Education	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Low Income	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hispanic	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
White	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mathematics	Participation	Performance	Improvement	Attendance	Overall
Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Education	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Low Income	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hispanic	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
White	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

School faculty and leaders continue to focus on implementing and enhancing the America's Choice model for comprehension instruction with a particular focus on training and supporting teachers who are new to the school. Math improvement strategies are focused on developing Professional Learning Communities and implementing the workshop model, differentiating instruction through scaffolding based on assessments that are discussed at weekly and monthly curriculum meetings, using Larsen's Math to deliver differentiated instruction to students who need support in improving basic math skills, and using America's Choice Math Navigator as a safety net/intervention.

Henry Lord Middle School – Fall River

The Henry Lord Middle School was identified as *underperforming* in 2002 and determined to be *chronically underperforming* by the Board in 2005. The district placed an interim principal in the school for the 2005-06 school year. The Department recruited an experienced principal who was hired by the district and began her leadership work at the Lord Middle School in the 2006-07 school year. At the same time, the Department initiated the services of America's Choice as the school's turnaround partner, and implementation of the school reform model began.

In 2007-08, under the new principal's leadership, the Lord Middle School underwent significant change. The establishment and training of school-based data teams informed revision of the School Improvement Plan and implementation of new improvement initiatives. An aggressive professional development plan was created, and training was delivered to teachers during the

school day, after school and on Saturdays. This training focused on changing instructional practice in literacy and mathematics and was grounded in the America's Choice workshop model.

In 2008, the Lord School made AYP in mathematics for students in the aggregate and subgroups, but did not make AYP in ELA for either group. Based on the 2009 ELA MCAS test administration, Henry Lord Middle School did not make AYP in the aggregate or for any reportable subgroups. This marks the second consecutive year of the school not making adequate progress in English language arts. Additionally in 2009, the school did not make AYP in mathematics for either the aggregate or for any reportable subgroups. This follows 2008 mathematics performance in which AYP was achieved. The percentage of students scoring Proficient/Advanced in mathematics rose for all grades between 2008 and 2009.

		Adequate Yearly Progress History									NCLB Accountability Status
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	-	-	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	

2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

English Language Arts	Participation	Performance	Improvement	Attendance	Overall
Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Special Education	Yes	No	No	No	No
Low Income	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Hispanic	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
White	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Mathematics	Participation	Performance	Improvement	Attendance	Overall
Aggregate	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Special Education	Yes	No	No	No	No
Low Income	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Hispanic	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
White	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

To accelerate student learning in ELA, the school and faculty continue to focus on open response, new vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Teacher training in Writers' Workshop and Reciprocal Teaching have been enhanced. At the same time, the math focus includes implementing a Math Tutorial class (safety net/intervention), installing and using new software to address individual student needs, and using data to inform instruction.

In the case of Fall River, where the district faces difficulty in attracting highly qualified, experienced principals for its two *chronically underperforming* schools, the Department provides a significant financial incentive to attract, hire and retain these school leaders. An annual grant to

supplement the district's negotiated salary rate for each principal is made available to support the hiring and retention of the current principals at each of the two schools.

Fall River FY09 Update

The district of Fall River has a long history of poor student achievement and insufficient progress. In the fall of 2008, the district faced a serious budget shortfall and a period of contentious relations between the superintendent, the school committee and municipal leaders which led to the superintendent's resignation. In January 2009, Mayor Robert Correia and Commissioner Chester agreed that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education should send a review team to the district to evaluate the effectiveness of district leadership and the district's resource management capacity. The review team's final report is available at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/district/2009/00950000.doc>

District leaders have addressed in a Recovery Plan for the Commissioner's review and approval the following areas of weakness identified in the report: school committee governance; strategic implementation of improvements to teaching and learning, human resource management; and financial management. The Recovery Plan establishes strategies, action steps, benchmarks and timelines for needed improvement in district systems and structures across the four targeted areas noted above. In August of 2009, the Commissioner approved Fall River's Recovery Plan as long as the district revised the plan to meet nine conditions outlined by the Commissioner in an August 14, 2009 memo to the superintendent.

The Department has worked collaboratively to develop an addendum to the Recovery Plan that specifies needed Department assistance to support implementation of the plan. The addendum was completed in October 2009 and both financial and targeted assistance activities have been activated.

William Peck Middle School – Holyoke

The William Peck Middle School was closed at the end of the 2007-08 school year. Students have been assigned to other schools as part of a major district-wide effort to create K-8 schools.

Commonwealth Pilot Schools

The Commonwealth Pilot School Model

The Commonwealth Pilot Schools Initiative introduced in December 2006 represented a substantive reform to schools struggling with persistently low student achievement, and is patterned on a model in place in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Program guidelines specify that Commonwealth Pilot Schools are granted autonomy in 5 operational areas: (1) staffing and hiring, (2) school schedule and calendar, (3) curriculum and assessment, (4) governance, and (5) budget. Implementation of these autonomies required that each participating district develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with its local teachers' union, exempting proposed Commonwealth Pilot Schools from union contract work rules while defining conditions under which school-level work rules could be established.

2008-2009 Implementation (Year 2)

During the 2008-09 school year, five schools implemented a Commonwealth Pilot School model. Four (4) of the schools were in Year 2 of implementation. One school was in its first year of implementation.

During the 2008-09 school year, the superintendent of the Fitchburg Public Schools expressed concern over the lack of progress made at the Commonwealth Pilot School in his district. Concerned with declining enrollment at the school and pending budget reductions, the district proposed a merger of the Commonwealth Pilot School (a grade 5-8 middle school) with another middle school in the district. This merger was supported by the Department and the school withdrew from the Commonwealth Pilot initiative at the end of the school year.

As in the previous year, the Department asked each school, district and local educational association to submit an update on the progress made during the year. The spring 2009 Progress Reports included a reflection on each of the district and school conditions that have been established and progress and improvement that have been observed. Additionally, schools were asked to specify any changes or adjustments to the original plans that they intended to make for the coming school year.

One of the Commonwealth Pilot schools received a grant of state targeted assistance funds as well as contracted technical assistance to support the efforts outlined in its original design plan and progress report. Grant funds were used for a variety of activities including the development of professional learning communities, strengthening of instructional practices, and additional time for academic interventions and supports. The other four schools were eligible to receive federal school improvement grant funds to support similar efforts.

A comprehensive external evaluation of the Commonwealth Pilot School initiative continues to be conducted by the Donahue Institute at UMASS Amherst.

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) continues to provide technical assistance and coaching at each of the Commonwealth Pilot Schools through a contract with the Department. Detailed work plans outlining the specific services to be provided at each school were approved by the school's principal, the district superintendent, and the Department.

2009-2010 Implementation (Year 3)

Four schools continue to participate in the Commonwealth Pilot School initiative. Each school is receiving federal school improvement grant funds to support the efforts outlined in original design plans and subsequent progress reports as well as priority activities determined by the schools' leadership. Grant funds are being used for activities in a broad range of categories including the development of professional learning communities, strengthening of instructional practices, refining assessment systems (interim and formative), providing non-academic student support services and academic interventions and supports, and the continued development of school organization and culture.

These federal funds increase the Department's flexibility and capacity as well as mitigate the effect of recent state budget cuts. In addition to these grants, the Department uses federal funds to contract with CCE to provide intensive coaching and technical assistance in each school and district in the initiative.

Preliminary Findings and Impacts

The Donahue Institute captured the following initial impacts in its November 2009 policy brief:

- Schools' initial focus was on the hiring and integration of new staff;
- Organizational structures were substantially revised in four of the five schools;

- Revised school day schedules were implemented at four schools, with mixed impacts on instructional time;
- New scheduling strategies enabled substantial increases in collaborative professional time at all schools;
- New governance structures were established to support school- and community-based decision making;
- Great progress was realized in the development of new structures in year one, but it was not always a straight or easy path;
- School and staff readiness to undertake critical tasks varied;
- The scope of change being pursued overwhelmed some schools;
- Uncertainty regarding the extent of autonomy granted to schools complicated implementation;
- School characteristics complicated implementation of the pilot model; and
- Even where things went well, change proved a gradual process.

Although perceptions of schools' capacity to improve student learning were generally positive, the initiative does not yet appear to have had a substantial impact on school-level MCAS achievement. While three of the five schools experienced increases in their overall ELA CPI over the past two years, these increases are consistent with previously established improvement trends in these schools, and there is little evidence of acceleration in these trends. It is notable that results at two other schools that recently experienced a decline in ELA achievement are also following previously established trends.

Trends in mathematics scores have been flat at three schools over the past two years. A fourth school had shown dramatic progress from 2005–2008 but experienced a modest decline in 2009. However, the fifth school may have begun to show acceleration in this subject area in 2009. While a single year of improvement does not constitute a trend, this school's particularly strong intermediate outcomes and specific emphasis on improving mathematics instruction during the 2009 school year suggest it is an outcome worth monitoring.

Increased clarity regarding school and district accountability could facilitate program management and school success, as long as schools retain their freedom to innovate and refine plans. As schools applied for Commonwealth Pilot school status, their design plans were carefully reviewed by an appointed committee of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. However, accountability protocols associated with design plan implementation have not been clearly articulated, and the initiative does not have a specified framework of short-term (implementation) and mid-term (culture and practice) performance benchmarks that anchor assessment of progress toward improvement. Without these benchmarks, AYP is perceived as the de facto success criteria, which may obscure important intermediate accomplishments. In addition, the establishment of attainable benchmarks for the early phases of implementation may help generate the "quick wins" for school staff which is emphasized by technical assistance providers as a way to encourage buy-in and positive momentum for change.

IV. Intervention in Underperforming Districts

In July 2008, new legislation called for the Department to assume responsibility for the review of district performance. The law also directed the creation of separate offices of accountability and assistance within the Department and stipulated that a senior level administrative position be created to provide direct leadership oversight and coordination between these offices. Deputy Commissioner Karla Baehr currently leads the Division for Accountability, Partnerships and Assistance and is driving major restructuring of the state's model for accountability and assistance.

Underperforming Districts

In 2009, four Massachusetts school districts remain in underperforming status, having been officially declared as such by the Board. The chart below lists the four districts. In each case, the Department has continued to provide assistance and support.

District	Date of determination	# of students	# of Teachers receiving PD	FY09 Cost
Holyoke	November 2003	6,025	524	\$ 560,217
Southbridge	September 2004	2,120	181	\$ 27,720
Gill-Montague	June 2007	1,082	91	\$ 16,160
Randolph	November 2007	2,966	237	\$ 60,475

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Holyoke

Since 2004, Holyoke has supported the services of the America's Choice program as the district turnaround partner. Since the design of a comprehensive intervention plan, the Department has supported implementation of that plan. Over time, the turnaround plan has guided a range of improvement efforts at both district and school levels. These efforts have included: NISL Leadership training; developing systems to collect, manage, and analyze data; defining a new district vision for more rigorous expectations of students, staff, parents and community; literacy and mathematics training for teachers; and establishing, training, and deploying coaches in all the district's schools, among others.

In 2008, the Department contracted again with the Meristem Group, LLC to expand on its earlier evaluation and examine more deeply the artifacts of improvement in Holyoke. The July 2009 final report is provided as [Attachment C](#). In brief, the report notes a distinct shift in the fourth year of the district intervention work signaling a major focus on developing capacity to meet the needs of ELL students in all major focus areas: curriculum development, staff development, targeted intervention programs for students, leadership development and district capacity-building. The 2008-2009 school year also marked a significant transition in leadership of the district's improvement work, with America's Choice shifting responsibility for driving the various improvement projects to district personnel. The superintendent, central office personnel, and building principals were expected to use and build on newly developed skills and capacities to become instructional leaders and decision-makers.

In 2009, the district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for students in the aggregate or for any subgroup in either ELA or mathematics. Holyoke remains in corrective action accountability status for both subjects. The Department continues to support the improvement work in this district.

Gill-Montague

After being declared underperforming in June 2007, Gill-Montague leaders gained Board approval of their proposed turnaround plan and improvement work began. The Department has provided the district with ongoing support in a number of areas: agreeing to support a waiver for the serving superintendent (retired) to stay in his position for school year 2008-2009 to ensure leadership stability, providing grant funds to support mathematics content training for teachers in the district, support for curriculum mapping work and for technology enhancement.

Gill-Montague made AYP in 2009 for students in the aggregate and for all subgroups in both ELA and mathematics. The district has no NCLB status in either subject. The district continues to struggle with serious financial challenges.

Southbridge

Since the Board's declaration of Southbridge as an underperforming district in November 2007, the Department has provided both assistance and oversight to the Southbridge Public School district. Support through targeted assistance grants has built the district's capacity to lead curriculum development and implementation of standards-based teaching and learning. Communication between school officials, the local school committee and municipal leaders has improved over time, supported by a broad-based collaborative strategic planning initiative. The Department has supported building the district's capacity to use data to drive improvement decisions.

In 2009, the district made AYP for students in the aggregate and for all subgroups in both ELA and mathematics. Southbridge has no AYP status in mathematics but remains in corrective action for subgroups in ELA.

Randolph

Since the Board's approval of Randolph's turnaround plan in May 2008, the district has been working to implement the range of initiatives set out in that plan. Three priority areas include: developing and implementing standards-based curricula and instructional practices in all content areas, with particular attention to mathematics; improving performance of all students with disabilities; and raising the community's confidence and trust in the quality of education provided to all students by designating and implementing opportunities that create new conditions for positive collaboration.

The Department has assigned a District Support Team to work with municipal and school leaders in their efforts to address the district's priority improvement needs.

In 2009, Randolph did not make AYP for students in the aggregate in ELA, but did make AYP for subgroups. In mathematics, the district made AYP for both aggregate and subgroup populations. Randolph is in corrective action for subgroups in ELA and in improvement year 2 for subgroups in mathematics.

V. Identification and Recognition of Schools Showing Significant Improvement

Title I Academic Achievement Awards (formerly Commonwealth Compass Schools)

The Department also uses the School and District Accountability System to identify schools showing significant improvement in their students' performance in English language arts and mathematics. Until February 2007, schools meeting performance and improvement criteria were designated *Commonwealth Compass Schools*. In addition to special recognition at a public event at the Great Hall of the State House, Compass Schools received a grant. Since the program began in 2001, 95 public elementary, middle and high schools from across the state have been designated as *Commonwealth Compass Schools*.

Priorities for shrinking state funds have caused this important program—designed to ensure some symmetry in the accountability system—to be dormant for the past two years. However, federal Title I regulations allow the state to set aside monies for Academic Achievement Awards. Any school receiving Title I services, and showing “above average” improvement, is eligible under the federal guidelines. The Department’s School Improvement Grants office is working with the former Compass School administrator to identify schools that have shown notable achievement and improvement in the past three years. A list of Academic Achievement Award recipients and details on the criteria used to select them will be published in early 2010.

VI. FY10 Intervention and Targeted Assistance Initiatives

During fiscal year 2010, the Department has focused its targeted assistance efforts on building the capacities of the 10 Commissioner's Districts (Lawrence Lynn, Lowell, Boston, Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford, Worcester, Springfield, and Holyoke) to support the 182 Commonwealth Priority schools currently identified in total across these 10 districts. Implementation of the targeted assistance account also supports turnaround plans in the state's four underperforming districts (Southbridge, Gill-Montague, Holyoke, and Randolph). Current funding levels have enabled us to partially address these top priorities, but we have not been able to directly support the 46 districts where the remaining 76 schools have been identified.

Regional State System of Support

In order to reach these schools and others where performance and improvement lag and support building district capacity to intervene successfully in their own schools, the Department opened six regionally based District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs) in the late fall of 2009. DSACs will provide priority assistance to identified districts and their schools using targeted professional development and assistance to improve instruction and raise achievement for all students. The DSACs initially will fulfill the Department's responsibilities outlined in the Department Framework for Accountability and Assistance by giving first priority for assistance to districts in Corrective Action or districts with schools in Corrective Action or Restructuring.

In collaboration with partner organizations, DSACs use a regional approach that leverages the knowledge, skills, and expertise of local educators to address shared needs through an emphasis on expanding district and school capacity for sustained improvement. Each DSAC is led by a recently retired superintendent working part time to partner with districts to assess their strengths and needs and to strategically coordinate assistance to districts. In addition, each DSAC has contracted with successful principals and district leaders to provide focused assistance to selected Title I schools. DSACs also include data, literacy and mathematics specialists as part of their assistance teams.

During the course of the first year and summer, DSACs are offering a limited menu of professional development and targeted assistance aimed at addressing key district and regional needs. Examples of assistance that could be offered include:

Focused Professional Development:

- Principal leadership development for standards based schools;
- Sheltered English Immersion strategies for teachers at elementary and secondary levels (Categories 1 – 4);
- Foundations in Literacy, Reading Informational Text, and Writing;
- Intensive Mathematics Content training, Algebraic Thinking, and Rational Numbers; and
- Universal Design for Learning, and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports.

Assistance to Support Implementation of Effective Practices:

- Training on and modeling of tools to observe classroom practice, build effective use of common planning time, and use data for district level strategic decisions;

- Networks for superintendents, principals, mathematics and literacy leaders, coaches, and/or teachers; and
- Data reporting and analysis to support district self assessment and evaluation.

DSACs are located in one of the partner organizations participating in the Executive Office of Education's Readiness Center Initiative in each of the regions - Berkshires, Pioneer Valley, Central, Northeast, Greater Boston, and Southeast. Over time, each DSAC will develop partnerships and coordinate with the Readiness Center Consortium and other regional organizations to design and deliver assistance to districts.

The Department has utilized some Targeted Assistance funds in combination with federal Title I, Special Education, and Technology funds to support this initiative.

VII. Update on Accountability Initiatives

Internal Capacity Building

- a. The Center for Accountability has hired six full-time staff including one of the three management positions envisioned in the reorganization plan. Several positions remain to be filled.
- b. The Center has recruited two dozen professionals with specialized experience and knowledge who will be available to perform contractual work in the future.
- c. The Center is collaborating with the Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Evaluation to develop the template for the Annual District and School Data Review (see b. under System Redesign).
- d. The Center is collaborating with the Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Evaluation and has executed contracts to develop a searchable database for the teacher contracts being collected statewide for the first time.
- e. The Information Technology Bond proposed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature is providing funding to help build the technological infrastructure required to develop a statewide longitudinal database that will include the courses that students take. Once completed, the database will enable the expansion of indicators tracked in the Annual Trend Profile, e.g., the percent of eighth grade students completing algebra.
- f. The Office of Student Assessment field tested an MCAS “growth model.” The model helps make possible a more potent and efficient way of identifying districts and schools that require the most intervention and targeted assistance. The model will allow us to track absolute performance in combination with growth by student, grade, subgroup, school and/or district, thereby identifying schools with exemplary results (high achievement + high growth) as well as those where students are most at risk (low achievement + low annual growth).
- g. The Department is collaborating with MBAE to replicate the function of the Just for the Kids (JFTK) website.
- h. The Department is developing a valid methodology for identifying “comparable schools” for the purpose of statewide analysis and benchmarking and integrate this function in the Annual District and School Data Review.
- i. In collaboration with the Executive Office of Education, Department staff applied for and received a National Governors Association Best Practices Grant, The Turnaround Challenge: State Strategies to Improve Chronically Low-Performing Schools, to assist in the design of Levels 4 and 5 of the Framework.
- j. The statute transferring responsibility for district reviews to the Department requires that the Department administer “an annual survey to any schools and

districts receiving technical assistance.” To fulfill part of that obligation, Department staff engaged the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to conduct an administrator satisfaction survey of every superintendent, charter school leader, and collaborative executive director statewide; the survey focuses on perceptions of how well the Department is performing the full range of its accountability and assistance functions. Results of this survey have been presented to Department staff for analysis and planning.

System Redesign

- a. Deputy Commissioner Baehr and other Department staff have met ten times since November 1, 2008 with the Advisory Council on Accountability and Assistance to examine redesign needs and options.
- b. The Center for Accountability and Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Evaluation are working together to develop the Annual District Data Review, a comprehensive annual district and school five-year trend profile. For every district and school, a District Data Review will be produced annually and will show trends across a range of academic and resource indicators. The District Data Review will rely exclusively on data the Department already collects from districts and schools. The Data Review will be accessible to the public and provide a “snapshot” of how schools and districts are performing on multiple measures compared to other schools and districts in the state. A lead staff person has been hired and began work in March 2009 on the project. A pilot prototype was presented for Advisory Council review in June.
- c. Deputy Commissioner Baehr has used iterations of the Framework for District Accountability and Assistance graphic (presented to the Board at its October, February, April, June, and September meetings) in discussions with interested parties to focus analysis, deepen understanding of the issues, strengthen alignment, improve the design, and identify next steps. Groups engaged include the Advisory Council, the Stakeholder Working Group, the Urban Superintendents’ Network, MassPartners, Department senior staff, legislative staff, external experts and practitioners, and others.
- d. The Department has integrated federally-mandated special education accountability designations with the new Accountability and Assistance Framework levels (i.e., Level 1 through 5 with intervention beginning at Level 4).
- e. Draft revisions of the Conditions for School Effectiveness delineated in current Board regulations have been developed and are being revised in consultation with the field.
- f. Staff from the Centers on Accountability and Targeted Assistance collaborated on the redesign of the classroom observation tool used in district reviews. To improve transparency and ensure coordination between accountability and assistance processes, they used as a basis for the review tool the classroom characteristics and teaching practices identified in the Learning Walk Protocol introduced in the Commissioner’s Districts in 2006 and introduced statewide at

the December 2008 Curriculum and Instruction Summit. The review tool was used in the spring District Reviews. To strengthen inter-rater reliability, the Department is developing a training module with performance assessment that all future review team members will be required to complete prior to participating in a Review.

District Reviews

- a. The Commissioner dispatched a team of seven former EQA examiners to conduct a comprehensive review of the Fall River Public Schools. The team's report was released in March and led the Commissioner to require "stringent" planning and monitoring including a six-month follow-up report to the Commissioner by a Department-appointed monitor. The Commissioner has approved the district's Recovery Plan and the Office of Targeted Assistance is providing support for implementation.
- b. The Center for Accountability collaborated with Class Measures and SchoolWorks on the design and execution of eight urban district reviews that were focused on the effectiveness of district work to intervene successfully on behalf of the students in their underperforming schools. These reviews were completed in May and reports are available on the Department's website as ESE District Plan for School Intervention (DPSI) Review Report at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/>.
- c. Center staff identified six districts where student achievement and/or outcomes of Coordinated Program Reviews point to effective systems for supporting diverse learners, particularly those with special needs. A review protocol was developed that focused on 3 critical areas: 1) leadership, 2) curriculum and instruction and, 3) human resource management professional development. The Reviews identified those systems and practices that most likely have contributed to the positive results, as well as those that may be impeding rapid improvement. Completing these six reviews provided Department staff with information essential to achieving our new statutory obligation to coordinate District Reviews and Coordinated Program Reviews (CPR). These site visits were completed in June and reports are available on the Department's website as ESE Differentiated Needs Review at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/district/>.
- d. The Center for Accountability collaborated with the Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Evaluation to design and administer surveys of participants in the fifteen district reviews completed this year. Results have been tabulated and are available. The survey protocol fulfills a requirement of the new law and has provided valuable feedback to inform further revisions of the district review process.

Charter School Reviews

As has been the practice in past years, state accountability funds were transferred to the Department's Charter School Office, enabling them to contract with two vendors, Class Measures and SchoolWorks, that conducted thirteen charter school renewal inspections.

The fiscal year 2010 budget also included funding for the conduct of district level reviews as directed in Chapter 311 of the Acts of 2008: *An Act Relative to School District Accountability*. In total, nine urban districts participated in comprehensive reviews: Fall River, Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Holyoke, New Bedford, Worcester, Springfield, and Brockton. In Fall River, the review resulted in an ongoing engagement with the Department focused by the district's newly-developed Recovery Plan. In the other eight districts, the reviews reported on the effectiveness of each district's intervention efforts as they focused on their underperforming schools and provided specific recommendations for improvement.

The Department's Office of Accountability also conducted reviews in four other districts where data indicated greater success for students with special needs, focusing these reviews on identifying systems and practices that appear to be supporting better teaching and learning for this important student subgroup.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Department has developed a statistically valid method of measuring growth in student, group, school, and district performance over time. The "growth model," first released publicly in October 2009, complements the MCAS year-by-year test scores by reporting change over time rather than just grade-level performance results in any one year. The model identifies "typical" annual growth patterns for students based on various past patterns of achievement. The model also allows us to track absolute performance in combination with growth by student, grade, subgroup, school and/or district, thereby identifying schools with exemplary results (high achievement + high growth) as well as those where students are most at risk (low achievement + low annual growth). These new results have created a more powerful and efficient means of identifying districts and schools that require the most intervention and targeted assistance. This initiative has been supported by targeted assistance funds.

Growth scores at the group, school and district levels are available at: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx. District administrators can also access growth data for individual students, groups, schools, and districts via the Department's secure Education Data Warehouse.

VIII. FY10 Budget Recommendations

The Board's FY10 budget request of \$9.6 million was significantly reduced, reflecting an overall loss of approximately 25 percent, or \$2.3 million.

A summary of the Department's plan for expenditure of FY10 intervention and targeted assistance account funds is included as Attachment E.

IX. Appendix I

Attachment A: 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data – Massachusetts School and District Accountability Status

Attachment B: Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) District Report for Chelsea and Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) School Report for Clark Avenue School in Chelsea

Attachment C: Evaluation of Holyoke Turnaround Initiative (2008-2009): Executive Summary by the Meristem Group

Attachment D: Regulations on Underperforming Schools and School Districts

Attachment E: FY09 School and District Intervention Account Spending by Initiative

Attachment A: 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data – Massachusetts School and District Accountability Status

Total School Districts = 386

DISTRICT Accountability History Total Multi-School Districts: 241	2005 #	2006 #	2007 #	2008 #	2009		2009	
					#	%	New ID	Exited
							#	#
Restructuring - Aggregate	1	3	3	3	6	1.6	0	0
Corrective Action - Aggregate	2	11	9	9	6	1.6	0	0
Identified for Improvement - Aggregate	16	9	12	7	11	2.8	5	0
Subtotal	19	23	24	19	23	6.0	5	0
Restructuring - Subgroups	0	0	4	4	4	1.0	0	1
Corrective Action - Subgroups	0	20	28	37	39	10.1	0	0
Identified for Improvement - Subgroups	152	116	26	29	40	10.4	20	6
Total	171	159	82	89	106	27.5	25	7

* 2009 data do not include 1 single school district under review

Total Schools = 1721

SCHOOL Accountability History Total Schools: 1721	2005 #	2006 #	2007 #	2008 #	2009		2009						
					#	%	New ID	Exited	Subject Area Identified			Enrollment	
							#	#	ELA Only	Math Only	Both	Total	
Restructuring - Aggregate	30	60	77	124	191	11.1	--	1	74	70	47	191	102,780
Corrective Action - Aggregate	37	49	25	55	50	2.9	--	0	30	13	7	50	18,522
Identified for Improvement - Aggregate	131	208	200	178	157	9.1	52	4	102	42	13	157	52,351
Subtotal	198	317	302	357	398	23.1	52	5	206	125	67	398	173,653
Restructuring - Subgroups	--	--	114	155	186	10.8	--	3	45	103	38	186	148,320
Corrective Action - Subgroups	--	139	92	95	91	5.3	--	2	44	42	5	91	59,345
Identified for Improvement - Subgroups	222	174	164	233	254	14.8	82	15	114	83	57	254	149,772
Total	420	630	672	840	929	54.0	134	25	409	353	167	929	531,090

* 2009 data do not include 2 schools under review and 36 schools (26 of which had an accountability status) open in spring 2009 but closed prior to 2009-10 school year.

Notes: A single school district is a district comprising a single school (e.g., Commonwealth Charter or regional vocational/technical school, et cetera).

Percentages are out of the total number of school districts (n=386) or schools (n=1721) included.

The 'New ID' figure indicates the number of schools or districts newly identified for an Accountability Status in 2009.

The 'Exited' figure indicates the number of schools or districts that exited their 2008 Accountability Status by making AYP in the identified subject area for two consecutive years.

Attachment B: Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) District Report for Chelsea and Sample Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) School Report for Clark Avenue School in Chelsea

Chelsea - 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data

District: Chelsea (00570000)

Title I District: Yes

2009 AYP Data - Summary

Summary Data | [Detailed Data](#)

	NCLB Accountability Status	Performance Rating	Improvement Rating
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	Corrective Action - Subgroups	Moderate	On Target
MATHEMATICS	Corrective Action - Subgroups	Low	Improved Below Target

A district is newly identified for improvement if it fails to make AYP in the same subject area and all grade-spans, for students in the aggregate or any subgroup, for two consecutive years. A district will have no accountability status if it makes AYP in the same subject area for at least one grade-span for two consecutive years.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS					
Grade Spans		2007	2008	2009	2009 Subgroups Not Making AYP
Grades 3-5	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	Special Education -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Grades 6-8	Aggregate	Yes	No	Yes	White -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Grades 9-12	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Special Education -Low Income - Hispanic/Latino -F/LEP -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	

MATHEMATICS					
Grade Spans		2007	2008	2009	2009 Subgroups Not Making AYP
Grades 3-5	Aggregate	Yes	No	No	White -Special Education -Low Income - Hispanic/Latino -F/LEP -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Grades 6-8	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	White -Special Education -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	
Grades 9-12	Aggregate	No	Yes	No	Low Income -Hispanic/Latino -F/LEP -
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	

Adequate Yearly Progress History											NCLB Accountability Status
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009		
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	

Chelsea:

2009 AYP Data - English Language Arts By Grade Span

To make Adequate Yearly Progress in 2009, a student group must meet (A) a student participation requirement, either (B) the State's 2009 performance target for that subject or (C) the group's own 2009 improvement target, and (D) an additional attendance or graduation requirement.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS															
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Attendance/Grad Rate			AYP 2009
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2009 CPI	Met Target (90.2)	2008 CPI (Baseline)	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Grades 3-5															
Aggregate	1,269	1,264	100	Yes	1,224	72.2	No	67.8	5.4	72.2-74.2	Yes	95.3	-0.6	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	428	427	100	Yes	387	64.0	No	57.6	7.1	62.2-67.2	Yes	95.9	-0.6	Yes	Yes
Special Education	193	191	99	Yes	191	50.7	No	49.7	8.4	55.6-60.6	No	94.6	-0.3	Yes	No
Low Income	1,085	1,080	100	Yes	1,041	71.2	No	67.2	5.5	71.2-74.2	Yes	95.3	-0.5	Yes	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	100	99	99	Yes	92	66.0	No	63.0	6.2	64.7-73.7	Yes	96.3	-0.7	Yes	Yes
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	31	31	-	-	31	92.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	1,033	1,030	100	Yes	1,003	71.6	No	66.6	5.6	70.7-73.7	Yes	95.3	-0.6	Yes	Yes
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	101	100	99	Yes	94	77.9	No	76.1	4.0	76.1-84.6	Yes	94.1	-0.4	Yes	Yes
Grades 6-8															
Aggregate	1,166	1,163	100	Yes	1,121	76.6	No	71.6	4.7	74.8-77.8	Yes	94.9	-0.4	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	287	287	100	Yes	245	58.3	No	46.6	8.9	53.0-58.0	Yes	95.5	-0.8	Yes	Yes
Special Education	205	203	99	Yes	202	52.1	No	44.2	9.3	51.0-	Yes	94.1	0.6	Yes	Yes

										56.0						
Low Income	976	973	100	Yes	933	75.0	No	70.6	4.9	74.0-77.0	Yes	94.8	-0.4	Yes	Yes	
Afr. Amer./Black	89	89	100	Yes	83	68.1	No	59.2	6.8	61.5-70.5	Yes	96.3	-1.0	Yes	Yes	
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	28	28	-	-	28	91.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Hispanic	920	918	100	Yes	885	76.8	No	71.2	4.8	74.5-77.5	Yes	94.9	-0.4	Yes	Yes	
Native American	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
White	119	118	99	Yes	115	77.6	No	78.9	3.5	79.9-84.9	No	93.1	-0.1	Yes	No	
Grades 9-12												2008 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2007 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	309	298	96	Yes	286	77.6	No	77.8	3.7	79.0-84.0	No	49.9	-3.1	60.2	No	No
Lim. English Prof.	67	66	99	Yes	54	56.0	No	59.3	6.8	61.6-70.6	No	30.6	-5.9	47.3	No	No
Special Education	56	54	96	Yes	54	55.6	No	64.7	5.9	66.1-75.1	No	32.5	4.5	38.7	Yes	No
Low Income	241	232	96	Yes	222	76.1	No	77.7	3.7	78.9-83.9	No	48.0	-2.6	58.3	No	No
Afr. Amer./Black	29	27	-	-	26	62.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	242	234	97	Yes	223	77.6	No	78.5	3.6	79.6-84.6	No	47.5	0.0	56.2	No	No
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	26	25	-	-	25	92.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Chelsea:

2009 AYP Data - Mathematics By Grade Span

To make Adequate Yearly Progress in 2009, a student group must meet (A) a student participation requirement, either (B) the State's 2009 performance target for that subject or (C) the group's own 2009 improvement target, and (D) an additional attendance or graduation requirement.

MATHEMATICS															
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Attendance/Grad Rate			AYP 2009
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2009 CPI	Met Target (84.3)	2008 CPI (Baseline)	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Grades 3-5															
Aggregate	1,275	1,272	100	Yes	1,224	71.0	No	73.2	4.5	76.7-78.7	No	95.3	-0.6	Yes	No
Lim. English Prof.	434	432	100	Yes	384	63.9	No	64.9	5.9	68.3-73.3	No	95.9	-0.6	Yes	No
Special Education	192	190	99	Yes	190	53.4	No	54.1	7.7	59.3-64.3	No	94.6	-0.3	Yes	No
Low Income	1,091	1,088	100	Yes	1,041	70.1	No	72.7	4.6	75.8-78.8	No	95.3	-0.5	Yes	No
Afr. Amer./Black	102	101	99	Yes	90	64.4	No	62.3	6.3	64.1-73.1	Yes	96.3	-0.7	Yes	Yes
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	31	31	-	-	31	91.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	1,036	1,034	100	Yes	1,004	70.6	No	73.1	4.5	76.1-79.1	No	95.3	-0.6	Yes	No
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	101	101	100	Yes	94	75.0	No	75.8	4.0	75.8-84.3	No	94.1	-0.4	Yes	No
Grades 6-8															
Aggregate	1,170	1,169	100	Yes	1,123	61.9	No	55.8	7.4	61.7-64.7	Yes	94.9	-0.4	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	290	290	100	Yes	244	49.3	No	35.5	10.8	43.8-48.8	Yes	95.5	-0.8	Yes	Yes
Special Education	206	206	100	Yes	204	40.0	No	36.3	10.6	44.4-49.4	No	94.1	0.6	Yes	No
Low Income	979	978	100	Yes	934	61.2	No	54.9	7.5	60.9-	Yes	94.8	-0.4	Yes	Yes

										63.9						
Afr. Amer./Black	88	88	100	Yes	82	54.6	No	42.6	9.6	47.7-56.7	Yes	96.3	-1.0	Yes	Yes	
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	28	28	-	-	28	84.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Hispanic	924	923	100	Yes	887	61.7	No	55.7	7.4	61.6-64.6	Yes	94.9	-0.4	Yes	Yes	
Native American	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
White	120	120	100	Yes	116	64.0	No	60.0	6.7	64.2-69.2	No	93.1	-0.1	Yes	No	
Grades 9-12												2008 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2007 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	305	298	98	Yes	287	67.2	No	68.0	5.3	70.8-75.8	No	49.9	-3.1	60.2	No	No
Lim. English Prof.	65	65	100	Yes	54	41.2	No	52.5	7.9	55.9-64.9	No	30.6	-5.9	47.3	No	No
Special Education	55	53	96	Yes	53	49.1	No	45.9	9.0	50.4-59.4	Yes/SH	32.5	4.5	38.7	Yes	Yes
Low Income	236	230	97	Yes	220	65.9	No	68.0	5.3	70.8-75.8	No	48.0	-2.6	58.3	No	No
Afr. Amer./Black	29	29	-	-	28	48.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	238	231	97	Yes	221	67.4	No	67.9	5.4	70.8-75.8	No	47.5	0.0	56.2	No	No
Native American		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	26	26	-	-	26	78.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Clark Avenue School - 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data - Summary

District: Chelsea (00570000)
 School: Clark Avenue School (00570050)
 School Title I Status: Title I School (SW)
 NCLB School Choice Required: Yes
 Supplemental Educational Services Required: Yes

	NCLB Accountability Status	Performance Rating	Improvement Rating
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	Corrective Action - Subgroups	Moderate	On Target
MATHEMATICS	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups	Moderate	On Target

To make Adequate Yearly Progress in 2009, a student group must meet (A) a student participation requirement, either (B) the State's 2009 performance target for that subject or (C) the group's own 2009 improvement target, and (D) an additional attendance or graduation requirement.

Student Group	(A) Participation		(B) Performance		(C) Improvement		(D) Attendance		AYP 2009
	Did at least 95% of students participate in MCAS?		Did student group meet or exceed state performance target?		Did student group meet or exceed its own improvement target?		Did student group meet attendance (G1-8) or graduation rate target (G9-12)?		
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	Met Target	Actual	Met Target (90.2)	Actual	Met Target	Change from 2008	Met Target	Actual	AYP 2009
Aggregate	Yes	100	No	78.9	Yes	5.8	Yes	95.9	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	Yes	99	No	69.8	Yes	16.5	Yes	96.5	Yes
Special Education	Yes	100	No	45.0	No	4.7	Yes	95.2	No
Low Income	Yes	100	No	78.4	Yes	6.1	Yes	96.0	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	-	-	-	84.8	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	Yes	100	No	78.1	Yes	6.0	Yes	96.0	Yes
Native American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	Yes	100	No	81.4	No	-2.6	Yes	93.9	No
MATHEMATICS	Met Target	Actual	Met Target (84.3)	Actual	Met Target	Change from 2008	Met Target	Actual	AYP 2009

Aggregate	Yes	100	No	70.6	Yes	6.3	Yes	95.9	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	Yes	100	No	60.7	Yes	15.5	Yes	96.5	Yes
Special Education	Yes	100	No	33.4	No	-1.3	Yes	95.2	No
Low Income	Yes	100	No	70.3	Yes	6.5	Yes	96.0	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	-	-	-	77.8	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	Yes	100	No	69.7	Yes	5.9	Yes	96.0	Yes
Native American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	Yes	100	No	74.5	Yes	4.0	Yes	93.9	Yes

Adequate Yearly Progress History											NCLB Accountability Status
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
ELA	Aggregate	-	-	-	-	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	-	-	No	No	Yes	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	-	-	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	-	-	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	

Clark Avenue School - 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data - Detail

District: Chelsea (00570000)
 School: Clark Avenue School (00570050)
 School Title I Status: Title I School (SW)
 NCLB School Choice Required: Yes
 Supplemental Educational Services Required: Yes

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS															
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Attendance			AYP 2009
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2009 CPI	Met Target (90.2)	2008 CPI (Baseline)	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Aggregate	604	603	100	Yes	541	78.9	No	73.1	4.5	75.1-80.1	Yes	95.9	0.0	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	161	160	99	Yes	111	69.8	No	53.3	7.8	58.6-63.6	Yes	96.5	0.8	Yes	Yes
Special Education	88	88	100	Yes	80	45.0	No	40.3	10.0	45.8-54.8	No	95.2	0.0	Yes	No
Low Income	509	508	100	Yes	451	78.4	No	72.3	4.6	74.4-79.4	Yes	96.0	0.1	Yes	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	41	40	-	-	28	84.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	491	491	100	Yes	447	78.1	No	72.1	4.7	74.3-79.3	Yes	96.0	0.0	Yes	Yes
Native American	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	57	57	100	Yes	51	81.4	No	84.0	2.7	84.0-91.2	No	93.9	0.0	Yes	No
MATHEMATICS															
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Attendance			AYP 2009
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2009 CPI	Met Target (84.3)	2008 CPI (Baseline)	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Aggregate	603	603	100	Yes	539	70.6	No	64.3	6.0	67.8-72.8	Yes	95.9	0.0	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	161	161	100	Yes	110	60.7	No	45.2	9.1	51.8-56.8	Yes	96.5	0.8	Yes	Yes
Special Education	88	88	100	Yes	80	33.4	No	34.7	10.9	41.1-50.1	No	95.2	0.0	Yes	No
Low Income	508	508	100	Yes	449	70.3	No	63.8	6.0	67.3-72.3	Yes	96.0	0.1	Yes	Yes
Afr. Amer./Black	40	40	-	-	27	77.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	491	491	100	Yes	446	69.7	No	63.8	6.0	67.3-72.3	Yes	96.0	0.0	Yes	Yes

Native American	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	57	57	100	Yes	51	74.5	No	70.5	4.9	70.9-79.9	Yes	93.9	0.0	Yes	Yes

**Attachment C: Evaluation of Holyoke Turnaround Initiative (2008-2009):
Executive Summary by the Meristem Group**

**Evaluation of Holyoke Turnaround Initiative (2008-2009):
Executive Summary**

Noe J. Medina
Meristem Group
July 2009

The evaluation report and this summary were prepared by The Meristem Group, LLC, an independent consulting firm, under a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. The evaluation team was led by Noe Medina. The team included Faye Anderson, Elana Elstein, Ainsleigh Foster, Christine McDermott, Brendan O'Day, and Samantha Tan.

In November 2003, the Holyoke School District was one of two school districts declared “underperforming” by the Massachusetts Board of Education pursuant to the provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This was the first time that any school district in Massachusetts had received such a designation. This designation triggered the development of a comprehensive Turnaround Plan, the recruitment of an experienced national school improvement organization (America’s Choice) as a Turnaround Partner, and a commitment of additional state funding to support the implementation of the Turnaround Plan.

Brief Timeline for Holyoke Turnaround Initiative		
2005-06	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Curriculum Development • Middle Schools (6-8) Training Begins • AC Ramp Up Use in Middle & High School Classrooms • NISL Leadership Training Program • AC Site Coordinator Hired
2006-07	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math Curriculum Development • Elementary Schools (K-5) Training • Literacy & Math Coaches Hired • AC Ramp Up Use Ends in Most Classrooms • Principals’ Network Meetings Begun
2007-08	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Curriculum Development • Training Focus on Literacy & Math Coaches • AC Site Coordinator Leaves
2008-09	Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELL Curriculum Development • ELL Coaches Hired • Full-Service Community School Model Adopted by Peck

This is the second evaluation report on the Holyoke Turnaround Initiative prepared for the Department by The Meristem Group. The first report was submitted in June 2008 and documented the nature of this Initiative, assessed its impact, developed recommendations for the future, and identified lessons learned from this experience. This report was explicitly designed as a follow-up to the previous evaluation. Its stated purposes were to:

- Describe new and ongoing elements of the Initiative including changes made in response to the previous evaluation report
- Document its impact on the district, schools, administrators, faculty, and instruction
- Assess its impact on student academic achievement

Evaluation Findings

Curriculum & Instruction

Programs for ELL Students. Over the last year, the Initiative was successful in developing and implementing an ESL curriculum in grades 4 to 8 across the district. At the same time, Holyoke’s ELL Department began to replicate this process in two other subjects: Math and Science. Thus far, it has successfully developed and piloted curriculum for ELL students in Math at two schools and in Science at one school. Both programs were created and implemented in collaboration with the appropriate subject area departments and with the input of practitioners.

ELL Curriculum Map. The new ESL curriculum map was very well-received by coaches and faculty across the district. One principal characterized it as the district’s “best instructional product” under the Initiative. It provided multiple teaching options and more specific teaching strategies for working with beginning and early intermediate English speakers. Some administrators and faculty reported that this approach was appropriate and valuable for use with special needs student and low-performing readers, in addition to ELL students. The greater level of detail also made the ESL curriculum map more “user-friendly” for less experienced teachers than the ELA curriculum map.

Curriculum Maps. District curriculum leaders in ELA, Math, and Science demonstrated a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the curriculum maps in their subject areas. At the same time, school administrators and faculty remained very positive about the curriculum maps and particularly about the consistency provided in each subject areas. The only concerns related to the ELA curriculum and particularly the Readers Workshop Program because it lacked appropriate instructional strategies (“safety net”) to meet the needs of low-performing students. This was a particular concern for teachers in grades 4 and 5 who lacked a targeted reading intervention program appropriate for their grades.

Instructional Practices. Among the instructional methods introduced and/or promoted by America’s Choice as part of this Initiative, “Rituals & Routines” was generally seen as the most widely accepted and effectively used. Administrators, coaches, and faculty agreed that there also was widespread use and general support for other key instructional methods, including the workshop model, student journals, regular formative assessment of student performance, and communication with students on standards. While use of these methods continued to expand, only limited progress was reported in the use of differentiated instruction. Use of the America’s Choice instructional methods by many Holyoke faculty involved compliance rather than authentic understanding, adoption, and integration into their teaching. However, stories emerged during the interviews to indicate that faculty were continuing to make that transition. At the same time, variability in the use of the America’s Choice instructional methods across different schools continued.

Instructional Coaches. The instructional coaches were consistently characterized by district administrators, school administrators, and faculty as highly effective. At the same time, many faculty complained that they were unable to spend sufficient time with their literacy and math coach. This complaint was echoed by principals, some district administrators, and America’s Choice staff. There was a widespread perception that coaches were spending “too much time” outside their building on multiple training sessions (mainly with America’s Choice trainers) and district-wide meetings. However, this perception did not appear to be accurate.

Instead, the situation may have related to many appropriate demands on coaches' time while in their building. While increasing the time that teachers and coaches spend together is important, it will be a very challenging process.

America's Choice. The trainers provided by America's Choice were consistently characterized as being effective, professional, and responsive to the needs of Holyoke schools. One Holyoke administrator referred to a trainer as "fabulous". Another was called "indispensable". The ELL trainers were seen as particularly important and valuable in supporting and advancing the increased focus on that population.

These characterization of effectiveness was consistent with comments made about America's Choice trainers during the previous year. However, the responsiveness of America's Choice trainers to Holyoke conditions and needs was seen as a positive change from previous years. Some Holyoke administrators noted that America's Choice staff were more "cooperative" this year. The relationship with America's Choice was described by one district administrator as a "true partnership".

Programs for Special Education Students. America's Choice and the Turnaround Initiative have been criticized for failing to focus attention on the instruction of special education students. The situation with special education students has not changed thus far. District administrators have reported that addressing the many program compliance violations identified during the recent audit (26 in all) have been the immediate priority and have prevented the district from developing and implementing broader program change efforts. However, the potential for change now exists and initial plans have been put in place.

Access & Use of Student Assessment Data. The district has made substantial progress in improving the collection, management, and distribution of student assessment results. Principals and faculty in the grade K-8 schools generally reported making only the most basic use of student assessment data for their instructional decisions. However, the primary grade faculty in the Reading First schools made relatively sophisticated use of student assessment data as part of their Program. Some department heads and faculty at both high schools, district curriculum administrators and instructional coaches also reported relatively sophisticated data use.

Leading & Supporting Building-Based Change

Professional Learning Communities. During 2008-09, the professional learning communities continued to develop and mature in three of the Holyoke schools (Donahue, Kelly, and White). There was less progress in the development of the professional learning communities in the other four schools. Two schools (Morgan and Peck) were essentially new schools in 2008-09 as a result of the district's school reorganization. These two elementary schools along with two other Holyoke schools (McMahon and Sullivan) also got new principals in the Fall 2008. These new principals reported spending much of their first year familiarizing themselves with their staff, assessing assets and needs, implementing basic management structures and processes, and building positive school cultures.

School Leadership Teams. Leadership teams in the elementary schools were relatively small. The functions and operation of the school leadership teams were not always clearly defined in some schools. Many faculty were not aware of the existence of a leadership team in their school, of its membership, or of its responsibilities and methods of operation. The leadership teams in the high school were generally much larger and more formal in operation. Both were used more for communication within the school.

Communication. Although efforts continue to be made within the Holyoke School District to improve internal communication, it remained a significant weakness. Two-way exchange of information – “down” from the decision-maker and “up” from the practitioner – was perceived by many faculty to be rare in previous project years. Interviews this year suggested that some administrators were increasingly promoting such two-way exchanges and some faculty saw this as providing them both knowledge about the Turnaround Initiative and a “voice” in its further development and implementation. One avenue for direct communication with faculty, the local teachers union, received very little attention during the Turnaround Initiative.

Staff Engagement. Many faculty reported limited initial involvement by practitioners in the Initiative’s curriculum development efforts. However, there appeared to be greater engagement by faculty in these processes during the last year. In part, this was because the district had demonstrated a commitment for maintaining the elements of the Turnaround Initiative. In addition, district curriculum teams solicited feedback from practitioners about their classroom experiences and used it to improve the curriculum. Both factor provided a level of authenticity to the role which encouraged participation.

Principals Network. During 2008-09, five meetings focused on the instruction of ELL students while two meetings focused on science instruction. Although these meetings were all seen as valuable and effective, the sessions on ELL instruction were characterized as “exceptional”.

Classroom Visits & Focus Walks. Most district administrators, principals, and coaches reported participating in classroom visits on a regular basis throughout 2008-09, including formal Focus Walks. The ELL Department reported participating in the most Focus Walks during the year – two in each school. Feedback to principals and faculty from the Focus Walk varied. The ELL Department had the most extensive feedback process.

Community & Parent Outreach. Little progress has been made at the district level in promoting community and parent outreach in Holyoke during the course of this Initiative. However, the new Peck School has begun to implement the full-service community school model. This model has the potential for bringing together an array of community agencies to better coordinate the delivery of academic, social, mental, physical, and vocational programs and services that meet student and family needs.

District-Level Activities

District Curriculum Meetings. Monthly meetings of district curriculum coordinators have served as appropriate forums for the effective coordination of curriculum development and staff training activities across different subject areas, grade levels, and schools.

District Data Team. This team successfully completed all three major tasks identified for 2008-09 and continued to disseminate information on the availability of student assessment data for use by principals and faculty.

Faculty Recruitment & Retention. Holyoke continued to struggle to recruit and retain highly-qualified teachers. This was affected by higher salary and benefits in neighboring districts, working conditions in some suburban schools were considered less burdensome than in Holyoke due to the needs of its student population, and many of the teachers hired by Holyoke were new to the profession, a time when attrition from the profession is higher.

Impact on Student Academic Performance

Student assessment results were discouraging for the overall population of elementary and middle school students in Holyoke. During the implementation of the Turnaround Initiative, Holyoke students were outperformed on the MCAS by students from five comparison districts and failed to achieve the state's MCAS gain targets either in English or Math. Holyoke students also did not gain in Reading or Math on the MAP compared to a typical student population.

However, the longitudinal analysis had some positive results. In all three longitudinal student cohorts examined, students enrolled in Holyoke throughout the implementation of the Turnaround Initiative had gains that were greater than students in five comparison districts in both ELA and Math. In addition, Holyoke students exceeded the state target for MCAS gains for all three cohorts in English and for one cohort in Math.

In all five longitudinal student cohorts examined, students enrolled in Holyoke throughout the implementation of the Turnaround Initiative made small but consistent gains on the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test compared to a typical student population. Gains occurred while students were in upper elementary and middle school grades but not when they entered high school.

Recommendations

Planning & Outcomes. Develop long-term goals and annual benchmarks to guide the planning, implementation, and assessment of the Holyoke Turnaround Initiative.

District Leadership. Involve ESE in the recruitment of the new Superintendent. Ensure that his replacement has an authentic commitment to building on the current successes of the Turnaround Initiative rather than discarding them and starting over again.

Leadership Training. Provide NISL training to all new principals and district curriculum administrators. Later offer NISL training to assistant principals and aspiring principals.

Community Outreach. Development a district community outreach plan designed to support and enhance district-wide and building-based efforts at community collaboration with a particular focus on implementation of the full-service community school model at the new Peck School.

Communication. Promote greater direct communication between the district and schools and within schools. Engage the local teachers union as a partner to promote greater communication and cooperation on the Turnaround Initiative.

Instructional Coaches. Identify and implement new strategies to increase the time spent working with faculty and staff in their assigned schools while ensuring adequate time allotted for ongoing training and meetings outside their building.

Curriculum and Instruction. Continue development of programs and curriculum maps for ELL students and adopt a similar strategy for special education students. Extend curriculum development to include social studies and other curricular areas.

Use of Student Assessment Data. Continue to deepen and expand district and school staff capability for analyzing and using data to address student needs and improve instruction.

Student Mobility. Addressing the challenges associated with the high levels of student mobility should be a priority. Effort should include new, collaborative efforts to develop and implement policies and practices that promote greater family stability, support for new Peck School as full-service community school, new assessment policies for a community with high levels of student mobility, holding districts accountable for meeting the education needs of all students even mobile students, and use differentiated instruction strategies to serve mobile students.

Summary

These results indicated that the Holyoke School District still has a long way to go in its efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of this Turnaround Initiative – to substantially improve the performance of its overall student population on the MCAS. At the same time, our analysis of the MCAS and MAP results documented academic improvement in both ELA and Math by students who were enrolled in Holyoke elementary and middle school grades during the implementation of the Turnaround Initiative. Thus, the changes made by the Holyoke School District with the assistance and support of America’s Choice and ESE may have been successful for at least one group of students in Holyoke. Moving forward, the Holyoke School District and ESE should continue to build on these gains while also recognizing that new strategies must be integrated into the Initiative to address the needs of students who have not yet been reached by the past efforts.

Attachment D: Regulations on Underperforming Schools and School Districts

603 CMR 2.00: Underperforming Schools and School Districts

Section:

[2.01: Authority, Scope, and Purpose](#)

[2.02: Definitions](#)

[2.03: School Accountability](#)

[2.04: Underperforming School Districts](#)

[2.05: Low-Performing Mathematics Programs](#)

[View All Sections](#)

Adopted by the Board of Education: June 16, 1997

Most Recently Amended by the Board of Education: October 24, 2006

2.01: Authority, Scope and Purpose

- (1) 603 CMR 2.00 is promulgated pursuant to the authority of the Board of Education under M.G.L. c.69, §§ 1B and 1J and c. 71, § 38G.

603 CMR 2.00 governs the Board's review of the adequacy of the educational opportunities and services provided by the Commonwealth's public schools, and identifies the circumstances under which the Board may declare a school or school district chronically underperforming and intervene in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69,

- (2) §§ 1J and 1K. 603 CMR 2.00 also governs the Board's review of the mathematics programs provided by the Commonwealth's public school's and identifies circumstances under which the Board may declare a school's mathematics program low-performing and require mathematics teachers in that program to take a diagnostic mathematics content assessment.

2.02: Definitions

Accountability Status shall mean the category to which a school is assigned, based on its AYP determinations over multiple years, to define the required course of school, district and/or state action that must be taken to improve student performance. Accountability status categories include Identified for Improvement, Corrective Action and Restructuring. Schools that make AYP in a subject for all student groups for two or more consecutive years are assigned to the No Status category. A district or school may be placed in an accountability status on the basis of the performance and improvement profile of students in the aggregate or of one or more student subgroups over two or more years in English language arts and/or mathematics.

Adequate Yearly Process or AYP shall mean a determination by the Department of the adequacy of district, grade level, school, and student subgroup performance and improvement relative to performance and improvement targets in English language arts and mathematics established by the Board in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act.

Board shall mean the Board of Education, appointed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 15, § 1E.

Chronically Underperforming School shall mean a school deemed by the Commissioner to be an underperforming school, also known as a Commonwealth Priority School, that is found by the Board, in accordance with M.G.L. c.

69, § 1J, to have failed to demonstrate significant improvement consistent with its approved remedial plan within 24 months after Board approval of its plan.

Commissioner shall mean the Commissioner of Education, appointed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 15, § 1F, or his or her designee.

Commonwealth Priority School shall mean a school that the Commissioner has deemed to be underperforming within the meaning of M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J.

Core academic subjects shall mean the subjects specified in M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D (mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages and the arts) and subjects covered in courses that are part of an approved vocational-technical education program under M.G.L. c. 74.

Corrective Action shall mean the Accountability Status of a school that has failed to meet AYP in English language arts, mathematics, or both subjects in the aggregate or for student subgroups for four consecutive years or for two or more non-consecutive years while in Identified for Improvement accountability status.

Department shall mean the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education acting through the Commissioner or his designee.

District or school district shall mean a municipal school department or regional school district, acting through its school committee or superintendent of schools; a county agricultural school, acting through its board of trustees or superintendent/director; a charter school, acting through its board of trustees or school leader; or any other public school established by statute or charter, acting through its governing board or director.

District Review shall mean a review conducted by the office of Educational Quality and Accountability to determine whether a district is making adequate provision for the delivery of a high quality education to all students served by the district, and whether the district is making effective and efficient use of available resources to improve the educational outcomes attained by students attending the district's schools. District reviews shall be based on performance standards adopted by the EMAC. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability shall publish and provide district officials with written guidelines for District reviews.

District Review Teams shall mean a group of individuals appointed by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability to conduct desk based and/or on site school and district performance review activities.

Educational Management Audit Council or "EMAC" shall mean the entity, comprised of individuals appointed by the Governor pursuant to M.G.L. c. 15, § 55A that directs and oversees the conduct of school and district audits performed by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability.

Fact-Finding Review shall mean a review conducted by one or more individuals appointed by the Commissioner in accordance with M.G. L. c. 69, §1J or 1K to assess the reasons for a school's or district's underperformance and prospects for its improvement.

Identified for Improvement shall mean the Accountability Status of a school that has failed to meet AYP in English language arts or math or both subjects in the aggregate or for student subgroups for two consecutive years.

Low-performing Mathematics Program: A mathematics program in a Massachusetts public middle or high school that has been identified as low-performing according to the criteria found in 603 CMR 2.05.

Mathematics Content Assessment: A diagnostic assessment of mathematics content knowledge designated by the Board and paid for by the Department.

Mathematics Teacher: Any educator who teaches any mathematics course in a Massachusetts public school.

NCLB shall mean the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. 6301, et. seq.

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability or "EQA" shall mean the agency established pursuant to M.G. L. c. 15, § 55A.

Restructuring shall mean the Accountability Status of a school that has failed to make AYP in English language arts, mathematics, or both subjects in the aggregate or for student subgroups for five or more consecutive years or for one or more additional years after being identified for Corrective Action.

School shall mean a single public school, consisting of one or more school buildings, which operates under the direct administration of a principal, director, or school leader appointed by the school district or charter school board responsible for its governance.

State Review Panel shall mean a group of highly qualified individuals appointed to serve, on request, as advisors to the Commissioner and Board on matters related to school and district performance review and improvement planning.

2.03: School Accountability

The Department shall implement an accountability system approved by the Board to track the performance and improvement demonstrated by Massachusetts public schools on State assessments in designated core academic subjects and other measures of performance approved by the Board on recommendation of the Commissioner. The school accountability system implemented by the Department shall be designed to meet federal as well as state statutory requirements.

The school accountability system shall measure performance referenced to Board-approved state targets

- (a) for student performance on MCAS tests and alternative assessments in English language arts and mathematics, high school graduation rate, and student attendance.

- (1) In addition to state targets for MCAS performance which in a given year are the same for all schools, the
- (b) Department shall establish subject-specific MCAS improvement targets on an annual basis for each school, and for each student subgroup within a school.

- (c) The Department shall compile and analyze the performance and improvement data for each school and district, together with data on MCAS participation, student attendance, and high school graduation rates on an annual basis to determine, for each school, whether students in the aggregate and student subgroups within the school have made adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the achievement of state performance targets.

- (d) The Department shall communicate AYP and accountability status determinations to school and district officials and the public on an annual basis as soon as practicable after annual MCAS results become available, and shall inform school and district officials of any state actions that may occur as a consequence of those determinations.

The Commissioner shall recruit highly qualified individuals to serve as members of a State Review Panel.

The Commissioner shall select Review Panel members on the basis of their demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following fields:

- (2)
 1. district or school leadership
 - (a) 2. standards-based elementary or secondary curriculum, instruction, and assessment
 3. instructional data management and analysis
 4. district, school, or program evaluation

5. educational program management
6. teacher leadership
7. organizational management
8. district or school budget and finance
9. any other fields that the Commissioner deems to be relevant to the review and evaluation of school or district performance or school improvement planning.

The Commissioner shall deploy Review Panel members, individually or as a group, to conduct or participate in the review of school improvement plans and the evaluation of district improvement

- (b) activities. Review Panel members may be asked to provide advice and assistance to the Commissioner and Board regarding the appropriateness and sufficiency of actions being taken by district and school leaders and by the Department to improve student performance in Commonwealth Priority Schools and Chronically Underperforming Schools.
- (c) Candidates for appointment to the State Review Panel shall be approved by the Board.
- (d) State Review Panel members may be compensated by the Department for their service.

Designation as a Commonwealth Priority School

- (3) When a school is identified for Corrective Action or Restructuring in English language arts and/or mathematics for students in the aggregate as a result of failing, for four or more years, to make AYP in the same subject(s), the Commissioner shall designate the school a Commonwealth Priority School

Notice of Designation and Opportunity for Reconsideration

- (a) When a school is found to meet the criteria for designation as a Commonwealth Priority School, the Department will provide written notice to the governing body of the school, the district superintendent, if any, the school's principal, and the collective bargaining agent for the school's faculty, if any, informing them that the school is so designated.

The governing body of a school designated as a Commonwealth Priority School may seek reconsideration of that designation if it believes that the designation was based upon erroneous or misleading information or that the school should not be so designated due to special circumstances. A

- (4) (b) request for reconsideration of a Commonwealth Priority School designation shall be accompanied by documentary support of the claim of error, offer of explanation, or statement of special circumstances, and must be received by the Commissioner no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the date the school received notification of its designation.
- (c) The Department will not initiate state intervention in a school designated as a Commonwealth Priority School while a timely request for reconsideration is pending.
- (d) The Commissioner's determination on reconsideration of a Commonwealth Priority School designation shall be final.

Fact Finding to Assess Intervention Required

Within thirty (30) days after the Commissioner issues a Commonwealth Priority School designation, the school committee and superintendent of a district in which a school so designated is located, or the board of trustees and head of school of a charter school so designated, shall submit a written self-

- (5) (a) assessment to the Department setting forth:
 1. a succinct assessment of the extent to which the essential structures, policies, administrative practices and operating conditions for improving student performance in the school are in place, and
 2. the school's needs for improvement assistance and support.

- (b) District officials shall confer with teacher representatives in preparing this assessment and statement of needs.
- (c) The Department may rely in whole or in part on information contained in the district self-assessment report to determine initially the school's need for service and support.

Within thirty (30) days following Department receipt of a Commonwealth Priority School's self-assessment and statement of needs, the Department will initiate an independent fact finding review to assess the current capacity and willingness of district, school, and community leaders to plan for, lead, and productively engage the school's faculty, administrators, students, parents and community institutions in appropriate school improvement efforts, with or without assistance from an external partner.

(d)

The Commissioner may appoint one or more members of the State Review Panel to consider the results of the fact finding review, the district's self-assessment and statement of needs, and other relevant information provided by the Department or solicited by panel members. The panel member(s) may recommend appropriate action to the Commissioner and Board based on their professional judgments regarding:

1. the present adequacy of leadership for change to improve results;
2. the present adequacy of district infrastructure to support school improvement;
- (e) 3. the readiness and apparent capacity of school and district personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student achievement at the school;
4. the readiness and apparent capacity of district, school and faculty leaders to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner;
5. the likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the school's performance within current management structure and staffing; and
6. the necessity that the school in question remain in operation to serve district students.

The Commissioner, upon consideration of the recommendations of the State Review Panel members assigned to the case, shall determine the services and supports for which a Commonwealth Priority School will have priority. The school may be given priority for receipt of state-funded or arranged assistance and supports including, but not limited to:

1. financial support from the Department to support the successful implementation of district planned and directed improvement initiatives;
- (f) 2. direct assistance from Department staff and consultants to support data analysis, program design, evaluation of curriculum and instructional practice, or school management;
3. school improvement planning, personnel recruitment, selection or evaluation, and budget planning assistance;
4. participation in state-sponsored leadership training and teacher professional development opportunities;
5. guidance, assistance and/or services from an external organizational partner engaged by the Department to support district systemic changes and/or school-based improvement initiatives

Improvement Planning and Reporting Requirements

- The governing body of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School shall adopt clear, rigorous performance expectations for raising the level of student achievement at the school. Such expectations shall include, but not be limited to, meeting school-wide Adequate Yearly Progress standards within two years after the adoption of a school improvement plan. The governing body shall adopt a written policy setting forth the manner in which the performance expectations it has
- (6) (a)

established will be used in its personnel evaluation system.

- (b) The governing body and administrators responsible for management of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School shall ensure that essential infrastructure and conditions are in place to support the delivery of high quality, standards-based curriculum, instruction, assessment and student support services at the school.

- (c) The governing body of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School shall revise existing policies, structures, agreements, processes, and practices as needed to remove existing barriers to achievement of the conditions for effective teaching, learning and instructional management.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J, no more than six months after the school is declared to be a Commonwealth Priority School or a Chronically Underperforming School, the superintendent of the district in which the school is located, or in the case of a charter school, its head of school, shall submit to the Board the district's plan to improve the performance of students at the school. The improvement plan shall specify:

- (d) the immediate corrective actions that the district has taken and proposes to take to ensure that
1. essential infrastructure and conditions for improved teaching, learning, and instructional management at the school are in place, and
 2. the steps that will be followed by school administrators and faculty to develop and implement a coherent, intentional design for the delivery of effective teaching, learning, instructional management and student services at the school.

The district's immediate term plan of corrective action to improve student performance in a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School shall describe the changes in the district's or school's existing policies, structures, agreements, processes, and practices necessary to ensure significant achievement gains for all students enrolled in such schools. All such plans must include the following elements, or a compelling rationale for alternative approaches designed to achieve comparable or superior results:

1. The school's principal has authority to select and assign staff to positions in the school without regard to seniority;
2. The school's principal has control over financial resources necessary to successfully implement the school improvement plan;
3. The school is implementing curricula that are aligned to state frameworks in core academic subjects;
- (e) 4. The school implements systematically a program of interim assessments (4-6 times per year) in English language arts and mathematics that are aligned to school curriculum and state frameworks;
5. The school has a system to provide detailed tracking and analysis of assessment results and uses those results to inform curriculum, instruction and individual interventions;
6. The school schedule for student learning provides adequate time on a daily and weekly basis for the delivery of instruction and provision of individualized support as needed in English language arts and math, which for students not yet proficient is presumed to be at least 90 minutes per day in each subject;
7. The school provides daily after-school tutoring and homework help for students who need supplemental instruction and focused work on skill development;
8. The school has a least two full-time subject-area coaches, one each for English language arts/reading and for mathematics, who are responsible to provide faculty at the school with consistent classroom observation and feedback on the quality and effectiveness of curriculum

delivery, instructional practice, and data use;

9. School administrators periodically evaluate faculty, including direct evaluation of applicable content knowledge and annual evaluation of overall performance tied in part to solid growth in student learning and commitment to the school's culture, educational model, and improvement strategy;

- The weekly and annual work schedule for teachers provides adequate time for regular, frequent, department and/or grade-level faculty meetings to discuss individual student progress, curriculum issues, instructional practice, and school-wide improvement efforts. As a general rule no less than 10. one hour per week shall be dedicated to leadership-directed, collaborative work, and no fewer than 5 days per year, or hours equivalent thereto, when teachers are not responsible for supervising or teaching students, shall be dedicated to professional development and planning activities directed by school leaders.

- District officials, in developing a plan to improve the performance of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School, shall consider the merits of contracting for third party management services or requesting Board approval of a Horace Mann charter to restructure governance of the school. The district's written submission to the Board, containing district leaders' improvement plan proposal, shall include a discussion of these options.
- (f)

- The Commissioner will publish guidance to assist district administrators, school leaders, faculty, and staff of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School with the organizational redesign aspect of the school improvement planning process referenced at 603 C.M.R. 2.03(6)(d) 2. The Department's guidance on school system design will identify elements of effective practice and conditions of organizational operation that have been demonstrated to be effective contributors to improved student performance in low performing schools.
- (g)

- The Commissioner's published guidance on instructional and administrative policies, practices and conditions found to have positive effects on student performance shall serve as a basis for the Department's assessment of the adequacy of the policies, practices, and conditions in a school failing to meet performance expectations, and shall be the foundation for the school improvement planning and support provided by the Department.
- (h)

- The Department will form a stakeholder working group to assist in the development and participate in periodic review and amendment of Department guidelines for the conduct of fact-finding reviews to determine the capacity and service needs of districts with schools designated as Commonwealth Priority Schools. The stakeholder working group shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from the professional associations of Massachusetts school committees, superintendents, principals, program administrators, teachers and parents. The Department will publish these guidelines in draft form for public review and comment prior to adoption and final publication.
- (i)

- When the governing body of a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School submits, for Board approval, its plan for improving student performance, the Commissioner may appoint one or more members from the State Review Panel to review the proposed plan and recommend appropriate action to the Commissioner and Board.
- (j)

- The Commissioner shall recommend to the Board, and the Board shall exercise its discretion to decide whether to accept, reject or direct that specific amendments be made to the plan submitted by a district to improve student performance at a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School. The Board's exercise of its plan approval authority shall be guided by the recommendations, if any, of any State Review Panel members designated by the Commissioner to review and advise on approval of proposed plans. In cases of Chronically Underperforming schools, the Board shall consider amending school improvement plans to require management of the school by a qualified third party, under a performance-based contract or Horace Mann charter.
- (k)

In January and July of each year, the governing body of a Commonwealth Priority School and a Chronically Underperforming School shall provide the Commissioner with a written report of the school's progress toward its improvement objectives. These progress reports shall be prepared and submitted by the school's leader and superintendent in conjunction with the school's external partner, if any.

(l) The Commissioner, with approval of the Board and to the extent permitted by federal and state statutes, may withhold funds when, after reasonable notice and opportunity to comply, the district fails to comply with directives of the Board to take specified actions designed to improve student performance in a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School.

(m) Failure by local school or municipal officials to comply with directives of the Board issued pursuant to its authority under M.G.L. c. 69, s 1J to address performance deficiencies in a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School may result in Board action to declare the district to be chronically underperforming and place the district in receivership, as provided for by M.G.L. c. 69, s 1K and 603 CMR 2.04(5).

Training and Support for School Leaders

(7) Subject to funding, the Department will make training and support available to the principals and members of the school leadership teams of all schools designated as Commonwealth Priority Schools or Chronically Underperforming Schools. The nature and extent of training provided in a particular case will depend on the leadership education and training history, past professional development experiences, and demonstrated knowledge and skills of the principal and leadership team. Subject to funding, the Department will make available coaches or mentors to principals and leaders of schools designated as Commonwealth Priority Schools or Chronically Underperforming Schools to advise, assist, and support them in fulfilling their leadership responsibilities.

(a) The principal or leader appointed to lead a Commonwealth Priority School or Chronically Underperforming School shall participate in the school leadership training and support program approved for him or her by the Commissioner.

(b) The Department may fund recruitment and performance-based pay incentives to attract highly qualified individuals to serve as principals or leaders of Commonwealth Priority Schools and Chronically Underperforming Schools.

Termination of Designation as a Commonwealth Priority School

(8) If a Commonwealth Priority School makes AYP in both English language arts and mathematics for students in the aggregate for two consecutive years following its designation as a Commonwealth Priority School, the school's governing body may request termination of the school's designation. The Commissioner may grant the request unless the school is in Restructuring.

(a) If a Commonwealth Priority School has significantly improved student performance and has met many but not all of its AYP targets for students in the aggregate for four or more years, the school's governing body may request termination of the school's designation. The Commissioner may grant the request unless the school is in Restructuring.

(9) If a Commonwealth Priority School fails to demonstrate significant improvement in student performance within 24 months after acceptance of a remedial plan by the Board, the Board may declare the school to be chronically underperforming. School officials of the district in which the school is located and members of the public shall have an opportunity to be heard by the Board prior to final action by the Board declaring a school chronically underperforming.

(10) Upon declaration by the Board that a school is chronically underperforming, the Board shall intervene in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J, and shall issue a written order specifying actions that the district shall take to improve the academic performance of students at the school. The principal or leader appointed to lead a chronically school shall have the extraordinary powers specified in M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J. The superintendent

and school committee of the district, or the school leader and board of trustees of a charter school, in which a chronically underperforming school is located shall ensure that all corrective actions ordered by the Board are implemented without delay.

2.04: Underperforming School Districts

Every district shall develop and implement an annual self-evaluation and district improvement planning process, led by the district superintendent and school committee with active participation by teachers, parents, business and community leaders.

The district's evaluation and planning process shall result, at least once in every three years, in the

- (a) development of a written long-range plan to improve the educational programs and services and ensure the adequacy of educational facilities and equipment for students attending the district's schools.

- (1)
 - (b) Annually, the district shall develop and implement a written plan stating specific goals for improved student performance and detailing the actions to be taken by the district to meet those goals.

A district's long-range and annual improvement plans shall be premised on an analysis of data on

- (c) performance by the district's students and an assessment of actions the district and its schools must take to improve that performance toward meeting State targets.

- (d) Annual district improvement plans shall, in form and content, conform to requirements set forth in M.G.L. c. 69, § 11 and guidelines published by the Department.

A district's plan(s) to support the improvement of any school within the district that has been designated a

- (2) Commonwealth Priority School or a Chronically Underperforming School shall be incorporated into, and given high priority, in the district's annual improvement plan.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability shall, on an annual basis, analyze data evidencing the performance of all school districts, and based on that analysis shall select districts to undergo district review.

- (a) District reviews shall be conducted according to standards, policies and procedures adopted by the EMAC.

The district review shall consist of an analysis of data, reports and documents and a focused interview of the district's leadership team, and shall address five areas of inquiry: assessment and evaluation,

- (b) and financial management. Beginning November 1, 2004, for any district whose level of student performance and improvement is below the threshold established by the Board of Education in consultation with EMAC, the district review shall also include an in-depth review of the deficiencies the EQA has identified.
- (3)

- (c) In addition to the in-depth reviews that EQA shall conduct under 603 CMR 2.04 (3) (b), the EMAC may direct the EQA to conduct an in-depth review in any district based on identified deficiencies relating to any of the five areas of inquiry in 603 CMR 2.04 (3)(b).

- (d) The EQA shall provide a written report of the findings and conclusions of each district review team to the district, the EMAC and the Commissioner of Education, and shall make such reports available to the public.

- (e) The EQA shall provide the EMAC and the Commissioner and Board with an annual report of the results of the reviews it performs.

The EMAC shall advise the Commissioner of any case in which a district review conducted by the EQA uncovered serious or widespread deficiencies in the quality of curriculum or instruction or in the adequacy of

- (4) programs, services, operational management or facilities that, in the EMAC's judgment, are likely to have a substantial negative effect on the educational achievement of students attending the district's schools. The Commissioner shall provide Board members with copies of the written district review report for each district in

which such deficiencies are identified.

- The Board, after receipt and review of such a report and any additional information it may request, shall provide an opportunity for district officials to appear before the Board or a subcommittee thereof to explain the reasons for the district's performance deficiencies and offer a plan for their remediation, and after consideration of the findings of the district review team and any contrary or explanatory information provided to the Board by district officials, shall determine whether the district's performance warrants a declaration of underperformance.
- (a)

If the Board determines a district to be underperforming, the Commissioner shall appoint an independent fact-finding team. Using the reports from EQA as a basis, the fact-finding team will assess the reasons for the underperformance. The fact-finding process shall include an evaluation of the capacity and willingness of the district's leadership to implement effectively an improvement plan in partnership with the Department. At the Commissioner's direction, the team shall do additional fact-finding as needed to assess the reasons for the underperformance and the prospects for improvement. When the Commissioner is satisfied with the adequacy of the fact-finding, he may take action as follows.

- If the Commissioner concludes, based on the fact-finding, that the district leadership does have the requisite capacity and willingness to implement an improvement plan, the Commissioner shall direct
- 1. the district to prepare a plan to remedy its performance deficiencies and to propose a timeframe within which identified deficiencies shall be corrected. The Board, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner, may accept, reject or require modification of the district's plan.
- (b)

- The Commissioner shall, to the extent practicable, enter into a memorandum of agreement with the district and a turnaround partner approved by the Department who will work with district leaders to support strategic planning, training and management assistance for necessary reforms. As long as the district is classified as underperforming, the district may not dismiss the turnaround partner without the agreement of the Commissioner. The district and its turnaround partner, if any, shall make regular progress reports to the Commissioner, at least twice each year.
- 2.

- If the Commissioner concludes, based on the fact-finding, that the district leadership does not have the requisite capacity and willingness to implement an improvement plan, he may either propose specific personnel changes to the district or recommend to the Board that it declare the district to be chronically underperforming.
- 3.

A determination by the Board, on recommendation of the Commissioner, that one or more of the conditions or occurrences set forth at 603 CMR 2.04(5)(a) through (h) exists within a particular school district shall constitute evidence that inadequate or unsound educational or fiscal practices by a school district are negatively affecting the academic performance of students within the district's schools. Such evidence shall be sufficient grounds for the Board to declare a district to be chronically underperforming and shall trigger the appointment by the Board of a receiver for the district. The receiver shall report to and take direction from the Commissioner, and shall have all of the powers normally vested in the superintendent and school committee, as provided by M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K.

- (5) (a) Failure by the district's superintendent and school committee to agree to, or failure by the district to faithfully and diligently implement, within the established timeframe, a plan approved by the Commissioner and Board pursuant to 603 CMR 2.04(4)(b) 1. or 2.

- (b) Determination by the Commissioner, pursuant to 603 CMR 2.04 (4) (b) 3, that the district leadership does not have the requisite capacity and willingness to implement an improvement plan, and that the district has failed to make personnel changes recommended by the Commissioner, if any, to ensure adequate leadership.

- (c) Failure by a district to submit an acceptable plan, or to faithfully and diligently implement, within the established timeframe, the plan approved by the Commissioner and Board, for the improvement of one or more schools declared, pursuant to M.G.L c. 69, § 1J, and 603 CMR 2.03, to be a Commonwealth Priority School(s) or Chronically Underperforming School(s).

Failure by a district to remedy, within the time period specified by the Department or permitted by statute
(d) or agency rule, a serious violation of state or federal law regarding the provision or operation of required public education programs or services.

Failure by a district to correct, within the time period specified by the Department, any school facility
(e) deficiency that seriously impedes the delivery of education services or poses a serious health or safety risk to district students.

Failure by a school district or its governing city or town(s), after notice and opportunity to take corrective
(f) action(s), to comply substantially with the appropriation and spending requirements set forth at M.G. L. c. 70, 603 CMR 10.00, and any special legislative enactment related to the financing of public education.

Failure by a school district, after notice and opportunity to take corrective action(s), to properly manage,
(g) lawfully expend, or truthfully report the district's use of funds appropriated or awarded for the support of public education.

Failure by a school district to meet student performance and improvement objectives specified in the
(h) district improvement plan, after the period of time specified in the plan.

- (6) School district and municipal officials and members of the public shall have an opportunity to be heard by the Board prior to final action by the Board to declare the district to be chronically underperforming.
- (7) The Board shall proceed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K when requested to modify or terminate a school district receivership order.

2.05: Low-Performing Mathematics Programs

Any middle or high school in which 30 percent or more of the students fail the MCAS mathematics test, excluding those students who are enrolled in special education, who are classified as having limited English
(1) proficiency, or who have not been enrolled in the school for at least two school years, and which failed to make AYP in mathematics for students in the aggregate or any student subgroup during the most recent accountability cycle, shall be considered to have a Low-Performing Mathematics Program.

- Mathematics teachers at schools with low-performing mathematics programs shall take the next administration of the Mathematics Content Assessment offered after the mathematics program is classified as low-performing. In addition, any mathematics teacher in a middle or high school that has been designated a Commonwealth Priority School or a Chronically Underperforming School, and any mathematics teacher who is not certified in
(2) mathematics and is teaching in a middle or high school with 30percent or greater failure rate on the MCAS mathematics test, excluding those students who are enrolled in special education, who are classified as having limited English proficiency, or who have not been enrolled in the school for at least two school years, shall be considered a mathematics teacher in a Low-Performing Mathematics Program and shall take the Mathematics Content Assessment when it is next offered. A mathematics teacher shall be required to take the Mathematics Content Assessment only once.

- Individual results on the Mathematics Content Assessment shall be forwarded to the applicable mathematics teachers and their school principals for use in developing or revising professional development plans, as
(3) provided in the Recertification Regulations, 603 CMR 44.04 (4). These individual results are to be used for diagnostic purposes only, and individual mathematics teachers' results shall not be considered public records. The Department shall analyze and publish aggregate, statewide, district-level and school-level results, except to the extent such publication would have the effect of revealing the performance of any individual teacher.

- In addition to the procedures contained in 603 CMR 2.03(1)-(3), the Commissioner shall determine whether
(4) any school with a low-performing mathematics program should be designated a Commonwealth Priority School. In making this determination, the Commissioner shall consider the participation rates and performance of the school's mathematics teachers on the Mathematics Content Assessment, among other factors.

The Commissioner may waive the Mathematics Content Assessment requirement for individual mathematics (5) teachers based on a finding that such teachers have demonstrated mastery of mathematics or that special circumstances exist that make said assessment requirement inappropriate or immaterial.

Regulatory Authority:

M.G.L. c. 69, §§ 1J and 1K, c. 71, § 38G.

Attachment E: FY10 School and District Intervention Account Spending by Initiative

FY10 7061-9408 Targeted Assistance Spending Report Summary by Initiative

	Payroll/Admin	Consultants	Conference Expenses	Grants	Total
<u>Commissioner's Districts</u>					
Subtotal		\$395,000		\$1,000,000	\$1,395,000
<u>Commonwealth Priority Schools (level 4 schools)</u>					
Subtotal				\$994,245	\$994,245
<u>District Intervention</u>					
Subtotal		\$1,096,714	\$1,500	\$22,300	\$1,120,514
<u>Instructional Leadership Training</u>					
Subtotal		\$43,080	\$5,550		\$48,360
<u>Other Targeted Assistance</u>					
Includes: Urban HS Dropout Reduction Initiative, Coaching, Regional Service Centers, Urban Leadership Transitions Planning Support, Regionalization					
Subtotal		\$171,100	\$53,491	\$424,492	\$649,083
<u>Professional Development for Teachers</u>					
Subtotal		\$202,643			\$202,643
<u>Regional System of Support</u>					
Subtotal		\$1,517,526	\$9,119		\$1,526,645
<u>Staff - 21 FTE's</u>					
Subtotal	\$1,957,554				\$1,957,554
<u>Underperforming Districts</u>					
Subtotal		\$482,500		\$309,822	\$792,322
<u>Budget Allocation Total</u>	<u>\$1,957,554</u>	<u>\$3,908,562</u>	<u>\$69,660</u>	<u>\$2,750,859</u>	<u>\$8,686,635</u>
7061-9408 FY10 account	\$6,874,476				
* Balance from FY09 account	\$1,812,159				
Total funds	\$8,686,635				

* Monies rolled forward to support summer activities as authorized by the legislative language expended by August 31, 2009

X. Appendix II

Chapter 27 of the Acts of 2009

7061-9408 “For targeted intervention to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, schools and districts which have been placed in the accountability status of identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring pursuant to departmental regulations, or which have been designated Commonwealth Priority Schools or Commonwealth Pilot Schools pursuant to said regulations; provided, that no money shall be expended in any school or district that fails to file a comprehensive district plan pursuant to the provisions of section 1I of said chapter 69 of the General Laws; provided further, that the department shall only approve reform plans with proven, replicable results in improving student performance; provided further, that in carrying out the provisions of this item, the department may contract with school support specialists, turnaround partners, and such other external assistance as is needed in the expert opinion of the commissioner, to successfully turn around failing school and district performance; provided further, that no funds shall be expended on targeted intervention unless the department shall have approved, as part of the comprehensive district improvement plan, a professional development plan which addresses the needs of the district as determined by the department; provided further, that eligible professional development activities for purposes of this item shall include, but not be limited to: professional development among teachers of the same grade levels and teachers of the same subject matter across grade levels, professional development focused on improving the teacher’s content knowledge in the field or subject area in which the teacher is practicing, professional development which provides teachers with research based strategies for increasing student success, professional development teaching the principles of data driven instruction, and funding which helps provide common planning time for teachers within a school and within the school district; provided further, that preference in the awarding of such funds shall be given to professional development in math and English content skills; provided further, that funds from any targeted intervention grant may be used to partially offset the cost of said professional development and common planning time; provided further, that funds may be expended for the purchase of instructional materials pursuant to section 57 of chapter 15 of the General Laws; provided further, that no funds shall be expended on instructional materials except where the purchase of such materials is part of a comprehensive plan to align the school or district curriculum with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks; provided further, that preference in distributing funds shall be made for proposals which coordinate reform efforts within all schools of a district in order to prevent conflicts between multiple reforms and interventions among the schools; provided further, that not more than \$1,200,000 of this amount shall be expended on the Commonwealth pilot school initiative established by the board in November 2006; provided further, that not more than \$200,000 of this amount shall be expended on regionalism study grants to explore methods of improving the delivery of education services in areas of declining student enrollment, including but not limited to, studies of fully regionalizing partial regional school districts, funding demographic studies to project future district enrollments, and exploring creative means of collaborating across regions, including sharing curriculum specialists, professional development providers, transportation services, and other educational and instructional interventions between regions; provided further, that the department shall issue a report, no later than February 2, 2009 and annually thereafter describing and analyzing all intervention and targeted assistance efforts funded by this item; provided further, that such report shall include but not be limited to: the number of school and school districts eligible to receive such assistance, the number of students attending school in said districts, the nature and type of intervention activities funded through this item, by school and school district, the number of teachers in professional development funded in part through this item, the number of districts

with curricula or professional development systems aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, and the number that are undertaking that effort with grants funded by this item, the number of outside vendors with whom the department has contracted to provide intervention and turnaround services, the amount each vendor has received, and the results obtained in each instance, the number of students who have passed the MCAS assessment and obtained a competency determination through these programs, before, and during the period of intervention and turnaround, and any other data relative to the successes achieved or challenges faced by the effort to turn around schools, along with any legislative or budgetary recommendations for improving the initiative and increasing the success of all intervention efforts; provided further, that said report shall include an analysis of the number of districts with curriculum plans not aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, along with any legislative and regulatory recommendations to address the issue; provided further, that said report shall indicate the number of schools which have accepted the Commonwealth pilot school model, the reforms which they have undertaken, and the number which have expressed interest in the pilot school option; provided further, that said report shall be provided to the secretary of administration and finance, the senate president, the speaker of the house, the chairs of the house and senate ways and means committees and the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education; provided further, that no funds shall be expended on recurring school or school district expenditures unless the department and school district have developed a long term plan to fund such expenditures from the district's operational budget; provided further, that for the purpose of this item, appropriated funds may be expended through August 31, 2009 to allow for intervention and school and district improvement planning in the summer months; provided further, that not less than \$200,000 be expended for a pilot parent engagement program including, but not limited to, a Randolph Parents' Academy and Parents' Support Network operated by the Randolph Public Schools; provided further, that not more than \$100,000 shall be expended to reimburse planning and implementation expenses incurred by municipalities in their efforts to establish new regional school districts; and provided further, that any funds distributed from this item to a city, town or regional school district shall be deposited with the treasurer of such city, town, or regional school district and held in a separate account and shall be expended by the school committee of such city, town, or regional school district without further appropriation, notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary \$9,175,041”