



Massachusetts Department of  
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY  
EDUCATION

## Winthrop Public Schools District Review

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Review conducted January 17–20, 2012

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# Overview of District Reviews

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## ***Purpose***

The goal of district reviews conducted by the Center for District and School Accountability (CDSA) in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is to support districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. Reviews consider carefully the effectiveness, efficiency, and integration of systemwide functions using ESE’s six district standards: **Leadership and Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources and Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial and Asset Management.**

District reviews are conducted under Chapter 15, Section 55A of the Massachusetts General Laws and include reviews focused on “districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar populations.” Districts subject to review in the 2011-2012 school year include districts that were in Level 3<sup>1</sup> (in school year 2011 or school year 2012) of ESE’s framework for district accountability and assistance in each of the state’s six regions: Greater Boston, Berkshires, Northeast, Southeast, Central, and Pioneer Valley. The districts with the lowest aggregate performance and least movement in Composite Performance Index (CPI) in their regions were chosen from among those districts that were not exempt under Chapter 15, Section 55A, because another comprehensive review had been completed or was scheduled to take place within nine months of the planned reviews.

## ***Methodology***

To focus the analysis, reviews collect evidence for each of the six district standards (see above). The reviews seek to identify those systems and practices that may be impeding rapid improvement as well as those that are most likely to be contributing to positive results. The district review team consists of independent consultants with expertise in each of the district standards who review selected district documents and ESE data and reports for two days before conducting a four-day district visit that includes visits to various district schools. The team holds interviews and focus groups with such stakeholders as school committee members, teachers’ union representatives, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Team members also observe classes. The team then meets for two days to develop findings and recommendations before submitting the draft of their district review report to ESE.

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, as Level 3 is defined, districts with one or more schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide of schools serving common grade levels pursuant to 603 CMR 2.05(2)(a).

# Winthrop Public Schools

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The site visit to the Winthrop Public Schools was conducted from January 17–20, 2012. The site visit included 35 hours of interviews and focus groups with over 53 stakeholders ranging from school committee members to district administrators and school staff to teachers’ association representatives. The review team conducted focus groups with 9 elementary, 9 middle school, and 27 high school teachers. The team also conducted visits to all of the district’s four schools: William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School (pre-kindergarten through grade 2), Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School (grade 3–5), Winthrop Middle School (grades 6–8), and Winthrop Senior High School (grades 9–12). Further information about the review and the site visit schedule can be found in Appendix B; information about the members of the review team can be found in Appendix A. Appendix C contains information about student performance from 2009–2011. Appendix D contains finding and recommendation statements.

Note that any progress that has taken place since the time of the review is not reflected in this benchmarking report. Findings represent the conditions in place at the time of the site visit, and recommendations represent the team’s suggestions to address the issues identified at that time.

## ***District Profile<sup>2</sup>***

The municipality of Winthrop, with a population of 17,497 (2010 census), is governed by a council-manager form of government. The nine members who are elected to the town council appoint a professionally trained town manager who oversees the delivery of public services.

The Winthrop School Committee consists of seven members including the town council president. The superintendent of schools was new at the time of the review, having begun his appointment in July 2011 after a period of upheaval during which two school committee members, the former superintendent, and the director of finance and facilities all resigned, and school committee meetings were described as contentious and antagonistic. At the time of the review, the new superintendent had been well received by school staff as well as the community. The central office leadership team consisted of the superintendent and a newly appointed assistant superintendent, who had been in the district over a period of time and was responsible for pupil personnel services; an office financial manager; a director of technology; a payroll accountant; and a chief financial officer. It should be noted that the chief financial officer, the director of technology, and the director of facilities are positions that were being shared with the Town of Winthrop. Two new directors appointed by the superintendent were a director of humanities and a STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) director.

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<sup>2</sup> Data derived from ESE’s website, ESE’s Education Data Warehouse, or other ESE sources.

The district’s four schools include the William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School with a 2012 enrollment of 485 students, the Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School with 480 students enrolled, Winthrop Middle School with 460 students, and Winthrop Senior High School with 510 students.

Table 1a below shows the 2010–2011 Winthrop enrollments by race/ethnicity and special populations, while Table 1b shows the same for 2011–2012.

**Table 1a: Winthrop  
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations  
2010–2011**

<b>Selected Populations</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Total enrollment</b>	<b>1,961</b>	<b>100.0</b>	African-American/Black	33	1.7
First Language not English	189	9.6	Asian	17	0.9
Limited English Proficient*	69	3.5	Hispanic/Latino	142	7.2
Special Education**	363	18.3	White	1,735	88.5
Low-income	553	28.2	Native American	2	0.1
Free Lunch	431	22.0	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	122	6.2	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	30	1.5
<p>*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.”  **Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements.  Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data</p>					

**Table 1b: Winthrop  
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity & Selected Populations  
2011–2012**

Selected Populations	Number	Percent of Total	Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent of Total
Total enrollment	1,935	100.0	African-American/Black	27	1.4
First Language not English	209	10.8	Asian	19	1.0
Limited English Proficient*	95	4.9	Hispanic/Latino	163	8.4
Special Education**	356	18.2	White	1,695	87.6
Low-income	578	29.9	Native American	2	0.1
Free Lunch	490	25.3	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2	0.1
Reduced-price lunch	88	4.5	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	27	1.4
*Limited English proficient students are referred to in this report as “English language learners.” **Special education number and percentage (only) are calculated including students in out-of-district placements. Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website and other ESE data					

Student enrollment in the district has decreased slightly from 2,017 students in 2007 (data not in a table) to 1,935 students in 2012. The loss of students over this period was not cited by the district as a great area of concern. A review of the data (not in a table) also shows that all racial and ethnic groups have remained fairly stable in recent years. The greatest change has taken place with the proportion of students from low-income families; it has increased from 19 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2012 (see Table 1c below).

**Table 1c: Winthrop Enrollment  
of Students from Low-Income Families**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Percent of Total Enrollment	19%	23%	23%	26%	28%	30%

While district staff generally were not aware of the exact increase in proportions, many mentioned the changing demographics in the Winthrop community. The proportion of students

from low-income families attending schools in the district in 2012 ranged from 26 percent at the William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School to 34 percent at the Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School (data not in a table).

As shown in Table 2 below, the district's total expenditures increased 4.2 percent from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011, from \$24,475,997 to \$25,513,093. Actual net school spending has been above required each year, but by less each year; it was 7.8 percent over in fiscal year 2010, 6.5 percent over in fiscal year 2011, and was projected to be 3.3 percent over in fiscal year 2012.

**Table 2: Winthrop  
Expenditures, Chapter 70 State Aid, and Net School Spending  
Fiscal Years 2010–2012**

	FY10		FY11		FY12
	Estimated	Actual	Estimated	Actual	Estimated
<b>Expenditures</b>					
From local appropriations for schools					
by school committee	16,086,267	16,081,900	15,557,794	15,875,050	15,642,734
by municipality	5,955,872	5,892,918	5,987,085	6,207,134	6,189,025
Total from local appropriations	22,042,139	21,974,818	21,544,879	22,082,184	21,831,759
From revolving funds and grants	---	2,501,179	---	3,430,909	---
Total expenditures	---	24,475,997	---	25,513,093	---
<b>Chapter 70 aid to education program</b>					
Chapter 70 state aid*	---	5,080,860	---	4,784,037	5,157,850
Required local contribution	---	12,509,487	---	12,482,874	12,779,319
Required net school spending**	---	17,590,347	---	17,266,911	17,937,169
Actual net school spending	---	18,964,314	---	18,392,885	18,532,013
Over/under required (\$)	---	1,373,967	---	1,125,974	594,844
Over/under required (%)	---	7.8	---	6.5	3.3
<p>*Chapter 70 state aid funds are deposited in the local general fund and spent as local appropriations.</p> <p>**Required net school spending is the total of Chapter 70 aid and required local contribution. Net school spending includes only expenditures from local appropriations, not revolving funds and grants. It includes expenditures for most administration, instruction, operations, and out-of-district tuitions. It does not include transportation, school lunches, debt, or capital.</p> <p>Sources: FY10, FY11 District End-of-Year Reports; Chapter 70 Program information on ESE website. Data retrieved on September 7, 2012.</p>					

**Findings**

**Student Achievement**

The district’s proficiency rates in ELA did not increase over the five test administrations from 2007 to 2011, falling behind statewide proficiency rates, while its mathematics proficiency rate increased by five percentage points without gaining on the statewide rate.

**Table 3: Winthrop and State ELA and Math Proficiency Rates, All Students 2007–2011**

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>ELA</b>	<b>District</b>	68%	63%	66%	65%	68%
	<b>State</b>	66%	64%	67%	68%	69%
<b>Math</b>	<b>District</b>	47%	47%	45%	48%	52%
	<b>State</b>	53%	55%	55%	59%	58%

Sources: School/District Profiles on ESE website for 2008-2011; District Analysis and Review Tool on ESE website for 2007

The district proficiency rate in ELA was 68 percent in 2011, the same as it had been in 2007; in the years in between, it was lower. The statewide ELA proficiency rate, on the other hand, was 3 percentage points higher in 2011 than in 2007. Thus the district proficiency rate fell behind the state rate; after being 2 percentage points higher in 2007 than the state rate, in 2011 it was 1 point lower. While the district math proficiency rate rose by 5 percentage points over these years, the state rate rose by the same amount, leaving the gap between district and state proficiency rates unchanged (6 percentage points).

The superintendent said that one of his main concerns was scores for grades 3-8 . Tables C1 and C2 in Appendix C show that in most grades below grade 10 from 2009-2011 district proficiency rates were below state rates, with especially large gaps in math. (The notable exception was grade 6 ELA, where proficiency rates were above the state rates in each year from 2009 to 2011.) In very few grades in either subject did proficiency rates improve in both 2010 and 2011; fluctuation was the norm. Median student growth percentiles (SGPs) were notably high in math in grade 8 in 2010 and 2011 and in grade 10 in all three years, as well as in ELA in grade 4 in 2009. Otherwise, median SGPs were in the moderate range (and in one case, for grade 5 in math in 2010, below the moderate range).

Information gathered during the review, discussed in the findings below, indicated that factors including incomplete curriculum, insufficient district curriculum leadership, uncoordinated assessment practices, the absence of a strong supervision and evaluation system, insufficient professional development, and a limited number of student support programs have all

contributed to the difficulty in improving student proficiency levels. In addition, a factor mentioned by many was the turmoil among leadership during the two years before the review.

## **Leadership and Governance**

**The Winthrop Public Schools experienced turmoil and uncertainty over the two years before the new superintendent arrived. The district was in a period of transition at the time of the site visit, and stakeholders expressed optimism.**

In the two years before the new superintendent assumed his position in July 2011 events took place involving district leadership that caused turmoil and uncertainty in the school system.

One challenge face by the district was school committee turmoil and turnover. On October 28, 2009, the outgoing school committee voted 4-3 to give the former superintendent a contract extension until June 2012, five days before a new school committee was elected. The new school committee included three new members, one of whom was the new town council president (the town council president sits on the school committee ex officio).

After the new school committee took office, according to interviewees, the atmosphere at school committee meetings changed and some members took on a more aggressive role. Interviewees at all levels characterized this school committee using such words as “contentious,” “antagonistic,” “adversarial,” and “hostile” and said that meetings were difficult for the chair to control. Teachers said that school committee members were “out of touch” and “unsupportive” and did not “value teachers’ jobs at all.” Administrators said that staff were treated “as if they were on trial” and were afraid of the school committee, and that the contentious meetings resulted in “staff distress.” Interviewees stated that the school committee was divided into two groups, one supporting the school committee chair and the other supporting the town council president. In June 2010, after a vote by the town council to reduce the school department budget, both the chair and another member of the school committee resigned. Both positions on the school committee were filled in July 2010.

Another source of tension was controversy about the budget; the following are the key events. The town council meeting minutes of June 1, 2010, show that, by a majority voice vote, the town council voted to pass a motion by the new town council president to reduce the 2011 fiscal year school department budget by \$240,000. According to the minutes, the town council president offered his rationale for the proposed reduction: “School Administration coming over to the Town Hall would be a savings of \$80K; seven teachers retiring and hiring at an entry level salary would be a savings of \$130K; \$30K reduction in Utilities. He further stated that he recommends the reduced amount be placed in Council Reserve and at such time the School [District] needed it, they could apply for a transfer.”

The town council’s reduction of the school department budget by \$240,000 was perceived by several interviewees on the district side as being related to the proposed new collective

bargaining agreement with teachers, given the fact that it occurred while the school committee was nearing a settlement with the teachers' association on a new agreement. According to district leaders the cost of the proposed new agreement between the Winthrop School Committee and the Winthrop Teachers' Association, which would have provided for raises for teachers, was approximately \$240,000. The agreement with the teachers' association, which had been in the last stages of negotiation, was not finalized, and the negotiating process started all over again.

A third source of uncertainty was the resignation of the superintendent and director of finance and facilities. On August 5, 2010, the superintendent informed the school committee that he would be on medical leave beginning August 18, 2010, and that he would resign on December 31, 2010. The school committee searched for and hired a one-year interim superintendent. Interviewees said that the interim superintendent "got us through the year." It was said that it was a "hard year" because negotiations were still taking place.

At a February 2011 school committee meeting, the director of finance and facilities submitted his resignation. One administrator stated that everyone was "shocked." This position remained vacant; the administrative secretary to the director of finance and facilities "continued to do the books." The chair of the school committee's finance subcommittee worked with this administrative secretary to prepare the fiscal year 2012 school department budget. In 2011–2012 the district shared the chief financial officer position with the town.

However, a cautious optimism was evident in the district with the appointment of a new superintendent, who began his assignment on July 1, 2011. Interviewees knew that the new superintendent was meeting with members of different stakeholder groups and had established six committees to focus on the six standards of Leadership/Governance, Curriculum/Instruction, Assessment, Human Resources/Professional Development, Student Support, and Financial & Asset Management. And the superintendent had made it known that the Entry Plan that he had outlined would lead to the establishment of a District Improvement Plan. Comments made about the new superintendent from administrators and teachers included "positive attitude," "out and about," "breath of fresh air," "involved with kids," "he comes into the building and offers positive remarks," and "approachable." The new superintendent has been participating in the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP).<sup>3</sup>

Three new school committee members, including a new town council president, were elected in November 2011 and began their responsibilities on the committee in January 2012. One of the newly elected school committee members was chosen as the school committee chairman.

It is important that district leaders commit themselves to maintaining a laser-like focus on supporting schools and improving teaching and learning. The school system should not be distracted by a contentious and antagonistic school committee that district staff find intimidating.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a joint program of ESE and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), aimed at strengthening the role of superintendents in supporting and prioritizing effective instructional practice and management. See [memorandum to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education of January 13, 2012](#).

When relations among the town, school committee, and district staff lead to resignations among the school committee and district administrators, establishing strong working relationships becomes especially critical.

**At the time of the review the new superintendent had taken a number of steps, preliminary to developing a District Improvement Plan, to form relationships with stakeholders in the district, learn about district concerns, issues, and culture, and establish a presence in the district by visiting schools and classrooms.**

At the time of the review the school system did not have a District Improvement Plan, which usually includes, among other things, a vision, mission, and goals, and which is intended to provide the roadmap and direction for the district. The goals in each School Improvement Plan are expected to be aligned with the District Improvement Plan's goals. Interviewees mentioned that the new superintendent was in the process of implementing an Entry Plan and had also established six standards committees to assist him with the development of a District Improvement Plan.

In accordance with the Entry Plan outlined in a memorandum to the school committee a couple of months after he assumed his position, the superintendent had at the time of the review begun a process of building relationships with various stakeholders, gathering information about the district, and becoming familiar with practice in the schools.

### *Relationships*

According to the superintendent, he had met with school committee members, town officials, some teachers, and various groups such as the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. He mentioned meeting with individual school committee members, especially with the newly elected members to provide them with orientation materials pertaining to their responsibilities. Also, the superintendent stated that he met frequently with the town manager, and as needed with the police chief and fire chief, to build a positive relationship between the school department and the town departments. The superintendent said that it is "important to establish trust." He cited the example of the town hall and the schools where "for a long time a sense of separation" existed. He expressed the opinion that a positive relationship was being built with town hall. These same sentiments were echoed by the town manager in an interview with members of the review team. The superintendent stated that he attends the Monday morning meetings at town hall. In addition, he spoke about three positions that the school department currently shares with town hall, namely, the chief financial officer, the director of technology, and the director of facilities.

The superintendent indicated and other administrators confirmed that he meets weekly with the assistant superintendent and monthly with his leadership team, which consists of the central office administrators and the school-level administrators. Meetings had also taken place between the superintendent and the officers of the Winthrop Teachers' Association.

### *Concerns, issues, and culture*

The superintendent mentioned that he has been “trying to get a feeling about the concerns and issues about the school system in the community. He mentioned as issues teacher evaluations not being completed in a timely manner and in some situations not done at all, and the importance of certification of new faculty hires. He said that he attempts to “diffuse” issues and concerns whenever possible.

In connection with school operations, the superintendent talked about the study being done of the feasibility of constructing a new high school or a middle/high school complex. He mentioned various meetings with the school building committee. Also, he mentioned the reconfiguration committee that was examining different grade configurations for the district; this committee was due to present its report to the school committee in March 2012.

On the culture in the district, the superintendent said that he was “not sure the kids are coming first.” He questions, when decisions are made, “Are the decisions going to help kids?” Also, he said that the “culture needs to be improved upon” and that the values and beliefs will come from the District Improvement Plan.

The superintendent told the review team that he had established six committees corresponding to the six district standards to determine improvements needed in each of the six areas; the work of each of these committees was to be used in the development of a District Improvement Plan. These were cross-cutting committees with broad representation. Every committee had a school committee member, at least one district leader, and a school representative. Town leadership, collective bargaining unit representatives, parents, and teachers were also included on committees. All of the district’s principals participated on a committee.

### *Visits to schools*

The superintendent reported that he visits the schools, participates in walkthroughs, and chats with teachers. Staff members commented that the superintendent is “visible” in the district, agreeing that he frequently visits the schools and observes classrooms. The superintendent said that he tended to be at Cummings School more because the principal was new. He commented that the students know who the superintendent is; he also remarked about the importance of presence and said that besides visiting classrooms, he attends various events such as athletic games, concerts, and plays, where he has an opportunity to talk to parents. Some comments made by the superintendent about his classroom observations included references to teachers “doing a little too much stand and deliver,” “kids need[ing] more group work,” and “too much lecturing.”

The actions the superintendent has taken in accordance with his Entry Plan engaged staff and provided information about what needs to be improved in the school system as he proceeds with the process to develop the District Improvement Plan. From interviews with the superintendent and district staff, it seems that he was making progress toward building the relationships,

gathering the information, and forming the working groups needed to create a District Improvement Plan.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

**Curriculum materials in the district are incomplete in core subjects at all levels. Until the 2011–2012 school year, the district did not have sufficient district personnel to ensure that curricular documentation is complete and that it is aligned vertically among the district’s schools.**

The district does not have current curriculum. For the core content areas there are no complete curriculum guides that include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. With the exception of updated documentation of the scope and sequence with alignment to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks in math at the high school level, there were no recent curricula documents to review. Further, the documents were not complete when originally designed. For example, the ELA Curriculum Frameworks, Content and Performance Standards for grades 3–5 and 6–8, dated 2002, lists content standards, general standards, and learning standards with a section for examples. They do not contain objectives, resources, strategies, pacing guides, and assessments. Pacing guides that the district provided to the review team, dated 2011, are a list of topics that teachers were required to submit in 2010–2011. They were not developed collaboratively as true pacing guides.

### *Elementary Level (pre-kindergarten through grade 5)*

Before the adoption of a math program (GO Math!, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) in September of 2010 and an ELA program (StoryTown, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) in 2009 in grades 1–2 and 2010 in grades 3–5, there were no universally adopted programs in these core subjects at the elementary level. Interviewees stated that 11 different math programs were being used at the elementary level until the adoption of GO Math! Although there are no district guides in these core subjects, school leaders and teachers refer to both programs as the curriculum in ELA and math at the elementary level. According to the publisher of GO Math! and interviewees, the program is aligned to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. However, in interviews teachers and school leaders cited the need to align StoryTown to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. At the kindergarten level StoryTown was implemented in September 2011, completing the full implementation of the program at the elementary level.

The writing program is not consistent at the elementary level with the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level using the John Collins Writing Program and the grades 3–5 level using various programs including Framing Your Thoughts and Writing Process.

The district does not have curriculum documents to guide and inform instruction in either science or social studies at the elementary level. In interviews district leaders and teachers described the science curriculum as “old, with old text books” and “no access to science materials.” Although

a science lab was available at the grades 3–5 level, it was dismantled in 2008 because of an absence of funding, and the equipment was stored in the basement of the school. In interviews teachers reported that they share materials and pace themselves, using the curriculum frameworks as a guide. In grade 3, according to interviewees, science is taught for half the year and social studies for the other half. Although grade 4 received new science textbooks in 2010–2011, teachers said that there are no written updated curriculum maps for science to guide instruction and ensure continuity and coherence. Curriculum for social studies at the elementary level mirrors the situation for science with teachers generating the curriculum and pacing themselves. There are no curriculum guides in social studies. In interviews, teachers reported no accountability in social studies with teachers teaching “what they are comfortable with.”

#### *Middle School Level (Grades 6–8)*

There are no updated curriculum guides in the core subjects at the middle-school level. In interviews teachers and school leaders said that teachers use the frameworks and textbooks to guide instruction in the core subjects. Pacing and horizontal alignment are done in grade-level subject meetings that take place every six days; teachers report that teams are aligned with each other. In grades 7 and 8 common assessments in math and ELA are given twice a year at the mid-term and the final exams. Team leaders at the middle-school level have organizational rather than curricular responsibilities.

District curriculum materials at the middle-school level are characterized as “antiquated.” In interviews, teachers and school leaders said that the curriculum is “teacher driven,” citing an example of grade 8 teachers writing the algebra curriculum. In the absence of a science curriculum to guide instruction, teachers rely on old science books, the frameworks, the Internet, and teacher-made materials. Materials for science labs are donated and equipment often does not work. In 2006, social studies teachers were cut from the middle school; in 2011 they were reinstated. Again, interviewees said that there were no curriculum guides for social studies. Without curriculum leadership at the middle-school level, the curriculum in core subjects is teacher driven; teachers rely on textbooks and copies of the curriculum frameworks to guide and plan instruction.

#### *High School Level (Grades 9–12)*

Curricular practices at the high school are undergoing change. The position of lead teacher in English, math, social studies, and science was established at the start of the 2011–2012 school year: curricular responsibilities were given to the lead teachers, who teach three classes rather than five. Interviewees stated that this was a “major change,” with lead teachers having the time to develop materials for new and experienced teachers. At the time of the review the lead teachers were addressing alignment to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

The curriculum documentation at the high-school level is inconsistent in design and detail. The documentation for the English curriculum, grades 9–12, consists of scope and sequence charts including pacing guides, topics, alignment to the frameworks, and references to texts used. A

similar format is used for U. S. History. While pacing guides and benchmarks exist, written documentation for the curriculum is fragmented. During the 2011–2012 school year, the math lead teacher developed course overviews for every course in the math department including pacing guides, a list of standards addressed, and an alignment matrix to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. In interviews teachers described the current state of the curriculum at the high school as “challenging” with core standards and pacing guides that do not have “explicitness” to guide and inform instruction. Another, new teacher expressed a sense of not knowing what should be in place and a need to rely on colleagues for guidance.

### *Review and Revision of Curriculum*

The district does not have an established, documented process for the regular and timely review and revision of the curricula. Most documents have not been revised in ten years. However, there have been adjustments to the curriculum based on MCAS analysis. In interviews, teachers cited the implementation of the new math curriculum (GO Math!) and the new ELA curriculum (StoryTown) at the elementary level as a result of data analysis.

Under the leadership of the new superintendent, two districtwide curricular positions were added in school year 2011–2012, the STEM Director (Science Technology Engineering Math) and the director of humanities. In addition, the district has created lead teachers in core subjects at the high school who have begun to take curricular responsibilities. With district curriculum leadership in the core content areas, the district is poised to begin the cycle for the review and revision of the curriculum. In interviews, district leaders and teachers said that on January 2, 2012, teachers met in vertical teams for the first time since 2006. Further, instructional leadership teams at the grade 3–5 level and at the middle school have recently been formed (spring and fall of 2011) with the support of ESE’s District and School Assistance Center (DSAC). Initial work was focused on setting priorities based on the Conditions of School Effectiveness.

The district does not have written curriculum in the core subjects at any level. Relying on textbooks and lists of standards in core subjects is insufficient. Further, the absence of a documented curriculum creates inconsistencies and discontinuity both across classrooms and between grades. Although the implementation of new programs at the elementary level in math and ELA has provided cohesiveness and consistency to the delivery of content in those areas, programs such as these—however they are aligned to the Massachusetts standards—do not provide needed supplementary instructional materials, techniques, and assessments to reach all learners. Over the years the district has not given adequate attention and resources to the development and implementation of curriculum guides, nor has it established a regular cycle to review and revise curriculum.

Without fully developed curricular documentation in core subjects, instructional practices are compromised. Rather than concentrating on providing enriched learning opportunities for all students, teachers are forced to focus on creating curriculum. As a result, opportunities for all students at all grade levels to attain high levels of achievement are diminished.

**While examples of effective instructional practices could be found in all the district's schools, high-quality instruction was not solidly in place throughout the district.**

The review team observed instruction in 58 classrooms in the district: 31 elementary classrooms in total with 17 at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level and 14 at the grade 3–5 level; 12 at the middle-school level; and 15 at the high-school level. These classes included 21 ELA classes, 9 math classes, and 1 computer class at the elementary level; 6 ELA, 4 math, and 2 science classes at the middle-school level; 3 ELA classes, 5 math classes, 5 science classes, 1 social studies class, and 1 computer science class at the high-school level. Of the classes observed, three were inclusion classes and one was a special education class.

The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length. All review team members used ESE's instructional inventory, a tool for observing characteristics of standards-based teaching and learning to record their observations. The tool contains 35 characteristics within 10 categories: classroom climate, learning objective, use of class time, content learning, instructional techniques, activation of higher-order thinking, instructional pacing, student thinking, student groups, and use of assessments. Review team members are asked to note when they observe or do not observe a characteristic and record evidence of a characteristic on a form.

In the area of organization of the classroom, the review team found that behavioral expectations, class rules, and procedures were clearly communicated in 100 percent of the classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, the grade 3–5 level, and the high school level, while the review team found this practice to be in place in 58 percent of the middle school classrooms observed. Review team members characterized observed elementary classrooms as calm, with students making transitions in an orderly way. In visited classrooms rules were posted and students behaved according to rules and expectations. At the middle school observers reported positive and supportive classrooms with rules posted and students responding to teachers' directions and hand signals to get students' attention. At the high school observers noted that all students were engaged and classrooms ran in a smooth and respectful manner. At all levels and in all schools visited, students behaved according to rules and expectations and students and teachers demonstrated positive and respectful relationships.

In each of the district's schools, there was solid practice in the use of class time. In 100 percent of the classrooms observed at the elementary and high school levels review team members found teachers were prepared and materials ready for instruction. This was also the case at the middle school where this practice was solidly in place in 92 percent of the classrooms observed. Review team members typically commented that students came into class and got right to work; students followed the classroom routines; no time was wasted; teachers were very well prepared and gave clear expectations; and students responded to transitions without any difficulty.

Under the category of content learning observers reported that content appeared to be appropriate for the grade and level of instruction in 100 percent of the classrooms observed at all the district's schools. Further, in visited classrooms there was solid evidence that teachers in the district were communicating academic content with clarity and accuracy. The review team found

this to be the case at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level in 86 percent of the classrooms observed and at the grade 3–5 level in 100 percent of the classrooms observed; there was solid evidence that teachers were communicating academic content with clarity and accuracy in 92 percent of the classrooms observed at the middle school and in 100 percent of the classrooms observed at the high school.

In all of the classrooms observed at all levels in the district, review team members found that lessons were paced to ensure student engagement. Observers saw this practice in 93 percent of the classrooms visited at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, in 100 percent of the classrooms visited at the grade 3–5 and high school levels, and in 92 percent of the classrooms visited at the middle school level. Observers commented that “students were totally engaged; the pacing was excellent and students appeared eager to start.” The use of wait time to allow for responses from all students was uneven in the classrooms observed throughout the district. This practice was found in 93 percent of observed classrooms at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level and in 94 percent of the observed classrooms at the grade 3–5 level. However, at the middle school level observers noted the practice in 50 percent of classrooms observed and at the high school in 60 percent of the classrooms visited.

While a strong classroom climate was evident in the district, the characteristic of teachers setting and conveying high expectations for student learning was not solidly in place in all the district’s schools. Observers found teachers setting high expectations for learning in 64 percent of classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, in 41 percent of the observed classrooms at the grade 3–5 level, in 67 percent of the observed classrooms at the middle school level, and in only 47 percent of the observed classrooms at the high school level. The review team did observe exceptions. In one English class at the high school level, students were reviewing for mid-year exams using a rigorous list of activities that included work in pairs, note taking, and discussion of theme generating. At the middle school in another English class, students were interpreting poetry and explaining what metaphors meant to them by personalizing the metaphor to show why they were like a show of “fireworks.” In a middle school math class, students were working in teams using electronic “clickers” to review for their mid-term. If 100 percent did not have the correct answer, they were asked to explain their reasoning and rework the problem.

The practice of communicating learning objectives and identifying learning outcomes that drive instruction is not in place in the district. At all levels observers found activities, agendas, and standards posted in visited classrooms, but learning objectives that drive the lesson were not typically present nor were they communicated orally. The review team found the practice of communicating learning objectives that drive the lesson in 29 percent of classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level; in only 12 percent of classrooms visited at the grade 3–5 school level; in 13 percent of classrooms observed at the high school level, and in 50 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school level.

While there is very strong evidence that teachers communicated academic content with clarity and accuracy and that content was appropriate to grade and level, other characteristics in the category of content learning were not solidly in place in the district's schools. The review teams found that students were engaging in a variety of curriculum resources including technology to enhance their learning in only 27 percent of classrooms observed at the high school. This was the case in 33 percent of the classrooms observed at the middle school; in 41 percent of the classrooms observed at the grade 3–5 level, and in 64 percent of the classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level.

The use of a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate learning styles and different learning needs was strongest at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level where this characteristic was in place in 71 percent of observed classrooms; however, this characteristic was not solidly in place at the other schools in the district. Students participating in tiered activities based on academic readiness was in place in 57 percent of visited classrooms at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level and in 53 percent of observed classrooms at the grade 3–5 level; however, this characteristic was observed in only 8 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school and 7 percent of classrooms observed at the high school level.

The practice of students applying new conceptual knowledge during the lesson was not solidly in place throughout the district; this characteristic was evident in 50 percent of observed classrooms at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, in 41 percent of classrooms visited at the grade 3–5 level, and in 50 percent of observed classrooms at the middle school level. At the high school there was stronger evidence of students applying new conceptual knowledge during a lesson, with this characteristic in place in 67 percent of observed classrooms.

Under the category of instructional techniques, the review team found direct, whole-group instruction to be the dominant mode of instruction in the district; the review team found this characteristic in place in 64 percent of classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, in 76 percent of classrooms visited at the grade 3–5 level, in 92 percent of classrooms observed at the middle-school level, and in 67 percent of classrooms visited at the high-school level. The range of instructional techniques used in classrooms appeared to be more limited as the review team moved up through the grades in its observations. For example, guided practice was observed in 86 percent of the observed pre-kindergarten through grade 2 classes, but was not solidly in place in any of the district's other schools. Small group and pair learning was solidly in place at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level where it was evident in 79 percent of the classes observed, but this practice was not found solidly in place in any of the district's other schools. Independent practice, in which students have full responsibility for the task, was found to be strongest at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 and the middle school levels, with this characteristic in place in 71 percent and 67 percent of observed classrooms, respectively. This practice was not observed to be solidly in place in either of the district's other schools.

Overall the activation of higher-order thinking skills including forming predictions, developing arguments, evaluating information, and generating questions was not commonly in place in the district. An exception was the middle school where the review team found students were examining, analyzing, and interpreting information in 83 percent of the classrooms observed.

Under the category of student thinking, the opportunity for students to use varied means, orally or in writing, to represent their ideas and thinking ranged from school to school in the district. The review team found this practice in place in 71 percent of classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level and in 83 percent of observed classrooms at the middle school, but this practice was not solidly in place in observed classes at the grade 3–5 level or at the high school. The review team found in observations throughout the district’s schools that there were very limited opportunities for students to engage in structures that advance their thinking.

The review team observed opportunities for students to inquire, explore, or solve problems together in small groups/pairs in 71 percent of the classrooms observed at the pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level, but these opportunities were not typically observed in other schools in the district. The pre-kindergarten through grade 2 level has implemented an RTI (Response to Intervention model). In one grade 1 classroom, a review team member noted six small groups at work: one group of six students was working with the classroom teacher combining letters to make real and “alien words”; a group of four students was working with Lexia on computers; one student was working independently listening to a book and following along; a group was working on story maps, sharing stories, completing the maps, and drawing illustrations; one student was working on spelling; and one student was working one-on-one with an assistant.

Active monitoring of instruction by teachers through the use of informal classroom assessments, adjusting instruction based on informal assessments, and having students revise work was not solidly in place in the district. The practice of giving students feedback that tells students where they are in relation to the learning goals was observed in 92 percent of classrooms visited at the middle school level, but was not in place in observed classrooms in any of the other district schools.

According to the evidence from the classrooms observed in the district, areas of instructional strength included classroom organization, the use of class time, effective teacher communication in content areas, the provision of appropriate content for grade and level, and effective pacing techniques that support student engagement. While these areas of instructional strength were evident, there did not appear to be a commonly held model throughout the district’s schools of what quality instruction looks like.

In the judgment of the review team instructional practices not implemented consistently within the district include setting high expectations for student learning, using learning objectives to drive the lesson, implementing effective strategies for content learning, using varied instructional techniques, activating higher-order thinking skills, using student grouping in which students have an opportunity to share their thinking, and, finally, using informal student assessments to check

for understanding. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are linked. (See the Curriculum finding above and the Assessment findings below). Without a robust curriculum to guide and inform instruction, instructional delivery and design are not adequately supported and the opportunity for all students to achieve at higher levels is compromised.

## **Assessment**

**At the time of the review the district did not have a centralized assessment system for data collection and analysis for use by school and curriculum leaders to drive student achievement.**

It was reported by school leaders that the district did not have a District Improvement Plan (DIP). A DIP is a document that guides the district's work; it has measurable goals and objectives developed using data collected from both formative and summative assessments. The DIP's goals guide principals in the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

The new superintendent told the review team that he intended to address assessment in the district. He had convened six committees to review and make recommendations across six different standards including assessment. Each committee was expected to come up with information that collectively would lead to the development of a District Improvement Plan.

There were no common practices driven by the district with respect to what data would be collected, analyzed, and monitored to make decisions and track student progress. SIPs provided to the review team did not reflect a continuous collection or use of data across the district. Two SIPs contained no student achievement data. Two other SIPs included MCAS results from 2011, but only one of those SIPs had achievement goals for the upcoming year. There was little evidence of guidance about what data should be included in SIPs. An administrator reported in an interview that "data collection is building-based."

Reviewers were told by teachers and administrators that there was an array of formative and benchmark assessments in place to guide instruction and determine where support is needed. Reviewers examined the district assessment matrix and an extensive list of benchmark assessments administered from kindergarten through grade 2. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) is administered in kindergarten through grade 5 and all grade 3 students take the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Elementary schools now have built-in common assessments accompanying GO Math! and StoryTown, the kindergarten through grade 5 math and English language arts reading programs in Winthrop. The middle and high schools have begun administering common assessments in core subject areas. Additionally, the district assessment matrix included MCAS, PSAT, SAT, and AP exams.

The use of results from these assessments differed from school to school. In one elementary school teachers reported that they got together once a month to review assessment printouts. They used benchmark results to identify trends. They identified where students were struggling

and then regrouped students and modified instruction. School leaders said that they used assessment data to make decisions about where to assign classroom support. Others spoke about hiring part-time retired teachers to help bolster student achievement, in response to a review of performance. It was also reported that GO Math! and StoryTown were adopted, in part, in response to a review of student data. Middle school teachers discussed common assessment results with their teaching counterparts during common planning time. At the secondary level item analysis was done for common assessments but not done for MCAS tests.

MCAS student data was not uniformly shared across the district. One participant in the secondary teacher focus group said, "I never get MCAS information." She said that she only learned about MCAS results from students themselves. Teachers from one school said that results were discussed during a faculty meeting. In another school, reviewers were shown a copy of a PowerPoint presentation that gave a comprehensive overview of how students in that school performed. The district does not have adequate technology and trained leaders and teachers to analyze and use MCAS data to plan and make effective adjustments to programs and services. When asked whether they do an MCAS item analysis one curriculum leader said that they didn't have a system to categorize and would have to do it by hand. Another curriculum leader said that MCAS scores and data never came up in department meetings before he became lead to provide him with a model. He said that he did not know how to tackle it. Four teachers recently attended an Education Data Warehouse training for the district. One attendee said that although he had had the training he had not had a chance to use it yet. Elementary teachers reported that they had received no MCAS analysis training. Interviewees also talked about the absence of adequate technology to follow up on training that they had received in the past. At a teacher focus group, one teacher spoke of TestWiz training that they had received five to six years ago, saying that she did not have access to technology to follow up on this training. Interviewees said that most classrooms had no printers. Another teacher was excited to describe the aligned assessments that accompany GO Math! and StoryTown but said that their use was limited in the schools because the computers were too old.

The district is just beginning to address issues related to assessment. It is important to note that in addition to the new superintendent there are two curriculum directors who were appointed in 2011-2012, a STEM director and a director of humanities. The STEM director was assigned to head the superintendent's leadership subcommittee on assessment.

Having an opportunity to review and discuss student achievement data at the district and school levels could lead administrators and teachers to ask the right questions. Then they could identify practices and implement programs in response. Without data analysis and collaborative discussions they run the risk of creating strategies that will not have the expected impact.

It is the judgment of the reviewers that there are pockets of good practice using both summative and formative assessment results, for instance to modify instruction, group students, and bolster the curriculum, but that there are also pockets of missed opportunities. The absence of a uniform district assessment policy, set by district leadership and used throughout the district, limits the

district's ability to use data to improve curriculum and instruction and its ability to plan and advocate for needed programs and services.

## **Human Resources and Professional Development**

### **The district does not provide sufficient support to retain new teachers.**

Although the district had had a mentoring program for first-year teachers for a number of years, according to some teachers the effectiveness of the program was compromised because the mentor and mentee were oftentimes not in the same grade level and discipline and time for the two to meet was rarely available.

The district has had to hire new teachers because of turnover. The rates of teacher turnover in the Winthrop Public Schools were 21 percent in 2008-2009, 14 percent in 2009-2010, 15 percent in 2010-2011, and 19 percent in 2011-2012, compared to state teacher turnover rates of between 11 and 12 percent in each of those years.<sup>4</sup> Turnover rates were especially high in these years for the middle school and high school.<sup>5</sup> When asked the reasons for this large turnover, administrators largely attributed the phenomenon to many retirements. However, when teachers in a teacher focus group were asked this question, the response was that teachers were leaving the district for many reasons, including not having a competitive salary schedule with other districts, lack of consistency, and the few resources available in both materials and support for classroom teachers. In an interview, a central office administrator agreed that low salaries, as well as the lack of a collective bargaining agreement for teachers, contributed to turnover along with retirements.

Especially with incomplete curriculum documents, little professional development or instructional coaching, and relatively low salaries, having a strong induction and mentoring program for new teachers is critical. Although several positive steps toward stability had been taken by the new superintendent in the short time he had been at the helm of the school district, there is more work to be done to ensure that teachers' needs for consistency and support are met.

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<sup>4</sup> See the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) for districts (Leadership/HR-PD tab), at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>. Turnover rate is the percentage of teachers from the prior year who did not return, including retirements. Turnover because a teacher in the prior year was covering for a teacher on leave is not included.

<sup>5</sup> See the District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) for schools (Leadership/HR-PD tab), also available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html>.

**The supervision of the district’s teachers and the evaluation process for teachers varied greatly from school to school; as a result the processes used were not effective in informing instruction or promoting professional growth.**

### *Supervision*

In recent years the district has not had any districtwide supervision model; the philosophy of the former superintendent was to allow the principals of the schools to run their schools independently in a largely site-based management model. This has led to school principals supervising teachers in vastly different ways. At one elementary school, a regularly scheduled “walkthrough” process exists and teachers are given oral feedback within a day or two. At this school, weekly lesson plans are collected, reviewed, and returned to the teachers with comments. In the other elementary school, the new principal has instituted a more formal “walkthrough” process with a specific form with written feedback to the teachers. She also has required lesson plans to be regularly submitted. At the middle school and high school, lesson plans are not required to be turned in and checked and the “walkthrough” process is either informal or absent. It was confirmed at the focus groups that administrative “walkthroughs” and feedback from those events varied greatly in the district schools. Comments from teachers ranged in this regard from regularly seeing a principal in their classrooms to “practically never” seeing an administrator in their classrooms. These varying practices have led to unevenness in the supervision of teachers. The week before the review team’s visit, the superintendent said that he had conducted a walkthrough at the middle school. He mentioned that as there was no walkthrough protocol he had given staff a copy of the ESE instructional inventory; he said that he wanted leaders to focus on classrooms and for teachers to see the value of walkthroughs.

### *Evaluation*

The review team examined the personnel folders of 34 randomly selected teachers and of all administrators and found no evidence in the folders that administrators or teachers are held accountable for student achievement.

The official evaluation process for the district’s teachers had been in place for a number of years at the time of the review; the process used a number of different forms (lettered A through E). Each form was designed to be used for a specific task and for a specific type of individual (e.g., a teacher without professional status or a teacher with professional status). Form B, for example, is basically a checklist to be used as both an observation form and a summative form for teachers who have worked in the district for more than eight years. This particular form leaves little or no space for informative or instructive comments to be written, and in fact the review team found no such comments on any of these forms in the folders of veteran teachers it looked at.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> As used by the review team, “informative” means that the evaluation is factual and cites instructional details such as methodology, pedagogy, or instruction of subject-based knowledge that is aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. “Instructive” means that the evaluation includes comments intended to improve instruction.

In perusing the 34 teachers' files, the team found wide variation in the type of documents included and no evidence of districtwide expectations for the evaluations. For example, of the eight randomly selected folders for the Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School teachers, only three (38 percent) were found to include timely evaluations, and all the evaluations included used only the checklist section of whichever form was completed, with no informative or instructive comments. Each of the four folders for the William P. Gorman/Fort Banks School teachers, on the other hand, was found to have a timely evaluation, and the evaluations included a number of informative and instructive comments in addition to the checklist. At the other end of the spectrum, only one (9 percent) the 11 high school teachers' folders examined was found to have an up-to-date evaluation, and the most recent evaluation in several of these folders had been completed five, six or even seven years before the site visit. The folders of two second-year teachers at the high school contained no evaluative documents of any kind. In the district as a whole, only 9 of the 34 evaluations reviewed (26 percent) contained any type of instructive comments that would lead to improving instruction.

At all three teacher focus groups that the review team conducted, attendees agreed that the district's evaluation system was ineffective in promoting professional growth. At two of the focus groups, teachers commented that they would welcome instructive comments from their principals so that they could improve their pedagogy.

A review of administrators' personnel files revealed that the former superintendent had rarely evaluated his administrators and that they were not held accountable for student achievement. The examination of folders, however, did reveal that during the 2010-2011 school year the interim superintendent had evaluated each of his principals and central office staff; each evaluation contained several areas of recommended professional growth.

When the topic of evaluations was brought up in interviews, everyone from the superintendent and the district's principals to the teachers and teachers' association representatives agreed that they were looking forward to implementing a new evaluation system aligned with the new ESE model, as mandated for 2012-2013 in districts participating in the Race to the Top grant program. The consensus was that the new evaluation system would be a positive step forward in an area in the schools that had been a shortcoming in the past. The district's plans were to introduce the new process and system in the spring of 2012 and implement it fully in the fall of 2012.

At the time of the review, the district was without two essential systems for improving student achievement—a consistent districtwide system of supervision, and an effective system of educator evaluation. The implementation of a new educator evaluation system also provides an opportunity for the district to continue the new superintendent's early steps toward ensuring that classroom instruction across the district is effectively monitored and supervised.

**The district has only minimally supported a professional development program for its teachers and administrators, with funding substantially below statewide levels.**

In interviews, all the different constituencies of the school department, from school committee members and central office personnel to principals and teachers, agreed that there was too little time for professional development for the teachers and administrators in Winthrop and not enough substance in it.

Interviewees told review team members that for the past several years, professional development funding was the first item to be cut from a new fiscal year budget request list and that the primary funding for professional development was through grants. District per-pupil expenditures on professional development from all funding sources in fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011 totaled \$40, \$75, and \$127, as compared with \$224, \$226, and \$238 in statewide per-pupil expenditures on professional development in those years. Aside from the districtwide mandatory professional development topics such as anti-bullying sessions and restraint training, school principals were free to choose the type of professional development that would benefit their teachers; however, they were required to bring such programs to their schools at minimal cost and during the 90-minute period assigned to professional development on early release days spread out throughout the school year. A complication in this arrangement was that the release days for the individual schools rarely took place on the same day, so that having vertical articulation meetings between schools was nearly impossible. Another concern for the teachers was that, for the past several years, anyone who was given permission to attend a conference in their discipline or on a topic of pedagogical importance would have to pay for all expenses, including the conference fee, out of pocket.

When teachers in the teacher focus groups were asked what type of professional development opportunities were made available to them during these release days, the responses were mostly negative, from “PD, what’s that?” and “One and gone” to “How much can be accomplished in a 90-minute period at the end of a day after everyone has been teaching?” The district did make some progress in this regard in 2011 and 2012 by adding one full day for professional development to the teachers’ year. Both days, March 17, 2011, and January 3, 2012, were used to present mandated programs to all the district’s teachers and, importantly, to organize vertical articulation meetings between schools.

Another concern voiced by the district’s teachers was that their schedules did not include common planning time to exchange ideas and best practices with colleagues teaching the same grade level or discipline. When inquiries were made as to whether professional development on such topics as differentiated instruction, data analysis, technological implementations for the classroom, or research-based instructional strategies was offered in recent years, the answer was that very little, if any, time was spent on those topics.

Another concern that was evident among teachers in focus groups, was the concern that an insufficient number of teachers had been provided with Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)

training. One teacher said that category training had been offered on a Saturday, which was not convenient, and that time needed to be set aside for it on a full-day professional development day. Another teacher in another focus group said that category 1 training had been offered in 2011, but that there were only 25 spaces available.

It was apparent to the review team that the district's teachers were anxiously awaiting an improvement in their professional development opportunities. Without more time and other resources for district-coordinated professional development, both embedded within the school day and outside of it, the district will be missing the opportunity for an important complement to its new educator evaluation system: professional development that prioritizes educator needs identified through the goal-setting and evaluation process. It will also be without an important tool for improving educator practice and student achievement.

## **Student Support**

**The district does not provide sufficient resources at all grade levels for all students, especially students at risk, to achieve in accordance with their potential.**

The supports in place to help students in the Winthrop Public Schools vary from level to level. In an interview the superintendent expressed a concern about scores at grades 3 through 8. He also said that in order to advance student achievement he wanted to move the Response to Intervention model from the pre-K-2 level to other levels. At the time of the review, however, in an initiative that could meet the needs of only some students, he was encouraging administrators and teachers to provide additional assistance to students who were within two points of moving forward from one MCAS category to another—for instance, from “Needs Improvement” to “Proficient”—(the “Eights Club”), and to students who were within two points of falling from a higher MCAS category to a lower category (the “Twos Club”).

### *Support in the Elementary Schools*

District leaders told the review team that Title I assistance was available only at the William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School. According to interviewees, the leadership team decided in 2010–2011 to focus on the early elementary level and as a result provided it with three reading teachers and a .5 ESP. The staff at this school said that they used the Title I assistance to deliver a well-developed Response to Intervention (RTI) model in reading for the first time in the 2011–2012 school year. The school has recently adopted the StoryTown reading program, and the RTI focuses on students who are at risk in this program. The team was able to view a schedule of the reading program at the school, which showed that ESPs were involved in providing tiered instruction. School staff said that ESPs and classroom teachers were able to meet daily to discuss students and the instruction that would be delivered. According to a staff member, during the 2011–2012 school year 79 students were being pulled out for reading groups in a 45-minute

block. This same staff member acknowledged that without Title I assistance it would be difficult to implement a RTI model.

However, according to a school administrator there was no regular planning time for teachers to discuss students and their progress in attaining necessary skills.

In addition to the Title I support offered in school to students there was a component providing home tutoring in both reading and math for students from low-income families (those students who receive free and reduced-price lunch). According to a Title I administrator, 20 students were eligible for this service and received home tutoring twice a week. The students could be achieving beyond grade level, but if they are categorized as students from low-income families they qualify for the home tutoring. According to the administrator, the grant for this program was \$60,000 and many more students were eligible than wanted the service. One disadvantage of the home tutoring program is that there is no opportunity for tutors to meet with classroom teachers to discuss student achievement; as a result there is less than optimal coordination.

Although there were no after-school programs at the William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School, an administrator said that in 2010–2011 a computer-based Lexia Program provided practice in reading from 7:30 until 8:30 in the morning. However, not all students could attend as parents had to provide transportation.

In interviews the team was told that the RTI model was not fully functioning at the other schools in the district. However, an administrator said that while the Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School, which serves grades 3 through 5, did not have a Title I program, it provided its own version of RTI in reading with the support of all the teachers in the school. This took place during the “POD” period when small group tutorials take place. Teachers in focus groups told the review team that in the 2011–2012 school year, for the first time, the school was receiving some help in math, from a retired math teacher employed by the district to work with students needing support in math. The retired teacher worked with students in grades 3, 4, and 5 daily over an eight-week period to move the students from the Needs Improvement level to the Proficient level on MCAS.

The team was also told by administrators and teachers that there was a need for a remedial reading teacher and a math teacher. Further, teachers and administrators said that the school does not have a science lab and the technology in the school is sorely in need of updates.

The Cummings Elementary School does have an after-school program funded through 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant money. The program was formerly located at the middle school, but attendance was not consistent, so the program was moved. The program runs from 2:30–6:00 Monday through Friday and had 65 students enrolled at the time of the review. Students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch do not have to pay a fee, but students who do not are asked to pay \$10.00 a day. However, any child who cannot afford the fee is welcome to attend the program. It is a zoned program with an on-site coordinator and a teaching staff of eight—primarily Cummings School teachers. Zones include a Homework Zone from 2:30–3:30 and an activity

zone from 3:30–5:30 that can change daily. Some activities offered include Gym/Fitness, Science Partnership, Computer Zone, and Creative Activities. The zone from 5:30–6:00 is a free half hour for the students to pursue what they wish. There is a snack offered every day. The director of the program said that there was good communication between teachers in the program and the classroom teachers of those students who attend. No transportation is provided. Therefore transportation must be provided by parents of students who are enrolled in the program.

### *Support in the Middle School*

Administrators and teachers in focus groups said that there were insufficient programs at the middle school to meet the needs of all students. The review team was told by teachers in a focus group that the school used to have an after-school program but no longer did. They said that some teachers come in early and stay late in order to help students. Teachers expressed serious concern that there was no remedial reading teacher. An administrator said that although a request for a 1.0 reading teacher was made last year, it was not granted. At the time of the review, according to an administrator, there was no instruction in reading at grade 6 as reading was incorporated into ELA instruction. Teachers said that the only students who get extra reading help were students with disabilities whose IEP prescribed it. However, other interviewees mentioned the fact that the school uses the last period of the day as an enrichment period, and that students can receive extra help in math and ELA during that period. The team was also told that some grade 8 students were pulled from specials to receive extra help in math and ELA. Interviewees said that members of the National Honor Society at the high school would soon be coming to the middle school to work with struggling students. At the time of the review students from Boston University and Boston College were visiting the school daily to tutor students.

The review team was also told that because of scheduling there was no class time for students to use the library, and that as a result it went unused. While the computer room was used, there was no one to oversee the room. Teachers said that every computer in the room was a “hand me down” and that no computers had been purchased for several years. According to interviewees, textbooks are shared among students, and one teacher said that one book being used was the same one that was used when she was a student. The school was using science books with publication dates in the mid-1980s, and the most recent allocation for science materials was \$500.00 for grades 6, 7, and 8.

### *Support in the High School*

Interviewees at the high school told the review team that they did not have many supports for struggling students. They mentioned that some National Honor Society students did some tutoring but said that there were no formal programs in place. Many interviewees were concerned about the fact that while the elementary and middle schools had adjustment counselors, the high school did not have one and had not had one since the 2006–2007 school year. According to teachers and administrators, this was especially concerning as there were many instances of mental health issues that required immediate and professional attention but

without an adjustment counselor had to be dealt with by other staff. Administrators said that guidance personnel were occupied with college issues and did not have enough time to help deal with mental health issues. According to a school administrator, staff wear many hats because of a lack of resources; they try to do their best for students at risk and hope they are doing enough.

The high school has been successful in increasing the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. An administrator said that in prior years AP was a “closed shop” and the attitude expressed to many students was, “You can’t do this.” Now all grade 10 students take the PSAT, and the results are used to identify students who could be successful in an AP class. The school’s enrollment in AP classes advanced from 19 percent in 2007, compared to 17 percent statewide, to 45 percent in 2011, compared to 22 percent statewide. However, this achievement has led to the comments heard from some teachers in the high school focus group: that the high school was no longer a comprehensive high school, that it served AP students well but had nothing for the middle of the road, that a lot of middle-of-the-road kids had athletics, and that if it wasn’t for sports the dropout rate would be much higher. Another teacher said that the high school did not have an alternative program, and “it show[ed].”

The high school does have a credit recovery program through NOVA Net for students in grades 11 and 12. Students work after school using the online program under the supervision of a teacher. According to interviewees, there are typically five students in the course.

A high school administrator cited a Saturday School that was in place for a while for students at risk of dropping out but had to be discontinued because a custodian had to be on-site and this became too costly. The Pathways Program at North Shore Community College was offered to at-risk students; it started out with twelve students, but eventually, although the district provided transportation, only two students attended.

#### *Social and Emotional Support in the District*

Social and emotional support is provided through the Second Step Program; while its use is mandated by the district its implementation varies throughout the grade levels, according to interviewees. Even so, through a grant five years before the review many teachers in the district were trained and interviewees said the training continues. Originally purchased for the high school, the program has quite limited use at that level and is no longer used there. There are structured kindergarten through grade 8 lessons with themes that can be incorporated into other lesson plans. Interviewees said that the program is geared to the elementary schools and that teachers do use it at that level. Implementation at the middle school is inconsistent, and according to interviewees the program is viewed as “dorky” by middle-school students. Although the high school does not use the program, in 2011-2012 an advisory period was instituted with students meeting with advisors every two weeks for 30 minutes.

The review team was told by district staff that the high school did not provide enough support for students with mental health issues and that there was no social service component onsite. As mentioned above, high school staff were concerned that they had not had an adjustment

counselor since the 2006–2007 school year. Teachers mentioned the fact that there were not programs in place to address the issues faced by students at risk.

### *Conclusion*

The insufficiency of support services at most levels in the district has an impact on students' social and emotional wellbeing and their academic achievement. This insufficiency also contributes to the belief on the part of some members of the teaching staff that the district is not providing the necessary means for its teachers to fulfill their commitment to educate the students of Winthrop. Outdated textbooks, antiquated technology, and insufficient programs and personnel to provide services all have a direct impact on teaching and learning, hindering improvement of student performance.

### **Teachers expressed the view that ELLs were not receiving the instruction and support they needed to be successful.**

In 2010 an ESE Coordinated Program Review (CPR), among other findings, found that most ELLs were not receiving the state-recommended amounts of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and that not all teachers who taught ELLs had received the required categories of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training. Progress reporting on the implementation of the corrective action required of Winthrop as the result of the CPR was not complete as of the end of December, 2012. In one progress report the district indicated as difficulties financial challenges, time constraints, and the attrition of existing staff with some SEI training.

Though it heard otherwise from one interviewee, this review team heard from teachers in focus groups that the district did not have enough support in place to ensure ELLs had the instruction they needed. The district had 69 ELLs in 2010-2011, rising to 95 in 2011-2012, with most attending the two elementary schools and a few attending the middle and the high schools. At the time of the review, according to interviewees and documentation, there were two full-time ESL teachers assigned to the elementary and middle schools, with an additional part-time teacher at the early elementary school, and one ESL teacher assigned to the high school. All of these teachers had dual certification.

As mentioned above, teachers expressed the concern to the review team that an insufficient number of teachers had been provided with Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training. Teachers in focus groups said that training provided on Saturdays was not convenient for staff, and that time needed to be set aside for it on a full-day professional development day. The time needed for category training and the associated cost were cited as the barriers to teachers being trained. One teacher in a focus group said that she was reluctant to finish the training as she did not want to be one of the few trained, with a disproportionate share of the teaching of ELLs falling on her.

The district did not have an ELL coordinator at the time of the review, though it had had one in previous years. ESL staff said that they reported to their principals; however, there was not one

person in the district who oversaw the program and reported to the district level about the implementation of the program and its needs.

## **Financial and Asset Management**

### **Budget development in Winthrop has not been transparent to stakeholders because**

- **there has been insufficient staff participation, and**
- **supporting information such as student performance data, programmatic information, and district goals has not been provided in narrative and back-up details.**

**The absence of transparent budget development is a hindrance to the district in coping with budget cuts, which have recently been required, and with the unmet needs in the district.**

Budget documents submitted to the review team consisted of two documents: an Excel table with a list of line items and budgeted amounts, and a PowerPoint presentation of budget highlights. Included in the budget table was a list of staff members and their salaries by budget category, with deductions for salary amounts to be covered by grants. Although grant sources for salaries were identified, there was no documentation of outside funding in total, or of how non-salary funding would be used. The budget format was a little difficult to read, for instance to clarify subtotals, and it did not have a summary or explanatory charts.

The previous financial director had data about historical expenditure trends in a document from December, 2010, that was not incorporated in the fiscal year 12 budget document. According to members of the business staff, the most recent budget was prepared by a finance staff member working with the superintendent, with assistance from a school committee member. A member of the town finance department noted that the town wanted data that showed budget-to-actual comparisons for prior years, and used an average of expenditures from the last three years as a basis for developing fiscal year 2012 budget line items.

Interviewees at all levels described unmet needs in the areas of curriculum, technology, data analysis, supervision and evaluation, professional development, student support, and conditions of the school buildings. The teachers' collective bargaining agreement for fiscal years 2009 to 2011 was settled retroactively in the fall of 2011, for two years with zero increases other than step and educational attainment increases, and in fiscal year 2011 a 2.25 percent increase was added retroactively. There have been layoffs, as noted in school committee minutes of January 8, 2009. Two adjustment counselor positions were eliminated mid-year in fiscal year 2009, along with seven other positions. In the words of one school committee member, "We're not rich enough to afford what we need and we are not poor enough to be eligible for some federal and state funding." Both the town administration and the school department have hired or identified employees to seek more grant funding.

It should be noted that the budget development process under the new superintendent was to begin with input from principals and department heads on school and educational needs, and there was a written budget development policy on the district's website at the time of the review. Principals told the review team that the new superintendent wanted them to present to him the needs of their schools along with details and justification to support their budget requests. They expressed appreciation for being included as part of the administrative team in budget development, in contrast to the budget procedures in previous years, when little input was requested or received from them.

In the past, though, without a clear and informative budget document built on input from stakeholders, the district has not had the guidance needed to allocate funds effectively in support of district priorities. It is also the review team's view that the prior budget process and limited budget document have impaired school leaders' ability to advocate for funding for needed programs and personnel. In several interviews, a sense of discouragement was conveyed regarding the public's view of the school department; the budget process and document as they have existed are hindrances to changing that view. At the time of the review some initial steps had been taken, but there was more work to be done.

**At the time of the review, there was no certified business administrator serving the district. Financial issues in the recent past indicate that more experienced financial management is needed.**

The previous director of finance and operations resigned abruptly at a school committee meeting in February, 2011. A job description for the director's position existed at the time of the review, but the position had not been filled while the town tested the proposed consolidation of district and town financial management. Beginning in fiscal year 2012, three administrative positions, including chief financial officer, were being shared between the town and schools, with the school department picking up a significant part of the salary costs. However, none of the individuals serving in the capacity of school business administrator at the time of the review was certified—the school business office manager, the town's chief financial officer, or the assistant chief financial officer.<sup>7</sup> The school business office manager was responsible for budget development, ongoing financial reporting, bi-weekly data entry for payroll, journal entries, general ledger oversight, and financial aspects of grants management, among other duties. According to interviewees, there was no appreciable change under the consolidation in the workload of the business office, which also has 1.6 FTE business clerks. Questions were raised to the review team by some district leaders about the efficiency and desirability of the district-town consolidation of financial management

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<sup>7</sup> Under Mass. Gen. Laws Chapter 71, Section 38G, "No person shall be eligible for employment as a teacher, guidance counselor, . . . school business administrator . . . by a school district unless he has been granted by the commissioner a provisional, or standard certificate with respect to the type of position for which he seeks employment . . ."

The absence of finance management by a certified, experienced individual with sufficient staff makes it difficult to identify and address problems in the financial management of the district. For example:

- Purchase order procedures have not been rigorously followed resulting in post end-of-year unpaid bills. Cost overruns were identified after the close of the financial year in at least two recent budget cycles. The superintendent expressed concerns to the review team over use of proper purchasing procedures.
- Financial software was recently changed, resulting in significantly more hand entry of data and unproductive time on the part of the business office staff. The new software does not have an electronic purchase order system, for instance. According to a member of the business team, it could take two months for an invoice to be paid with the current system.
- Payrolls were routinely processed before the relevant payroll warrants were signed.
- The fiscal year 2011 End of Year Report was prepared by a consultant; it contained errors such as miscoding custodians and did not have entries in some line items that would have correctly identified expenditures for a full professional development day. The superintendent seemed to be planning for a consultant to prepare the fiscal year 2012 End of Year Report.

The review raised concerns about the operational effectiveness and financial controls of the integrated district-town financial system that call for review of that system.

**There is no agreement between the school committee and the town with regard to town expenditures on behalf of education (including municipal contributions to net school spending.)**

According to the district's finance staff, the district and town do not have an agreement about town expenditures on behalf of schools, including agreement on what town expenditures will count toward net school spending. A substantial amount of the town's expenditure for schools comes from town accounts, apparently without documentation. Town expenditures for the Winthrop Public Schools are in typical areas, including retirement contributions and payments for active and retired school employees' health insurance, administrative and building operations services, fixed charges, debt service and tuitions in fiscal year 2011. It should be noted that Winthrop offers health insurance through the Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission.

The review team sees the omission of an agreement with detailed information about municipal expenditures to be attributed to education and net school spending as a problem that should be rectified promptly. Certain municipal expenses can be charged to net school spending only with the agreement of the school committee.<sup>8</sup> In addition, 603 CMR 10.05(11) states: "In support of

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<sup>8</sup> See the July 24, 2008, ESE document entitled Reporting by Municipal Agencies, available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/accounting/default.html?section=archive>.

all reported and estimated education-related expenditures by a municipality from accounts other than the school committee appropriation, the municipality shall maintain . . . copies of the agreements between school committee and municipal officials which are the basis of reported expenditures and cost allocations.”

## **Recommendations**

*The priorities identified by the review team at the time of its site visit and embodied in the recommendations that follow may no longer be current, and the district may have identified new priorities in line with its current needs.*

### **Leadership and Governance**

**The district should complete a District Improvement Plan as a roadmap for district improvement work, and the superintendent and school committee should make use of the New Superintendent Induction Program and the District Governance Support Project to build their capacity to work together effectively in the best interest of the students in the school system.**

The superintendent of schools was new at the time of the review, having begun his appointment in July 2011 after a period of upheaval during which two school committee members, the former superintendent, and the director of finance and facilities all resigned. During this period (beginning with the seating of a new school committee, including a new town council president, in the beginning of 2010) members of the school committee were described as out of touch and unsupportive as well as contentious and antagonistic; interviewees said that treatment of the staff by school committee members resulted in staff feeling intimidated and distressed. In January 2012 three new school committee members, including a new town council president, took office.

It is imperative that the new superintendent provide much-needed direction for the school system and that all members of the school committee be apprised of their responsibilities and work together with the superintendent to move the district forward. To this end, several recommendations are made.

First, it is important that the six standards committees established by the superintendent

- complete their charges by identifying areas needing improvement under each standard and then
- assist the superintendent with the development of a District Improvement Plan, including a vision, mission, goals, and action steps, to provide direction for the school system.

The superintendent should then make sure that the goals in each of the School Improvement Plans are aligned with the goals in the DIP and that administrators are held accountable for attaining the goals.

The superintendent's participation in the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP) should support the further refinement of the district's improvement strategies as well as the cultivation of effective working relationships between district leaders and the school committee. This new program is the result of a partnership between the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents. Among the various

aspects of this program, superintendents have an opportunity to conduct a complete analysis of student achievement and of the quality of instruction in their school districts.

Finally, it is recommended that the superintendent and all the members of the Winthrop School Committee avail themselves of resources to strengthen governance through the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), particularly the District Governance Support Project (DGSP). This project, led by the MASC and supported by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), is a companion piece to the New Superintendent Induction Program. The DGSP provides school committees with strategies, skill building tools, professional development, and ongoing coaching to help their members focus their work on student achievement, accountability, and fulfillment of their fiduciary responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> It is “designed to focus on continuous improvement and build greater understanding of both the distinct roles and responsibilities of the school committee and district superintendent as well as promote new strategies for teamwork and collaboration to enhance student achievement.”<sup>10</sup>

With the superintendent and school committee members participating in DGSP, and with the superintendent participating in NSIP, a common understanding of their respective roles will be furthered leading to a more effective partnership, with enhanced communication, more public confidence, and a more strategic commitment of resources toward improving instructional quality and raising student achievement.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

**The district should complete the development of curricular materials in all subjects aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, emphasizing core subjects first, and should create a districtwide cycle for the timely review and revision of the curriculum. Further, collaborative professional development time for district and school leaders and teachers to accomplish this task is important.**

The district does not have complete K-12 curriculum guides for ELA, math, science, and social studies that include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. The district’s curriculum documents were not complete when originally designed in 2002, consisting of a list of content and learning standards with sections for teachers to include examples. Over the years, the district has not given adequate attention and resources to the development and implementation of curriculum materials, nor has it established a regular cycle to review and revise curriculum. As the district aligns its ELA and math curricula to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, it will be important to set a new standard for these curricula.

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<sup>9</sup> For information on the DGSP (and also the NSIP) see the [January 24, 2012, memorandum to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education from the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.](#)

<sup>10</sup> See [DGSP brochure.](#)

The new superintendent recognized the need to address the state of the curriculum in the district and had appointed a STEM director and a director of humanities, PK–12, to support curriculum leadership. In addition, the superintendent established a curriculum and instruction committee (see the final Leadership and Governance finding above) to assist him in preparing the District Improvement Plan. Another initial step was providing the staff with an opportunity to meet as vertical teams during the January 3, 2012 release day. In addition, support for instructional leadership teams from the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC) was in place at the grade 3–5 level and at the middle school. The district was poised to make much-needed improvements and revisions in the curriculum throughout its schools.

To that end, the review team strongly encourages the district to create complete curricula materials in all subjects at all levels with a particular emphasis to begin with on the core subjects. Curriculum guides or maps should be developed for all core content areas, and the district should develop a complete model for their creation. Whatever model the district selects, it should include objectives, resources, instructional strategies, timelines, and assessments. In addition, the district should ensure that the curricula used throughout the district are aligned to the new Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance descriptions, and that they are horizontally and vertically articulated.

Further, the district should establish a documented curriculum review and revision cycle based on valid research and the analysis of results from MCAS and other assessments, with involvement by from the district’s professional staff, including its teachers. Opportunities for professional development and collaboration are linked to the success of the improvement of the curriculum in the district. It is through collaborative professional development time that teachers and district and school leaders can ensure that the curriculum is aligned both vertically between grades and horizontally across grades and across sections of the same course.

Having a documented, complete curriculum will lead to consistency both across classrooms in the same grade and between grades, and will provide teachers with the supplementary instructional materials, strategies, and assessments they need to reach all learners. Without the need to focus on creating curriculum, teachers will be able to concentrate on instruction. And by creating a process for staff’s regular review and revision of the curricula based on valid research and timely analysis of assessment results, the district can ensure that curricular practices in the district are continuously developed and implemented to promote high levels of achievement for all students.

**The district should ensure that instructional supervision is consistent throughout its schools, with active monitoring and feedback on instruction to promote the common understanding and consistent implementation of effective instructional practices.**

Although the review team saw some examples of strong instructional practices throughout the district’s schools, the implementation of these practices was not consistently in place districtwide. According to the team’s observations in classrooms in the district, areas of instructional strength include classroom organization, the use of class time, effective teacher

communication in content areas, the provision of appropriate content for grade and level, and effective pacing techniques that support student engagement. While these areas of instructional strength were evident, there did not appear to be a commonly held model throughout the district's schools of what quality instruction looks like.

Among instructional practices not implemented consistently in the district are the setting of high expectations for student learning, the use of learning objectives to drive the lesson, effective strategies for content learning, the use of varied instructional techniques, the activation of higher-order thinking skills, the use of informal student assessments to check for understanding, and the use of student grouping to give students an opportunity to share their thinking. Consistent with an absence of student grouping, the review team found that the dominant mode of instruction in the district was teacher-directed, whole-group teaching.

The district had not had a districtwide supervision model in recent years, leading to very different supervision of teachers in the four schools (see the second Human Resources and Professional Development finding above). And there had been few opportunities in the district for teachers to participate in professional development that supports a common understanding of high-quality, data-based instruction (see the third Human Resources and Professional Development finding above).

The review team recommends that the district and its schools develop a common understanding of high-quality, data-based instruction, supported by appropriate professional development, and a districtwide system for monitoring and giving consistent, timely feedback on instructional practices (see Human Resources and Professional Development recommendation below). By providing leadership and support for effective instructional practices the district is ensuring that all its students have the opportunity to achieve at higher levels.

## **Assessment**

**The district should implement a comprehensive kindergarten through grade 12 assessment system, providing for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Data analysis should be used by leaders to develop goals for the District Improvement Plan and the aligned School Improvement Plans.**

The review team did not find common practices driven by the district with respect to what data would be collected, analyzed, and monitored to make decisions and track student progress. SIPs provided to the review team did not reflect a continuous collection or use of data across the district. The use of assessment results differed from school to school, and MCAS results were not uniformly shared across the district.

However, the district was poised to put data at the core of planning and making decisions about its programs, curriculum, and services. At the time of the review the new superintendent had already convened a leadership committee on assessment. The charge of this and other

committees was to identify areas that needed improvement and assist the superintendent in the development of the District Improvement Plan (DIP), which could serve as a model to schools in the development of their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). There were pockets of good practice in some schools with regard to data. The new reading and math programs at the elementary schools had embedded assessments. There were new curriculum leaders for STEM and the humanities. To the review team the district seemed ready to build and nurture its culture around data collection and analysis to improve student achievement.

The review team recommends that the district assessment committee provide clear and uniform expectations and oversight responsibilities for the continuous collection, analysis, and dissemination of student achievement data and other relevant data to assist in program improvement. In addition, the committee should use data analysis to help develop goals for the District Improvement Plan that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) (see first recommendation above). Also, individual schools should use data analysis to develop their SIPs, which should be aligned with the goals of the DIP.

A comprehensive assessment system will greatly bolster the district's ability to use data to improve curriculum and instruction and its ability to plan and advocate for needed programs and services.

**To facilitate the analysis and use of data to improve student achievement, the district should prioritize upgrading computer hardware and software and providing ongoing training of administrators and teachers.**

On several occasions the review team was told that that printers were scarce and technology was generally inadequate. Interviewees reported that an MCAS item analysis was not done because they would have to do it by hand; the district did not have a system in place to perform the analysis by computer. Teachers said that the use of StoryTown and GO Math! assessment data was limited because the computers were too old to adequately accommodate the program.

Reviewers also were told that training was needed for leaders and teachers. One curriculum leader said that MCAS data had not been analyzed in department meetings before he became a lead teacher to provide him with a model for how to discuss it. Although four lead teachers had recently attended an Education Data Warehouse training, one reported that he had not had a chance to use it yet. Elementary teachers had not received any MCAS analysis training.

The district should identify key people to train in data analysis and provide time for follow-up. The district should also provide ways for those trained to train others, for instance by establishing data teams in each school. The "train-the-trainer" method will maximize knowledge of data analysis in the district; training accompanied by improvement of the technology available to staff will maximize the use of data analysis in Winthrop.

## Human Resources and Professional Development

**As it implements a new evaluation system aligned with the new Massachusetts educator evaluation system, the district should also develop and implement a districtwide system of supervision.**

Because Winthrop is a participant in the Race to the Top grant program, it is mandated to implement a new evaluation system aligned with the new state educator evaluation system in 2012-2013. Full implementation of such a system will result in more timely and meaningful evaluations for all teachers and administrators, placing emphasis on student learning, and the system will inform instruction to a much greater degree than at the time of the review.

As mentioned in the instructional recommendation above, because of the site-based management model that had been used in the district in recent years, the supervision practices used in each school varied greatly from one another. Though both elementary schools had procedures for walkthroughs, at the middle school and high school the walkthrough process was either informal or absent.

Frequent, unannounced observations and observations of teachers outside the classroom are both important aspects of an effective educator supervision and evaluation system, as stated in ESE's guide entitled *Strategies and Suggestions for Observations* (available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/>). Specifically, the guide outlines the following:

- ***Frequent, unannounced observations.*** *Frequent observation of classroom practice – with feedback—is essential to improving practice, but only feasible if most observations are short, unannounced and followed by brief, focused feedback. There will be times when an evaluator is in a classroom or other work site and it becomes apparent that the visit needs to be extended, but a visit of approximately 10 minutes can yield a great deal of useful information. With short, unannounced visits, many more samples of practice can be collected, and many more powerful conversations about teaching practice can be had: when the typical observation of classroom practice is 10 minutes in duration and does not have to be preceded by a pre-observation conference or followed by a period-long post-observation conference, then evaluators can reasonably be expected to conduct 2 to 5 such observations on a typical day.*
  - *3 observations conducted each day on 150 of the 180 days in a school year translate to 450 observations each year, or 10 observations per year for each of 45 teachers. 7-10 brief observations followed by focused feedback should be a sufficient number to secure a representative picture of practice and promote the reflection and discussion needed to support improving practice.*
  - *Feedback can be provided during a conversation or in writing. Providing feedback through conversation promotes discussion of practice; providing feedback in*

*writing creates an opportunity for the educator to more easily reflect on the feedback on an ongoing basis. Whenever possible, an evaluator should have a conversation with the educator and follow up with brief written feedback summarizing the conversation and/or offering targeted advice for improvement.*

- *It should be noted that not all observations can or should be 5 to 15 minutes. There will be circumstances where longer observations are appropriate. Novice or struggling teachers may benefit from longer observations on occasion.*
- ***Observations outside of the classroom.*** *Observation of practice need not be limited to classroom observation. Conferences with individual teachers or teacher teams that focus on unit planning or ways the team is responding to interim assessment data can yield useful information and provide opportunities for feedback and growth. They can also be well-aligned with school and team goals. Most schools have goals that depend on effective collaboration among educators, so observation of educators in settings where they are developing their skills in collaboration can support school-wide goals. That said, care needs to be taken to ensure that observation does not interfere with the free exchange of ideas that is important in any healthy collegial environment. Therefore, collecting, reviewing and giving feedback on specific artifacts from department and team meetings can serve a purpose similar to observation of meetings. Similarly observing educators with parents and/or reviewing a team's analysis of representative samples of home-school communications can support collaborative work, reinforce school goals, and provide opportunities for useful feedback.*

The district should clarify expectations for supervision and make sure its administrators have and use the time needed to carry it out. The central office should organize and offer to supervisors professional development in the most effective ways of supervising and informing instruction. Close monitoring and supervision of educator performance is important for meaningful and effective change in the district's classrooms.

**The district should investigate ways to reallocate resources to provide needed professional development for teachers and administrators, as well as instructional coaching.**

There is little instructional coaching in the district and in recent years professional development for the district's teachers and administrators has been funded mostly through grants. Beyond state-mandated programs and some professional development offered at the school level, there was little professional development, though the district did add one full day for professional development to the teachers' year in 2011 and 2012. Interviewees at all levels, from school committee to teachers, said that professional development had insufficient substance and there was too little time for it. Many meaningful programs offered regularly in districts throughout the state, such as training in differentiated instruction, data-analysis procedures, implementation of technology in the classroom, or research-based instructional strategies, were either absent or only

minimally touched upon in Winthrop. District per-pupil expenditures on professional development from all funding sources in fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011 totaled \$40, \$75, and \$127, as compared with \$224, \$226, and \$238 in statewide per-pupil expenditures on professional development in those years.

It was apparent to the review team that the district's teachers were anxiously awaiting an improvement in their professional development opportunities. The district should explore ways to allot the necessary funds to support a district-coordinated professional development program, within and outside of the school day, that is supported by instructional coaching and/or supervision, tied to district priorities, and responsive to educator needs identified through the district's newly implemented goal-setting and evaluation process. It should establish a professional development committee that includes administrators and teachers to plan the offerings and evaluate each of them. Such a program of professional development would result in improved educator practice and improved student achievement and might well improve teacher morale as well.

## **Student Support**

**The district should examine the resources it has for students at all levels and determine which are effective and what reallocated or additional resources are needed at each level to improve student achievement.**

Support services varied from level to level in the district. They included:

- At the Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School (pre-K-2),
  - A Response to Intervention (RTI) model in reading, funded with Title I assistance;
  - A home tutoring program;
  - A computer-based Lexia program before school to provide reading practice.
- At the Cummings Elementary School (grades 3-5),
  - The school's own version of RTI in reading with the support of all the school's teachers;
  - Remedial help from a retired math teacher;
  - An after-school program funded through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant.
- At the middle school:
  - Tutoring from Boston University and Boston College students.
- At the high school:
  - Tutoring by National Honor Society students;

- A credit recovery program through Nova Net;
- An 30-minute advisory period every two weeks.

Also, social and emotional support was provided through the Second Step Program, primarily for elementary school students.

Interviewees at both the middle school and the high school told the review team that there were not enough supports for students. Interviewees at several schools voiced the need for more staff to support students (e.g., a remedial reading teacher at Cummings and the middle school, a math teacher at Cummings, and an adjustment counselor at the high school) and more programs (e.g. an after-school program at the middle school and programs for at-risk students and students with mental health issues at the high school). Textbooks were cited as outdated, science materials as insufficient, and computer hardware and software as inadequate. According to interviewees, the district's ELL program did not provide students with either enough ESL instructional time or enough classroom teachers with sufficient training in Sheltered English Immersion.

A thorough review of the needs in the district, as well as the supports available and their effectiveness, would allow the district to continue those supports that have been effective and discontinue those that have not. It would also help the district develop a plan to address the various needs in the most effective and cost-effective way possible, using present funding, re-allocated funding, or, if available, additional funding.

#### **The district should**

- **ensure that it is providing the resources necessary for its ELL students to receive the recommended amounts of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction;**
- **make plans for its regular education teachers to receive more training on sheltered English immersion, in accordance with ESE's RETELL initiative<sup>11</sup>; and**
- **ensure district-level coordination for the ELL program.**

The district should conduct a review of the ELL program to determine the amount of ESL instructional time ELL students at each proficiency level are receiving and then take steps if necessary to provide more ESL time to meet state recommendations. It should also review the amount of SEI training classroom teachers have received and make plans to provide them with more SEI training, in accordance with ESE's RETELL initiative. Coordination of the program at the district level is necessary not only to provide oversight for the program but also so that there is knowledge at the district level about the needs of the program and its adherence to state recommendations and mandates.

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<sup>11</sup> Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners. See [www.doe.mass.edu/retell/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/).

## **Financial and Asset Management**

**Understanding that the town currently has little ability to generate additional tax revenues, district and town leadership should work together to prioritize services and make the best possible use of available resources to better meet the needs of the students in Winthrop Public Schools.**

During the two years before the review, there was considerable tension between the school committee and district administration on the one hand and the town council on the other hand. (There was also, according to interviewees, tension between two groups on the school committee, one that backed the school committee chair and one that backed the town council president, who sits *ex officio* on the school committee.) The town council's move to take \$240,000 from the school department budget in June, 2010, was perceived by several interviewees on the district side as being related to a proposed new agreement between the school committee and the teachers' association, which it was reported would have resulted in increased costs of about \$240,000. This reduction of the school department budget was closely followed by the resignations of two school committee members and the former superintendent.

The new superintendent meets frequently with the town manager and attends weekly meetings at town hall. A new administrative team is in place to assist in developing data to better direct educational activities and support individual school and departmental budget requests in a new budget cycle. Both the town administration and school department have hired or identified employees to seek more grant funding. And three new school committee members, including a new town council president, took office shortly before the review. This is a good time to make use of new and positive relationships between the town and schools to appropriately prioritize the needs of the town, including education-related needs, and to evaluate the current use of resources by the school department to see how they might possibly be reallocated to better meet the needs of the students.

**The school committee and town manager should appoint a committee to develop an agreement on how town expenditures on behalf of education will be calculated for the ESE End of Year Financial Report and net school spending.**

As mentioned above, the review team sees the omission of an agreement with detailed information about municipal expenditures to be attributed to education and net school spending as a problem that should be rectified promptly. Certain municipal expenses can be charged to net school spending only with the agreement of the school committee. A substantial amount of the town's expenditure for schools comes from town accounts, apparently without documentation. It will be worthwhile to discuss in detail the basis for town expenditures for the schools, especially in light of the recent trial of shared administrative positions. Such an evaluation might also highlight places where spending is duplicated or attributed incorrectly, resulting in savings or in a clearer understanding of municipal and school finances.

**The new superintendent should engage all stakeholders in budget development and ensure that the resulting document provides clear and accessible information about the needs for requested funds. The budget should include the goals of the district and school improvement plans.**

At the time of the review the superintendent had already begun the process of involving stakeholders in the development of the budget: principals expressed appreciation for being included in the process, in contrast to earlier years when they had not been involved. The superintendent should continue this promising start and continue to involve a wide group of stakeholders in budget development; this will help ensure that the budget that is developed accurately reflects the needs of the district.

A well-prepared budget and thorough documentation of student enrollment and performance, explanation of financial needs and requests, and explanatory details and charts are important tools in convincing town leaders and citizens that a well thought-out plan is in place to meet the needs of the town's young people. In several interviews, a sense of discouragement was conveyed regarding the public's view of the school department. Taxpayers want to be assured that the most efficient and effective use is made of every tax dollar and that outside funding is sought and used to the fullest extent. A complete and transparent budget document is one of the most important ways of providing this assurance. Numerous examples of well-prepared budget documents are available through professional associations in Massachusetts and beyond. Adapting one of these to meet Winthrop's needs would be beneficial in providing the clearest possible picture of district finances, needs, and priorities and at the same time improving communications with the larger community.

**Winthrop would be well served to have a certified and experienced school business administrator with the capacity to assist the leadership in making best use of resources, and in assuring that budgets, reports, and transactions are completed in an accurate and timely manner.**

At the time of the review the district's business office manager was not a certified business administrator, nor was the town's finance director or his assistant. Several district leaders questioned whether the consolidated finance operation of town and district being tested was working well. Unless a town finance person becomes certified for his or her responsibilities relative to school finance by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and is able to devote significantly more time to meeting the budgeting and reporting needs outlined in this report, there is serious question whether a combined financial management system will work well for Winthrop.

When the two operations are combined there is also the question of how checks and balances are maintained between the processing of financial transactions and the posting and auditing of receipts and payments. It appeared that the lack of a certified administrator was preventing careful management of financial transactions, for instance purchasing. A companion question is

the ongoing use of the new financial management software. Continued use of such tools as paper purchase orders in this day of effective, efficient technology solutions seems inadvisable.

## Appendix A: Review Team Members

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The review of the Winthrop Public Schools was conducted from January 17, 2012–January 20, 2012 by the following team of educators, independent consultants to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dr. John Kulevich, Leadership and Governance

Ms. Suzanne Kelly, Curriculum and Instruction

Ms. Lenora Jennings, Assessment

Mr. William Wassel, Human Resources and Professional Development

Ms. Dolores Fitzgerald, Student Support, review team coordinator

Ms. Gail Zeman, Financial and Asset Management

## Appendix B: Review Activities and Site Visit Schedule

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### District Review Activities

The following activities were conducted as part of the review of the Winthrop Public Schools.

- The review team conducted interviews with the following Winthrop financial personnel: town manager, technology director, and chief financial officer. (The technology director and the chief financial officer positions are shared between the schools and the town.)
- The review team conducted interviews with the following members of the Winthrop School Committee: chairperson, town council president, vice chair, and three other committee members.
- The review team conducted interviews with the following representatives of the Winthrop Teachers' Association: president, vice president, treasurer, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and three other members.
- The review team conducted interviews and focus groups with the following representatives from the Winthrop Public Schools central office administration: superintendent, assistant superintendent, humanities director, STEM director, chief financial officer, and office manager.
- The review team visited the following schools in the Winthrop Public Schools: William P. Gorman/Fort Banks Elementary School, Arthur T. Cummings Elementary School, Winthrop Middle School, and Winthrop Senior High School. During school visits, the review team conducted interviews with school principals, In focus groups the team interviewed nine elementary teachers, nine middle school teachers, and 27 high school teachers.
  - The review team conducted 58 classroom visits for different grade levels and subjects across the four schools visited.
- The review team analyzed multiple sets of data and reviewed numerous documents before and during the site visit, including:
  - Data on student and school performance, including achievement and growth data and enrollment, graduation, dropout, retention, suspension, and attendance rates.
  - Data on the district's staffing and finances.
  - Published educational reports on the district by ESE, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the former Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA).

- District documents such as district and school improvement plans, school committee policies, curriculum documents, summaries of student assessments, job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements, evaluation tools for staff, handbooks for students/families and faculty, school schedules, and the district's end-of-the-year financial reports.
- All completed program and administrator evaluations, and a random selection of completed teacher evaluations.

## Site Visit Schedule

The following is the schedule for the on-site portion of the district review of the Winthrop Public Schools, conducted from January 17, 2012–January 20, 2012.

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
January 17, 2012	January 18, 2012	January 19, 2012	January 20, 2012
Orientation with district leaders and principals	Professional Development Interview	Student Support Interview	Classroom visits at the Fort Banks Elementary School
Interview with Superintendent,	Curriculum and Instruction Interview	Professional Development Interview	Interview with Principal of Fort Banks Elementary School
Interview with Curriculum and Instruction staff	Leadership Interview with school principals	Curriculum and Instruction Interview	Classroom visits at the Winthrop Middle School
Assessment Interview	Finance Interview	Assessment Interview	Briefing with the Superintendent of Schools
Human Resources Interview	Student Support Interview	Leadership Interview with Finance	Emerging Themes Meeting with District Leaders and Principals as well as DESAC member
Financial & Asset Management Interview with district staff	Financial & Asset Management Interview with Town Officials	Interview with Assistant Superintendent	
Student Support Interview	Focus Group	School Committee Interview	
Interview with Teachers' Association Members	Interviews with Elementary, Middle and High School Teachers, and School Council Parents	Classroom visits at the Cummings Elementary School	
	Interview with Teachers' Association Members	Classroom visits at the Winthrop Middle and Senior High School	
	Classroom visits		
	Interview with high school principal		

## Appendix C: Student Performance 2009–2011

**Table C1: Winthrop Public Schools and State Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) 2009–2011 English Language Arts**

Grade	2009		2010		2011	
	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Proficient	Median SGP
<b>All Grades—District</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>50</b>
All Grades—State	67	50	68	50	69	50
<b>Grade 3—District</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>NA*</b>
Grade 3—State	57	NA*	63	NA*	61	NA*
<b>Grade 4—District</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>49</b>
Grade 4—State	53	50	54	50	53	51
<b>Grade 5—District</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>
Grade 5—State	63	50	63	50	67	50
<b>Grade 6—District</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>57.5</b>
Grade 6—State	66	50	69	50	68	50
<b>Grade 7—District</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>43</b>
Grade 7—State	70	50	72	50	73	50
<b>Grade 8—District</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>48</b>
Grade 8—State	78	50	78	50	79	50
<b>Grade 10—District</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>52</b>
Grade 10—State	81	50	78	50	84	50

Notes: “Student growth percentiles” are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student’s MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see “MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide” and other resources available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>.

The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

\*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C2: Winthrop Public Schools and State  
Proficiency Rates and Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)  
2009–2011 Mathematics**

Grade	2009		2010		2011	
	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	Median SGP	Percent Advanced/ Proficient	Median SGP
<b>All Grades—District</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>
All Grades—State	55	50	59	50	58	50
<b>Grade 3—District</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>NA*</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>NA*</b>
Grade 3—State	60	NA*	65	NA*	66	NA*
<b>Grade 4—District</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>
Grade 4—State	48	50	48	49	47	50
<b>Grade 5—District</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>58</b>
Grade 5—State	54	50	55	50	59	50
<b>Grade 6—District</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>51.5</b>
Grade 6—State	57	50	59	50	58	50
<b>Grade 7—District</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>57</b>
Grade 7—State	49	50	53	50	51	50
<b>Grade 8—District</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>72</b>
Grade 8—State	48	50	51	51	52	50
<b>Grade 10—District</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>64</b>
Grade 10—State	75	50	75	50	77	50

Notes: “Student growth percentiles” are a measure of student progress that compares changes in a student’s MCAS scores to changes in MCAS scores of other students with similar performance profiles. The most appropriate measure for reporting growth for a group (e.g., subgroup, school, district) is the median student growth percentile (the middle score if one ranks the individual student growth percentiles from highest to lowest). For more information about the Growth Model, see “MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide” and other resources available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>.

The number of students included in the calculation of proficiency rate differs from the number of students included in the calculation of median SGP.

\*NA: Grade 3 students do not have SGPs because they are taking MCAS tests for the first time.

Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C3: Winthrop and State  
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)  
for Selected Subgroups  
2011 English Language Arts**

	Winthrop			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	<i>CPI</i>	<i>Median SGP</i>	<i>CPI</i>	<i>Median SGP</i>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>87.4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>50</b>
African-American/Black	17	85.3	---	77.4	47
Asian	9	---	---	90.2	59
Hispanic/Latino	84	79.8	37	74.2	46
White	918	88.2	51	90.9	51
ELL	25	65	---	59.4	48
FELL	37	87.8	53	81.7	54
Special Education	205	64.3	44	68.3	42
Low-Income	341	81.2	44.5	77.1	46

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.  
 2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.  
 3. "ELL" students are English language learners.  
 4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.  
 Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

**Table C4: Winthrop and State  
Composite Performance Index (CPI) and Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)  
for Selected Subgroups  
2011 Mathematics**

	Winthrop			State	
	<i>Number of Students Included</i>	<i>CPI</i>	<i>Median SGP</i>	<i>CPI</i>	<i>Median SGP</i>
<b>All Students</b>	<b>1,050</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>50</b>
African-American/Black	17	61.8	---	65	47
Asian	9	---	---	89.5	64
Hispanic/Latino	84	72.3	57	64.4	46
White	917	78.4	57	84.3	50
ELL	25	54	---	56.3	52
FELL	37	79.1	72	75.1	53
Special Education	206	55.2	56.5	57.7	43
Low-Income	340	70.6	59	67.3	46

Note: 1. Numbers of students included are the numbers of district students included for the purpose of calculating the CPI. Numbers included for the calculation of the median SGP are different.  
 2. Median SGP is calculated for grades 4-8 and 10 and is only reported for groups of 20 or more students. CPI is only reported for groups of 10 or more students.  
 3. "ELL" students are English language learners.  
 4. "FELL" students are former ELLs.  
 Source: School/District Profiles on ESE website

## Appendix D: Finding and Recommendation Statements

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### ***Finding Statements:***

#### **Student Achievement**

1. The district's proficiency rates in ELA did not increase over the five test administrations from 2007 to 2011, falling behind statewide proficiency rates, while its mathematics proficiency rate increased by five percentage points without gaining on the statewide rate.

#### **Leadership and Governance**

2. The Winthrop Public Schools experienced turmoil and uncertainty over the two years before the new superintendent arrived. The district was in a period of transition at the time of the site visit, and stakeholders expressed optimism.
3. At the time of the review the new superintendent had taken a number of steps, preliminary to developing a District Improvement Plan, to form relationships with stakeholders in the district, learn about district concerns, issues, and culture, and establish a presence in the district by visiting schools and classrooms.

#### **Curriculum and Instruction**

4. Curriculum materials in the district are incomplete in core subjects at all levels. Until the 2011–2012 school year, the district did not have sufficient district personnel to ensure that curricular documentation is complete and that it is aligned vertically among the district's schools.
5. While examples of effective instructional practices could be found in all the district's schools, high-quality instruction was not solidly in place throughout the district.

#### **Assessment**

6. At the time of the review the district did not have a centralized assessment system for data collection and analysis for use by school and curriculum leaders to drive student achievement.

#### **Human Resources and Professional Development**

7. The district does not provide sufficient support to retain new teachers.
8. The supervision of the district's teachers and the evaluation process for teachers varied greatly from school to school; as a result the processes used were not effective in informing instruction or promoting professional growth.

9. The district has only minimally supported a professional development program for its teachers and administrators, with funding substantially below statewide levels.

### **Student Support**

10. The district does not provide sufficient resources at all grade levels for all students, especially students at risk, to achieve in accordance with their potential.
11. Teachers expressed the view that ELLs were not receiving the instruction and support they needed to be successful.

### **Financial and Asset Management**

12. Budget development in Winthrop has not been transparent to stakeholders because
  - there has been insufficient staff participation, and
  - supporting information such as student performance data, programmatic information, and district goals has not been provided in narrative and back-up details.

The absence of transparent budget development is a hindrance to the district in coping with budget cuts, which have recently been required, and with the unmet needs in the district.

13. At the time of the review, there was no certified business administrator serving the district. Financial issues in the recent past indicate that more experienced financial management is needed.
14. There is no agreement between the school committee and the town with regard to town expenditures on behalf of education (including municipal contributions to net school spending.)

## ***Recommendation Statements:***

### **Leadership and Governance**

1. The district should complete a District Improvement Plan as a roadmap for district improvement work, and the superintendent and school committee should make use of the New Superintendent Induction Program and the District Governance Support Project to build their capacity to work together effectively in the best interest of the students in the school system.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

2. The district should complete the development of curricular materials in all subjects aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, emphasizing core subjects first, and should create a districtwide cycle for the timely review and revision of the curriculum. Further, collaborative professional development time for district and school leaders and teachers to accomplish this task is important.
3. The district should ensure that instructional supervision is consistent throughout its schools, with active monitoring and feedback on instruction to promote the common understanding and consistent implementation of effective instructional practices.

### **Assessment**

4. The district should implement a comprehensive kindergarten through grade 12 assessment system, providing for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Data analysis should be used by leaders to develop goals for the District Improvement Plan and the aligned School Improvement Plans.
5. To facilitate the analysis and use of data to improve student achievement, the district should prioritize upgrading computer hardware and software and providing ongoing training of administrators and teachers.

### **Human Resources and Professional Development**

6. As it implements a new evaluation system aligned with the new Massachusetts educator evaluation system, the district should also develop and implement a districtwide system of supervision.
7. The district should investigate ways to reallocate resources to provide needed professional development for teachers and administrators, as well as instructional coaching.

## **Student Support**

8. The district should examine the resources it has for students at all levels and determine which are effective and what reallocated or additional resources are needed at each level to improve student achievement.
9. The district should
  - ensure that it is providing the resources necessary for its ELL students to receive the recommended amounts of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction;
  - make plans for its regular education teachers to receive more training on sheltered English immersion, in accordance with ESE's RETELL initiative<sup>12</sup>; and
  - ensure district-level coordination for the ELL program.

## **Financial and Asset Management**

10. Understanding that the town currently has little ability to generate additional tax revenues, district and town leadership should work together to prioritize services and make the best possible use of available resources to better meet the needs of the students in Winthrop Public Schools.
11. The school committee and town manager should appoint a committee to develop an agreement on how town expenditures on behalf of education will be calculated for the ESE End of Year Financial Report and net school spending.
12. The new superintendent should engage all stakeholders in budget development and ensure that the resulting document provides clear and accessible information about the needs for requested funds. The budget should include the goals of the district and school improvement plans.
13. Winthrop would be well served to have a certified and experienced school business administrator with the capacity to assist the leadership in making best use of resources, and in assuring that budgets, reports, and transactions are completed in an accurate and timely manner.

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<sup>12</sup> Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners. See [www.doe.mass.edu/retell/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/).