

# Mastering the Maze of School Accountability



A Handbook for Massachusetts School and Local Association Leaders



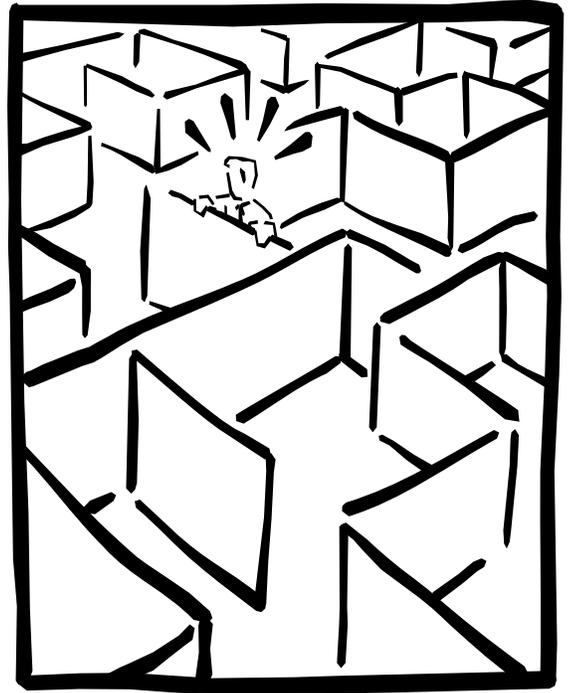
# Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

A Massachusetts School Accountability Handbook for  
School Improvement Teams and Local Association  
Leaders

by  
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*Dedicated to the memory of Kara Evans-Scott  
President, Monson Teachers Association  
Member, MTA Professional Development Council*

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- 1. Influencing Educational Policy*
- 2. Informing, Educating and Improving Understanding of Educational Issues*
- 3. Improving Practice*
- 4. Including the Educator Voice in Education Reform Initiatives*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massachusetts school accountability landscape is rapidly changing. Schools must address state and federal accountability requirements. Both are grounded in student test results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

This handbook is designed for school improvement team members and local association leaders who are confronting the accountability maze created by the Massachusetts Department of Education in response to both the Education Reform Act of 1993 and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002. This handbook addresses five key issues:

### 1. Education Reform Context

- The national reform context begins with the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk* and includes the National Goals Panel practices and the Effective Schools research.
- Massachusetts legislative activity starts with the *Basic Skills Improvement Policy Act of 1979* and continues through the *Education Reform Act of 1993*.
- The history of *Webby-Levy-McDuffy* and *Hancock* cases addresses the equity and adequacy of school funding.
- The Board of Education, Department of Education, and Education Management Audit Council control the regulation process with regard to school and district accountability.
- School “accountability,” with the resulting rewards and sanctions, is explained in relation to school improvement focused on student achievement.

### 2. School Accountability in Massachusetts

- The state system includes the School Performance Rating Process and a School Panel Review for *Underperforming Schools*.
- The federal system includes the requirement that all students be *proficient* in English and mathematics by 2014. Schools must make *Adequate Yearly Progress* toward this goal for all students and student sub-groups. Schools must close the *achievement gap* using *disaggregated* data by disability, poverty, language, and racial status.
- Although both systems rely on MCAS data, each applies different *consequences* to schools whose performance is determined to be *inadequate*.

### 3. School Performance Rating Process in Massachusetts

- Using MCAS results, the DOE evaluates all schools’ progress toward meeting the established standards.
- Then, the DOE must identify schools that are not meeting expectations and those that are performing and/or improving at a high level.
- The BOE determines whether schools with low performance are *underperforming* or, if, after a two year improvement effort, are *chronically underperforming*.

### 4. Preparing for a School Panel Review

- Currently, 48% of Massachusetts schools have failed to make AYP in both English and math and over 250 have been involved in either the state or federal accountability system.
- To date, 62 schools have had panel reviews. These involve staff surveys, review of documents, and a brief site visit. The focus is on school improvement planning.
- The expectation, however, is that up to 90% of all Massachusetts public schools could be eligible for a school panel review by 2014.

### 5. School Improvement Planning

- The Massachusetts accountability system focuses on the school as the unit of improvement. School leaders are responsible for developing improvement plans based on their analysis of student performance data and educator needs.
- The four key analyses that should inform a well-designed plan include student assessment data; standards-based curriculum aligned to the curriculum frameworks; instructional strategies addressing the differentiated needs of students; and professional learning for the school’s instructional and administrative staff.



**Table of Contents**

Foreword: An Illustration	I
Handbook Organization	iii
<b>Section 1: Setting the Context</b>	
The National Context	1.1
The Massachusetts Context	1.1
History of Education Litigation in Massachusetts	1.3
Education Reform Act of 1993	1.4
Standards-based Reform in Massachusetts	1.4
The Next Chapter: <i>Hancock v. Driscoll</i>	1.6
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002	1.7
Who is in Charge of Education Reform in Massachusetts?	1.8
What is Accountability?	1.10
<b>Section 2: Overview of School and District Accountability in Massachusetts</b>	
Components of the Accountability System for Massachusetts Schools and Districts	2.1
Accountability Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act	2.1
How Do Massachusetts Schools Perform?	2.2
Status of Massachusetts Schools	2.4
Sanctions and Rewards for Schools	2.5
<b>Section 3: Massachusetts School Performance Rating Process</b>	
Description	3.1
Four-Step School Accountability Process	3.2
Explanation of Composite Proficiency Index and Adequate Yearly Progress	3.3
How is the AYP Improvement Target Determined?	3.4
Step 1: All Schools Rated	3.4
Step 2: School Panel Review	3.5
Step 3: Fact-finding Review and School Improvement Plan	3.6
Step 4: Determination of Chronic Underperformance	3.7
How State and Federal Accountability Systems Interact to Affect Massachusetts Schools	3.7
Consolidation of Accountability with EQA	3.10
<b>Section 4: Preparing for a School Panel Review</b>	
1. Understand what is important about school improvement	4.2
2. Understand the use of data	4.3
3. Be informed about the details of the accountability process	4.4
4. Acknowledge the role of test-based accountability	4.4
5. Understand that high standards for all students is a new goal and requires new practices	4.5
6. Describe the resources that the school is lacking that affect student achievement	4.6
Participation in a School Panel Review Process	4.6
1. Staff Survey	4.6
2. Explaining Staff Absenteeism	4.7
3. Explaining Staff Education and Experience Background	4.7
4. School Site Visit by Panel Review Team	4.8
5. Fact Finding	4.9

6. Development of the School Improvement Plan	4.9
---	-----

**Section 5: School Improvement Planning**

All Schools	5.1
Data Related to Individual Schools	5.1
Recommendations Based on the Data	5.3
School Improvement Planning – Low-Performing Schools	5.3
School Improvement Team	5.4
Getting the School Improvement Conversation Started	5.4
Identifying School Improvement Goals	5.5
School Improvement Plan	5.5
Determining How to Achieve School Improvement Goals	5.5
Program Evaluation Using Benchmarking	5.6

**Appendices**

A MTA School Improvement Initiatives	App.1
B Chapter 69. Section 1J. Chronic failure by school or district to improve educational program.	App.3
C 603 CMR 2.00. Underperforming schools and school districts	App.5
D Evaluating school performance – The panel review process	App.8
E MADOE performance improvement mapping process rubric	App.18
F Glossary	App.23
G Useful web sites	App.32
H Works Cited	App.33

**Figures**

1.1 Six National Goals Panel practices	1.1
1.2 Nine characteristics of high performing schools	1.2
1.3 Four "pillars" of standards-based education reform	1.5
1.4 Membership and responsibilities of the Board of Education and the Education Management Audit Council	1.9
2.1 Massachusetts and federal school accountability systems	2.1
2.2 NAEP Massachusetts results 1992-2003	2.3
2.3 ESEA progressive sanctions for Title I schools failing to make AYP	2.4
2.4 ESEA terminology related to progressive sanctions	2.5
3.1 MCAS mid-cycle and cycle reporting years	3.1
3.2 Four-Step School Accountability Process as applied to Massachusetts schools	3.3
3.3 Composite proficiency index (CPI) methodology	3.4
3.4 Determining adequate yearly progress (AYP)	3.4
3.5 School improvement ratings	3.4
3.6 Performance rating based on CPI range	3.5
3.7 Integration of Massachusetts and federal accountability systems	3.7
3.8 State and federal accountability systems with resulting sanctions for failure to move students toward proficiency	3.8
3.9 Massachusetts School Ratings	3.11
4.1 Marzano's comparison of high performing school-level factors across researchers	4.2

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

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4.2	Cycle of continuous improvement	4.9
4.2	Administrator annual attendance	4.11
4.3	Teacher annual attendance	4.12
4.4	Paraprofessional annual attendance	4.13
4.5	Administrator education and experience	4.14
4.6	Teacher education and experience	4.15
4.7	Paraprofessional education and experience	4.16
5.1	Components of school improvement plan	5.1
5.2	Linear progression to AYP	5.2
5.3	Timeline and activities for school improvement plan development	5.4
5.4	Completed school goal example	5.5
5.5	School improvement planning discussion	5.7
5.6	Data supporting affirmative responses and possible solutions	5.8
5.7	Essential questions focused on improving student achievement	5.9
5.8	School improvement plan cover page	5.10
5.9	SIP Section 1 – Goal and Details	5.11
5.10	SIP Section 2 – Current assessment data	5.12
5.11	SIP Section 2 – Projected assessment improvement	5.13
5.12	SIP Section 2 – Local Assessments	5.14
5.13	SIP Section 2 – Changes to curriculum and instruction based on assessment data	5.15
5.14	SIP Section 3 – Curriculum	5.16
5.15	SIP Section 4 – Instructional practices	5.17
5.16	SIP Section 5 – Instructional leadership	5.18
5.17	SIP Section 6 – School budget and resources for improvement	5.19
5.18	SIP Section 6 – Professional time and expertise needed to implement SIP	5.20
5.19	SIP Section 7 – Professional development	5.21
5.20	Program evaluation benchmarks	5.22

*Notes*

**FOREWORD: AN ILLUSTRATION**

**THE HORACE MANN SCHOOL STORY**

By Anne Wheelock

Several years ago following surgery, my elderly aunt collapsed during rehab. Did a doctor rush to her side to see what had happened? Not at all. Instead, she was sent for a battery of high-tech tests. By afternoon's end, the results were known, but not one provided a clue as to the cause of her fainting.

The call for a takeover of the Horace Mann School because of low MCAS scores reminded me of my aunt's experience. In schooling, as in medicine, test results may confirm that problems exist. But testing does not necessarily identify the source of school problems, let alone point to improvements that best fit a school's particular context, strengths, and needs.

Findings from a University of Wisconsin study illustrate the limitations of testing. Several years ago, Wisconsin researchers wondered how well test scores matched real student achievement. To find out, they first identified students who scored at similar levels across all schools in a wide range of communities. Next they visited schools to look at the real work students were doing. Their finding? Despite identical test scores, students in different schools were producing very different sorts of schoolwork showing very different levels of skills and understanding.

In some schools, students' best work included worksheets for which students had correctly provided one-word answers to multiple choice questions about coastal geography, whaling, or the Civil War. In other schools, that work included projects that reflected student learning gained from classroom Socratic discussions, in-depth research on a subject, and disciplined preparation of their findings for an audience outside the school.

Had researchers used test results to assess the schools, they would have mistakenly concluded that student achievement was equally strong or lacking in all schools. But when they looked at student work, they saw deeper and more "authentic" learning in some schools, weaker and more shallow learning in others. Testing had not picked up the distinction.

But this distinction is important in helping us understand how MCAS supporters who see Horace Mann's scores as an accurate measure of school quality can be at such odds with teachers and parents who insist that there's nothing like a school visit to get a valid and reliable picture of school performance. The Wisconsin research suggests that the second group is closer to the truth.

In fact, school visitors can learn a lot about a school if they pay attention to three main aspects of schooling.

First, visitors should be alert to the kind of work students do. Do students spend their time completing worksheets, or do they create pieces of work – books for the school's younger students, an essay, story, or poem for a competition, a study of the community's water quality – that help them develop skills in the context of a larger project?

Do students analyze high-quality examples of similar work so they understand the standards of quality they are aiming for in their own work? Do they get comments on their work and have adequate time to revise it before turning in a final product? Do students get to explain what they have learned from these assignments to others, whether in a student-directed parent-teacher conference or in a presentation to other students or community members?

Second, visitors should pay attention to how a school uses its resources to ensure that all students have access to meaningful opportunities to learn. Does student-teacher load allow teachers to know their students learning strengths and needs well? Do class sizes allow for in-depth Socratic conversations to develop thinking skills? Are resources for learning – books, library resources, science kits, field trips, art supplies – adequate and organized to support high quality work? Equally important, are those resources available equally to all or reserved only for the most "deserving" students? Is extra help available to vulnerable students before, not after, they fall behind? Is extra help provided without labeling or stigmatizing students?

Third, visitors should be on the lookout for how human relationships feed and nurture student learning. School reformer and scholar Ted Sizer says "rigorous caring" is key to motivating students to develop an academic identity and rise to the challenge of improving their work. Yet too many students tell researchers they feel that "nobody cares" about them or the work they do. Likewise, positive relationships among educators are essential for the teachers' own professional growth. Do teachers have time to work in teams to coordinate assignments and discuss student work on a daily basis? Do teams have access to student support and family outreach staff? Have teachers worked together to map the school's curriculum? Do teachers take the lead in reviewing and selecting new curriculum materials?

In medicine, patients do not recover their well-being through testing. They need resources and the sustained human contact with people who are on their side in the struggle to get better. School improvement is not too different. Only a hands-on approach can reveal the quality of student work, the adequacy and use of resources, or how human relationships support learning in a given school.

Let Horace Mann's teachers be the city's first, but not the last, to invite friends and critics alike to review with them how these essentials of schooling play out in their school. The district will be the better for it.



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### Handbook Organization

The MTA Center for Educational Quality and Professional Development has produced this handbook to address educators' need for information about school accountability in general and school improvement planning within an accountability system. Specifically, this handbook is designed to provide information to school and district educators and local association leaders about how school accountability works in Massachusetts in the context of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the so-called *No Child Left Behind Act*), including:

- state and federal accountability processes and how each affects school communities.
- Resources, such as laws, regulations, Board of Education policies and Department of Education documents, that define the school accountability system in Massachusetts.
- connections between accountability and school improvement.
- assistance for educators who are involved in school improvement efforts.

The handbook is divided into the following sections:

- **Section 1: Setting the Context**

Provides a history of education reform in Massachusetts and the school financing cases from *Webby to Hancock*; explains the composition and roles of the Board of Education, Department of Education, and the Education Management Audit Council; and discusses the concept and meaning of "accountability."

- **Section 2: Overview of School Accountability in Massachusetts**

Provides an overview of the school accountability requirements of Education Reform Act of 1993 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and their general application to Massachusetts elementary, middle, and high schools.

- **Section 3: The Massachusetts School Performance Rating Process**

Describes the four components of school ratings and their relationship to both the Education Reform Act of 1993 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

- **Section 4: Preparing for a School Panel Review**

Explains how a school community can prepare for an inspection by state examiners; describes assumptions; and outlines practices that are "proactive."

- **Section 5: School Improvement Planning**

Describes the school improvement planning process, including the composition of the school improvement team and a proposed timeline for planning; and provides questions for school improvement teams and templates to use in developing an improvement plan.

- **Appendices:** Documents and information related to the state and federal accountability requirements which provide improvement planners with more detailed information about each component of the two accountability systems.

A separate handbook focused on district accountability will be available in Fall 2004.

*Notes*

## SECTION 1: SETTING THE CONTEXT

### The National Context

Over 20 years ago, in reaction to *A Nation at Risk (1983)* report and concern that our national economic future depended on an improved education system, business and political leaders created a framework for a **standards-based reform** that would change the focus from inputs to outcomes. Historically, education reform focused on such **inputs** as school funding, quality and quantity of the teaching force, readiness of students to learn, education policies at the state and district level, and

**Figure 1.1: Six National Goals Panel Practices**

1. **Leadership:** schools with demonstrated success in raising student achievement typically have strong leaders.
2. **Professional Development:** high quality professional development for educators is essential to effective efforts to raise student achievement.
3. **Involving Higher Education:** in too many states, higher education has been a missing partner in standards-based reform.
4. **Extra Help for Students:** testing student achievement will not improve learning unless it triggers additional help for the students and schools that need it.
5. **Data Use:** successful schools have used a wealth of information from student assessments and community outreach (beyond student scores and rankings) to guide decisions on policy, practice, and resource allocation.
6. **Staying the Course:** statewide improvements in student achievement are most likely among states with continuity of education reform policies.

National Education Goals Panel (2000)

external supports involving parents, community and business partners. The shift to **outcomes** focused attention on measurable manifestation of the effects of schooling, such as improved student achievement, higher graduation rates, improved student and staff attendance, increased student and parental satisfaction with the school, successful citizenship, post-secondary enrollments, and attaining satisfying careers.

The National Goals Panel, a group of political and business leaders, established six national performance goals for the year 2000 (see Figure 1.1). A business management model of accountability for results emerged as an important component of standards-based reform. What is noteworthy about these six practices is the complete lack of attention to standards, curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, and parental engagement.

In contrast to the National Goals Panel, are the nine characteristics of Effective Schools which are the product of extensive research investigating school practices that result in positive student achievement (Figure 1.2). Here, educators have articulated the necessary conditions for high performing schools – which begin with a shared vision that is focused on curriculum, instruction, assessment; require educational leaders who focus their attention on teaching and learning; and demand that there be meaningful collaboration among the adults whose responsibility it is to rear and educate our children.

### The Massachusetts Context

Prior to the late 1970s, schools and districts in Massachusetts were subject to little or no control by the Board of Education (BOE), in line with the small percentage of funding for education that state government provided. Local control prevailed; spending, curriculum and graduation decisions were all made by local school committees.

In 1979, the early signs of what would become a major change in the control of education policy in Massachusetts appeared. Under the Basic Skills Improvement Policy of 1979, all districts, as a matter of state policy, were required to test students for *minimal competency*. But the decisions on

what grades to test, what test to use and what standards to apply were, for the most part, made locally.

**FIGURE 1.2: NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

**1. Clear and Shared Focus**

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

**2. High Standards and Expectations for All Students**

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

**3. Effective School Leadership**

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders can have different styles and roles—teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often have a leadership role.

**4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**

There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions.

**5. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards**

The planned and actual curriculum are aligned with the essential academic learning requirements. Research based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understand the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

**6. Frequent Monitoring of Learning and Teaching**

A steady cycle of different assessments identify students who need help. More support and instructional time is provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

**7. Focused Professional Development**

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need. Feedback from learning and teaching focuses extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

**8. Supportive Learning Environment**

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

**9. High Levels of Family and Community Involvement**

There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Families, businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.

*Shannon & Bylsma. (2003)*

Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985 established a more formal statewide testing program with two components. The first was the Massachusetts Education Assessment Program (MEAP) that was designed to assess the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction in schools, despite the lack of statewide curricula or standards. The second, a revised Basic Skills Testing Program, required state-developed and administered tests at three grade levels and statewide passing standards for each test. No consequences were attached to performance on either the MEAP or the Basic Skills Test, although some districts did experiment with using a passing score on the Basic Skills Test as a requirement for graduation. The assumption under all of these policies and statutes is that public reporting of test scores serves as a form of accountability and acts as an impetus for school improvement.

## HISTORY OF EDUCATION LITIGATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

Over the past 25 years, education reform efforts have been intertwined with a series of lawsuits filed on behalf of students in high poverty districts. These suits focused on the equity and adequacy of school funding. MTA/NEA has been a financial supporter of these lawsuits.

Over the years the name of this lawsuit changed as *Webby v. Dukakis* became *McDuffy v. Robertson*; however, the focus of the suit did not change. The plaintiffs were represented by the lead student who changed from *Webby* to *McDuffy* after *Webby* graduated from high school; both were students in the Brockton public schools. Governor Dukakis was the lead defendant; however, when Piedad Robertson was appointed Secretary of Education, she became the lead defendant.

From 1978 through 1993, the *Webby-McDuffy* suit was filed, put on hold and resurrected a number of times as illustrated here.

**1978:** *Webby v. Dukakis* is filed with the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), the highest court in the Commonwealth. The plaintiffs charge that students in predominately poor towns are being denied the opportunity to receive an adequate education as guaranteed by the Massachusetts Constitution.

In response to the lawsuit, the Massachusetts Legislature enacts *School Funds and State Aid to Public Schools* legislation. The plaintiffs in *Webby* respond to the legislature by temporarily suspending their legal action before the court.

**1981:** Convinced that state remedies have not sufficiently improved schools in poor districts, the plaintiffs in *Webby v. Dukakis* again move forward with their suit. Both sides begin to assemble their evidence.

**1985:** *Webby v. Dukakis* begins to move through the system, as the SJC orders preliminary hearings to begin.

The Massachusetts Legislature passes an *Act Improving the Public Schools of the Commonwealth*, also known as Chapter 188. Again, the plaintiffs in *Webby v. Dukakis* withdraw their suit.

**1989:** Attorneys working on behalf of students who attend public schools in Worcester, Carver, Revere, and Rockland file *Levy v. Dukakis*. Like the *Webby* suit, *Levy* challenges the constitutionality of the state's school-financing system.

**1990:** Dissatisfied with the lack of progress made to equalize support of education, the plaintiffs in *Webby v. Dukakis* file a "restated complaint" with the SJC. The case is effectively combined with *Levy v. Dukakis*, and heard in court as *McDuffy v. Robertson*.

**1992:** Justice Ruth Abrams of the SJC orders *McDuffy v. Robertson* be heard by the full SJC in February 1993.

The Massachusetts Legislature begins working on broad-based education reform. "The fastest and least adversarial way to achieve meaningful reform," said Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, "is for the governor and Legislature to agree on a legislative package."

**1993:** On June 15, 1993, the SJC hands down the *McDuffy* decision. The court rules that the Massachusetts school funding system is unconstitutional, and orders the Legislature to craft a

remedy. In its ruling, the SJC outlines seven broad learning goals that a person would need to attain to be educated.

On June 18, 1993, Governor Weld signs the Education Reform Act of 1993 which addresses the issues articulated in the *McDuffy* decision.

### EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1993 (MERA)

The MERA represented a marked shift in the governance of education in Massachusetts. In order to respond to the SJC's finding that the state's system of financing education primarily through local property taxation was unconstitutional, the Legislature passed a comprehensive reform act that established a funding system designed to provide equitable educational services to all children in Massachusetts, regardless of the property value of the community in which they reside.

Over the past decade, Massachusetts BOE members, Department of Education (DOE) staff, and business leaders have referenced an alleged "deal" that was struck when the MERA was passed. Mass Insight (2004) – a paid pro-MCAS consultant to the DOE – states in a recent publication under the heading **Trading Funding for Accountability** "that 'deal' in Massachusetts helped sustain bipartisan political leadership support and the commitment of urban superintendents through years of unsatisfactory test scores and public controversy."

In fact, the SJC in the 1993 *McDuffy* decision spoke not of a "deal" but rather of a "duty." What the SJC said in *McDuffy* was

- [T]he Commonwealth has a **duty** to provide an education for *all* its children, rich and poor, in every city and town of the Commonwealth at the public school level, and that this **duty** is designed not only to serve the interests of the children, but, more fundamentally, to prepare them to participate as free citizens of a free state to meet the needs and interests of a republican government, namely the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. [415 Mass. at 606.]
- [T]he Massachusetts Constitution impose[s] an enforceable **duty** on the magistrates and Legislatures of this Commonwealth to provide education in the public schools for the children there enrolled, whether they be rich or poor and without regard to the fiscal capacity of the community or district in which such children live. [415 Mass at 621.]
- [I]t is **the responsibility of the Commonwealth to take such steps as may be required in each instance effectively to devise a plan and sources of funds sufficient to meet the constitutional mandate.** [415 Mass at 621.] [emphasis added]

Even if there had been an alleged "deal," it must not have included educators, who, in the intervening decade, have been either ignored or blamed by policymakers for a "failure" to carry out policies created without their input – and often in direct contradiction to what educators' have articulated were the conditions for effective school improvement.

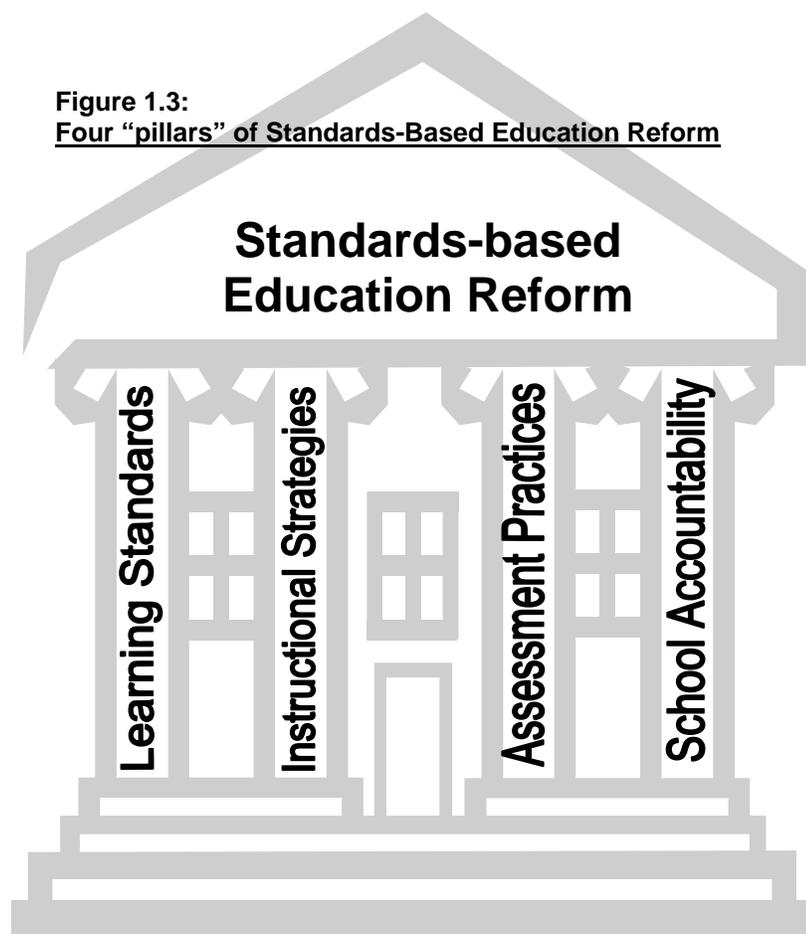
### Standards-Based Reform in Massachusetts

When the national education conversation coalesced around standards-based reform, the business, political and educational leaders in Massachusetts had to address the need to remake the state's system of financing education. Standards-based reform that "aims to hold high expectations and provide high levels of support of all students, teachers and educational leaders," (Thompson, 2001) was determined to be a natural fit for what needed to be accomplished in Massachusetts. Because state government in Massachusetts would be assuming a greater responsibility for funding education, legislators incorporated the concept of **accountability** for students, schools, and districts into the MERA in part to win support from the business community for the increased investment in education.

As envisioned, Massachusetts standards-based education reform has four components: curriculum, instruction, assessment, and accountability (see Figure 1.3). However, this vision has never been fully implemented in all school districts.

First, the learning standards are articulated through seven curriculum frameworks, one for each content area identified in MERA: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, history and social studies, science and technology, foreign languages, health, and the arts. Each framework document identifies the specific learning standards to be mastered by students in grades PK-4, 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12. In 2003-04, the BOE approved amended ELA and math frameworks with discrete standards for grades 3-8 in preparation for the annual testing required by the federal accountability system.

**Figure 1.3:**  
**Four “pillars” of Standards-Based Education Reform**



Second, instructional strategies address the learning styles, readiness levels, and interests of an evermore diverse student population. This often requires that “regular” education teachers acquire knowledge and skill in the theory, strategies, and practices of inclusion, language acquisition, and differentiated instruction.

Third, student assessment practices in the form of multiple measures gauge student mastery of the learning standards. Multiple measures should include such assessment practices as: class work, homework, tests, quizzes, oral and written reports, performance tasks, demonstrations, district-wide performance tasks with scoring rubrics, etc. Both state and federal laws mandate that one form of assessment must be criterion-referenced tests related to the state’s learning standards.

Fourth, schools are held *accountable* based on annual student performance on state-administered standardized tests. Unfortunately, the only measure used by both the state and federal accountability systems is student performance on MCAS. Accountability essentially means sanctions for low performing schools and rewards for high performing schools, with no overt positive or negative labeling for schools in the middle.

While the BOE has directed some attention toward the content of the learning standards and significant attention has been paid to state testing, the accountability system established by the MERA has been quietly evolving. Added to this is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA – the so-called *No Child Left Behind Act*) in January 2002 with its heavy reliance on accountability. The combination of the state and federal focus on using test results to rate

and impose sanctions on schools and districts is pushing accountability to the top of the education reform agenda.

Consequently, educators increasingly find themselves navigating through a maze created by overlapping, and not always consistent, accountability systems. Many are being confronted with a new language embedded in the terminology of accountability: *Achievement Gap*, *AYP*, *Composite Proficiency Index Corrective Action*, *DPE*, *EMAC*, *Gap Analysis*, *In Need of Improvement*, *Instructional Change Objectives*, *Panel Reviews*, *PIMP*, *Proficiency*, *Restructuring*, *SPRP*, *Supplemental Services*, and *Underperforming*. The glossary in this handbook provides current definitions for the new lexicon of accountability [see Appendix E].

Further, state and federal accountability processes require that schools develop and implement improvement plans, sometimes using a required process or template – but not always!

### **Education Reform – The Next Chapter: *Hancock v. Driscoll***

With the passage of MERA, the context changed. Now the DOE, local school districts and individual schools were obligated to implement far-reaching reform in seven curricula areas. The foundation formula which was crafted in response to the *McDuffy* decision was based on the input of school superintendents prior to the enactment of MERA. The formula did not take into consideration the curriculum frameworks, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), nor the school accountability that resulted from it.

So, in 2002, the plaintiffs returned to the SJC filing *Hancock v. Driscoll*; Julie Hancock is a student in the Brockton public schools and David Driscoll is the Commissioner of Education. The plaintiffs argued that high poverty districts were still providing an inequitable education, now using the requirements of MERA as the basis of their suit. The SJC assigned the case to Judge Margot Botsford to make findings of fact and recommendations to the court. On April 26, 2004, Botsford issued a 300+ page report.

The judge states that “the factual record establishes that the schools attended by the plaintiff children are not currently implementing the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks for all students, and are not currently equipping all students with the *McDuffy* capabilities.”

On the issue of time, state officials argued that 2014 – or perhaps 2012 – was an appropriate time frame within which to implement all elements of MERA. Botsford, echoing the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that “justice delayed is justice denied,” found that “in the context of this litigation, and eleven years after the *McDuffy* decision, that timetable is just too long.” She recommends that the defendants be given six months to come up with a plan and a timetable for implementation.

Botsford found that the defendants argued that the “struggles being experienced by certain school districts, including presumably the focus districts, are not related to inadequate resources, but, rather, reflect a lack of leadership and managerial capacity.” Yet, she states that “*McDuffy* expressly holds that the Commonwealth, not the local districts, is ultimately responsible ‘to devise a plan and sources of funds sufficient to meet the constitutional mandate.’” So, while the state officials essentially blamed the districts for their failures to implement MERA, Botsford finds that these state officials are obligated to develop a plan to provide *all* students with an adequate education.

With regard to DOE capacity, Botsford found that state officials “contend that the Commonwealth is dealing with the capacity issue through the school and district accountability system it has put into

place.” Yet she found that the DOE has done only 12-14 school panel reviews (at the time of this report’s publication 208 schools were *In Need of Improvement*). She further found that “the department states that with respect to most failing schools, it relies on the districts in which the schools are located to assist in the development of an adequate school improvement plan, but there was no evidence that such reliance was justified.”

So, the DOE argued that the districts which they characterized as lacking “leadership and management capacity” should be able to develop “adequate school improvement plans.”

*Hancock* is scheduled to go before the SJC in October 2004 with a decision expected in December 2004 or January 2005.

At the same time, the BOE – urged on by the *Partners in Progress* report by the Grogan Commission – is seeking to “hurry up” the process of state intervention in schools and districts that are not performing adequately. School personnel should begin to understand that more and more schools will be identified *In Need of Improvement*. The DOE capacity to review schools may or may not increase and real technical assistance may never be provided. The reality is that school personnel will need to rely on their own resources, knowledge, and expertise or their ability to find partners in professional associations and higher education to develop school improvement plans that address the requirements of MERA.

### **ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 2002 (ESEA)**

In 2002, the federal government adopted its version of *reform by accountability*. In the reauthorization of the ESEA, Congress established a far-reaching and detailed accountability system that sets a national goal of “all students proficient by 2014” and requires schools to make “regular and documented” progress each year toward that goal. The ESEA specifies a new list of sanctions ranging from school choice to restructuring that will apply to Title I schools that fail to make the required progress. It should be noted that there are no federal sanctions for schools not receiving Title I funds. However, all schools are subject to Massachusetts sanctions.

By 2006, states are required to develop accountability systems that will meet the ESEA requirements, including annual testing in English and mathematics of all students in grades 3-8 and once in grades 9-10. By 2007 science must be tested once in the following grade spans: 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.

### **Landmarks in Federal Education Reform**

*ESEA is not a new law. It was first passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson’s “Great Society” programs. It must be “reauthorized” every five years. From its modest beginnings, the law has now become highly prescriptive with punitive sanctions for schools that fail to “make the grade.”*

1954: *Brown v. Board of Education*

1964: *Civil Rights Act* desegregates schools

1965: *Elementary and Secondary Education Act - Title I*, by far the biggest ESEA program, focuses aid on high-poverty areas.

1975: *Education for All Handicapped Children Act [now called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act]* mandates access to education for children with disabilities.

1981: *Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA)* block-grants many programs. Renames “Title I,” “Chapter 1.”

1983: *A Nation at Risk* report is published.

1988: *Hawkins-Stafford School Improvement amendments* introduce accountability in Chapter 1 programs.

1989: *Governors’ Education Summit* convened by President George H.W. Bush results in *National Education Goals Panel*.

1994: *Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA)* broadens accountability system under Chapter 1 - renamed Title I.

1994: *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* sets national education goals and provides funds for standards and assessment systems.

2002: *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization* signed on January 8, 2002. Establishes minimum qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals and sets goals of all children achieving at state-defined “proficient” level by June 2014.

Cowan (2003)

In January 2003, the Massachusetts Accountability System which is completely dependent on MCAS, was judged to be in compliance with the federal requirements. This plan calls for the additional tests to be in place by 2006.

Educators in Massachusetts are now profoundly affected by the protocols, processes and sanctions of both the Education Reform Act accountability requirements and the ESEA rules. In order to understand how they work together, it is important to examine the process and sanctions associated with each.

### Who is in Charge of Education Reform in Massachusetts?

This non-elected BOE has used MERA as a means of implementing an ideologically conservative agenda leading to policies that ignore the professional knowledge of educators in favor of opinions and advice provided by business and political leaders. What has resulted is a rift between the DOE and school districts, school leaders, and educators that is best characterized by distrust and disrespect. The DOE, which had historically played the role of monitoring district practice and providing technical assistance, is now viewed a "policing" agency. A partner has become an adversary.

The two public boards overseeing school and district accountability are the BOE and the Education Management Audit Council (EMAC). Figure 1.4 provides an overview of each.

#### Acronyms and Meanings:

*BOE:* Board of Education  
*DOE:* Department of Education  
*EMAC:* Education Management Audit Council  
*EQA:* Office of Educational Quality & Accountability

The BOE approves the policies and regulations that public school districts implement. Seven of the nine members are appointed by the Governor. Geographically, BOE members James Peyser (Boston), Roberta Schaefer (Worcester), Abigail Thernstrom (Lexington), and Henry Thomas (Springfield) represent the population of the Commonwealth: all are Weld or Cellucci appointees. Rural communities, the Cape and Islands, and the Berkshires are not represented. One seat has been vacant for the past six months. Richard Crowley, President of Keystone Associates in Andover, represents the business sector and Harneen Chernow, AFL-CIO represents the labor community; the governor must appoint from three nominees from the Boston Labor Council. Two members serve *ex officio*, Judith Gill, the Chancellor of Higher Education and the president of the Student Advisory Council (generally a different high school student every year).

The current BOE does not reflect the racial composition of the Commonwealth's population; eight of the nine members are white and the second language population has no representation. Historically, the BOE has been described as "an independent lay board." However, beginning with the smaller "Silber" Board in the mid-90s, there has been a core of ideologically conservative members (James Peyser, Abigail Thernstrom, Roberta Schaefer) who are aligned with national anti-public education, pro-voucher organizations, such as the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. Many of the policies adopted have their roots in conservative organizations.

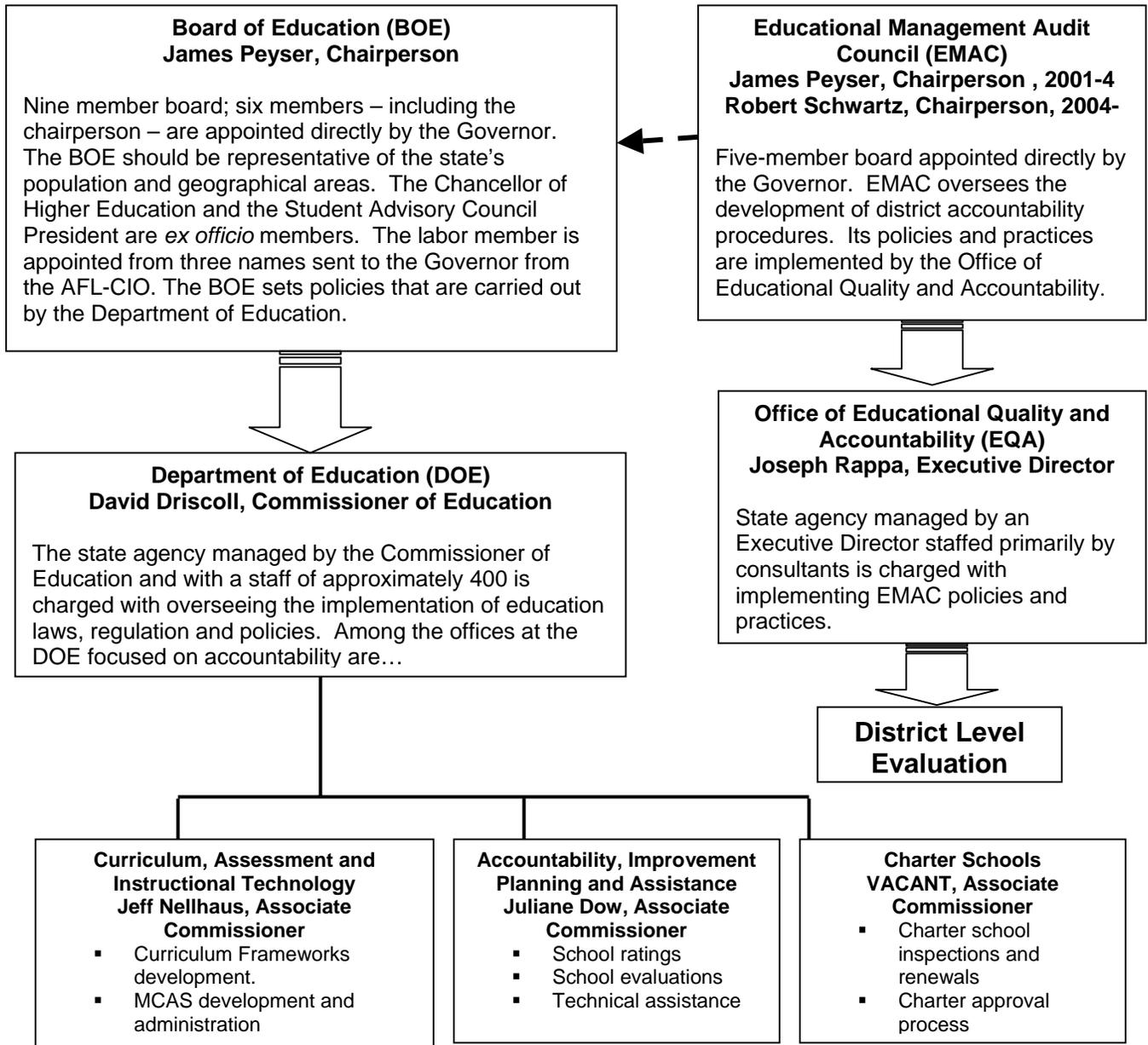
One of the ironies between making and implementing the education reform law in Massachusetts is that the Democratic Legislature enacted the law then turned over the regulatory process to the BOE; seven of the nine members appointed by Republican governors with core ideological conservatives driving the agenda.

The secretary of the BOE is the Commissioner of Education, David Driscoll. The DOE, of which the Commissioner is the manager, implements BOE policies and communicates directly with public school districts.

Currently, the DOE’s Office of Accountability, Improvement Planning and Assistance is overseeing school accountability. Eventually this responsibility will be in the same office as district accountability (see Figure 1.4).

The Education Management Audit Council (EMAC) is a five-member board; all are appointed by the Governor. EMAC is “within but not subject to the control” of the DOE. Like the BOE, EMAC has members who are aligned with politically conservative, anti-public education organizations. Members include:

**Figure 1.4: Membership and responsibilities of the Board of Education and the Education Management Audit Council**



- James Peyser (former chairperson; affiliated with such ideologically conservative organizations as the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Educator Leaders Council),

- Robert Schwartz, (chairperson; former education advisor to Governor Dukakis, former president of Achieve, Inc., lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education),
- Maura Banta (IBM, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education – MBAE)
- Jeffrey Howard (Efficacy Institute),
- Kathleen Madigan (Educator Leaders Council, National Council for Teacher Quality, American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence – all ideologically conservative organizations based in Washington, D.C.), and
- Mark Roosevelt (MBAE).

Currently, EMAC is responsible for district accountability. EMAC oversees the work of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) which is managed by a director and, right now, a small staff that consists primarily of outside consultants. Eventually, school accountability will fall under EMAC's umbrella. EMAC reviews EQA reports on district performance. If EMAC decides a district is possibly underperforming, the report is sent to the BOE which makes all final decisions (see Figure 1.4).

What is remarkable about both the BOE and EMAC is that there are no K-12 educators serving on either. Thus, decisions about education and schooling are being made by non-elected, political appointees with no professional knowledge about schooling. For some, their decisions are based on their own experiences as students and parents. For others, decisions are based solely on ideological or political considerations.

As the Massachusetts version of standards-based reform has evolved, state curriculum frameworks have been created, students are now required to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test to graduate, and schools and districts are rated based on student MCAS performance. Further, schools and districts are subject to such negative labels as *underperforming* or *chronically underperforming* if their scores are consistently unacceptable.

In the rhetoric of school reform, rewards and sanctions under the oversight of the BOE and EMAC have become the instruments of school improvement.

### **WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?**

While standards-based reform moves into its third decade, a “new accountability” (Fuhrman, 1999) has become the dominant topic of education reform conversations. In some respects, accountability has always been a part of the world of education. Students have been graded; teachers have been evaluated; and schools and districts have been monitored for compliance with regulations. Much of the previous accountability was directed toward ensuring that educational opportunities were provided to students – the focus was on *inputs* rather than on *outcomes*.

The three principles of the new accountability –

- high standards for all students leading to
- tests tied to the standards resulting in
- sanctions and rewards for individual schools based on student performance

– have been incorporated into both the state and federal accountability systems that affect Massachusetts educators.

But, as Robert Linn (2000) observes, even outcome-based or performance-based accountability has, in fact, appeared before.

*The use of student performance on tests in accountability systems is not new. Examples of payment for results – such as the flurry of performance contracting in the 1960s – and other ways of using performance as the basis for holding school administrators, teachers and students accountable has been found cropping up and fading away over many decades.*

Some educators believe that performance-based accountability was introduced with the reauthorization of ESEA in 2002. That is not the case. There have been accountability provisions in the federal statute since its enactment in 1965. What has changed is the focus on accountability as measured by *program evaluation* through student test results. In previous ESEA authorizations, progress was measured through Title I students' performance on standardized tests using a *normal curve equivalent*; tests used were commercial large scale standardized tests such as the Iowa, the Terra Nova, or the Metropolitan. With the 2002 ESEA authorization, progress is measured by annual state-created criterion-referenced tests that determine the percentage of all students and student sub-groups who are labeled *proficient* resulting in school and district attainment of *adequate yearly progress* goals.

So, what is “new” about the current reform by accountability?

**First:** the current notion of accountability is embedded in a powerful model of what is necessary for schools to improve – standards-based reform. Over the past twenty years, this approach to school improvement has achieved widespread acceptance as the basis for education policies at the federal, state and local levels. It holds that:

*Standards, tests and accountability are the key policy components of standards-based reform in public education. The standards outline the expectations held for all students, the test provides a way to judge student performance against these standards and the accountability component provides an incentive – in the form of rewards attached to the test results – for those involved to make the necessary changes in order to meet performance expectations. (Clarke, 2003)*

In its purest form, performance-based accountability means that the measure of success for public education is whether students have learned – a notion that is the cornerstone of standards-based reform. All would agree that improving student achievement is – and should be – the goal of all school improvement. However, the implementation of this approach has not been as simple as its theory.

Standards-based reform, which has come to have high acceptance among educators, has morphed into test-based reform. It must be noted that there is virtually no quality research to support the underpinnings of this test-based reform effort. Instead, we are confronted with ideologically driven treatises with footnotes – primarily from conservatives with an anti-public school, pro-voucher, pro-charter school agenda – masquerading as research.

*Standards-based reform has morphed into test-based reform. It should be noted, however, that there is virtually no quality research to support the underpinnings of this test-based reform effort.*

Clearly, there are many ways that student learning can be defined and measured. Beyond standardized tests, authentic assessment techniques are available that are more closely connected to curriculum and instruction. Both MERA and ESEA mandate multiple measures of assessment and both require that criterion-referenced tests be one tool. Educators have pushed for using multiple measures of student performance to draw conclusions about student achievement, arguing that no single test should be used to make serious decisions about a student. Further, educators believe that test results taken alone provide a very incomplete picture of student achievement) and may have an unintended negative impact on curriculum.

At the school level, recent research into the reliability and validity of using school test scores over time as the basis for accountability decisions has concluded that much of the annual changes in school test scores are due to factors other than changes in student achievement (Kane, 2000).

However, despite the opinion of virtually all psychometricians and testing experts, including those in the business of selling standardized tests (Pierce, 2003), education reform has become dominated by performance on standardized tests. Based partly on the influence of business leaders, the accountability provisions of current education policy depend so heavily on standardized tests that they have redefined standards-based reform as test-based accountability. Raising student test scores – rather than improving teaching and learning – has become the goal of education reform. Accountability systems have been designed to identify inadequate performance in terms of student scores on standardized tests (Skinner, 2004b).

*The ... assumption was that although schools, unlike businesses, show no profits and losses – no bottom line – at the end of the year, standardized test scores measure what has been learned and can roughly predict how future employees will perform in the workplace.*  
(Cuban, 2001)

**Second:** Standards-based reform has set an ambitious goal that represents a substantial change in the direction of public education – *all* students need a high quality education and need to meet the same high standards of performance. Although it comes as no surprise to educators, policymakers have come to acknowledge that:

*... poor or minority students...achieve at levels far below those of white, middle-class students, however those achievement levels are measured... we are not serving our students well, and ... we have an ethical obligation to assist all students in realizing their full potential* (Danielson, 2002).

In a different economic era, the premise of American education was that education goals and the programs to achieve them should be adapted for different students depending on an individual's life goals. Participation in a particular program would be determined by a student's level of achievement and interest. Little attention was given to the reality that groups of students, often identified by race and poverty, were receiving a lower quality education.

The shift toward standards makes it clear that differential education based on race and class is not acceptable. In a major departure from the goals of the public education system,

*Authentic, standards-based reform is fundamentally concerned with equity. It departs radically from the tracking and sorting carried out by the factory-style school of yore. Instead it aims to hold high expectations and provide high levels of support for all students, teachers, and educational leaders* (Thompson, 2001).

If the redirection of the educational mission of the public schools of the United States is to be successful, it will likely require substantially more investment than the administration of standardized tests. Deborah Meier (2000) has noted, it is a "lazy and cheap way of trying to provide equity."

**Third:** The emphasis on accountability in the current education reform movement rests on the belief that the public education system would not implement standards-based reform without being prodded by sanctions or encouraged by rewards. As James Peyser (2003), who served concurrently as the Chairperson of both the BOE and the Education Management Audit Council (EMAC), the Assistant

Education Advisor to Governor Romney, and Education Advisor to former Governors Swift and Cellucci commented, “Certainly, there was a lack of faith that local school districts would be able or willing to implement standards without consequences.” (Pierce, 2003)

With that assumption directing policy, a *carrot-and-stick* business accountability model has become embedded in standards-based reform. Richard Elmore and Susan Fuhrman (2001) observe, “the theory that measuring performance and coupling it to rewards and sanctions will cause schools and the individuals who work in them to perform at higher levels underpins performance-based accountability systems.”

Despite its widespread acceptance among policymakers that testing which results in negative consequences for students, educators, schools and/or districts is a primary tool for improving student achievement, the use of high stakes sanctions is not necessarily research-based. “This premise has broad popular appeal, but the empirical evidence regarding its veracity is mixed (Linn, 2000).” Those who insist on *data-driven decision-making* for schools do not seem to apply the same rules to themselves.

*High stakes testing is premised upon the assumption that everyone else involved in education – up to and including (shh!) students and their parents – has failed so dismally that a kind of exam ex machina is needed to sort the whole mess out. (Pierce, 2003)*

Consequently, much of the accountability effort has produced an environment that educators – and some parents and school committee members – perceive to be strongly punitive and disrespectful. Educators believe that accountability processes disregard the complex and difficult task they face when helping all students meet the goals of standards-based reform. In some instances, the negative consequences make that task even more difficult because time and energy are expended on attending to the bureaucratic process of identifying reasons for *underperformance* rather than spending time on professional learning, curriculum refinement, and improving instructional and administrative practices. “It’s definitely the feeling of the people in the field that they are being watched and constantly told that they are not good enough.” (Pierce, 2003)

An alternative view would acknowledge that standards-based reform for all students is asking those involved in the educational system to do something different from what they have seen as their traditional role. When any group of individuals within a system is asked to fundamentally change the manner in which they have done their work, it is likely that they will need training in order to know what to do. Such learning must focus on identifying what needs to be done to bring about the desired change, identifying the training that will be required for each group within the system, and finally assessing the impact of the changes on the desired result – improved student achievement.

To be successful, all parties within the system must work collaboratively and supportively. Focusing on sanctions and negative labeling of students, educators, schools and districts is counterproductive. Unfortunately, in the absence of policies that define a supportive process and policymakers who view themselves as allies instead of inspectors, educators will have to make sure school improvement happens on their own.

*By striking contrast, today’s testing proponents minimize student differences and promote an old-fashioned factory model (no longer common in business) which assumes that the reason students aren’t succeeding is that they and their teachers aren’t trying, and the way to make them try is to punish them if they fail. (Gratz, 2003)*

*Notes*

**SECTION 2:  
OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY IN MASSACHUSETTS**

**COMPONENTS OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM FOR MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**

The state and federal statutes and regulations, through MERA and ESEA, address school and district accountability (see Figure 2.1). Some components are the same and others are different. The DOE has been adjusting the state system to bring the two systems into alignment; this is a “stay tuned” issue. District accountability is also part of the process; this will be addressed in a separate handbook. State accountability is based on the performance of schools and districts.

**FIGURE 2.1: MASSACHUSETTS AND FEDERAL SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS**

	ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS	
	Massachusetts	Federal
<i>Governing Statute</i>	<i>Education Reform Act</i>	<i>Elementary &amp; Secondary Education Act</i>
<b>School Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School Performance Rating Process (SPRP)</li> <li>▪ School Panel Review for <i>Underperforming Schools</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All students must meet the state’s standard of <i>proficiency</i> in English and mathematics by 2014. Sanctions apply to Title I schools only.</li> <li>▪ <i>Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</i> is the aggregate student movement toward 100% proficiency by 2014.</li> <li>▪ <i>Gap Analysis</i> of the <i>achievement gap</i> refers to the <i>disaggregated</i> data by gender and disability, poverty, language, and racial status. Schools must close the gap.</li> </ul>
<b>State Accountability</b>		ESEA holds the state accountable for assisting schools <i>In Need of Improvement</i> .

**ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)**

**DESCRIPTION**

The provisions of ESEA mandate a single test-based accountability system for all states and call for all students to be *proficient* by the year 2014. However, each state develops its own test, sets its own standard for proficiency and specifies how progress toward that goal will be measured. So, rather than having one accountability system for all students in all states, there are 50+ such systems. All states have or are in the process of developing tests in ELA, mathematics and science, with the exception of Nebraska where state law prohibits such testing. Every state has a different “standard of proficiency”; some higher than others. Massachusetts has a very high standard.

	Accountability Systems	
	Massachusetts	Federal
<b>School Accountability</b>	SPRP Panel Review	<b>Proficiency for All AYP Gap Analysis</b>
<b>State Accountability</b>		<b>State Sanctions</b>

All schools, districts and states must make *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* toward the *proficiency* goal based on annual state-administered English language arts and mathematics tests administered to grades 3-8 and once in grades 9-10. Incremental sanctions for failure to make AYP for all students and for sub-groups of students sorted by race, disability, language, and poverty status. Only Title I schools are subject to negative consequences for failing to make AYP.

### PROCESS

The BOE has defined *proficient* as scoring in the Proficient or Advanced categories on the MCAS. The Massachusetts definition of *proficiency* is: *Students at this level demonstrate a solid understanding of challenging subject matter and solve a wide variety of problems.*

The MCAS school and district results report the percentage of all students in each of the four performance categories: *Failing/Warning, Needs Improvement, Proficient, and Advanced.* This is *aggregate data.* In addition, the DOE reports the percentage of students by race, disability, language, and poverty status: this is *disaggregated data.*

The DOE has created a *Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)* to measure whether schools have made the requisite annual progress in improving MCAS scores. The CPI is based on the number of students scoring in each of the MCAS performance categories. A CPI of 100 means that all students are at least in the Proficient category. The CPI calculation includes the scores of students who took the MCAS Alternate Assessment, converted to the regular MCAS performance categories.

All schools must make their two-year AYP targets for their CPI score in order to reach a CPI of 100 by 2014. CPI targets are set in ELA and math for all students and for students in each of the following sub-groups:

- Students with disabilities (those on IEPs and 504 plans)
- English language learners
- Low income students (as determined by free/reduced lunch)
- Students in each of five racial/ethnic categories (African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native American)

The ESEA requires that the graduation rate be used as an additional indicator for the accountability system for high schools. Until data are available to compute a graduation rate, DOE will use the percentage of students who receive a Competency Determination, with 70% as the target. The BOE has selected attendance as the additional indicator for elementary and middle schools and established a 92% attendance rate for the AYP threshold.

Each school in Massachusetts receives an AYP in two-year cycles. In 2003, the DOE began to issue mid-cycle AYP determinations. At mid-cycle, a school's CPI for each group represents above the state target or two-thirds of the two-year improvement target.

### HOW DO MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS PERFORM?

On the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), sometimes called The Nation's Report Card, our students do very well. NAEP uses the "sampling" method of testing students in demographically representative schools and using scores to project achievement levels at Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. There are no school or individual results; only statewide results. "NAEP is a national assessment that fairly and accurately measures student achievement and monitors change in performance over time (DOE, 2003a)."

Figure 2.2 illustrates Massachusetts' student performance on NAEP since its inception. Until the reauthorization of the ESEA, participation in NAEP was voluntary. It should be noted that from the 1998 through the 2003 administrations of the tests, our students scored in the top five states in the country. Students in grades 4 and 8 scored first in the nation on the 2003 NAEP reading tests.

**Figure 2.2: National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Massachusetts Results 1992-2003**

Subject	Grade	Year	Avg.	Avg.*	Percentage of Students in Each Scoring Category				Rank
					Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Above	
								Proficient	
Mathematics (scale: 0-500)	4	1992	227	[219]	68	23	2	25	NA
		1996	229	[222]	71	24	2	26	NA
		2000	233	[224]	77	31	3	34	2
		2003	242	[234]	84	41	6	47	3
	8	1992	273	[267]	63	23	3	26	NA
		1996	278	[271]	68	28	5	32	NA
		2000	279	[272]	70	30	5	35	5
		2003	287	[276]	76	38	8	46	2
Reading (scale: 0-500)	4	1992	226	[215]	74	36	7	43	NA
		1994	223	[212]	69	36	8	44	NA
		1998	223	[213]	70	35	8	43	3
		2002	234	[217]	80	47	13	60	1
		2003	228	[216]	73	40	10	50	2
	8	1998	269	[261]	79	38	3	41	5
		2002	271	[263]	81	39	3	42	1
		2003	273	[261]	81	43	5	48	1
Science (scale: 0-300)	4	2000	162	[148]	81	43	6	49	1
	8	1996	157	[148]	69	37	4	41	NA
		2000	161	[149]	74	42	5	47	2
Writing (scale: 0-300)	4	2002	170	[153]	94	44	4	48	2
	8	1998	155	[148]	87	31	2	33	3
		2002	163	[152]	90	42	4	46	2

However, this does not mean that we should be complacent or that the negative ESEA sanctions will not apply to our schools.

Connecticut is another high performing state on the NAEP tests. Moscovitch (2004), in a study conducted for the Connecticut Education Association, reports that by 2014 – the date by which all students are to be “proficient” – 744 out of 802 K-8 public schools in Connecticut will have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). That is a staggering 92.7% of all schools. [The Connecticut Mastery Test is only administered in grades 3 through 8, so no data is available to make projections for high schools.]

According to the DOE, there are 1,898 public schools in the Commonwealth. Given the demographics of Massachusetts schools and student performance on MCAS – which has not resulted in scores reflecting the high performance on NAEP – it can be assumed that a similar progression may apply to Massachusetts schools. Should that be the case, then by the 2014 deadline, 1,759 out of 1,898 schools will have failed to make AYP and will be subject to negative sanctions through either the state or the federal accountability systems.

What does this mean for a typical elementary school? For any school there are eighteen opportunities to fail to make AYP, as the following formula illustrates:

$$(\text{Aggregate Score} + 8 \text{ subgroup scores}) \times 2 \text{ (ELA and Math)} = 18 \text{ AYP scores}$$

The eight subgroups are English language learners, students with disabilities, high poverty students, and the five racial categories: African-American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native American.

If a school fails to make AYP in one area in Cycle 2, e.g. ELL students, but makes AYP for this subgroup in Cycle 3, but fails for another subgroup, then the school still fails to make AYP.

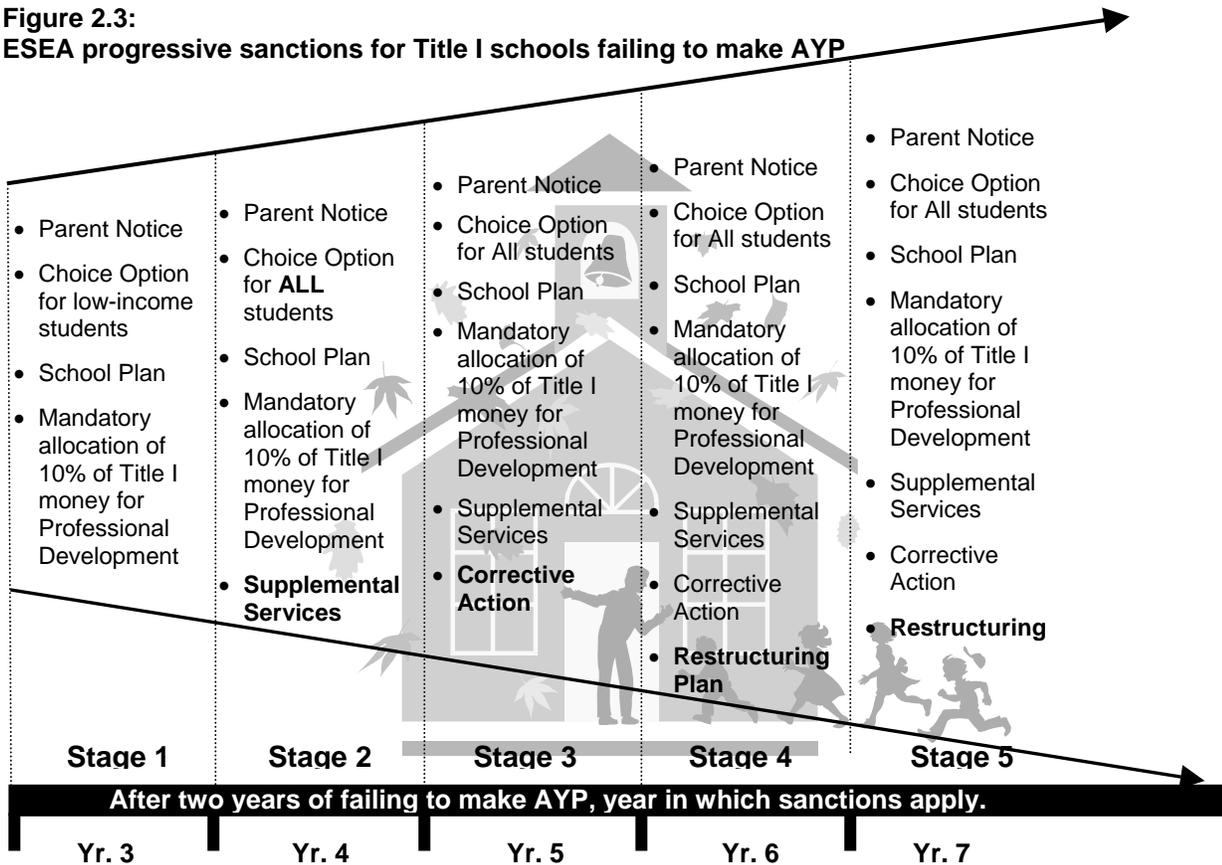
Whether such negative labeling will be politically acceptable is yet to be determined.

**STATUS OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS**

As of the printing of this handbook,

- In December 2002, the DOE identified 208 *Schools In Need of Improvement* based on their Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CPI compared to their AYP targets for ELA and Mathematics.
- Stage 2 sanctions have been imposed on 101 Title I schools to date (see Figure 2.3).
- In December 2003, based on mid-Cycle 3 determinations, 38 schools from the original list did not make AYP targets in at least one area and moved to the *Corrective Action* stage of ESEA sanctions (see Figure 2.3).
- In 2003, 52% of 1,608 schools in Massachusetts reached their ELA and Math AYP targets for all sub-groups and in the aggregate. Some schools (290) with small student populations were not counted;

**Figure 2.3:**  
**ESEA progressive sanctions for Title I schools failing to make AYP**



**SANCTIONS AND REWARDS FOR SCHOOLS**

The new ESEA provisions expand the accountability requirements that existed since the law’s reauthorization in 1994; those sanctions referred only to Title I students. Prior to the 2002 ESEA reauthorization, Title I students were required to meet annual yearly progress as defined by scores on standardized tests. The 2002 version of ESEA applies this concept to all students in all schools in the state – regardless of Title I status. This annual English and mathematics testing mandate is required to measure progress and establish an incremental set of sanctions that will be applied to both Title I schools and Title I districts that repeatedly fail to achieve improvement targets.

A school that does not make its improvement target in any one of the listed student sub-groups will be identified as a school *in need of improvement*. Title I schools – defined as schools receiving Title I funding for either target assistance or schoolwide programs – will be subjected to increasing requirements and control as the number of years the school does not make AYP increases.

**Figure 2.4: ESEA terminology related to progressive sanctions**

<i>Term</i>	<i>Explanation (USDOE, 2002)</i>
<i>Choice Option</i>	Students in schools identified for improvement must be given the option to transfer to another public school within the district that has not been identified for improvement, with transportation provided.
<i>Professional Development</i>	Schools identified for improvement must spend at least 10 percent of their Title I, Part A funds on professional development for the school’s teachers and principal that directly addresses the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified for improvement.
<i>Supplemental Education Services</i>	Students from low-income families must be given the option to use Title I funds to obtain supplemental educational services from a public- or private-sector provider, including faith-based organizations, selected from a list of providers approved by the state.
<i>Corrective Action</i>	Corrective actions must include at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacing school staff</li> <li>• Implementing a new curriculum – with appropriate professional development. Both curricula and professional development must use materials and training from <i>scientifically-based research</i>.</li> <li>• Decreasing management authority at the school level</li> <li>• Appointing an outside expert to advise the school</li> <li>• Extending the school day or year or reorganizing the school internally</li> </ul>
<i>Restructuring</i>	Restructuring may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reopening the school as a charter school</li> <li>• Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make adequate progress</li> <li>• Turning over school operations either to the state or to a private company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness</li> </ul>

Non-Title I schools that fail to make AYP are not subject to any consequences under ESEA. However, these schools may be sanctioned through the Massachusetts accountability system. Title I schools, however, are subject to progressive negative consequences for their failure to continuously achieve AYP (see Figure 2.4).

Two federal programs recognize schools that are successful in improving the test scores of students and/or have made substantial progress in reducing the achievement gap among sub-groups of students. The Title I Distinguished Schools Recognition Program and the Blue Ribbon Schools Program are long-standing federal school recognition programs that have revised their requirements to be consistent with the ESEA accountability program.

***Notes***

**SECTION 3:  
MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL PERFORMANCE RATING PROCESS (SPRP)**

**DESCRIPTION**

The Massachusetts School Accountability System (MassSAS), which was implemented prior to the reauthorization of the ESEA, was originally designed to meet two requirements of the MERA. First, the DOE must evaluate whether all schools are making progress in meeting the standards established by the BOE. Second, the DOE must identify schools that are not meeting expectations and those that are performing and/or improving at a high level. In particular, the system implements the MERA provision that the BOE determine whether a school with low performance is *underperforming* or *chronically underperforming*.

	Accountability Systems	
	Massachusetts	Federal
School Accountability	SPRP Panel Review	Proficiency for All AYP Gap Analysis
State Accountability		State Sanctions

**Figure 3.1: MCAS Mid-cycle and Cycle Reporting Years**  
School Performance Rating System is based on the average of two years of MCAS compared to the next two-year average with a mid-cycle report in the intervening year.

	Cycle Rating based on average scores from test administration years	Compared to Cycle Rating Year	Cycle Report Year	Mid-Cycle Report
Baseline	1998			
Cycle 1	1999 & 2000	1998	2001	2000
Cycle 2	2001 & 2002	1999-2000	2002	NA
Cycle 3	2003 & 2004	2001-2002	2004	2003
Cycle 4	2005 & 2006	2003-2004	2006	2005
Cycle 5	2007 & 2008	2005-2006	2008	2007
Cycle 6	2009 & 2010	2007-2008	2010	2009
Cycle 7	2011 & 2012	2009-2010	2012	2011
Cycle 8	2013 & 2014	2011-2012	2014	2013

- To meet these requirements, the DOE began rating schools in 2000 based on their MCAS performance. The following sets of school ratings have been completed:
- Mid-cycle ratings in 2000 (1999 MCAS scores compared to a 1998 baseline)
  - Cycle 1 final ratings in 2001(Average of 1999 and 2000 scores compared to 1998)
  - Cycle 2 ratings in 2002 (average of 2001 and 2002 scores compared to the average of the 1999 and 2000 as the baseline)
  - Mid-cycle 3 ratings in 2003 (2003 scores compared to the average of 2001 and 2002 baseline)
  - Cycle 3 ratings will be issued in 2004 (average of the 2003 and 2004 scores compared to the average of 2001 and 2002 baseline)

This pattern of ratings will continue through 2014 when ALL students are to be *proficient*. Figure 3.1 presents a schedule through that date.

Unfortunately, for those trying to understand how this rating process affects their school, the DOE has revised the SPRP in each of the three rating cycles. Cycle 2 ratings began to incorporate changes to make the Massachusetts accountability system compatible with the ESEA requirements. In particular, the Proficiency Index was developed to support the ESEA goal of all students proficient by 2014.

Cycle 3 ratings, including the mid-cycle AYP determinations issued in 2003, incorporated several changes:

- CPI includes scores from students who took the MCAS Alternative Assessment, matched to the regular MCAS performance categories
- Each school received one rating in each content area; all ELA and math scores across all tested grades were combined into an ELA and a math CPI.
- AYP determinations were calculated for each sub-group.

To “make AYP” in a content area,

- The MCAS participation rate must be 95% or above and
- the CPI must be greater than the state targets of 75.6 in ELA and 60.8 in Math

**OR**

- the CPI must be 2/3 of the two-year Cycle 3 improvement target, attendance rate of 92% or 1% improvement, and class of 2003 Competency Determination rate must be at or above 70%.

**Acronyms and Meanings:**

*AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress*

*CPI: Composite Proficiency Index*

*ELA: English language arts*

*MassSAS: Massachusetts School  
Accountability System*

*MCAS: Massachusetts  
Comprehensive Assessment  
System*

*SPRP: School Performance Rating  
Process*

Cycle 3 performance and improvement ratings will be issued in 2004.

#### **FOUR-STEP SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS**

The Massachusetts school accountability system uses a *tiered* approach that first rates all schools and then uses the ratings to identify schools for additional review. As shown in Figure 3.2, the School Performance Rating System includes the following four steps:

##### **Step 1 School Performance Rating Process (SPRP)**

All schools are rated based on the aggregate scores from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Each school receives a CPI (see Figure 3.3) and an improvement target based on the CPI (see Figure 3.4). In addition, schools are rated based on their attaining their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for each identified group of students.

##### **Step 2 School Panel Reviews**

Based on DOE established criteria, some schools will go through a school panel review process which is focused primarily on the adequacy of school improvement planning. There is a 1.5-day site visit to the school and the district. This will result in a designation as either *underperforming* or *not underperforming*.

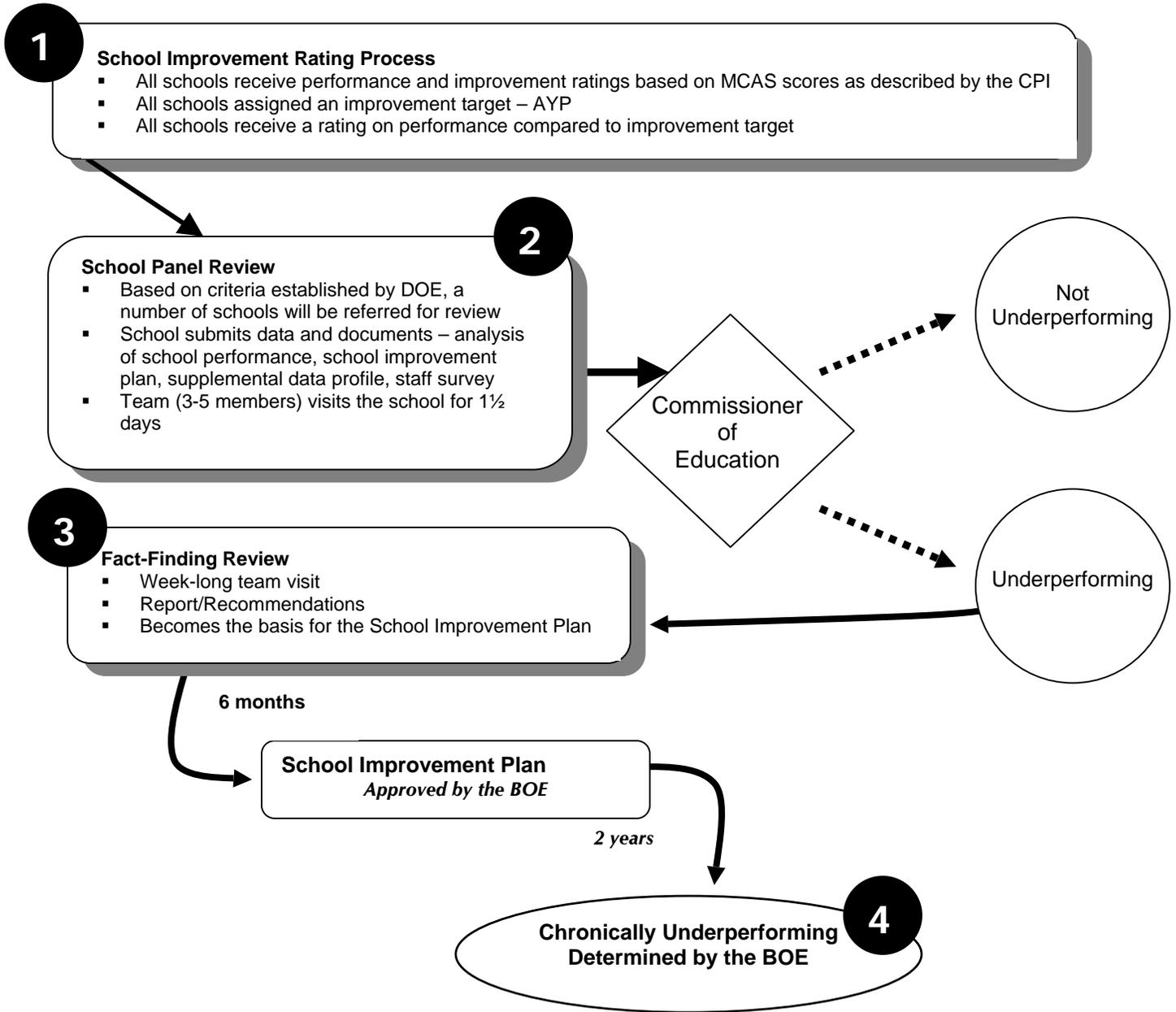
##### **Step 3 Fact-Finding Review**

Schools designated as *underperforming* will go through a week-long fact finding review. Within six months of the review, the school must create a school improvement plan that must be approved by the state BOE.

##### **Step 4 Determination of Chronic Underperformance**

After two years of implementing the school improvement plan, the BOE will determine if there is improvement or *chronic underperformance*.

Figure 3.2: Four-Step School Accountability Process as Applied to All Massachusetts Schools.



**EXPLANATION OF COMPOSITE PROFICIENCY INDEX (CPI) AND ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)**

The CPI is a statistic created by the DOE to judge whether a school (or district) has made AYP toward the goal of all students achieving proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year. The CPI methodology assigns a point value to the MCAS performance categories (see Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3: CPI Methodology**

Scoring Category	Points/student in scoring category
Advanced/Proficient (240-280)	100 Points
Needs Improvement – High (230-238)	75 Points
Needs Improvement – Low (220-228)	50 Points
Warning/Failure – High (210-218)	25 Points
Warning/Failure - Low (200-208)	0 Points

The total number of points is added and divided by the number of students to calculate the school's CPI. If all students are proficient, each will receive 100 points and the CPI will be 100. This methodology will measure improvement made by all students and the use of five categories will give schools credit for improvement in 10-point increments.

**HOW IS THE AYP IMPROVEMENT TARGET DETERMINED?**

The ESEA requirement that all students will be proficient by 2014 translates to all schools achieving a CPI of 100 by that date. A school's current CPI can be subtracted from 100 to determine what the total increase in CPI is that a school must accomplish. That increase can be divided by the number of years between now and 2014 to arrive at the AYP target (see Figure 3.4). For example,

**Figure 3.4: Determining Adequate Yearly Progress**

Score	Points (P)	Number of Students (N)	P x N =	CPI
Proficient or Advanced	100	9	900	
Needs Improvement - High	75	18	1350	
Needs Improvement – Low	50	32	1600	
Warn/Fail – High	25	36	900	
Warn/Fail – Low	0	6	0	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>4750</b>	<b>47.5</b>

Perhaps more important, each school is rated for its improvement relative to its annual target for all students and for each of the designated sub-groups of students. Figure 3.5 illustrates the assigned improvement ratings based on the CPI.

**Figure 3.5: School Improvement Ratings**  
School Improvement Rating depends on its CPI improvement.

Improvement Ratings	CPI Range
Above Target	Target +2.6 or more
On Target	Target +2.5
Improved Below Target	Above Baseline but below Target +2.5
No Change	Baseline +2.5
Declined	More than 2.6 below Baseline

**Step 1**  
**All Schools Rated**

Under the Massachusetts School Accountability System, all schools are rated based on their MCAS performance and on their improvement compared to a baseline in two-year cycles. The DOE conducts annual mid-cycle ratings, using an improvement expectation of 2/3 of the two-year AYP target in order to meet ESEA requirements. In Cycle 2, and in subsequent cycles, both baseline and comparison MCAS scores are computed using a two-year average. Performance ratings for the two-year MCAS average CPI are illustrated in Figure 3.6.

<b>Performance Ratings</b>	<b>CPI Range</b>
Very High	90-100
High	80-89.9
Moderate	70-79.9
Low	60-69.9
Very Low	40-59.9
Critically Low	0-39.9

The school ratings are used to identify both schools that may need intervention and those that are exemplary. All schools whose performance ratings are *Low*, *Very Low* and *Critically Low* are to be given priority for state support. Those schools with the lowest performance and that show no change or a decline in their CPI as compared to the previous cycle are eligible for Step 2.

**SANCTIONS**

- All schools are rated and are labeled from **Very High to Critically Low** (see Fig. 3.6) for performance and in one of five categories relative to their improvement target.
- Some schools with low performance and little or no improvement in MCAS scores may be selected for a School Panel Review (Step 2) to determine whether the school is underperforming.
- Each year, the DOE determines what criteria will be used to select schools for a panel review. Thus far, the actual school selection process has been somewhat arbitrary. Currently, the DOE intends to conduct a panel review for all schools who have reached the “Corrective Action” stage.

**REWARDS**

- Schools with *significant improvement* in their MCAS performance are eligible to apply for the DOE’s exemplary schools program and are designated as a *Commonwealth Compass School*. The DOE selects a number of Compass Schools each year for recognition and requires those selected to disseminate information on the programs and practices that produced their MCAS success.
- Eligible schools must complete a School Leadership Questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire responses and additional criteria determined by the DOE, schools will be selected to participate in a School Panel Review to identify which of the applicants will become Compass Schools.

**Step 2**  
**School Panel Review**

Based on the performance and improvement ratings, the DOE selects a number of “Schools Referred for Review.” This selection is based on criteria established by the DOE and the number of schools referred will depend, in part, on the capacity of the DOE to conduct the reviews.

Therefore, not every eligible school will be referred for a School Panel Review.

The panel review process includes the following components. [Appendix C contains a description of the DOE Panel Review Process.]

- A survey of the school’s staff
- Collection of documents and additional data by the DOE; these may include a staffing report with teacher qualifications (certifications, course of study, experience) and assignments, the School Improvement Plan, and an analysis of the school’s performance
- A DOE analysis of data such as attendance, dropout rate, and suspensions

- A 1.5-day visit by a panel that may include practitioners, parents, members of the public, other education professionals, as well as a DOE staff member who serves as a coordinator.

The visit by the panel review team will consist of interviews with staff, students and parents, classroom observations, focus groups and review of documents.

The panel review report uses the information collected during this process to address two questions:

1. *Does the school appear to have a sound plan for improving student performance?*
2. *Do the conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?*

The Commissioner of Education determines, based on the panel review report, if the school should be declared underperforming. Complete Panel Review reports are available from the DOE Web site at [www.doe.mass.edu/ata](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ata).

The Panel Review for schools that are candidates for the Commonwealth Compass Schools Recognition Program focuses on the following two questions:

1. *Is this school using effective improvement initiatives that could be replicated in other similarly profiled schools?*
2. *Are the conditions in place for this school to serve as a model of effective practices and successful improvement initiatives?*

### **SANCTIONS**

If the Commissioner finds the school is *underperforming*, a fact-finding team will visit the school and prepare a report examining the causes for underperformance.

### **REWARDS**

The Commissioner may identify up to 16 schools as Compass Schools each year. These schools will receive a certificate and a banner and participate in a recognition event. During their year as Compass Schools, they will participate in a number of dissemination activities, including a conference, two school-site events, regional workshops and other Department projects. The school will receive \$10,000 from the DOE to support Compass School activities. [At least two other school recognition programs exist – Vanguard Schools and Edgerly School Leadership Awards. Both are based on MCAS scores. For an analysis of these programs go to [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org).]

### **Step 3**

#### ***Fact-Finding Review and School Improvement Plan***

After a school is declared *underperforming*, a fact-finding team conducts a “comprehensive evaluation of the school during an on-site inspection that will evaluate the quality of the education provided by the school and identify key shortcomings.” The report is submitted to the Commissioner of Education. (Fact-finding reports are available on the DOE Web site at [www.doe.mass.edu/ata](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ata).)

In the six months after the fact-finding report is submitted to the DOE, the school must develop a two-year improvement plan that addresses the conclusions of the fact-finding report. Currently, underperforming schools participate in the DOE's improvement planning through the Performance Improvement Mapping Process (PIMP). (See Appendix D for the DOE's PIMP rubric.) The goal of PIMP is to produce a school improvement plan that will be reviewed by the DOE and approved by the

BOE. However, a careful review of PIMP protocols and manuals and interviews with school-based educators confirm that this is a “score improvement” rather than a “school improvement” process.

The school improvement plan, which may be developed using any meaningful process decided upon at the school or district level, will be the basis for the decision on *chronic underperformance*.

**SANCTIONS**

- School staff must develop a school improvement plan to address the issues included in the fact-finding report.

**Step 4**  
**Determination of Chronic Underperformance**

Two years after the improvement plan is approved, the school will be reviewed to determine if it has met its improvement

goals. Based on this review, the BOE will determine if the school should be declared *chronically underperforming*.

**SANCTIONS**

The MERA provides the following list of sanctions that may be applied to *chronically underperforming* schools:

- Remove the principal
- Appoint a new principal with “extraordinary powers”
- Provide funds to increase salaries up to 10% based on number of low-income students
- Implement “good cause” standard for dismissal of teachers
- Equalize spending across schools in the district
- Implement “other actions determined by the BOE, to be reasonably calculated to increase the number of students who...satisfy the student performance standards”

**How Do the State and Federal Accountability Systems Interact to Affect Schools in Massachusetts?**

The state accountability programs have been and will continue to be revised to reflect the federal requirements. At this point, as Figure 3.7 illustrates, the language and the concepts of the ESEA accountability provisions have been incorporated into the MassSAS.

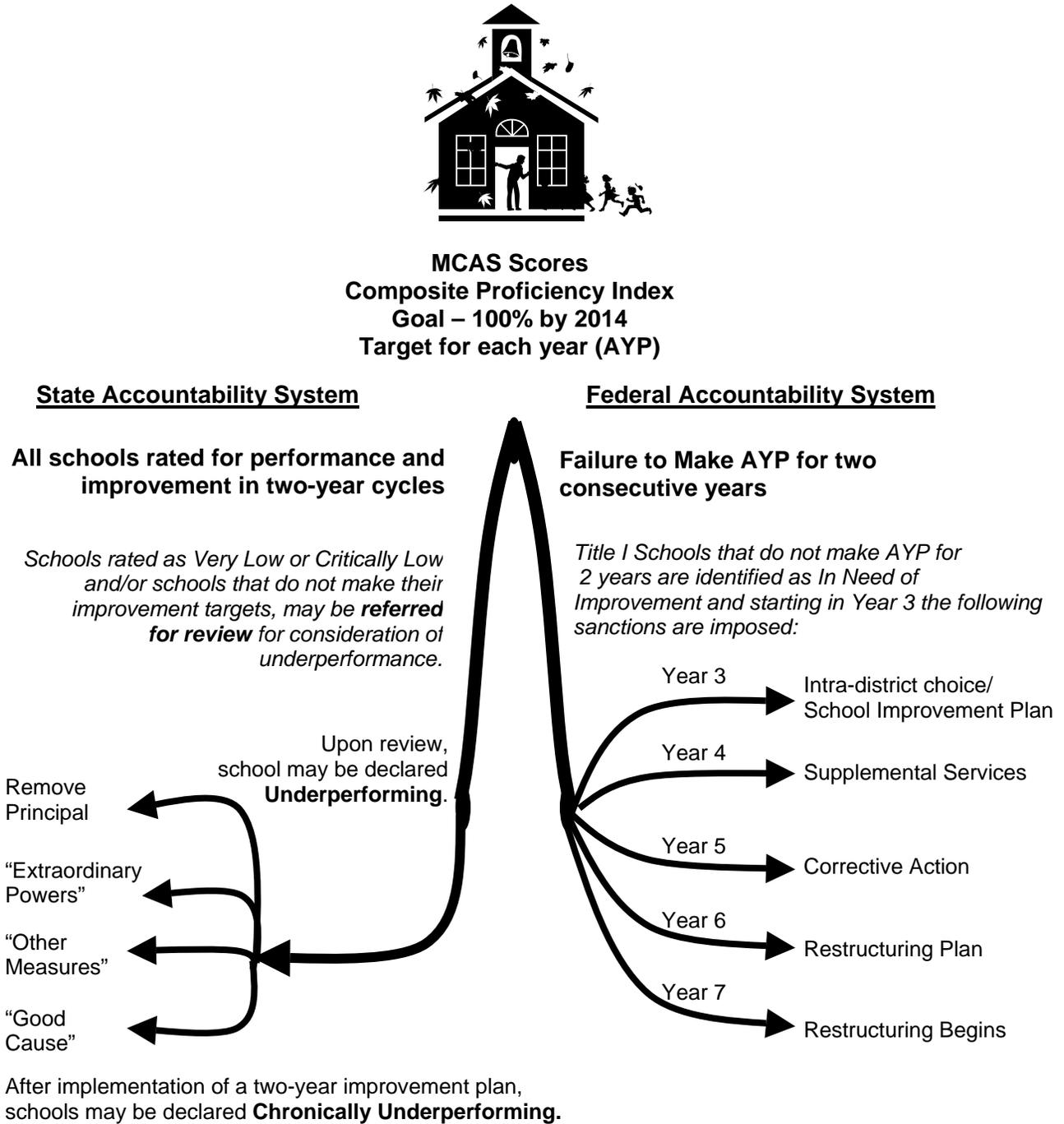
**Figure 3.7: Integration of Massachusetts and Federal Accountability Systems**

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS	
Massachusetts	Federal
<i>Education Reform Act</i>	<i>Elementary &amp; Secondary Education Act</i>
Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) ELA and math test results used to determine:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Students <i>Proficient</i> by 2014</li> <li>• Gap Analysis/Achievement Gap</li> <li>• Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</li> <li>• Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)</li> </ul>	

The MassSAS is based on the *proficiency* goal of the ESEA. The protocols have been created to focus on whether schools and districts are meeting annual improvement targets for all students. The CPI statistic is the basis for both Massachusetts and

ESEA accountability decisions. The ESEA approach to identifying inadequate school achievement and improvement is now used by the Massachusetts school and district accountability system. However, the sanctions associated with each separate component continue to apply.

**Figure 3.8: State and Federal accountability systems with resulting sanctions for failure to move students toward proficiency.**



As Figure 3.8 illustrates, the two accountability systems – state and federal – both start with the same statistics and analysis. Both use MCAS scores to calculate the Composite Proficiency Index used to

measure progress toward the goal of 100% Proficient by 2014. However, federal and state laws specify different approaches to imposing accountability on schools.

The federal ESEA accountability system focuses on those schools that fail to make AYP; no action is taken against any school until there are two consecutive years of failing to make AYP. At this point, those schools are automatically identified as “In Need of Improvement.” For each year thereafter that a Title 1 school continues to fail to “make AYP,” additional sanctions are imposed, eventually leading to restructuring that could include state takeover, private management, conversion to a charter school or some other approach.

In the Massachusetts accountability system, the MERA requires the DOE to determine, on the basis of an annual evaluation, whether schools are “underperforming” or “chronically underperforming.” To conduct the “annual evaluation,” the Massachusetts accountability system uses the ESEA MCAS and AYP statistics and rates all schools for performance on a scale ranging from *very high* to *critically low* in two-year cycles and provides an annual AYP determination.

Once all schools have been rated, the DOE selects a small number of eligible schools for further review. Criteria for being “referred for review” are determined by the DOE; there is no automatic selection. Under the Massachusetts accountability system, unlike the ESEA, no action is taken against any school until this additional review is completed. The DOE review focuses on evaluating the school’s improvement efforts and whether those efforts are likely to be implemented successfully.

On the basis of this review, the Commissioner makes a judgment as to whether the school is “Underperforming;” schools found to be underperforming undergo additional review, resulting in a two-year school improvement plan. After two years of implementing the plan, the BOE, after review, determines whether the school is “Chronically Underperforming”. At that point, sanctions similar to those specified by ESEA for restructuring may apply.

Thus, accountability for Massachusetts schools includes the following provisions:

- ◆ The standard for acceptable performance is making AYP toward the goal of all students proficient by 2014.
- ◆ Those schools that do not make sufficient annual progress will be subject to the sanctions established by either ESEA for Title 1 schools and/or the MERA accountability provisions which apply to all Massachusetts schools.
- ◆ ESEA sanctions are imposed automatically based on MCAS statistics while, under MERA, the judgment of the Commissioner and the BOE determine whether any sanctions are imposed.

The fact that the two accountability systems rely initially on the same statistics should, in theory, result in some convergence in the schools that are identified. However, the differences in the two systems make it inevitable that some schools will be involved in one but not the other and some will be involved in both.

Figure 3.9 illustrates how schools in Massachusetts are affected by the accountability system.

- Every school in the state is rated using the AYP framework based on the CPI. By 2005-2006, all students in grades 3-8 must be tested annually in English language arts and mathematics. Students must be tested in these two areas once during grades 9-10. By 2007-2008, all students must be tested in science once in grades 3-5, 6-9 and 10-12.
- Based on those ratings, schools that do not make AYP will be identified as *in need of improvement*.

- Some schools will be *Referred for Review*. Some of these will have been identified as *in need of improvement*; some may not have been.
- Some of the schools *Referred for Review* will be *underperforming*.
- Some of the underperforming schools will be chronically underperforming. *Chronically underperforming* schools may or not be also *in need of improvement*.
- Some of the schools *in need of improvement* may move toward restructuring.

### **Consolidation of Accountability with EQA**

In January 2001, the responsibility and funding for implementation of all accountability statutes was assigned to a newly created Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) which is “within but not subject to the control” of the DOE. EQA reports to the Education Management Audit Council (EMAC), a five-member board that from its inception through at least June 2004 was chaired by James Peyser, who served concurrently as Chairperson of the BOE. (See M.G.L., Chapter 15, Section 55A.) The creation of an “independent, single-purpose oversight body” was seen to be necessary to keep schools, districts, the DOE and the legislature “honest” with regard to accountability.

In its first year of operation, EQA focused on instituting a district performance evaluation process. While the EQA office is developing capacity, the school accountability programs, including charter schools, continue to be operated by the DOE with funding provided by EQA.

Current plans call for a transition of the school accountability operation to EQA. In April 2004, EMAC and the DOE postponed the transition that was scheduled to begin in the 2004-05 school year. Whenever it happens, the DOE will continue to provide data analysis to support the school and district evaluations and will be responsible for technical assistance to schools and districts.

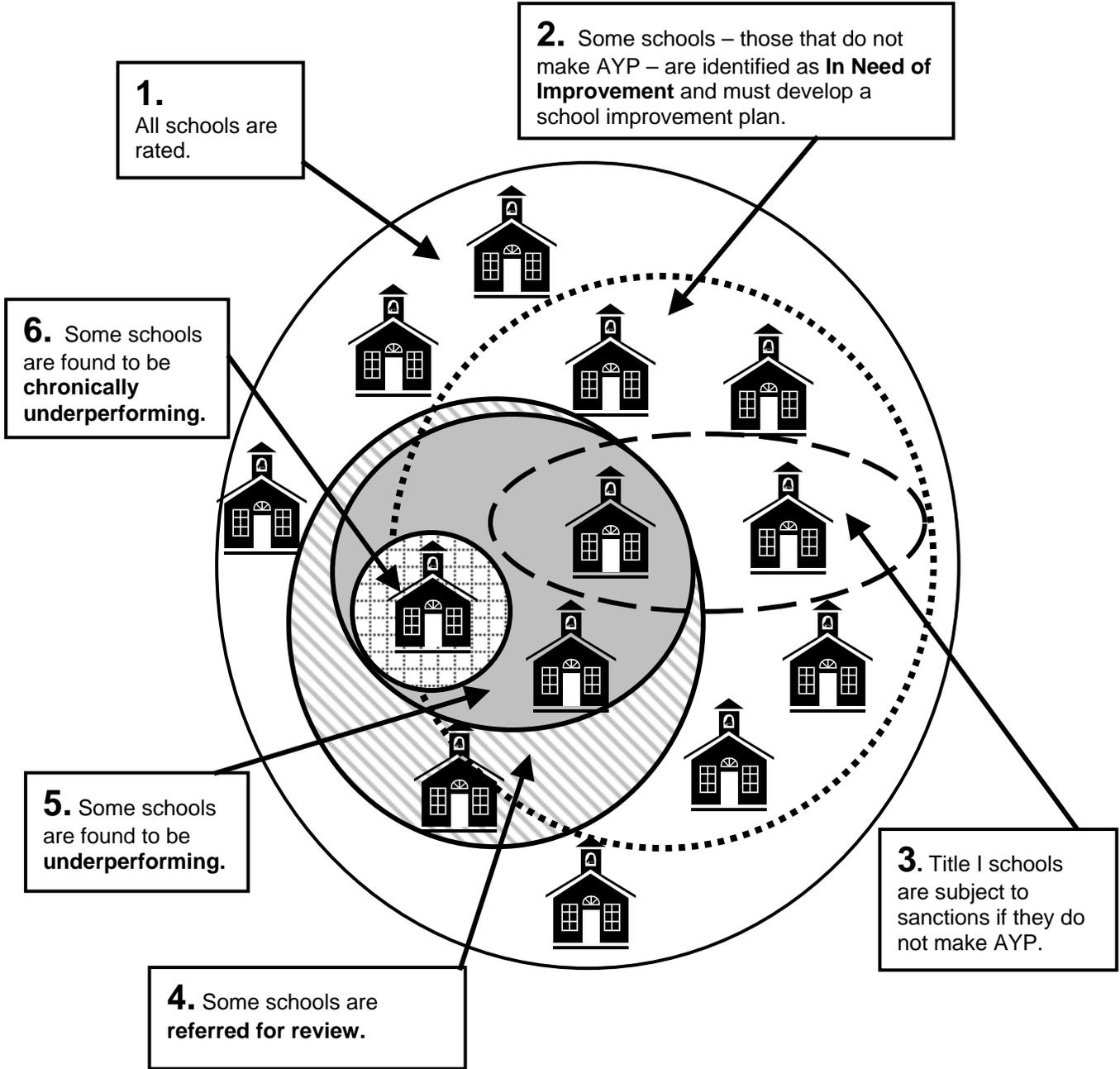
The transfer of accountability operations will likely result in further changes to the accountability protocols. For example,

- The DOE utilizes practitioners to staff the review teams for school panel reviews, while EQA uses staff examiners to conduct district evaluations. These two approaches will need to be reconciled.
- Currently, the Commissioner of Education determines whether a school referred for review is underperforming. After the transfer, it is possible that the EMAC will make that determination.

Several other issues will likely emerge as the need for schools and district reviews and technical assistance increases. In particular, the capacity of DOE and EQA to provide the evaluation and technical assistance required by the Massachusetts and ESEA accountability programs is questionable.

**Figure 3.9: Massachusetts School Rating**

School rating system for all Massachusetts public schools and implications for those failing to achieve AYP with sanctions for Title I schools



*Notes*

## SECTION 4: PREPARING FOR A SCHOOL PANEL REVIEW

What to do when your school is *Referred for Review*

**Or** *Identified as in need of improvement*

**Or** *Declared underperforming*

Your school has just been informed it is being *Referred for Review* or is *In Need of Improvement* or will be visited by the *School Panel Review Team* or a school improvement plan must be prepared.

Over 250 schools in Massachusetts have already been in this situation and the likelihood is that many more will undergo the experience over the next few years as the provisions of the ESEA and the Massachusetts District Performance Evaluation are implemented. In particular, the requirement that schools achieve the AYP target for each of the sub-groups of students enrolled in the school will involve many more Massachusetts schools being placed in a negative light through either the state or federal accountability system.

There are some overall principles that should guide educators' involvement. As the accountability systems are currently designed, there is no inclusion of educators' voices. In any school, educators are well aware of the challenges they face and the problems they have in addressing them.

Professional responsibility and accountability require educators to be vigilant when assessing and reporting student performance. Because the current accountability systems are so overly reliant upon MCAS, reviewers fail to see other evidence of student achievement. School and district educators have a responsibility to ensure that the "whole picture" is presented when they are reviewed.

At the same time, the school and district educators and policymakers are obligated to ensure that:

- the local curricula are aligned with the learning standards of the curriculum frameworks,
- textbooks and other instructional materials are compatible with the frameworks,
- classroom lessons are standards-based,
- multiple measures of assessment provide data to improve teaching and learning,
- benchmarked assessments are in place that inform teachers and administrators about individual student progress toward proficiency,
- parents are actively engaged with the school as a partner in their child's education,
- the school is a safe and healthy environment in which uninterrupted teaching and learning are the focus, and
- highly quality district-based professional development is provided and answers the fundamental question, "*What do our educators need to know and be able to do to ensure that all of our students move toward proficiency?*"

Therefore, educators need to define a constructive role for themselves that meets their needs and the needs of the students in the school. Your school's staff should understand the implications of the six points made below.

### **Example from The Field**

*In one Massachusetts school that had been Referred for Review, teachers prepared a Power Point presentation about the school and presented it to the panel review team.*

*In another instance, the faculty prepared a written response to each report issued by the DOE team – panel review report, fact finding, etc., and submitted it to the DOE.*

**1. Understand what is important about school improvement.**

Approach the school panel review from a position of knowledge about not only your school, but what researchers say makes schools effective: look at the conditions outlined in Figure 1.2.

Marzano, in analyzing the research on high performing schools, found that there were five essential conditions that made a significant positive difference; he ranks them in order of their importance. (see Figure 4.1):

- A guaranteed and viable curriculum: all students learn the same things supported by curriculum, instruction and assessment practices.
- Challenging goals and effective feedback: high expectations are set for all students and assessments are used to monitor progress and identify areas for remediation.
- Parental and community involvement: parents and the community are engaged with the school working in partnership supporting conditions for teaching and learning.
- Safe and orderly school: the school climate and culture are conducive for teaching and learning to be the central focus of the school.
- Collegiality and professionalism: instructional leadership is found among the school staff who work collegially toward attaining shared goals.

**Figure 4.1**  
**Marzano’s Comparison of High Performing School-Level Factors across Researchers**

The School-Level Factors	Rank*	Marzano	Scheerens and Bosker	Sammons	Levine and Lezotte	Edmonds
Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	1	Opportunity to Learn	Content Coverage	Concentration on Teaching and Learning	Focus on Central Learning Skills	Emphasis on Basic Skill Acquisition
		Time	Time			
Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback	2	Monitoring	Monitoring	High Expectations	High Expectations and Requirements	High Expectations for Student Success
		Pressure to Achieve	Pressure to Achieve	Monitoring Progress	Appropriate Monitoring	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
Parental and Community Involvement	3	Parental Involvement	Parental Involvement	Home-School Partnership	Salient Parental Involvement	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4	School Climate	School Climate	A Learning Environment	Productive Climate and Culture	Safe and Orderly Atmosphere Conducive to Learning
				Positive Reinforcement		
				Pupil Rights and Expectations		

The School-Level Factors	Rank*	Marzano	Scheerens and Bosker	Sammons	Levine and Lezotte	Edmonds
Collegiality and Professionalism	5	Leadership	Leadership	Professional Leadership	Strong Leadership	Strong Administrative Leadership
				Shared Vision and Goals		
		Cooperation	Cooperation	A Learning Organization	Practice-Oriented Staff Development	

\* Author has ranked these factors by order of impact on student achievement. Marzano (2003).

Do these conditions exist in your school? If not, why not? If so, how do you know that they exist? What is the evidence?

**2. Understand the use of data.**

Much has been made of “data-driven” decision-making. It is important to know what is and is not important. Schmoker (2003) argues that:

*The most important school improvement processes do not require sophisticated data analysis or special expertise. Teachers themselves can easily learn to conduct the analyses that will have the most significant impact on teaching and achievement.*

*The extended, district-level analyses and correlational studies some districts conduct can be fascinating stuff; they can even reveal opportunities for improvement. But they can also divert us from the primary purpose of analyzing data: improving instruction to achieve greater student success. Over-analysis can contribute to overload — the propensity to create long, detailed, "comprehensive" improvement plans and documents that few read or remember. Because we gather so much data and because they reveal so many opportunities for improvement, we set too many goals and launch too many initiatives, overtaxing our teachers and our systems.*

Remember, the focus on data analysis should be teaching and learning and improved student achievement. If the school team believes that changing your curriculum is an essential improvement goal, answer the questions:

- Why?
- What is it about the current curriculum that is inadequate?
- How do we know this?
- Have we asked classroom teachers about the success or failure of their students in each subject?
- Have they determined the strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum?
- What is the data that supports our decision-making?

By answering such questions, the essential data will be identified and analyzed and time will not be wasted on data – that while interesting – does not contribute to the decision making process.

**3. Be informed about the details of the accountability process, both at the beginning and as it unfolds.**

As the first part of this handbook has shown, the accountability landscape is complicated; the possibility of misinformation is high.

The whole faculty must understand how the school was “selected” to participate in the accountability process, what the process will entail, what they will need to do and what the results might be. It should not be assumed that the accountability agency (DOE or EQA) will provide this information as part of the review process. Nor should educators necessarily rely on school administrators to disseminate this information because they may be as much in the dark as anyone else.

Further, the accountability systems are fluid and changes may well be made from what is described in this handbook. Educators should ask for explanations and documents outlining the process and for more information about any requirements.

As the school moves through the accountability process, educators should read, review and respond to all reports from the state inspectors. Much of the Massachusetts accountability process involves a review of the school by external reviewers and the preparation of a report of their findings. The school staff need to know what conclusions have been drawn about the school and its staff and the basis for each conclusion. The school staff should react in writing to any component of the report which they believe incomplete, inaccurate or misguided.

Although the protocol of the accountability process does not include this element, a school’s faculty should consider preparing a response or its own analysis for any stage of the accountability process. The material can be sent directly to the DOE (or the BOE) or provided to members of the site review team. In this way, the faculty can establish a meaningful and professional role in the school improvement process.

One component of the DOE’s protocol that must be confronted by the school faculty is *secrecy*. After the DOE has completed a school panel review, an initial report is sent to the principal. Principals are told that they are **NOT to share** the report – this has both a chilling and an isolating effect on the individual responsible for managing the school. In addition, such secrecy is in direct opposition to the effective schools research that clearly points to collaborative problem-solving and decision-making as keys to successful schooling. Principals – who are in the unenviable position of being the first to be fired should the school not improve – should share all reports and engage the faculty in meaningful discussions and strategy sessions about how to improve student achievement. This cannot be done in a vacuum or through a veil of secrecy.

**Example from The Field**

*Teachers in one MA school formed a faculty steering committee to organize faculty input into the accountability process.*

**4. Acknowledge the role of test-based accountability.**

Student MCAS performance is at the core of the state and federal accountability systems in Massachusetts. Regardless of their disagreement with the use of high stakes testing, educators need to recognize the central role MCAS plays. As Mike Schmoker (2000) advises, “Demystify and promote a right regard for state and standardized tests – like it or not state assessments establish the context for improvement.”

When your school has been identified for state examination, it is not the time to debate the unfairness of the system (which much of it is) or, in particular, its reliance on standardized test results.

At the same time, having school-based benchmarks designed to measure student mastery of the learning standards in the various curriculum frameworks and a range of student work reflecting these benchmarks is a practice that can address issues of student achievement apart from state-mandated testing. This proactive practice puts MCAS in perspective and provides school-based data about actual student performance.

**5. Understand that high standards for all students is a new goal and requires new practices.**

Educators, as well as policy-makers and implementers, need to recognize that the goal of all students' achieving high standards translates into a new challenge for the public education system – “teachers...need to reach larger numbers of students with more demanding content.” (Elmore, 2002a). However, it is not always, or even usually, clear what teachers need to do to accomplish this goal. More important, even when it is clear, educators may well need substantial training to redirect their practice.

*Virtually all schools, no matter what their demographic characteristics or prior performance, must do different things, not just do the same things differently... and these new things require new knowledge and skills.*  
Elmore, 2002a

- The focus of school improvement must be on:
- determining what needs to be changed and
  - how to make the changes happen.

Remember the question that should guide all school-based professional development, “*What do our educators need to know and be able to do to ensure that all our students move toward proficiency?*”

In most low-performing schools, educators realize that their students' performance needs to improve. Educators also recognize that their students come to school with different levels of preparation for learning. The struggle to accomplish the first, given the reality of the latter, is at the center of the challenge that educators face, especially those in urban and rural schools serving a high-poverty population.

However, in part due to the beliefs that underlie most accountability systems, the expression of this struggle is often perceived as *using students' circumstances as an excuse* or *blaming the students for the failure to teach them effectively*. As they work through a school accountability process, educators must be aware that this kind of interpretation does occur.

As a general rule, the question needs to be changed from

*Why can't students learn what we have taught?*

to

*How can we change the way we teach so that all students can learn?*

This should be followed by

*What professional development do we need in order to change our practice?*

## 6. Describe the resources lacking in the school that affect student achievement.

A discussion about accountability should focus on what teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals need to know and be able to do to improve student achievement. Resources in the form of time, materials, professional development and compensation must be directed at low-performing schools to assist them in meeting their established goals. "Accountability cannot mobilize resources that schools do not have." (Elmore, 2002a)

Be prepared to tell examiners the resources that the school does not have that are necessary for all students to be successful. For example, if there are not enough textbooks for each child to have his or her own, say so. If there is a lack of access to instructional technology or if the library books are outdated, say so. State examiners have a narrow focus. The burden is on the school staff to expand that view to include all of the necessary resources that any school should have in order to meet the goals set by the state and federal governments.

### Participation in a School Panel Review Process

The School Panel Review Process (SPRP) has several components that require the direct involvement of educators. Teachers know more about their school than the Panel Review Team can learn in a 1.5-day visit, and they must ensure that their knowledge and expertise is incorporated into the process and the resulting reports. The following are some cautions and suggestions for doing so.

#### 1. Staff Survey

At the beginning of the SPRP, each staff member is asked to complete an anonymous survey. The content of the survey is not exactly the same each year, but, in general, it asks each staff member to identify the barriers to improving student achievement that exist in the school. Usually, there are some questions that require a written response, while others use a scaled response format.

*"In teacher focus groups, interviews and classroom observations, it became evident to the Panel that the school's staff agrees with the identified needs and the plans developed to address them. Practices observed in classroom visits reflect the goals of the School Improvement Plan and demonstrate that teachers are implementing initiatives. There are plenty of motivational, supportive and responsive cues from teachers and leaders in their effort to reach students. Academic games, such as Daily Oral Language (DOL), serve as vehicles to increase knowledge in a way that excites students to be active learners"*

*DOE School Panel Review Report*

#### Things to consider when completing the survey:

- Although the surveys are anonymous, in that you do not have to sign your name, the content is not confidential. In some instances, a summary of the responses, including the open-ended ones, have been returned to principals who have been able to identify the writer.
- Staff responses are used as data in the Panel Review Report. Many comments are taken as "fact" so that perception becomes reality.
- The survey can be used as an opportunity to state what educators believe they need in order to accomplish the improvement in student achievement that is necessary.

*"In interviews, teachers and parents shared theories and opinions that predominantly target "issues that were beyond their control" as opposed to instructional strategies and classroom practice. Low expectations regarding student achievement are notable among staff. Evidence from the teacher survey and interviews reveal "blame" as the predominant response for poor student performance. During teacher interviews, perceptions of the school's inability to help students achieve were characterized by numerous comments such as the following:*

- *Students come from an under-performing culture.*
- *There is no way they can achieve.*
- *Teaching is not the problem; learning is.*
- *School is not a priority for these kids."*

*DOE School Panel Review Report*

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) requires that all school examiners ask the question “What can we do to help you?” While this question is not asked by the state, educators may use the survey as a chance to answer it anyway.

- Educators should be aware that the DOE tends to view remarks about students’ socioeconomic status, linguistic ability and/or disability as “blaming the kids.” Instead, educators should focus on what they can do to address diverse student needs while holding all responsible for mastering the same learning standards.

### 2. Explaining Staff Absenteeism

Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 (all at the end of this section) provide a means for schools to present information on staff absenteeism. Because this is an area about which the DOE and certain BOE members have been critical, it is advised that schools take the time to complete these forms. If a staff member is absent for an extended period to illness or military service, that is not explained in anything other than a high absentee rate. To be proactive, the school should complete these forms in order to explain legitimate reasons for high rates of staff absenteeism. This may also point out problem areas that need to be dealt with administratively.

#### *Definitions of Staff Attendance Terms:*

- *Professional Day:* Day spent attending any professional development activity including in-district training, conferences, courses; days spent as part of an NEASC or NCATE visiting team.
- *Short-Term Illness:* Days absent from school because of illness; bedside care days for family members.
- *Long-Term Illness:* Time spent out of school due to treatment of serious illness or injury; maternity and/or child-rearing leave.
- *Personal Day:* Day used to conduct personal business that may not be accomplished during the school day, including bereavement days and religious holidays.
- *Court Day:* Days used to serve on a jury or to attend a required court session or legal meeting.
- *Military Service:* Time spent on active duty.
- *Other:* Day spent on another assignment at the request of a superior; day used for association/union business.

### 3. Explaining Staff Education and Experience

A claim often heard is that teachers do not have the content knowledge in the area(s) they teach. According to Education Week (2003) using National Center for Education Statistics data about Massachusetts:

- 15% of elementary, 29% of middle school, and 16% of high school students are taught by a teacher without a major or minor in their subject.
- 21% of elementary, 41% of middle school, and 28% of high schools students are taught by a teacher without BOTH a major AND certification in the subject.

To be proactive, the school team should gather information about the educational background and experience of administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Figures 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 (all at the end of this section) provide the school with a means of presenting this information to the inspection team.

#### 4. School Site Visit of Panel Review Team

The Panel Review team will spend about 1.5 days in the school district. Some of this time will be spent talking to district administrators, observing classes, meeting with small groups of teachers, students and/or parents. Teachers should respond directly and honestly to their questions.

However, having reviewed many of the Panel Review reports, certain topics appear consistently. Educators should know that:

- While the team will observe classes, they are not looking to evaluate any particular teacher. The Panel Review reports can contain some statements about the kinds of instruction the team observed. For example, *“panelist observation of classroom instruction revealed only occasional use of differentiated instruction or other varied teaching strategies.”*
- Since the focus of the Panel Review is on the School Improvement Plan (SIP), the team will ask teachers how much involvement they have had in developing the plan and how knowledgeable they are about its contents. Discrepancies among different staff members’ comments, the staff surveys, and observations will be apparent.
- Team members will have reviewed the staff surveys, the existing SIP, and data about the school – including certification, educational background, and assignment data about staff members. They will have formulated questions based on their review of all this material.
- Teachers should take the opportunity to ask questions of Panel Review Team members, including their own background and experience if it has not been provided. A number of schools have been visited by school panel members with little or no experience working with similar student populations. For example, one urban middle school was visited by educators from suburban, high-income school districts. Be sure to ask such questions as:
  - *What is your education background?*
  - *What is your professional background ?*
  - *What subjects have you taught? To whom? Where?*

If the Panel Review members’ professional experience has only been in upper middle class suburban schools and yours is an urban or rural school, ask:

- *How will you be able to judge our work methods having never experienced teaching in this type of setting?*

Remember, this should be a fair process to everyone – don’t be afraid to ask questions.

- Teachers may wish to prepare their own analysis of the school and its needs and provide it to the Panel Review Team at this point. Some examples would include:
  - SPRP focuses on the instructional strategies that teachers use to address the learning styles and readiness of their students. Explain the strategies used in the school. If there is a plan to broaden teachers’ instructional repertoires through professional development, explain the plan. [See Figure 5.15.]
  - SPRP focuses on the teacher input into the SIP. The school team should ensure that the plan’s development was collaborative and informed by the identified needs of the staff. [See Figure 5.8.]
  - SPRP focuses on data about the school. The school team should know about the staff’s educational background and expertise and connect it to the learning needs of the students. [See Figures 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7.]
- As with responses to the survey questions, educators should be aware that the DOE tends to view remarks about students’ socioeconomic status, linguistic ability and/or disability as “blaming the kids.” Instead, educators should focus on what they can do to address diverse student needs while holding all responsible for mastering the same learning standards.
- Typically the school principal will be given an opportunity to respond to the School Panel Review report. Teachers should ask to be informed when the draft report is available and

prepare a response, either as part of the principal's response or as a separate document that can be sent to the DOE; avoid falling into the "isolation trap" created by the DOE's claim that the draft report should not be shared. It's your report – share it!

**5. Fact-Finding Review**

Schools that are found to be *underperforming* will participate in a *fact-finding review* that is similar to the School Panel Review. The site visit will be longer, the team may be larger and the scope of the inquiry will be broader. However, the same guidelines and suggestions for the School Panel Review above apply to this process.

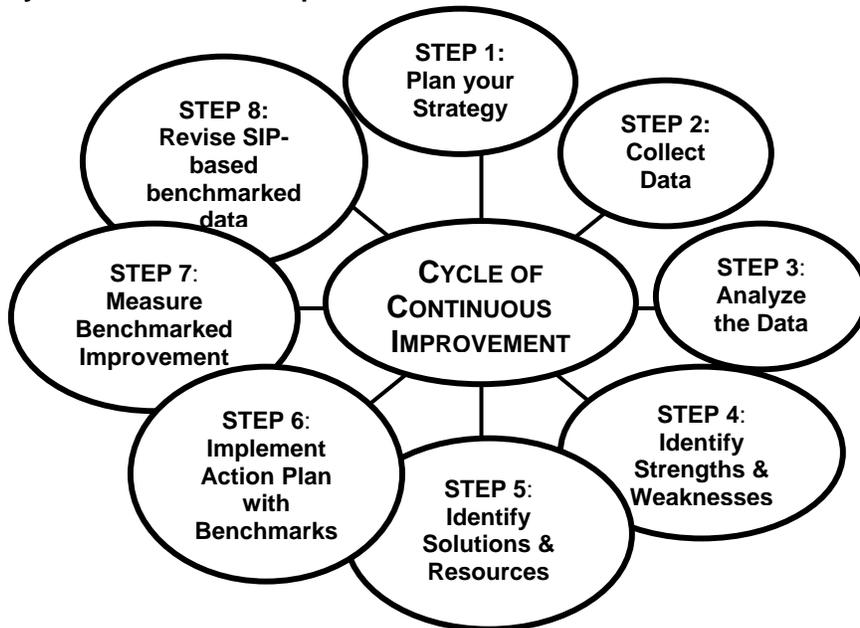
There is one additional guideline for the Fact-finding Review. The report that results from this process will be used to guide development of the School improvement Plan on which the decision of *Chronic Underperformance* will be based.

**6. Development of the School Improvement Plan**

The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1993 requires that all schools have a school improvement plan (SIP). Each School Council, which is advisory to the principal, is charged with the SIP development. One component of the SIP must be the professional development needed by educators within the school to bring the SIP goals to reality. All schools should have such a SIP for the purpose of entering into a continuous improvement cycle – regardless of their "performance" rating by the DOE (see Figure 4.1).

Development of a SIP is required for the schools *In Need of Improvement* as identified by the ESEA requirements, as well as underperforming schools. The process that is explained in Section 4 first focuses on SIP development for all schools and then turns to a SIP specifically designed to address student achievement.

**Figure 4.2: Cycle of Continuous Improvement**



Schools found to be underperforming under MERA must develop a school improvement plan to guide its improvement efforts in the two-year period before the BOE makes a decision on chronic underperformance. The BOE is currently developing its guidelines for determining whether a school is chronically underperforming and expects to make decisions on four schools in the fall of 2004.

The DOE has developed a school improvement planning model, Performance Improvement Mapping Process (PIMP), that many schools found to be underperforming will likely employ. The DOE strongly encourages schools to use this model and, in some instances, district administration has used PIMP in all schools in the district – underperforming or not.

The model is a ten-step process that the DOE describes as “an intensive, inquiry-and evidence-based planning model for very low-performing schools” that “is focused on raising student achievement in ELA and math.” The DOE has designed this process for “use by school leadership teams working with an outside facilitator who is rigorously trained in the model.”

In practice, the PIMP process has produced lengthy, bureaucratic documents that are clearly directed toward raising MCAS scores rather than on the school improvement its rhetoric suggests is its goal. The PIMP work often involves countless hours of staff time, often at the expense of instructional time, to complete worksheets that form the basis of the plan to identify *Student Learning Objectives*, *Instructional Change Objectives*, *Student Learning Benchmarks*, *Instructional Change Objectives*, *Root Causes*, etc.

Although the PIMP framework suggests elements of sound school improvement planning – use of data analysis and a focus on student performance – its implementation often bogs the school improvement team down in bureaucratic minutia that does not produce a clear and shared focus to guide the curriculum and instruction decisions of the whole school staff – a characteristic that the effective schools research and experience finds critical for school improvement.

The PIMP framework is a testament to Schmoker’s (2003) warning that “over-analysis can contribute to overload—the propensity to create long, detailed, ‘comprehensive’ improvement plans and documents that few read or remember. Because we gather so much data and because they reveal so many opportunities for improvement, we set too many goals and launch too many initiatives, overtaxing our teachers and our systems.”

While some schools may end up using PIMP to satisfy state or district requirements, the school team should try to substitute a collaborative, whole staff planning process that results in a clear, straight-forward improvement plan, the goals of which can be internalized and used by the entire school community to make curriculum and instruction decisions. In those instances, where the PIMP model is utilized, the school team will need to translate the PIMP plan to a meaningful, school improvement focused document that can guide the improvement work of the staff. The school improvement plan approach in Section 5 of this handbook provides a guide for this process.

Additional information on PIMP is available at [www.doe.mass.edu/sdi/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sdi/)

**Figure 4.3: Administrator Annual Attendance**

Administrator Absenteeism for Academic Year _____ to _____							
Month	Professional Day	Short-Term Illness	Long-Term Illness	Personal Day	Court Day	Military Service	Other
August							
September							
October							
November							
December							
January							
February							
March							
April							
May							
June							
Totals							

**Figure 4.4: Teacher Annual Attendance**

Teacher Absenteeism for Academic Year _____ to _____							
Month	Professional Day	Short-Term Illness	Long-Term Illness	Personal Day	Court Day	Military Service	Other
August							
September							
October							
November							
December							
January							
February							
March							
April							
May							
June							
Totals							

**Figure 4.5: Paraprofessionals/Teaching Assistants Annual Attendance**

Paraprofessional Absenteeism for Academic Year _____ to _____							
Month	Professional Day	Short-Term Illness	Long-Term Illness	Personal Day	Court Day	Military Service	Other
August							
September							
October							
November							
December							
January							
February							
March							
April							
May							
June							
Totals							

**Figure 4.6: Administrator Education and Experience**

Name	B.A.	Major	Minor	M.A. M.Ed.	Area	CAGS	Area	Ed.D Ph.D	Area	Teaching experience	Administrative experience	Other experience

Figure 4.7: Teacher Education and Experience

Name	B.A.	Major	Minor	M.A. M.Ed.	Area	CAGS	Area	Ed.D Ph.D	Area	Teaching experience	Other relevant experience	"Highly qualified" *

\* Teachers of "core subjects" (English, reading, math, science, history, social studies, the arts, foreign languages) are supposed to be "highly qualified" using the ESEA guidelines. There is no penalty for the teacher not being so identified. Schools, however, must report any teachers that are not so identified. See the MTA Web site for an explanation of "highly qualified" teacher ([www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)).

**Figure 4.8: Paraprofessional/Teaching Assistant Education and Experience**

Name	A.A.	Major	B.A.	Major	Minor	Two years of undergraduate	ParaPro Score	Local Assessment	Other degrees or credentials	Para experience	Other relevant experience	"Highly qualified" **

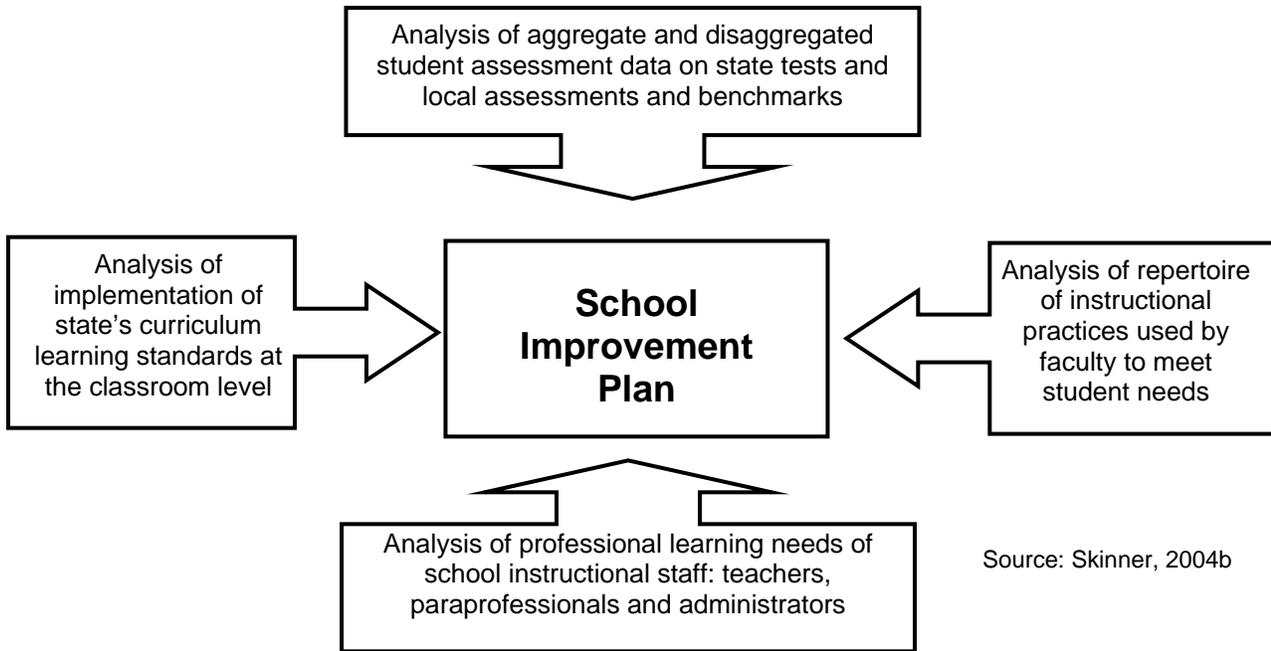
\*\* Paraprofessionals hired after 1/7/02 must have been "highly qualified." Paraprofessionals hired prior to 1/7/02 have until 1/7/06 to be so identified. There are four ways in which a paraprofessional may become highly qualified: 1) complete two years of undergraduate school, 2) earn an Associate's degree, 3) earn a 464 on the ParaPro test, or 4) complete a local assessment. See the MTA Web site for a more in-depth explanation of "highly qualified" paraprofessional ([www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)).

**SECTION 5:  
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

**ALL SCHOOLS**

Most state accountability systems, and the federal ESEA accountability requirements, focus on the school as the unit of improvement. School leaders are responsible for developing improvement plans based on their analysis of student performance data and educator needs. Figure 5.1 illustrates the four key analyses that should inform a well-designed SIP: student assessment data from state and local measures; standards-based units of instruction aligned to state curriculum frameworks; range of instructional strategies used to meet the differentiated needs of students; and identified professional learning needs of the school’s instructional and administrative staff.

**Figure 5.1  
Components of School Improvement Plan**



Source: Skinner, 2004b

To make this process fair to all schools and transparent to the community, the district should adopt a standard SIP format that all schools use. The more this process is standardized, the better all within the district can understand. The template provided in this handbook incorporates the standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Title I requirements, and the Effective Schools characteristics. All are generally accepted standards appropriate for schools at all levels.

**Data Related to Individual Schools**

The significant hard data about schools relates to student achievement as measured by state mandated and local assessments. Aggregate and disaggregated student performance on state-mandated tests is the means of determining each school’s progress toward attaining AYP, the ESEA measure of bringing all students to the *proficient* level in English language arts and mathematics by 2014. Local assessments provide student achievement data related to district benchmarks of

progress. The school team should use its analysis of student performance data as part of the school improvement process.

AYP means that a school's student population is progressing toward 100% proficiency. The federal law requires that assessment data be disaggregated by race, English language learners, disability, and socioeconomic status. The state is responsible for reporting disaggregated data to schools and districts; this is not a task performed at the local level. Historically, aggregated data has been used to determine a school's success on standardized tests. By disaggregating the data, schools must demonstrate that all student subgroups are progressing toward AYP.

Once the school improvement team has analyzed student performance data, it is responsible for articulating specific measures of growth that will result from the implementation of the SIP. Such measures should be attainable. For example, if 90% of the students score below proficient on the state's math test, it is unreasonable to state a measure of growth that *80% of our students will be proficient on the next state exam*. This would, in all likelihood, be an unattainable goal. However, a measure of growth such as *the percentage of students in the proficient category will increase by 10%* may be challenging but reasonable.

To understand this requirement, let's look at the hypothetical Horace Mann Middle School, a Title I school subject to federal sanctions should it fail to achieve AYP. There are 600 students in grades 6-8: 200 per grade.

The student demographics are:

- 45% Caucasian; 30% African-American; 15% Hispanic; and 10% Asian
- ELL students are 12% of the school population
- SPED students are 18%
- 60% free/reduced lunch

MCAS baseline data is from the 1998 administration of the test. Cycle 1 is the average of the 1999 and 2000 administrations; Cycle 1 is compared with the baseline to see if the school made AYP (see Figure 3.1 for a complete explanation and illustration of the cycles through 2014).

**Figure 5.2: Linear Progression to AYP**

Projected percentage of students who must achieve "proficiency" in ELA in the aggregate and by disaggregated sub-groups for the Horace Mann MS to achieve "adequate yearly progress" toward the ESEA requirement that ALL students must be proficient by 2014

Student Group	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Aggregate Data	30	39	47	58	66	75	83	92	100
Caucasian	26	35	44	43	63	72	81	90	100
African-American	31	39	48	57	65	74	83	91	100
Hispanic	50	56	62	69	75	81	88	94	100
Asian	33	41	49	58	66	74	85	92	100
ELL students	42	49	56	64	71	78	85	92	100
Students w. Disabilities	40	47	55	62	70	77	85	92	100
Free/reduced lunch	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

ESEA requires that all students in grades 3-8 be tested annually in English language arts and mathematics. Figure 5.2 illustrates how the Horace Mann MS, using a linear model, predicts its improvement toward proficiency which is spread out in equal increments over the eight cycles.

Staying on this course will determine if Horace Mann is on track to meet the “all students proficient” goal by 2014.

If specific student groups fail to demonstrate achievement either on state or local assessments, the school improvement team should determine what the cause(s) might be. If, for example, it is determined that current instructional strategies used in most classrooms are failing to address student learning needs, the team may recommend professional development in differentiating instruction as the solution.

Other hard data that should either be included in the SIP, or at least used informing its development, might include student attendance and/or tardiness rates; incidence of violent or disruptive behavior; and significant number of unlicensed teachers or those teaching outside their licensed field(s).

The school improvement team should address how the school will improve in these areas and what the measures of growth will be. For example, if 15% of the school’s faculty is unlicensed, a measure of growth would be to reduce that number to zero and a professional development goal would include a partnership with a local teacher preparation program to ensure that all teachers are licensed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE DATA

At the end of the data-gathering and analysis process, the school improvement team should write a draft SIP and share it with the school community for input. The school community should make recommendations based on answers to the following questions:

- *What are the one or two improvement goals that we as a school community should focus our attention on in the next one or two academic years?*
- *What are the professional development needs that must be addressed in order for us to achieve our goals?*
- *What resources will we need – time, money, materials, expertise – to achieve our goals?*
- *Who will do what and by when in order for us to achieve our goals?*

### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING – LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

It should not be a surprise to most schools who find themselves on either a list of schools *In Need of Improvement* or *Low Performing*. If your school is not making progress toward AYP, then the chances are you will eventually go through the School Panel Review process.

Being proactive about school improvement planning will assist a school that may find itself in a negative light. Knowing the weaknesses in curriculum and instruction and addressing them early with school-based – and, we hope, job-embedded – professional development is key to improving student achievement.

“Job-embedded” professional development means that the activities are part of the educator’s normal work day and work year. The most common job-embedded professional development is in the form of after school training or early release days. However, time that is not used exclusively for “administrative assignments,” such as lunchroom duty, could be used for professional development.

### NEA Resources

*The school improvement team may survey the staff – and parents – through the NEA KEYS 2.0 online survey – free to NEA local associations. This is a research-based tool that provides data on six characteristics of effective schools:*

1. *Shared understanding and commitment to high goals*
  2. *Open communication and collaborative problem-solving*
  3. *Continuous assessment for teaching and learning*
  4. *Personal and professional learning*
  5. *Resources to support teaching & learning*
  6. *Curriculum and instruction*
- Go to [www.keysonline.org](http://www.keysonline.org) for information and a demonstration.*

This is an area where some “outside the box” thinking is required by all members of the school community if educators are to be provided with the time – a critical resource – to learn new skills and knowledge.

Knowing the answers to difficult questions before they are asked sends a positive message to the DOE staff that your school understands its goals and has formulated a comprehensive plan that was developed in a collaborative fashion and has high “buy-in” from the staff. The following series of templates are designed to assist the school improvement team in creating such a plan.

**School Improvement Team**

Every school must have a School Council – which may serve as the school improvement team. However, a low-performing school may choose to create a separate entity that includes teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals from the school itself and some outside members with specific expertise. These members may come from within the system, e.g., educators from schools that have turned themselves around or district administrators with specific expertise, or they may come from higher education institutions or from other organizations doing professional development in PK-12 schools, e.g, the MTA’s Center for Educational Quality & Professional Development.

The school team should be trained in developing a school improvement plan. The work of the team should be divided among its members so that time is used to the best advantage. A means of getting input from the school community must be developed so that the plan has high “buy-in” from the staff. Figure 5.3 provides a general timeline for the SIP development.

**Figure 5.3: Timeline and Activities for School Improvement Plan Development**

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>School Team</i>	<i>School Community</i>	<i>Others</i>
March	Data Analysis from various sources about student achievement, curriculum and instruction	X		
Early April	Discussion of findings and dissemination to school community and other interested parties	X	X	X
Late April	Identification of 1-3 overarching goals for the next 1-2 years	X		
Early May	Dissemination to school community and others for reaction and input.	X	X	X
Mid-May	Redrafting of goals based on input and dissemination of new report.	X	X	X
Early June	Draft of objectives related to each goal; dissemination to school community and others for input.	X	X	X
Mid-June	Draft of final plan. It is recommended that there be a school vote on its adoption	X	X	X

All of the figures related to school improvement planning and the plan itself are found at the end of this section.

**Getting the School Improvement Conversation Started**

The school team should look at testing and other data and discuss whether each is a contributing factor to the school’s underperformance. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 are analytical tools. Once they are completed, the information should be shared with the school community in one staff meeting where everyone hears and sees the same thing. It is vital that the school team get good feedback on its work with the faculty. There are many ways to do this: e-mail and a designated mailbox in the main

office are the easiest. However, to move the process along, time limits on input must be established – a week after a whole staff presentation is sufficient.

**Identifying School Improvement Goals**

The next step is to identify the school’s improvement goals. Focusing on big ideas and essential questions signals to students, parents, and faculty that the underlying goal of every school effort is to improve student learning of important content, not just to raise standardized test scores. To that end, the school improvement team should use the guiding questions found in Figure 5.7 to form their discussion. Again, sharing the work in a timely fashion with the whole school community with a means of providing feedback is essential.

**School Improvement Plan**

Finally, the school team should complete the school improvement form by adding additional information not yet covered. Figures 5.8 through 5.19 provide templates for a SIP which takes into consideration the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation standards, the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I provisions, and the Effective Schools characteristics. Figure 5.8 provides a cover page that lists the essentials about the school and the names of the school team members.

**Determining How to Achieve School Improvement Goals**

The next step is to flesh out the one to three improvement goals. This work may require a trained facilitator to keep the school team focused on the work. Figure 5.9 contains all of the detail necessary to understand:

- What the goal is.
- The knowledge and skill needed on the part of school staff to ensure the goal is reached.
- A description of what the school will look like if the goal is achieved.
- Data that will be collected to assess school progress toward the goal.
- Professional development required for the school staff to ensure the goal is reached. This should be defined by job class, i.e., classroom teachers, counselors, assistant principals, paraprofessionals, etc.
- When the training will occur.
- Who will provide the training.

Figure 5.4 is an example of a completed Goal form for one school. Again, the school team should present their work to the whole school staff with opportunities for timely feedback.

**Figure 5.4: Completed School Goal focused on Adult Learning and Data Related to Goal Attainment**

<b>Goal:</b> To develop standards-based units of instruction that are vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (across content areas) aligned with learning standards of the curriculum frameworks.	
<b>What will educators need to know and be able to do to achieve the objective?</b> 1. Scope and Sequence 2. Learning Standards	<b>How will you know it’s working? (What will it look like?)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plan books</li> <li>▪ Student work</li> <li>▪ Classroom observations</li> <li>▪ Quarterly report with sample lessons</li> <li>▪ Department meeting discussions and sharing of strategies, units, etc.</li> <li>▪ Increased staff capacity in standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment</li> </ul>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Individual Students Needs</li> <li>4. Standards-based protocol</li> <li>5. Differentiating by process and product</li> </ol>	<p><b>How will you assess?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved student achievement through grades and attentiveness</li> <li>▪ Examination of student work against school rubrics</li> <li>▪ Improved student writing</li> <li>▪ End of term assessments</li> </ul>
<p><b>What professional learning will be needed?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to develop a standards-based unit of instruction using a “planning backwards” from assessment model</li> <li>2. How to identify student learning needs and differentiate lessons to address different learning styles, readiness, and interests</li> <li>3. Inclusion strategies for special education students and ELL students into standards based curriculum</li> <li>4. Understanding how to apply the concept of academic rigor for all students</li> </ol>	<p><b>When?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Next year</li> <li>▪ Incorporate into plan for before school year PD</li> </ul> <p><b>By whom?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District trainers</li> <li>▪ MTA</li> <li>▪ Internal experts</li> </ul>

The SIP should flow directly from the work done on the improvement goals.

*School Improvement Plan Cover Sheet (Figure 5.8)*

*Section 1: SIP Goal and Details (Figure 5.9)*

*Section 2: Assessment*

- Describe the school’s current assessment status (*Figure 5.10*) and future goals (*Figure 5.11*) on MCAS.
- Describe other assessment data used to determine student progress with an emphasis on *benchmarked* performance tasks (*Figure 5.12*).
- Describe how the school’s assessment data will inform curriculum and instruction changes (*Figure 5.13*).

*Section 3: Curriculum (Figure 5.14)*

- Describe the school curricular changes related to learning standards in the seven Curriculum Frameworks based on assessment data analysis.

*Section 4: Instruction (Figure 5.15)*

- Describe changes in instructional practices based on assessment data analysis.

*Section 5: Instructional Leadership (Figure 5.16)*

- Describe improvements to be made in instructional leadership focused on school climate and teaching and learning.

*Section 6: School Budget (Figure 5.17) and Resources for Improvement (Figure 5.18)*

- Identify changes in school resources to support this plan. Resources are time, money, materials, and expertise.

*Section 7: Professional Development (Figure 5.19)*

- Indicate the estimated amount of professional learning time needed to achieve the school goals.

**Program Evaluation Using Benchmarking**

Once the team has written the School Improvement Plan, Figure 5.20 should be completed. A *benchmark* is a measurable *indicator of performance* that moves from baseline data – where we start – to improved performance – where we are going – over time. *Benchmarking* verifies program effectiveness and/or improvement through documentation. *Benchmarking* demonstrates that the school is moving forward in goal attainment.

**Figure 5.5: School Improvement Planning Discussion**

Consider the following analysis. For each affirmative response in columns 2 and 3, provide data support in Figure 5.6 and suggest possible solutions. At the beginning of this process, brainstorming without comment is the best way to get to “outside the box” thinking.

Indicator	True	Partially True	Not True
Low student performance in ELA			
Low student performance in mathematics			
Low student performance in science			
Unclear academic standards in ELA			
Unclear academic standards in mathematics			
Unclear academic standards in science			
High rates of student absenteeism			
High dropout rates and/or student mobility			
High rates of staff turnover			
Staff teaching outside areas of certification/not certified			
High rates of staff absenteeism*			
High levels of disruption and violence			
Negative school atmosphere			

\* Complete Staff Attendance Form [Figure 5.6].

**Figure 5.6: Data Supporting Affirmative Responses and Possible Solutions**

Indicator	Data to Support Affirmative Response	Possible Solutions
Low student performance in ELA		
Low student performance in mathematics		
Low student performance in science		
Unclear academic standards in ELA		
Unclear academic standards in mathematics		
Unclear academic standards in science		
High rates of student absenteeism		
High dropout rates		
High rates of staff turnover		
Staff teaching outside areas of certification/not certified		
High rates of staff absenteeism		
High levels of disruption and violence		
Negative school atmosphere		





Figure 5.9: SIP Goal and Details

<b>School Improvement Goal:</b>	
<b>What will educators need to know and be able to do to achieve the objective?</b>	<b>How will you know it's working? (What will it look like?)</b>
	<b>How will you assess effectiveness?</b>
<b>What professional learning will be needed?</b>	<b>When?</b>
	<b>Provided by whom?</b>

**Figure 5.10: Section 2: CURRENT ASSESSMENT DATA:** Describe the school's current assessment status on MCAS.

**Current Aggregate English Language Arts Assessment Data  
MCAS (Percentage of Students Scoring Per Category – Last MCAS Administration)**

	Area of Concern based on disaggregated data	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade					

**Current Aggregate Mathematics Assessment Data  
MCAS (Percentage of Students Scoring Per Category – Last MCAS Administration)**

	Area of Concern based on disaggregated data	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade					

**Current Aggregate Science Assessment Data  
MCAS (Percentage of Students Scoring Per Category – Last MCAS Administration)**

	Area of Concern based on disaggregated data	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade					
Grade					

Area(s) of concern or strength: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 5.11: Section 2: PROJECTED ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT:** indicate the goals in the “advanced” and “proficient” categories on the next MCAS administration in order to move toward the ESEA “proficiency” requirement.

**Projected Aggregate English Language Arts Improvement**

Projected Improvement – Percentage of Students Scoring in Each Category				
	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade				

**Projected Aggregate Mathematics Improvement**

Projected Improvement – Percentage of Students Scoring in Each Category				
	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade				

**Projected Aggregate Science Improvement**

Projected Improvement – Percentage of Students Scoring in Each Category				
	Advanced	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Failing
Grade				
Grade				

Information related to these projected improvement goals: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 5.12: Section 2: LOCAL ASSESSMENTS:** describe local assessments – based on multiple measures – used to measure student progress toward proficiency on the Curriculum Frameworks learning standards.

Grade Level(s):		Content Area (s):		
Learning Standard	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4

**BENCHMARKED PERFORMANCE TASKS:** at least 2-3 times per year, all students in a grade should be assessed using the same assessment task (this may be a test, report, portfolio, demonstration, performance) that is scored using the same rubric for all.

Grade Level(s):		Content Area (s):	
Learning Standard	Benchmark 1	Benchmark 2	Benchmark 3



**Figure 5.14: Section 3: CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT AND CHANGES**

**Vertical and Horizontal Curriculum Alignment Complete (x):** indicate if the school's curricula is aligned with the learning standards of the seven Curriculum Frameworks.

Content Area	Grade											
	Vert.	Hor.										
Arts												
English												
Foreign Languages												
Health												
History & Social Studies												
Mathematics												
Science & Technology												

**Specific areas of improvement in the next 1-2 years:** Describe the school curricular changes related to learning standards in the seven Curriculum Frameworks based on assessment data analysis.

Area of Improvement	Professional Development Activity	Goal(s)

**Figure 5.15: Section 4: INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES:** Describe changes in instructional practices based on assessment data analysis.

Current Instructional Practices	Additions to Instructional Repertoire	Target Audience	Expected Improvements

**Figure 5.16: Section 5: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP:** describe the professional learning activities that will be provided to school leaders (administrators and teacher leaders at least; school council members should be included in some of these activities as well).

Instructional Leadership Improvement Area	Professional Development Activity	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible
Teaching and Learning			
School Climate			
Student Behavior			
Student Attendance			
Staff Evaluation			
Parent Engagement			
Community Involvement			

**Figure 5.17: Section 6: SCHOOL BUDGET AND RESOURCES FOR IMPROVEMENT:** describe the funding needed to support the activities related to school improvement. Provide a very brief – one sentence – explanation of each.

**Budget Supporting School Improvement Plan**

Budget Priority	Cost – Yr. 1	Cost – Yr. 2

**Figure 5.18: Section 6: PROFESSIONAL TIME AND EXPERTISE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN:** describe how time will be used to advance the goals of the SIP. Identify who will provide the expertise needed to accomplish each goal.

Time	Purpose	Audience	Expertise
During School Hours			
After School Hours			
Summer			
Weekends			

**Figure 5.19: Section 7: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** describe the professional development activities that will be provided to all school staff that are directly related to the SIP goals. This should not include any district professional development that is unrelated to school goals.

Professional Development Activity	No. of Hours	When	Audience	SIP Goal

**Figure 5.20: Program Evaluation Using Benchmarking**

Once the team has written the School Improvement Plan, the table below should be completed. A *benchmark* is a measurable *indicator of performance* that moves from baseline data – where we start – to improved performance – where we are going – over time. *Benchmarking* verifies program effectiveness and/or improvement through documentation. *Benchmarking* demonstrates that the school is moving forward in goal attainment.

Goal:

Academic Year: 20____ to 20____	Goal Benchmark	Person(s) Responsible
<b>August</b>		
<b>September</b>		
<b>October</b>		
<b>November</b>		
<b>December</b>		
<b>January</b>		
<b>February</b>		
<b>March</b>		
<b>April</b>		
<b>May</b>		
<b>June</b>		
<b>July</b>		

**APPENDIX A: MTA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**  
**KEYS 2.0 ONLINE SURVEY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

What makes a quality school? In 1989, NEA researchers set out to answer that question by identifying the conditions a school needed to have in place for students to achieve at the highest levels and found that high quality schools all displayed the same set of characteristics, or quality indicators, centered around six "keys":

1. Shared understanding and commitment to high goals
2. Open communication and collaborative problem-solving
3. Continuous assessment for teaching and learning
4. Personal and professional learning
5. Resources to support teaching and learning
6. Curriculum and instruction.

The result of this ground-breaking research is the KEYS Initiative. Short for Keys to Excellence for Your Schools, KEYS is:

- A survey tool that lets schools measure for themselves the extent to which the quality indicators are present.
- A process that brings educators, parents and the community together to improve their local schools.

KEYS is available to MTA affiliates only at no cost. This is a SCHOOL-BASED SURVEY. The local association president should contact MTA directly. MTA staff will work with the school community to learn about the survey and the process for analyzing the data and identifying school goals. School staff meetings include

- Providing in-school presentations to whole school communities about the KEYS survey and the training around analyzing data.
- Using KEYS as an entry point for discussions about the root causes of poor school performance on district and state assessment tools.
- Focusing school improvement efforts on the six keys which are highly correlated with the nine characteristics of effective schools.
- Building school-based capacity to understand how to analyze and use data from a variety of sources to form school improvement planning.

**PRIORITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE**

Priority Schools is an NEA MTA-funded school improvement program designed for schools identified as "in need of improvement" or in Stages 1-4 of failing to make AYP. This is a three-year improvement effort. There are four "cornerstones" for decision-making about school improvement that are the focus of training:

- **SCHOOL ORGANIZATION:** There is effective school leadership. The leadership, policies and practices within the school are supportive of priority learners and addressing individual student needs. There is administrative support for professional learning for all educators.
- **CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT:** The curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned to the learning standards articulated in the curriculum frameworks. Instructional practices address the learning needs, styles, and readiness

levels of the students. Assessment uses multiple measures of student performance and forms instructional practices.

- **STAFF DEVELOPMENT:** Professional learning is focused on the needs of educators and students within the school. Program evaluation is on-going to determine the effectiveness of professional learning on improving student achievement.
- **FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The school is engaged with students' parents and caregivers in productive ways that improve student achievement. The school forms partnerships with community businesses and service agencies to meet student needs.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES & BENEFITS**

- Technical assistance through school-based professional development programs sustained over a three-year period in the form of:
  - wall-to-wall training for all administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals about data-driven curriculum mapping and “backwards planning” standards-based units of instruction
  - school improvement team training in instructional leadership and school improvement plan development and implementation
- Coaching in the development/refinement of school improvement plans that focus on school assessment data for all students and disaggregated data by ESEA designated categories; curriculum alignment with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; and standards-based units of instruction that are differentiated by process and product.
- Online resources to PSI participants – teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and community members – through the MTA Web site.

### **DATA GATHERING, ANALYSIS, & EVALUATION PROCESS**

An annual KEYS survey will be conducted with a baseline survey at the beginning of Year One with annual follow-up surveys at the beginning of Years Two and Three and at the end of Year Three.

- An analysis of student achievement data from MCAS and local multiple measures.
- An analysis of the school improvement plans that are written annually as a result of the Instructional Leadership training.
- An analysis of the units of instruction and their impact on student learning as measured by the school-specific benchmarks.
- An analysis of the portfolios created by paraprofessionals as part of the three training programs.

This program is by application only. Schools that apply must have arranged for an all staff presentation by MTA staff; there must be a democratic vote taken of all staff (administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals) to commit to a three-year focus on school improvement that results in increased student achievement. A minimum of 65% of staff must vote to participate. For more information, contact Beverly Miyares at 800-392-6175

**APPENDIX B**  
**EDUCATION LAW RELATED TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**CHAPTER 69. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE DOE.**

Chapter 69: Section 1J. Chronic failure by school or district to improve educational program; regulations; remedial plan; determination of school's chronic underperformance; dismissal of principal; dismissal of teachers.

**Section 1J.**

The board shall establish regulations defining when a school or school district has chronically failed to improve the educational program provided to students served by the school or district. Such regulations shall be consistent with the goals and standards adopted by the board and the basis for the determination of chronic failure shall include, but not be limited to, the evaluations performed pursuant to section one I. The regulations adopted by the board shall take into account the turnover of students in particular schools and districts.

Schools that have consistently failed to improve the academic performance of their students shall be deemed underperforming, in accordance with the board's regulations. Upon determination that a school is underperforming, the commissioner shall immediately appoint an independent fact-finding team which shall forthwith assess the reasons for the underperformance and the prospects for improvement and report its findings to the commissioner and the district in which the school is located no later than ninety days from the date of its appointment. No more than six months after the determination that a school is underperforming, the district in which the school is located shall present to the board a remedial plan that shall set forth specific goals for improvement, specific means for attaining such goals, and a timetable, not to exceed twenty-four months, for carrying out the plan. The district shall implement said remedial plan, with such changes or amendments as the board shall direct. During the period of implementation, the commissioner shall provide to the school technical assistance for the improvement of the educational program provided to the students served therein.

If the school fails to demonstrate significant improvement as dictated by its remedial plan within twenty-four months after the approval of its remedial plan, the board may declare the school to be chronically underperforming. Upon a determination that a school is chronically underperforming, the following steps may be taken:

- (1) The principal of the school shall be immediately removed and shall not be assigned to the school for the following school year unless the board finds that the principal did not play a significant role in the underperformance of the school;
- (2) The superintendent may designate a new principal for the school. Any principal of a chronically underperforming school shall have such extraordinary powers, including the power to dismiss, in accordance with paragraph (4), any teacher or other employee assigned to the school without regard to the procedures set forth under sections forty-one and forty-two of chapter seventy-one or the provisions of any collective bargaining agreement. Such dismissed teachers shall otherwise retain such rights as may be provided under law or any applicable collective bargaining agreement, except that they shall not have the right to displace any teacher in any other school;
- (3) In order to recruit and retain talented personnel, the commissioner may make available funds, subject to appropriation, to permit the superintendent during the period of remediation to increase the salary of any principal or teacher assigned to the school by not more than one percent for every ten percent of the enrollment of the chronically underperforming school comprised of low-income students, as that term is used in chapter seventy;

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

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- (4) If the school does not receive funding from the district at least equal to the average per pupil funding received for students of the same classification and grade level in the district, the district shall provide additional funding sufficient to bring funding for that school to such level;
- (5) Such other actions determined by the board of education, to be reasonably calculated to increase the number of students attending the school who satisfy the student performance standards.

A principal appointed to a chronically underperforming school may dismiss a teacher with professional teacher status for good cause, provided that the teacher has received five school days written notice of the decision to terminate. The teacher with professional teacher status may seek review of a termination decision within five school days after receiving notice of his termination by filing a petition for expedited arbitration with the commissioner. An arbitrator shall be selected according to the procedures set forth in section forty-two of chapter seventy-one. In reviewing dismissal decisions, the arbitrator shall consider the chronic underperformance of the school to the degree that such underperformance is not due to factors beyond the control of the teacher, and the arbitrator shall consider any report from the fact-finding team that evaluates the teacher's performance. The arbitrator's decision shall be issued within ten school days from the completion of the hearing.

Available online on 5/12/04 at <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/laws/mgl/69%2D1j.htm>

**APPENDIX C**  
**EDUCATION REGULATIONS RELATED TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

603 CMR 2.00: underperforming Schools and School Districts

Section 2.03: Underperforming Schools

- (1) The Board shall adopt, and the Department shall implement, a School Performance Rating Process to track the performance and improvement demonstrated by Massachusetts public schools on State assessments in core academic subjects. The School Performance Rating Process and its implementation shall be explained in written guidelines published by the Department.
- (2) The Board shall adopt standards for the amount of improvement schools will be expected to demonstrate in each rating cycle. The amount of improvement expected of a school may vary from one rating cycle to another depending on the gap to be closed between a school's performance at the start of the rating cycle and State performance targets.
  - (a) Using the improvement expectations established by the Board, the Department shall determine the performance improvements that each Massachusetts public school is expected to make during a rating cycle, and shall give written notice to school and district officials of those expectations.
  - (b) At the end of each rating cycle, the Department shall provide a written report to the principal of each school and to the superintendent of the school district in which the school is located, stating the performance and improvement ratings achieved by the school through the State's School Performance Rating Process, and informing school and school district officials of any State actions forthcoming as a consequence of those ratings.
- (3) Whenever, at the conclusion of a school performance rating cycle, a school is determined not to have met its improvement expectations, the school's principal and school council, under the guidance and supervision of the district's superintendent and school committee, shall develop a written plan detailing actions the school will take to promote and support improved performance by students at that school. and a timetable for those actions. The district superintendent and school committee shall, in turn, develop a written plan detailing actions district officials will take, including allocation of the necessary human and financial resources, to support and oversee implementation of the school's improvement plan.
- (4) At the conclusion of each rating cycle, schools that fail to meet their assigned improvement expectations may be referred for review to determine whether the school is underperforming. The Commissioner shall determine, in each school performance rating cycle, the schools to be referred for review as a result of their failure to meet improvement expectations. Priority shall be given to the review of schools with the highest percentages of students performing in the *failing* and *needs improvement* levels on Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests. Schools' attendance and drop-out rates and improvement trends may also be considered by the Commissioner in determining which schools shall be referred for review.
  - (a) Each school referred for review to determine whether it should be declared underperforming shall be required to submit to the Department: 1) any supplemental data it has available demonstrating its students' academic performance on locally administered standardized assessments; 2) data on participation in foreign language study; 3) data on participation in arts instruction and performance; 4) evidence of the school's improvement efforts during the prior cycle, including efforts to actively engage parents/guardians in support of improved student performance; 5) an analysis of the reasons for the school's failure to meet its improvement expectations in the prior cycle, and 4) a copy of any plans developed by school and district officials to promote and support improved student results in the next rating cycle.
  - (b) For each school referred for review, the Department shall compile a report on other gauges of student learning. The report shall include data on student attendance and dropout data,

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

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suspensions and exclusions, academic results for special student populations, and grade retention.

- (c) The Commissioner shall appoint a Review Panel to analyze and evaluate the documentation submitted by the school pursuant to 603 CMR 2.03 4(a), and prepared by the Department pursuant to 603 CMR 2.03 4(b). The school's principal, accompanied by representatives of its faculty and their union representative, a parent representative on the school council, the district superintendent, and a representative of the district school committee shall meet with the panel to answer questions and address the Review Panel's concerns.
  - (d) At the conclusion of their inquiry the Review Panel shall provide the Commissioner and the school and district with a brief written report stating its assessment of the likelihood that the school will meet State improvement expectations in the subsequent rating cycle in the absence of State intervention to direct and oversee needed improvements in the quality of education provided and /or the effectiveness of school or district management.
  - (e) The Commissioner, after consideration of the Review Panel's assessment and taking into account the availability of resources to support State intervention efforts, shall determine whether to:
    - 1. declare the school to be underperforming and commence the fact finding and improvement planning process mandated by M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J; or
    - 2. assign the school priority status for State assistance and place the school on academic warning until the end of the next rating cycle.
- (5) Whenever the Commissioner, at the conclusion of the process set forth at 603 CMR 2.02(4), declares a school to be underperforming he shall so notify the school and district and, after consultation with the Board or its designee, shall appoint a Fact-Finding Team to conduct a comprehensive on-site inspection of the school.
- (a) Persons who served on the Review Panel for a school referred for review and subsequently declared to be underperforming may, at the Commissioner's request, also serve as members of the Fact-Finding Team.
  - (b) The Fact-Finding Team's inspection of a school declared to be underperforming with guidelines established by the Department that conform to the requirements of M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J.
  - (c) No later than 90 days from the date of its appointment, the Fact-Finding Team shall submit a written report of its findings and conclusions to the Commissioner and the Board, with copies to school and district officials and municipal officials of the city or town(s) with responsibility for the school.
  - (d) School, district and/or municipal officials shall have 10 business days to respond in writing to the Fact-Finding Team's report, prior to its transmittal to the Board. After 10 days, the Commissioner shall provide the Board with copies of the Fact-Finding Team's report and the response of local officials, if any.
- (6) In accordance with M.G. L. c. 69, s. 1J, no more than six months from the date on which a school is declared underperforming, the district in which the school is located must submit an improvement plan to the BOE for its approval.
- (a) The plan shall set forth specific goals for improvement, specific means for attaining such goals, and a timetable, not to exceed twenty-four months, for carrying out the plan. The plan shall address areas of deficiency identified by the Fact-Finding Team and shall detail the support and oversight district officials will provide to ensure successful implementation of school-based improvement efforts.

- (b) No plan for improvement of an underperforming school's improvement plan shall be forwarded to the Board for its consideration unless that plan has first been reviewed and judged by the Commissioner to be adequate and appropriate.
  - (c) The Board, upon receipt of the proposed plan for improvement, may accept, reject, or direct the modification of that plan or any portion thereof
- (7) Notwithstanding any provisions of 603 CMR 2.03 to the contrary, during the 1999 - 2000 school year the Department, as an interim step in the implementation of the school performance rating process, shall identify schools that demonstrated the lowest levels of performance on MCAS tests administered in 1998 that do not demonstrate improved performance on 1999 MCAS tests. The Commissioner may refer such schools for review, in accordance with the processes set forth at 603 CMR 2.03 (4) (a) - (e), and at the conclusion of said review shall determine whether any such school shall be declared underperforming. The provisions of 603 CMR 2.03 (5) and (6) and M.G. L. c. 69, s. 1J shall apply to schools that are declared, pursuant to this section, to be underperforming.
- (8) If an underperforming school fails to demonstrate significant improvement in student performance within 24 months after approval of a remedial plan by the Board, the Board may declare the school to be chronically underperforming. School officials of the district in which the school is located and members of the public shall have an opportunity to be heard by the Board prior to final action by the Board declaring a school chronically underperforming.
- (9) Upon declaration by the Board that a school is chronically underperforming, the Board shall intervene in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J, and shall issue a written order specifying actions which the school district shall take to improve the academic performance of students at the school. The principal appointed to lead a chronically underperforming school shall have the extraordinary powers specified in M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J. The superintendent and school committee of the school district in which a chronically underperforming school is located shall ensure that all corrective actions ordered by the Board are implemented without delay.

### REGULATORY AUTHORITY

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

Adopted by the BOE: June 16, 1997

Most Recently Amended: November 26, 2002

Available online on 5/12/04 at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html>

**APPENDIX D**  
**EVALUATING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**  
**STAGE 2 -- THE PANEL REVIEW PROCESS**

**Purpose of the Panel Review Process:** Panel reviews are conducted to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether State intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where students' MCAS performance is critically low and no trend toward improved student performance is evident from MCAS data.

**Criteria for Referral:** The School Performance Rating Process (SPRP), stage one in the three-stage process used to assess school performance under the new Massachusetts School and District Accountability System, is used to identify schools for panel review. Schools that perform in the lowest SPRP categories (very high percentage of students with failing MCAS performance; low percentage proficient and advanced) that on subsequent test administrations do not demonstrate a significant improvement trend are candidates for panel review. Schools with the lowest ratings in English language arts and mathematics have top priority. The number of schools to be referred for panel review in a given year is determined by the Commissioner of Education, taking into account the apparent need for, and resources available to support, the panel review process. Factors other than MCAS results, including a school's attendance and dropout rates, may be considered in the selection of schools to be referred for panel review.

**Scope of Review:** The Panel's charge is to advise the Commissioner of Education, at the conclusion of the review process, of their judgment on two questions:

1. Does the school under review appear to have a sound plan for improving student performance?  
and
2. Do the conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?

Panel members will be provided with guiding questions to help focus their analysis and discussion of the various sources of evidence on which they will rely in formulating responses to these two questions. (See attached document entitled School Panel Review - Guiding Questions.)

Panel members are not expected to formulate a sound plan for school improvement where such a plan does not presently exist, and/or recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions appear not to presently exist. These activities are outside the scope of the panel review process; and are the responsibility of the school and district in the next stage of the process, with guidance, where needed from a fact-finding team.

**Outcome of Review Process:** If, in the judgment of review panel members, a school under review needs State assistance to formulate a sound improvement plan or to put in place the conditions necessary for successful implementation of a sound improvement plan, the panel will so notify the Commissioner. The Commissioner, if he concurs with the panel's assessment, will declare the school to be underperforming. Schools that, at the conclusion of the panel review process and the Commissioner's review, are determined to be underperforming will move on to Stage 3 of the school evaluation process, in which an independent fact-finding team is appointed by the Commissioner. The fact-finding team conducts an in-depth diagnostic evaluation of the school, and on the basis of its evaluation, advises school and district leaders and the Commissioner and BOE as to the course of action team members recommend to promote and support improved academic performance by students at the school. Schools referred for review that are judged by the panels to be on course for the successful implementation of a sound improvement plan will be given priority for the award of State assistance to support their improvement initiatives.

**Panel Membership:** Review panels are composed of 3-5 members, a majority who are experienced K-12 educators, school administrators, curriculum coordinators, and/or school program evaluators. Other education professionals, parents and members of the public may be selected for panel service.

Individuals selected for participation in review panels will not be assigned to review the performance of any school in a district in which the panelist or any member of his or her immediate family lives or works. Panel members must make a commitment to attend a four-hour orientation session and actively participate in two to three panel reviews of 1-½ days each. Panels are expected to review and analyze the materials contained in the information packets provided to them at the orientation session in preparation for the panel deliberations that begin on the first evening of the panel review process.

**Compensation of Review Panel Members:** At the Commissioner's discretion, panel members may be permanent employees of the DOE, consultants hired by the Department to perform school and district evaluation functions, school district employees released from their routine duties to participate in this process with the approval of the district superintendent, and privately employed individuals who are released from their routine duties to participate in the panel review process. DOE staff and consultants employed to serve on the review panels will be compensated in accordance with the terms of their respective contracts. Per diem compensation for contractors shall not exceed \$500. School district employees and privately employed volunteers who will be paid by their regular employer for the day will receive a \$100 honorarium in appreciation of time spent beyond their regular work-day and to cover incidental costs (e.g., travel, childcare) associated with their participation. The Department will provide lodging, as necessary, for panel members during the panel review process. Participants may earn professional development points for their review panel service.

### **Panel Review Protocol:**

#### ***Notice to Schools Referred For Review***

Schools referred for panel review will be notified of their selection at least four weeks prior to the date scheduled for the review of their school. The district superintendent will be notified verbally by the Department and given the opportunity to verbally notify the school's principal and members of the district school committee prior to written notice being sent to the school. The Department will not release to the press and public the names of schools referred for panel review until after all schools referred for review have received their written notice and had at least 24 hours to inform their staff. At least two weeks prior to the review, schools will be notified of the specific date on which the panel will visit their school and meet with school and district leaders to assess the school's improvement plan and prospects for its successful implementation.

#### ***Submission of Supplemental Data and Documents By Schools Referred For Review***

Schools referred for panel review will be expected to provide the Department with certain data and documents about the school to supplement information routinely collected by DOE. The school will receive written notice from the Department detailing the data and documents it is required to submit and the timeline for their submission. The Department may require that this information be provided in a specified form or format to facilitate the analysis and presentation of information for the panel review. Schools will have a minimum of 10 business days to collect and compile the information requested.

#### ***Panel Assignment***

The Department shall determine the assignment of panel members to particular panels and the schools to be reviewed by each panel. Panelists will be informed of their specific panel assignments at least 10 days prior to the date on which their panel is scheduled to convene. Panelists will be asked to promptly notify the Department if they have any special knowledge of or relationship to the schools or districts their panel is assigned to review that might conflict with their service on that panel and will be reassigned or removed if such a conflict exists.

The Department will designate one member of the panel to serve as panel review **chairperson**. The panel chairperson will be responsible for keeping the panel's deliberations on track and on time and co-facilitate these deliberations and meetings with the panel coordinator. The panel review chairperson, in conjunction with the panel review coordinator, will prepare a report of the panel's findings and recommendations which will be reviewed by all panel members. The panel review chairperson will participate fully as a member of the review panel.

To maximize the panel's time on task and minimize disruption of planned panel activities due to logistical complications, the DOE will assign a staff member/consultant to each panel to serve as coordinator. Panel review coordinators will visit the school under review in advance of the panel review date and will work with school and district leaders to organize the schedule, meeting spaces, and other logistics for the panel review. The panel review coordinator will serve as liaison with the school and the district leaders and co-facilitate panel meetings and deliberations with the panel review chairperson. The panel review coordinator will participate fully as a member of the review panel.

The DOE staff who participate in the panel review process as **coordinators** may, at the conclusion of that process, be called upon to lead or serve on DOE technical assistance and support teams for the reviewed schools.

### ***Presentation of Data and Documents For Study By Panel Members***

Prior to beginning its review of a school's performance, the Department will conduct an orientation session for panel members. The panel review protocol and details of the panel review process will be discussed at the orientation. Panel members will be provided with an information packet containing: student performance data, a program and services report, results from a teacher survey and materials submitted by the schools related to their improvement efforts and plans. At the orientation session Department staff will introduce panel members to the materials provided and answer questions about the data or documents that panel members have at that time. Between the date of the orientation session and the day on which the panel convenes to begin the review process, each panel member is expected to study the specific information on the school to be reviewed, formulate initial impressions regarding the school's improvement needs and plans, and identify questions to ask and/or topics to discuss during the review process.

### ***Panel Deliberation on the Quality and Viability of Schools' Improvement Efforts and Plans***

Over the course of the panel review process, each panel will spend approximately six hours as a group discussing and deliberating on the improvement needs, efforts and plans of each of the schools they are assigned to review. Time for group deliberation is built into the schedule at several intervals in the process to encourage systematic consideration of the evolving body of information presented for the panel's consideration. (See attached Planned Schedule of Review Panel Activities.)

### ***On-Site Visit***

As part of the panel review process each panel will make a site visit of approximately five hours to each of the schools the panel is assigned to review. The on-site visit will afford panel members the opportunity to see and experience each school in operation, observe classes, talk with teachers and students, and meet with the school's principal and instructional leaders in their work environment.

### ***Meeting with School and District Representatives***

Before completing the school site visit, the review panel will have a meeting with school and district leaders. In addition to the school's principal, the district's superintendent, a representative of the school committee, bargaining unit representative(s), and school council, faculty, parent and student representatives may participate in this session. The purpose of this meeting is for panel members to solicit information from, pose questions to, and engage in discussion with school and district leaders about the school under review. One half hour of this session will be available to school and district leaders for their presentation of information and opinion to the panel.

### ***Panel Findings and Panel Review Report***

During the final hour of panel deliberation on each school reviewed, panel members will be asked to answer, to the best of their ability in light of the information known to them, the two questions which are the focal point for this review:

- 1) Does the school under review appear to have a sound plan for improving student performance?
- 2) Do the conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?

Panel members are expected to reach consensus on an answer to these questions. The panel chairperson or coordinator will make written note of the panel's judgments on these questions, and will record the key factual findings, impressions, or conclusions on which the panel's judgment is founded.

Within five working days of the conclusion of the on-site visit, the panel chair will draft a report of the panel's findings that answers the two key questions. This draft report will be distributed to all panel members for their review. Panel members will review the draft for accuracy and insure that the report reflects the panel's experience during the school visit and fully supports the members' judgments on the two key questions. After making any necessary changes to the report based on the panelists' comments, the chair will send the revised draft of the report to the school principal for his/her factual review. Should the principal disagree with the findings articulated in the report, the principal will be afforded the opportunity to send a letter of rebuttal with clarifying evidence to the Office of School Performance Evaluation. Along with the final report, this letter will be considered by the Commissioner in his final determination of underperformance. The Commissioner's determination will be communicated by letter directly to the Superintendent and to the Principal.

### Evaluating the Panel Review Process

When all panels have completed their work, panel chairpersons and coordinators will participate in a scheduled meeting to evaluate the protocol and processes. Panel members will also be invited to contribute, in person or by written submission, to this evaluation process. Practitioners will be asked to complete brief evaluations of panel chairs and coordinators; chairs and coordinators will be asked to complete brief evaluations of practitioner panelists. This process will provide guidance for future D.O.E. training sessions in all school review activities.

### Schools Referred for Panel Review - Winter 2003

#### ***Selection Criteria:***

The following criteria were used to select the 12 schools that have been referred for the Winter 2003 School Panel Reviews:

- Cycle II School Performance Rating of Critically Low or Very Low in both English Language Arts and mathematics
- Cycle II School Improvement Ratings indicating the least amount of improvement
- More than 25 students included in the test results for each content area in 2002
- Schools not reviewed in Winter 2002
- Maximum of 1 school per district, with exception of the largest districts:

If more than one school in a district met these criteria, the Department gave priority to those schools that had the lowest performance results **in both English language arts and mathematics and/or the least improvement.**

### Schedule Winter 2003 Panel Reviews

Overnight accommodations have been arranged for all panel participants the night before the site visit date of the review process. Participants are requested to overnight at the hotel that will be the panel's base of operations rather than travel home on that night. This will minimize confusion and delay on the mornings the school site visit when panel members are scheduled for early a.m. arrival at the schools they are reviewing. Any panelist not willing or able to overnight at the hotel must make arrangements in advance with their panel's coordinator.

Participants traveling from outside the greater Boston area who will need overnight accommodations on the night of the panel orientation are asked to so notify the Department as soon as possible.

**Detailed Schedule of Panel Review Activities**

**Orientation Session (4 hours)**

- 4:00 - 4:30 p.m. Introductions, general orientation to protocol, review of the Code of Conduct
- 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Introduction to school data and documents
- 6:00 - 6:45 p.m. Dinner
- 6:45 - 7:00 p.m. Overview of Site Visit
- 7:00 - 7:45 p.m. Panelists meet for initial review of documents
- 7:45 - 8:00 p.m. Wrap-up

**Example Panel Review Schedule  
Afternoon before Site Visit**

**Day 1  
(7-8 hours)**

- 10:30-12:00 a.m. Panel chairperson and panel coordinator meet to discuss and clarify roles, prepare for the first team meeting, and review general logistics/schedule for the review. (Location: hotel)
- 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Team meeting # 1: Full team meets for the first time to discuss each panelists' individual analysis of school data and documents; team forms preliminary findings on key questions. (Location: hotel)
- 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Panelists meet with the district Superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).(Location: hotel)
- 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. Panelists meet with Principal (and one other school-based leader, if appropriate). (Location: the school)
- 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Team meeting # 2: Panelists synthesize interview information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for Day 2 of the review. (Location: hotel)

**Day 2 (10 hours) All activities take place in the school ( interview protocols are provided for all meetings )**

- 7:30-8:00 a.m. Panelists meet with the Principal
- 8:00-8:30 a.m. Panelists meet with the School Council
- 8:30-9:00 a.m. Panelists meet with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized, as appropriate, to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students, classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific inquiry groups.

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
Focus Group				

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

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9:00-11:00 a.m. Classroom observations and teacher interviews\*

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
9-10 a.m.	Observe teacher 1 and teacher 2	Observe teacher 3 and teacher 4	Observe teacher 5 and teacher 6	Observe teacher 7 and teacher 8	Observe teacher 9 and teacher 10
10-11 a.m.	Interview teacher 1 and teacher 2 individually	Interview teacher 3 and teacher 4 individually	Interview teacher 5 and teacher 6 individually	Interview teacher 7 and teacher 8 individually	Interview teacher 9 and teacher 10 individually

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Team meeting # 3: team meets to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch)

12:30-1:00 p.m. Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information; panelists are encouraged to roam the entire school and visit classrooms not yet seen.

1:00-2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teachers in groups; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
1:00-1:30	Teacher Focus Group 1		Teacher Focus Group 3		Prepare report
1:30-2:00	Teacher Focus Group 2		Teacher Focus Group 4		

2:00-2:30 p.m. Closing meeting with the principal to discuss next steps (all panelists are present) No preview of judgment is offered.

2:30-5:00 p.m. Team meeting # 4: Panelists deliberate and form conclusions

\*Instructions for teacher observations, individual interviews, and focus groups

1. Observations: Each panelist will observe at least two class lessons in order to obtain a representative sample of the school's individual classrooms. The purpose of the classroom observation is to judge the quality of the learning environment, which is a critical aspect of the school's overall conditions, and a determinant in whether or not the school will be able to successfully implement its improvement plan. The learning environment includes:

- The physical setting-space, lighting, size, classroom temperature, etc.,
- The classroom organization-desk arrangement, resources available to students, orderliness, etc.
- The level of the teacher's preparation for instruction; the students' readiness for learning
- The level of the teacher's expectation for student learning and performance
- The interaction between teacher and students-the students' level of engagement or withdrawal.
- The level and quality of instructional practice in the school. ( Panelists are not evaluating individual teachers )

2. Individual Teacher Interviews: The purpose of the teacher interview that follows the observation is to:

- Clarify the evaluator's impressions of the classroom dynamic and learning environment
- Determine what the teacher considers to be the chief learning needs of students across the school and within his or her classroom
- Determine the teacher's understanding of the school's plan to address those needs and to improve student performance
- Determine the teacher's role in the overall mission and improvement plan of the school

3. Teacher Focus Groups: The purpose of the teacher focus groups is to:

- Determine what each teacher considers to be the chief learning needs of students across the school and within his or her classroom
- Determine each teacher's understanding of the school's plan to address those needs and to improve student performance
- Determine each teacher's role in the overall mission and improvement plan of the school

**Taken together, the teacher interviews will provide a comprehensive view of the staff's understanding of, and participation and investment in, the improvement planning process**

### **Review Panel Code of Conduct**

*Participants in the School Panel Review Process will adhere to the following code of conduct during all phases of the review.*

#### **INTEGRITY**

- a. Adhere to the protocol and focus on answering the protocol's essential questions.
- b. Assure others that you are primarily interested in how well students are learning.
- c. Emphasize that student needs come first and are at the center of the review to counter perceptions of review as "punitive" or "critical" of school, faculty, leadership, etc.
- d. Focus on the "the Big Picture" - school improvement planning and student achievement. Refrain from offering individual opinions; avoid anecdotal references to what is done in your classroom, school or district.

#### **EXHIBIT RESPECT / SENSITIVITY FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

- a. Be polite and sensitive to the school's needs. Try to minimize stress.
- b. Try to relieve anxiety through mutual respect and valuing the opinions of others.
- c. Assure confidentiality. Under no circumstances criticize the work of anyone in the school or make judgment statements within earshot of others.
- d. Classroom observations are confidential to the teacher and the team.
- e. Do not put students or staff in a position where they may have conflicting loyalties.
- f. Be supportive and enabling. Evidence given under undue stress is unreliable.

#### **BE OBJECTIVE; MAKE JUDGEMENTS BASED ON EVIDENCE**

- a. Draw upon your professional insight (background and experience) when reviewing evidence.
- b. Discussions with staff and team members are part of the process to create a fair and secure evidence base upon which corporate judgements are made. The professional expertise of individuals, as opposed to individual opinions, informs discussions.
- c. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is opinion or evidence. This applies to Team members' judgments as well.
- d. Judgements must be robust, fully supported by evidence, defensible, and must inform the essential questions.
- e. Judgements, while inherently evaluative, must be reliable in that others would make the same judgment from the same evidence.

**Communicate clearly, simply and cooperatively.**

- a. Be frank and open.

- b. Ask forthright questions.
- c. Express judgments concisely and succinctly.
- d. Listen carefully to others.

**Adhere to professional norms of courtesy, timeliness and responsibility.**

- a. Whenever possible, work to others' convenience.
- b. Be on time; remain on time. Stick to the schedule to minimize disruptions to the school environment and allow scheduled parties to contribute fully.
- c. Handle all issues not pertinent to the review during travel times or break times, i.e. phone calls to home and school.
- d. Expect to remain on-site until the team has reached consensus on the essential questions.
- e. Turn off cellular phones during panel review work time.

### Guiding Questions for Review Panelists

The review panel's charge is to consider and advise the Commissioner on two Key Questions. The guiding questions are intended to assist panel members in performing the data and document review and analysis undertaken to answer the two Key Questions. Panel members are expected to consider and formulate responses to the guiding questions while preparing for and implementing the review.

**Key Question One:**

**Does the school have a sound plan for improving student performance?**

- A. Has the school analyzed appropriate data and program information to accurately identify the gaps in student performance and determined why those gaps exist?**
- School has considered:
    - Student assessment results ( multiple and appropriate sources )
      - Students are regularly assessed relative to State and local student performance standards.
      - Student assessment results are used to identify key weaknesses in student learning and to review and improve curricula, courses, and instructional practices.
    - Current instructional practices
      - A variety and range of instructional strategies are utilized to address differences in student learning needs, modes of expression, and social and cultural backgrounds.
    - The quality of the curriculum and its alignment with state learning standards in the Curriculum Frameworks:
      - The school has a documented curriculum (guide, map, scope and sequence) in each core area at each grade level that is aligned with the Frameworks.
      - There is a process in place for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's curriculum.
    - The quality and appropriateness of the school's programs and services
      - The approved curriculum is being taught to all students.
      - Curriculum planning and instructional programs are based on the school's vision, goals, and the needs of the school, district and community.
    - Structure and schedule of the school day and year
    - Staff qualifications and characteristics
      - Teachers demonstrate working knowledge of the observed content area.
      - Teachers have access to and utilize copies of the State learning standards and the school's curricula in developing units and lesson plans.
      - The effectiveness of previous school improvement planning efforts
      - Staffing placement patterns
      - Other pertinent data

- School clearly identifies and prioritizes its problems and concerns
  - School clearly articulates its understanding of the problems it has identified and has developed written statements of these priority problems
  - School clearly explains its thinking about why the problems exist and has documented the identified reasons.
- B. Does the plan set out clear improvement goals with specific objectives that are grounded in the school's analysis of the reasons for poor student performance?**
- Goals have a focus on teaching and learning
  - Objectives are directly tied to specific findings in areas of identified weakness
  - Goals and objectives are reasonable and achievable
  - Goals and objectives are specific and measurable
- C. In order to accomplish each improvement objective, does the plan specify strategies which appear likely to lead to improved student results?**
- Strategies selected appear to be directly connected to the identified root causes.
  - Successful implementation of the strategies would directly impact the identified weakness in student performance.
  - Strategies selected are research-based or have a demonstrated level of effectiveness.
- D. Are the school's written improvement planning document(s) clear and specific enough to guide their implementation of planned improvement initiatives?**
- Planning documents referenced in sections A - C ( above ) are articulated in writing and include: statement of the problem(s), analysis of the causal factors, measurable goal(s) and objectives, and specific strategies.
  - Benchmarks have been established to check for periodic progress and specific methods of evaluation for overall results have been articulated.
  - Detailed, written action plans have been generated or provision has been made for their development to guide the implementation of the school's improvement initiatives.
  - Action plans identify specific steps (actions) which must be taken.
  - Action plans articulate realistic timelines for implementation and completion of tasks.
  - Action plans specify resources / assistance needed
  - Action plans identify staff / persons needed for implementation / oversight of specific actions
  - Clear linkage between identified improvement objectives and planned solutions
- E. Was the School Improvement Plan developed through a process that will support its successful implementation?**
- Involved a representative group
  - Considered previous improvement plans and their effectiveness
  - Planned for regular review of progress
  - Tied in professional development planning with goals and objectives of the school improvement plan
  - Communicated the plan to all stakeholders
  - Staff understands their role in and responsibility for implementation of actions
  - School is actually implementing the plan
  - School has a process for on-going evaluation of the plan's implementation and for making adjustments when needed as a result of this monitoring

### Key Question Two

#### Are the conditions in place for the successful implementation of the improvement plan(s)?

**A. Does the school have effective leadership and sound management?**

- School leaders communicate effectively
- School leaders nurture and support a positive school climate and recognize the importance of a strong morale
- School leaders effectively focus on high expectations and communicate the school's vision in a positive way.

- School leaders guide improvement efforts with confidence, energy and purpose
  - School leaders effectively involve a broad range of stakeholders in decision-making
  - School staff expresses confidence in leaders
- B. Is there evidence that the school's faculty supports the planned improvement efforts?**
- Staff agrees with the school's assessment of identified needs
  - Staff agrees with the improvement strategies being planned / implemented
  - Staff expresses a firm belief that improvement planning will result in measurable improved student performance
  - Staff are actively engaged in implementing the school's improvement initiatives
  - School leaders and staff have developed a process for regular review and assessment of instructional practice
- C. Is the school receiving adequate guidance and support from the district leadership?**
- District leaders are well-informed of the needs of the school
  - District leaders have been directly involved with the development of the school's School Improvement plan
  - District leaders review the School Improvement Plan and provide appropriate feedback to the school
  - District provides financial resources to support improvement efforts
  - District provides human resources to support improvement efforts

Available online at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/panel/>

**APPENDIX E  
MADOE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT MAPPING PROCESS RUBRIC**

**RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING  
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROCESS**

<b>Rating:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Excellent</b> - All criteria met fully and consistently
	<b>2</b>	<b>Adequate</b> - Criteria met, but with some inconsistency and with room for improvement
	<b>1</b>	<b>Inadequate</b> - Criteria filled poorly and/or inconsistently
	<b>0</b>	<b>Not Met</b> - Criteria have not been met

<b>Step 1: Determine student performance strengths and weaknesses</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has examined three or more sources of data in order to identify weaknesses in student performance. These sources include MCAS, other standardized tests, and/or district and school assessments.</p> <p>The school has consistently disaggregated data sources by gender, race, LEP and SPED status as well as by course, curriculum, and/or participation in special programs and services. The school has examined patterns in this data over time.</p> <p>School has used multiple data sources to confirm the patterns identified in any single source.</p>	<p>The school has only thoroughly analyzed their MCAS data and has not performed an in-depth analysis of other sources of data.</p> <p>The school has disaggregated some of its data, but not in all areas and/or not over time.</p> <p>The school has not confirmed patterns in student performance through examination of more than one source of data.</p>	<p>The school has not examined sources of data beyond the MCAS report sent by the testing company.</p> <p>The school has not disaggregated data or examined patterns over time beyond what is provided in the MCAS report.</p> <p>The school has not compared patterns of performance in multiple sources of data.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
<b>Step 2: Set student performance goals</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>Goals clearly address <u>prioritized</u> areas of weakness in student performance identified in student data.</p> <p>Goals are specific, measurable and rigorous.</p>	<p>Goals address some areas of weakness in student performance, but may not address the most critical areas of need.</p> <p>Goals are broad and are not stated in specific, measurable terms.</p>	<p>Goals are overly broad and are not connected to areas of weaknesses in student performance as identified in student data.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
<b>Step 3: Define student learning objectives</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has used MCAS item analysis and other data analysis to identify specific weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Student Learning Objectives identify specific weaknesses in</p>	<p>The school has not used MCAS item analysis or other data analysis to identify specific weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge.</p> <p>The school does not specify</p>	<p>The school has not identified specific weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

<p>the skills and knowledge of specific student groups.</p> <p>Student Learning Objectives are articulated with reference to specific learning standards wherever appropriate.</p>	<p>differences in the skills and knowledge of different student groups.</p> <p>Descriptions of the weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge do not reference the learning standards.</p>		
<b>Step 4: Identify the most significant causes of weaknesses in students' knowledge and skills</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has examined instructional practice and articulated the reasons for poor student performance in each Student Learning Objective.</p> <p>The school has prioritized causes related to instruction, curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>The school has prioritized causes that should have a significant impact on student learning and over which the school or district has a significant amount of control.</p>	<p>The school may have speculated about reasons for poor student performance, but has not based those speculations on an examination of instructional practice.</p> <p>The school has not prioritized causes related to instruction, curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>The school has included causes related to factors over which the school and district have little control.</p>	<p>The school has not attempted to identify reasons for poor student performance.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
<b>Step 5: Establish instructional change objectives</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has articulated the learning experiences students need in order to gain the skills and knowledge identified in the student learning objectives.</p> <p>The school has clearly articulated the changes in instruction that must be made in order to provide students with high quality learning experiences and has set specific instructional change objectives.</p> <p>The changes the school plans to make directly address the causes of poor student performance.</p>	<p>The school may have identified necessary changes in instruction, but has not articulated how these changes will offer students the learning experience necessary to address the skills and knowledge they lack.</p> <p>The links between the changes the school plans to make and the causes of poor student performance are unclear.</p>	<p>The school has not articulated the learning experiences student need in order to improve student performance.</p> <p>The changes the school plans to make do not focus on improving instruction.</p> <p>The changes the school plans to make do not address the causes of poor student performance.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>

Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

<b>Step 6: Assess current activities</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has examined the effectiveness of current practices in the areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>The school plans to modify current practices to improve their implementation and effectiveness and to integrate them with new strategies.</p> <p>The school plans to discontinue practices that have not proven to be effective.</p>	<p>The school has made little attempt to examine the effectiveness of current practices in the areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>The school has some plans to integrate current practices with new strategies, but has not thoroughly examined their past implementation or effectiveness.</p> <p>The school has not considered whether ineffective practices should be discontinued.</p>	<p>The school has not attempted to examine the effectiveness of current practices.</p> <p>Planned changes involve adding new programs and activities without consideration for how these strategies will be integrated with existing practices.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
<b>Step 7: Research and select new strategies</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has researched potential strategies to identify those which will be most effective.</p> <p>Strategies are directly targeted to accomplish the instructional change objectives and to address the skills and knowledge identified in the student learning objectives.</p> <p>Strategies respond directly to the causes of weaknesses in student performance identified by the school.</p>	<p>The school has selected strategies without researching their strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>Strategies are not consistently targeted to accomplish the instructional change objectives and to address the skills and knowledge identified in the student learning objectives.</p> <p>Strategies do not consistently address the causes of weaknesses in student performance identified by the school.</p>	<p>The school has selected strategies without researching their strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>The strategies do not target specific identified weaknesses in students' skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Selected strategies do not address the causes of poor student performance.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>
<b>Step 8: Develop a written plan</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school's written plan articulates the logical connections between the decisions made at each step in the planning process.</p> <p>The plan identifies: activities necessary to implement strategies for each objective, person(s) responsible, the timeline, resources needed and how implementation will be monitored.</p>	<p>The school's written plan does not fully articulate the logical connections between the decisions made at each step in the planning process.</p> <p>The plan identifies only some of the following: activities necessary to implement strategies for each objective, person(s) responsible, the timeline,</p>	<p>The school's written plan does not articulate the logical connections between the decisions made at each step in the planning process.</p> <p>The plan does not identify activities necessary to implement strategies for each objective, person(s) responsible, the timeline, resources needed and/or</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

<p>All instructional staff are familiar with the plan and can articulate the connection between weaknesses in student performance and the strategies they will be implementing in the classroom.</p>	<p>resources needed and how implementation will be monitored.</p> <p>Some staff are unfamiliar with the plan. Instructional staff do not understand their role in implementing the plan at the classroom level.</p>	<p>how implementation will be monitored.</p> <p>Only the principal and planning team are familiar with the plan. Instructional staff do not understand their role in implementing the plan at the classroom level.</p>	
<p><b>Step 9: Establish benchmarks</b></p>			
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>0</b></p>
<p>The school has established standards by which they will measure changes in instruction and the student learning experience. The school has developed a system for observing classrooms and measuring progress toward those standards.</p> <p>The school has defined the incremental progress that should be made in student performance at set intervals. The school has developed a schedule of assessments to track this progress and a system for collecting, compiling and analyzing the results.</p>	<p>The school has established some standards by which to measure changes in instruction, but has not created an adequate system for measuring progress toward those standards.</p> <p>The school has defined the incremental progress that should be made in student performance at set intervals, but has not developed an effective system for conducting assessments and collecting and compiling the results.</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>The school has developed a schedule of assessments, but has not defined the amount of incremental progress that should be made at set intervals.</p>	<p>The school has not established a method for measuring changes in instruction or the student learning experience.</p> <p>The school has not defined the incremental progress that should be made in student performance and plans to use only MCAS scores to measure progress toward reaching their goals.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p>Comments:</p>

Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

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<b>Step 10: Set a process and timeline for review of the school's plan</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>The school has established a clear timeline and process for periodic review of the plan. The school has assigned oversight responsibilities to specific people.</p> <p>The school follows through in tracking the implementation of the plan and its effects on student performance.</p> <p>The planning team regularly analyzes benchmark data and uses it to make adjustments to implementation.</p> <p>When necessary, the planning team uses benchmark data to revise objectives and strategies.</p>	<p>The timeline and process for periodic review of the plan are vague. The school has not assigned oversight responsibilities to specific people.</p> <p>The school is inconsistent in tracking the implementation of the plan and its effects on student performance.</p> <p>The planning team inconsistently reviews benchmark data and makes only simple adjustments to implementation.</p> <p>The planning team does not revise objectives and strategies when needed.</p>	<p>The school has not established a timeline or process for periodic review of the plan.</p> <p>The school does not follow through in tracking the implementation of the plan and its effects on student performance.</p> <p>The team does not review benchmark data or make adjustments to the plan.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>

**APPENDIX F  
GLOSSARY**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Accountability *	State or district policies related to holding districts, schools, and/or students responsible for performance. School and district accountability systems typically include efforts to assess and rate schools or districts based on student performance and other indicators, to publicly report on school or district performance, and to provide rewards and sanctions for schools or districts based on performance or improvement over time. Student accountability generally refers to efforts to hold students responsible for their own performance by requiring students to pass a test to be promoted from grade to grade or to pass an exam to graduate from high school.
Achievement Gap	Significant differences in achievement for different groups of students. In Massachusetts schools monitor scores for gaps in gender, race, poverty, special needs, and English proficiency and develop plans to eliminate those differences in achievement.
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, required annual improvement in reading, mathematics and science for students in grades 3 through 8 and grades 9-10 to reach <i>proficiency</i> by the 2013-14 school year.
Alignment **	<p>The process of linking content and performance standards to assessment, instruction, and learning in classrooms. One typical alignment strategy is the step-by-step development of (a) content standards, (b) performance standards, (c) assessments, and (d) instruction for classroom learning. Ideally, each step is informed by the previous step or steps, and the sequential process is represented as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Content Standards → Performance Standards → Assessments → Instruction for Learning</p> <p>In practice, the steps of the alignment process will overlap. The crucial question is whether classroom teaching and learning activities support the standards and assessments. System alignment also includes the link between other school, district, and state resources. Alignment supports the goals of the standards, i.e., whether professional development priorities and instructional materials are linked to what is necessary to achieve the standards.</p>
Alternative Assessment **  (Also authentic or performance assessment).	An assessment that requires students to generate a response to a question rather than choose from a set of responses provided to them. Exhibitions, investigations, demonstrations, written or oral responses, journals, and portfolios are examples of the assessment alternatives we think of when we use the term "alternative assessment." Ideally, alternative assessment requires students to actively accomplish complex and significant tasks, while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems. Alternative assessments are usually one key element of an assessment system.
Assessment *	An exercise—such as a written test, portfolio, or experiment—that seeks to measure a student's skills or knowledge in a subject area.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Assessment System **	The combination of multiple assessments into a comprehensive reporting format that produces comprehensive, credible, dependable information upon which important decisions can be made about students, schools, districts, or states. An assessment system may consist of a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessment, an alternative assessment system, and classroom assessments.
Authentic Assessment ***	An evaluation of what students actually know and can do; may include portfolios, journals, observations, taped readings, videotaping, and teacher-student conferences.
Basic Skills *	The traditional building blocks of a curriculum that are most commonly associated with explicit instruction in early elementary language arts and mathematics. Basic skills have historically been taught in isolation. Basic skills include teaching the letters of the alphabet, how to sound out words, spelling, grammar, counting, adding, subtracting, and multiplying.
Benchmark **	A detailed description of a specific level of student performance expected of students at particular ages, grades, or development levels. Benchmarks are often represented by samples of student work. A set of benchmarks can be used as "checkpoints" to monitor progress toward meeting performance goals within and across grade levels, i.e., benchmarks for expected mathematics capabilities at Grades 3, 7, 10 graduation.
Bloom's Taxonomy ***	Benjamin Bloom's theory of the hierarchy of learning which includes (1) knowledge, the basic level of understanding; (2) comprehension, grasping the meaning of knowledge; (3) application, the ability to apply knowledge in actual situations; (4) analysis, the ability to break down information and study it as a whole and as pieces of a whole; (5) synthesis, the ability to rearrange things learned for useful purposes; (6) evaluation, the ability to make judgments about things learned.
Board of Education (BOE)	Nine person Board; the chairperson and five other members are appointed by the governor. The Chancellor of Higher Education and the President of the Student Advisory Council are <i>ex officio</i> members. A labor seat must be filled by one of three recommendations by the Boston Labor Council to the governor.
Chronic Under-Performance	An underperforming school that the BOE determines has failed to make significant performance after two years of implementing the improvement plan approved by the BOE
Classroom Assessment **	An assessment developed, administered, and scored by a teacher or set of teachers with the purpose of evaluating individual or classroom student performance on a topic. Classroom assessments may be aligned into an assessment system that includes alternative assessments and either a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessment. Ideally, the results of a classroom assessment are used to inform and influence instruction that helps students reach high standards.
Collaboration ***	Two or more classroom teachers, aides, special education or itinerant teachers, parents or other school volunteers who plan and work together to accomplish a goal such as improving student achievement.
Comprehensive Improvement Planning ***	Planning process for schools focused on improving student achievement and serving as an application for certain state funds; formerly called the consolidated plan.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Content Standards **  (Also Learning Standards)	Broadly stated expectations of what students should <i>know and be able to do</i> in particular subjects and grade levels. Content standards define for teachers, schools, students, and the community not only the expected student skills and knowledge, but what schools should teach. An example of a Grades 3-4 language arts standard is: "Read aloud grade-appropriate imaginative/literary and informational/expository text fluently, accurately, and with comprehension, using appropriate timing, change in voice, and expression."
Continuous Assessment ***	Tests and other measures teachers use on a regular basis to understand what students know and can do, what progress they are making, and where more work is needed.
Continuous Progress ***	A student's unique progression at his or her own rate without being compared to others in the program and without links to age or number of years in school.
Cooperative Learning ***	An instructional method in which students are divided into small learning groups, are assigned roles, and work together to accomplish a common goal or task. Students are held accountable individually but rely on each other for the success of the group.
Core Concepts ***	Main ideas; for example, core concepts for democracy might include equality, responsibility, choice, and freedom.
Corrective Action	Sanctions that apply to schools in need of improvement (ESEA) that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four years. Schools in Corrective Action must be involved in one of the following:
Criterion-referenced test (CRT) *	A standardized test that is aligned with a state's academic standards and thus intended primarily to measure students' performance with respect to those standards rather than to the performance of their peers nationally. Compare with "norm-reference test."
Curriculum ***	The knowledge and skills a school intends to teach students, often organized in an outline indicating the order in which topics are taught.
Curriculum alignment ***	A process to ensure an agreed-upon curriculum for an entire school. In many Massachusetts schools, teachers from all grade levels work together to be sure all of the content and skills in the Core Content for Assessment are taught.
Curriculum Framework ***	Guidelines available for schools and districts in the development of local curriculum. Massachusetts state law requires the state board to develop curriculum frameworks as a resource for local schools and districts, but does not mandate that it be used.
Cycle 1, Cycle 2, Cycle 3	Two-year periods at the conclusion of which the DOE assigns school improvement and performance ratings for each school in MA
Developmentally appropriate practice ***	Teaching methods that take into account students' developmental levels and needs. For example, six- and seven-year-old students cannot sit still for long periods of time and need to be more active as they learn.
Differentiated Instruction ***	Varied teaching methods that meet different needs of students such as learning styles, learning levels and interests as opposed to using a textbook with all students on the same page at the same time.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Dimensions **	Desired knowledge or skills measured in an assessment and usually represented in a scoring rubric. For example, a measurement of student teamwork skills on a performance assessment might include 6 dimensions: <i>adaptability</i> (recognizing problems and responding appropriately), <i>coordination</i> (organizing team activities to complete a task on time), <i>decision making</i> (using available information to make decisions), <i>interpersonal</i> (interacting cooperatively with other team members), <i>leadership</i> (providing direction for the team), and <i>communication</i> (clearly and accurately exchanging information between team members).
Disaggregated data ***	For test results, data broken out by subgroups such as gender, race, income level, disability, second language acquisition, etc..
Education Reform Act of 1993 (MERA)	Sweeping reform legislation signed on June 18, 1993 in direct response to the plaintiffs' affirmative decision in the <i>McDuffy</i> decision.
Education Management Audit Council (EMAC)	The entity, consisting of 5 members appointed by the Governor, that "directs and oversees the conduct of school and district audit performed by the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability." Currently, EMAC oversees district audits only; the DOE will continue to conduct school evaluations at least through the 2004-2005 school year.
Effective Schools Network ***	Formerly a federally-funded program that provided assistance for school planning by bringing together staff, students, parents, and community members to offer a first-rate education; strong focus on student performance and high expectations for all students. Though no longer funded, many of the school networks continue.
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) *	The Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, this Act authorizes the federal government's single largest investment in elementary and secondary education. The ESEA focuses on children from high-poverty communities and students at risk of educational failure. The Act authorizes several well known federal education programs including Title I, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Bilingual Education (Title VII), and Impact Aid.
English Language Learners *  (Also Limited-English Proficient Students)	Students enrolled in U.S. schools who speak a language other than English and haven't yet mastered English. They are also known as limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. They are either immigrants or children born in the United States. Each state has a different way of ascertaining whether a child is an English-language learner. Usually such students receive bilingual education or English-as-a-second-language services.
Extended school services ***	Programs providing additional instructional services outside the regular school day for students at risk of not meeting academic expectations; intended as after school, weekend, or summer programs; may be used during the regular school day with permission of the commissioner of education. Individual schools and districts decide how to offer these services.
Fact-Finding	A team of individuals who conduct a diagnostic review of an underperforming school to determine the reasons for a school's underperformance and its prospects for improvement. The fact-finding report will be incorporated into the school improvement plan that will be the basis for a determination of chronic underperformance.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Gap Analysis	An analysis of the differences in academic achievement between sub-groups defined by race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, low income, and Special Education.
Goals 2000 *	A federal program that provides grants to states and school districts in exchange for the establishment of challenging academic content standards and accompanying assessments. It codifies the six national education goals that emerged from the 1989 education summit of President Bush and the nation's governors. Introduced by the Clinton administration and adopted by Congress in 1993, Goals 2000 has now expanded to eight national education goals.
High school restructuring ***	Changing the way high schools operate for the purpose of improving student achievement; could include integrated academic portfolios, student-initiated culminating projects, school-sponsored and school-approved activities, and exit reviews. These changes are not required but are ways schools can improve student learning.
High stakes accountability system ***	In education, a system of setting learning goals, testing to see if goals are met, and establishing significant consequences for results ; consequences could include financial rewards for meeting goals or school takeover for failure to meet goals. Some states have high stakes for students including retention or denial of high school diploma if goals are not achieved.
Improvement Ratings	The MA School Performance Rating Process assigns a rating to each school in two-year cycles based on the school's MCAS performance compared to the expected improvement, defined by AYP.
<i>In Need of Improvement</i>	Label assigned to a school that does not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on MCAS for two years in row. Based on this designation, sanctions defined by ESEA will apply to the school
Inclusion *	The practice--sometimes called "full inclusion"--of educating children with disabilities alongside their non- disabled peers, often in a regular classroom in their neighborhood school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that disabled children be educated in the "least restrictive environment" possible.
Individual Education Plan (IEP)	A plan developed by teachers and parents which outlines a student's program of study and the particular education services the child receives.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) *	Landmark 1975 federal law, originally known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In exchange for federal money, schools must guarantee that all children with disabilities receive a "free, appropriate public education." Different portions of the law cover children from birth to age 21. The law has been amended several times but originally addressed children with disabilities who were kept out of the public schools, and taught either at home or institutions
In-service education ***	Professional development; education and training to provide teachers and other school professionals with additional knowledge and skills to support improved student learning; in Massachusetts four days are set aside during the 185- day school year for professional development.
Instruction ***	Methods and techniques used to teach the curriculum.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Learning disability *	Encompasses a wide variety of learning difficulties; the criteria for the label varies from state to state. In general, a learning disability describes a discrepancy between a child's intelligence and academic achievement. Some children have learning disabilities only in specific areas, such as reading or math.
Learning styles ***	Different ways of learning. See also multiple intelligences.
MCAS	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System is the test developed by the DOE to measure student performance
MEAP	Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program was the MA testing program that existed prior to the Education Reform Act of 1993; It was not based on curriculum frameworks (at the time, no statewide curriculum frameworks existed) and did not generate individual student results.
MERA	Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993
National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) *	NAEP, known as "the nation's report card," is a national testing program administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. Since 1969, NAEP tests have been conducted periodically in reading, math, science, writing, history, and geography. The NAEP trend assessment provides comparable data over time on the achievement of 9, 13, and 17 year olds across the nation. The NAEP main assessment allows for regional and state-by-state comparisons of the educational attainment of 4th, 8th and 12th grade students.
Needs assessment ***	An analysis of data collected at a school, usually in preparation for school planning, that identifies areas that need particular attention. Information might be collected from student testing; teacher, parent or student surveys; focus groups, or other means.
Norm-referenced test (NRT)	A standardized test designed primarily to compare the performance of students with that of their peers nationally. Such tests do not generally measure how students perform in relation to a state's own academic standards. Compare with "criterion-referenced test."
Office for Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)	The agency established to conduct school and district audits that is "within but not subject to the control of the DOE."
On-demand Assessment **	An assessment that takes place at a predetermined time and place, usually under uniform conditions for all students being assessed. The SAT, district and state tests, and most in-class unit tests and final exams are examples of on-demand assessments.
Open Response test item ***	Test items or questions requiring students to write answers to questions using their knowledge and skills rather than to respond in a single word or sentence; used to assess reading, science, mathematics, social studies, arts and humanities, and practical living/vocational studies; also referred to as open-ended items.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Opportunity to Learn (OTL) **	To provide students with the teachers, materials, facilities, and instructional experiences that will enable them to achieve high standards. Opportunity to learn (OTL) is what takes place in classrooms that enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills that are expected. OTL can include <i>what</i> is taught, <i>how</i> it is taught, by <i>whom</i> , and with <i>what</i> resources.
Outcomes-based education *	An education theory that guides curriculum by setting goals for students to accomplish. Outcomes-based education focuses more on these goals, or outcomes, than on "inputs," or subject units. This theory has drawn intense criticism from parent groups who fear that, by focusing on outcomes, schools are inflicting values onto students.
Performance Improvement Mapping Process	The DOE school improvement planning model
Performance Standards **	Explicit definitions of what students must do to demonstrate proficiency at a specific level on the content standards. For example, the performance level "exceptional achievement" on a dimension "communication of ideas" is reached when the student <i>examines the problem from several different positions and provides adequate evidence to support each position.</i>
Portfolio *	A systematic and organized collection of a student's work throughout a course or class year. It measures the student's knowledge and skills and often includes some form of self-reflection by the student.
Professional development ***	Activities designed to help teachers expand their knowledge and ability to help students learn; in-service days are used for professional development.
Professional development plan ***	Part of the comprehensive improvement planning process in which learning needs of staff are identified and plans are made to acquire appropriate training focused on improving student achievement.
Proficient (Massachusetts definition)	Students demonstrate solid understanding of challenging subject matter and solve a wide variety of problems.
Reform Network *	An association of educators, schools, or districts joined together to provide mutual support as they work on common plans for improving education. Popular reform networks include Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools and James Comer's School Development Program.
Reliability ***	In testing, answers the questions: Is the test consistent over time? If the same students take a test a second time, will they score the same?
Remedial education *	Instruction that seeks to bring students deficient in basic skills up to standard levels in essential subjects such as writing, reading, and math.
Restructuring	This must begin not later than the beginning of the seventh year of failing to make AYP. One of the following actions must be taken: state takeover; private management; conversion to charter school; or recontituion. All corrective action must be consistent with state and local laws and collective bargaining.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Rewards ***	In Massachusetts, money given to schools that meet or exceed their improvement goals (in the meeting goals category), are in the progressing category and have improved over the previous two years, are pacesetter schools, or reach a recognition point. Rewards are given to the school for school improvement to be determined by the school council, or principal, if there is no council. Funds can be used for staff bonuses.
Sanctions ***	Consequences for schools in the assistance category that fail to meet improvement goals; could include school audits, assistance from highly skilled educators or school improvement grants, required training, removal of school council members, teachers or principals and/or student transfers depending on the level of school assessment scores.
Scale score ***	Underlying score from which all other scores are calculated; on the CTBS the scale score is a range of 100-999 representing a continuum of kindergarten through grade 12; as a child gets older, the scale score should be going up to represent growth in learning.
School-based management or Site-based management	The shift of decision-making authority from school districts to individual schools. Such proposals vary, but they usually give control of a school's operation to a school council composed of parents, teachers, and local administrators.
School Panel Review Team	A group of individuals who evaluate the improvement efforts and plans of a school that, based on the School Performance Rating Process, has been referred for review to determine whether it is under-performing.
School Performance Rating Process (SPRP)	A process conducted by DOE to evaluate the performance and the improvement made by a school during a two-year cycle. The evaluation is based on MCAS statistics.
Schools Referred for Review	A review of a school's improvement plan and the likelihood the plan will be implemented conducted by a team established by DOE. Schools with low ratings on performance and/or improvement may be selected for a review. Based on the findings of the review, the Commissioner may determine a school to be underperforming.
School Reform *	A generic term encompassing all kinds of efforts that are taking place to improve schools. Reform efforts focus on all aspects of schooling, from how schools are governed to what curriculum is taught in the classroom.
School report card ***	Report required by law to communicate school performance to parents and the public. It must include the following: student academic achievement, attendance, retention rates, drop-out rates, student transition to adult life, and school learning environment such as measures of parent involvement. It may include other measures of performance.
Standards *	Subject-matter benchmarks to measure students' academic achievement. Curriculum standards drive what students learn in the classroom. Most agree that public schools' academic standards need to be raised. However, there is national debate over how to implement such standards--how prescriptive they should be, and whether they should be national or local, voluntary or mandated.
Standards-based Reform **	A program of school improvement involving setting high standards for all students and a process for adapting instruction and assessment to make sure all students can achieve the standards.

## Mastering the Maze of School Accountability

Term	Meaning
Supplemental Services ***	Tutoring and other instructional help for students; to be available for certain students through the federal ESEA law.
Target	The increase in MCAS scores, defined in terms of the Composite Proficiency Index, that a school is assigned for each rating cycle. (ESEA uses the term "Adequate Yearly Progress" to describe the target.)
Title I *	The nation's largest federal education program, with a 2002 funding level of \$10.4 billion. Created in 1965 during the War on Poverty, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act serves remedial education programs to poor and disadvantaged children in nearly every school district in the country. Amendments to the law in 1994 were designed to tie the program to schoolwide and districtwide reforms based on challenging academic standards. Title I was formerly known as "Chapter 1."
Title II	Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program provides funds to LEAs to conduct in-service training of teachers.
Title VII *	A federal program to make limited-English-proficient students proficient at the English language. The full title of this program, created in 1984, is Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Funding goes to alternative approaches to bilingual education, such as English immersion programs, as well as traditional instruction in a student's native language.
Under Performing	A school with low MCAS scores that the Commissioner has determined to be lacking a sound plan for improvement and/or the conditions for the plan to be implemented successfully. An underperforming school will undergo a Fact-finding review and must have a school improvement plan approved by the BOE that will be the basis of a decision on chronic underperformance after two years of plan implementation.
Validity **	The extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure and the extent to which inferences and actions made on the basis of test scores are appropriate and accurate. For example, if a student performs well on a reading test, how confident are we that that student is a good reader? A valid standards-based assessment is aligned with the standards intended to be measured, provides an accurate and reliable estimate of students' performance relative to the standard, and is fair. An assessment cannot be valid if it is not reliable.
Writing across the Curriculum ***	Incorporating writing activities in other content areas like mathematics, arts and humanities, and science.

\* <http://www.edweek.org/context/glossary/>

\*\* <http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/CRESST/pages/glossary.htm>

\*\*\* <http://www.prichardcommittee.org/pubs/glossary.pdf>

**APPENDIX G**  
**USEFUL WEB SITES**

American Federation of Teachers  
<http://www.aft.org>

Council of Chief State School Officers  
<http://www.ccsso.org/>

Education Commission of the States about ESEA  
[http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/publications/home\\_publications.asp?am=5](http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/publications/home_publications.asp?am=5)

Harvard Civil Rights Project  
<http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/nclb.php>

Massachusetts Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook for ESEA  
<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplans03/macsa.doc>

Massachusetts Law: Power and Duties of the Department of Education (Ch. 69, Sec. 1J and Sec. 1K)  
<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/laws/mgl/69%2D1j.htm>  
<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/laws/mgl/69%2D1k.htm>

Massachusetts Law: Education Management Audit Council (Ch. 15, Sec. 55A)  
<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/laws/mgl/15%2D55a.htm>

Massachusetts Regulations: Under-Performing Schools and School Districts (603 CMR 2.00)  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr2.html>

Massachusetts School and District Accountability  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/>

Massachusetts School Performance Ratings Process (SPRP)  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ata.html/#sprp>

Massachusetts Submission: NCLB School and District Accountability System Approval  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/NCLBapproval.html>

Massachusetts Teachers Association  
<http://www.massteacher.org>

National Education Association  
[http://www;nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

National Center for Fair and Open Testing  
<http://www.fairtest.org>

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA)  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/eqa/default.html>

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