

Report to the Legislature: Intervention and Targeted Assistance (2016-2017)

Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2017 Line Item 7061-9408 and G.L. c.69, §1J(z) and 1K
April 19, 2018

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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

April 19, 2018

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to present the progress report for school year 2016-2017 (FY17), describing the ongoing work of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“the Department”) to offer targeted assistance to districts and schools across the Commonwealth with the highest need in order to maximize the rapid academic achievement of these students.

This report is responsive to reporting requirements outlined in [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 section 1J](#) and [Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2017](#), line item [7061-9408](#), which directs the Department to provide:

“ . . . targeted intervention to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming or chronically underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, including schools and districts which have been placed in levels 3, 4 or 5 of the state’s framework for accountability and assistance pursuant to departmental regulations. . . provided further, that the department shall issue a report not later than January 9, 2018 describing and analyzing all intervention and targeted assistance efforts funded by this item. ”

The Department has been working steadily and seeing progress among the lowest performing schools since 2010 when this work began under [An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap](#), legislation that provided new flexibilities and authorities for rapid school turnaround.¹ Under this statutory framework, the Department has been providing dedicated accountability, assistance, and targeted interventions to the state’s highest need schools and districts--that is, those districts and schools determined by the state’s accountability system to be performing in the lowest 20 percent of schools (Level 3), underperforming (Level 4), and chronically underperforming (Level 5).² To accomplish this important turnaround work, the Department strategically augments, to the extent possible, the state targeted assistance funds (line item [7061-9408](#)) with available federal resources to support school improvement.

¹ An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter12>.

² Massachusetts' state system thoroughly reviews and places schools and districts on a five-level scale, ranking the highest performing in Level 1 and lowest performing in [Level 5](#). This approach is detailed on the Department’s [website](#).

During FY2017, resources were used to provide an array of direct financial and professional development support to districts and schools across the spectrum of Levels 3, 4, and 5. These targeted resources are designed to meet significant challenges in closing achievement gaps, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of English learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty. A constellation of strategic, research based interventions have been employed to build capacity in these schools and districts to better serve the needs of their students and improve student performance.

As the following report will describe, the investment in our lowest performing schools and districts has led to steady improvements across the Commonwealth in closing achievement gaps. While we are not yet satisfied with the overall performance of these schools, the gaps with Level 1 and 2 schools are closing. Trends in schools that were in Levels 3-5 show they have made gains in both mathematics and English language arts, as measured by student performance, movement out of the lowest accountability levels, increases in graduation rates, and declines in dropout rates. Although the legislature has been consistently committed to providing resources to supplement federal support for school turnaround work, the significance of those resources will become more serious in FY19 and beyond as federal dollars shrink substantially. An examination of the state's investment will be necessary to maintain the forward progress that Massachusetts students have made.

This report conveys an overview of the Department's system for targeted assistance and intervention, a description of the strategies being used for school turnaround, and an analysis of the impact that Targeted Assistance funds have had on student performance in Level 3, 4, and 5 schools and districts.³

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

³ The Legislative Report on Targeted Assistance Funds from the previous year can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/category.aspx?section=legislative&yr=2017>, and all previous Legislative Reports on Targeted Assistance Funds can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/category.aspx?section=legislative&yr=All>.

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Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education respectfully submits this *Report to the Legislature: Intervention and Targeted Assistance (2016-2017)* pursuant to [Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2017](#), line item [7061-9408](#):

“For targeted intervention to schools and districts at risk of or determined to be underperforming or chronically underperforming under sections 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, including schools and districts which have been placed in levels 3, 4 or 5 of the state’s framework for accountability and assistance pursuant to departmental regulations. . .provided further, that the department shall issue a report not later than January 9, 2018 describing and analyzing all intervention and targeted assistance efforts funded by this item.”

and [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69 Section 1J \(z\)](#):

“The commissioner shall report annually to the joint committee on education, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the speaker of the house of representatives and the senate president on the implementation and fiscal impact of this section and section 1K. The report shall include, but not be limited to, a list of all schools currently designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming, a list of all districts currently designated as chronically underperforming, the plans and timetable for returning the schools and districts to the local school committee and strategies used in each of the schools and districts to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students...⁴”

Targeted Assistance Delivery System Overview

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“the Department”) has dedicated targeted assistance funds (state budget line item [7061-9408](#)) to intervene, assist, and turn around schools and districts *at risk* of underperforming (Level 3), *underperforming* (Level 4), or *chronically underperforming* (Level 5) within the *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance* (see Appendix I) in order to close student achievement gaps. All schools with sufficient data, including charter schools, are classified into Levels 1-5, with schools that are meeting their gap-narrowing goals in Level 1 and those that require the most intervention and assistance in Levels 3, 4, and 5. This work has been ongoing since 2010 under [An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap](#) (“the Act”) in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.⁵

The Department prioritizes resources and intervention to Level 3, 4, and 5 districts and schools and provides: direct expert assistance and accountability from Department staff and its approved turnaround partners, funding and research based resources, and preferred access to professional

⁴ M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J>.

⁵ An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter12>.

development. The majority of these efforts are designed to enhance school and district capacity to effectively and proactively use proven instructional and supportive practices to boost and sustain rapid gains in student achievement.

In instances when all other avenues to implement ambitious and accelerated reforms have been exhausted in Level 4 schools and districts and when it is in the best interest of students, the state has intervened, using the Act's legal authorities, and has placed districts and schools under state receivership into Level 5 or chronically underperforming status. At present, three districts and four schools are under state receivership.

The foundation for the Department's assistance and intervention in all Level 3, 4, and 5 schools is significant turnaround research conducted in Massachusetts' Level 4 schools and districts that have made rapid student achievement gains. Research examining effective turnaround practices in Massachusetts schools ("the [Turnaround Practices](#)") provides models and guidance for all low performing schools to improve their own systems and practices.⁶ The assistance and interventions provided through the Department are designed to promote schools' implementation of these key practices at Levels 3, 4, and 5. The [Turnaround Practices](#) research identified four key focus areas for successful school turnaround: 1) leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration; 2) intentional practices for improving instruction; 3) student specific supports and instruction to all students; and 4) school climate and culture that provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and families.⁷ Department research has further indicated that the most effective way to improve student performance is through the faithful implementation of these practices in an integrated and coherent system for improvement.

Statewide System of Support

Level 3, 4, and 5 schools and districts are supported by resources from throughout the Department. Mainly, the direct targeted assistance for turnaround in the high need districts and schools is overseen through the Statewide System of Support in the Center for District Support. The Statewide System of Support (SSoS) provides targeted assistance through a multi-pronged approach that offers customized support based on district size, capacity, and accountability status. In 2016-2017, the Statewide System of Support offered assistance affecting districts with a combined total of 395,917 students, which is 42 percent of the state's total student enrollment (953,748). Approximately 48 percent of these students were economically disadvantaged, 17 percent were English learners, and 19 percent were students with disabilities.

The basic design for assisting these districts and their schools involves addressing their distinct strengths and needs in the following ways:

- **Commissioner's Districts (Levels 3 and 4) and Districts in Receivership (Level 5)** - The state's 10 largest, highest poverty school districts, collectively known as the

⁶ Turnaround practices research and evaluation reports: <http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/accountability/support-for-level-3-4-and-5-districts-and-schools/school-and-district-turnaround/turnaround-in-massachusetts/turnaround-and-emerging-practices-reports.html>.

⁷ Ibid.

“Commissioner’s Districts,” are supported through full time liaisons, program specialists, and partners with expertise in collaborating with the large urban districts’ considerable content and leadership infrastructure. Services are based on needs identified through careful examination of data and focused by research, districts’ self-assessments, improvement plans, and direct observations conducted by these skilled liaisons. Additional assistance is provided by Department content experts in English language arts, mathematics, science, and English language development. Further external turnaround partners and consultants, who are vetted by the Department and hold documented records of accomplishment at improving outcomes for high-need and urban students, provide additional targeted supports based on need. The Commissioner’s Districts are: Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester. The accountability and assistance levels of these districts range from Levels 3-5.

In addition, each Level 5 district (Lawrence, Holyoke, and Southbridge) has a Receiver/Superintendent appointed by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Commissioner”) and receives prioritized assistance and support from the Commissioner and other staff from the Center for District Support and the Department. The 10 Commissioner’s Districts plus Southbridge collectively serve 195,186 students (approximately 20 percent of the state’s student enrollment). Approximately 60 percent of these students are economically disadvantaged, 26 percent are English learners, and 19 percent are students with disabilities.

- **District and School Assistance Centers (Levels 3 and 4)** - Support to the small and medium-sized districts is delivered through [District and School Assistance Centers](#) (“DSACs”) organized into six regions across the state.⁸ The DSACs serve a range of struggling districts and their schools that may lack sufficient infrastructure and human resources to deliver the complex array of supports necessary to further their educational improvement efforts. DSACs are staffed by a team of experts. These include former superintendents and principals, who provide experienced leadership and guidance, as well as specialists in mathematics, literacy, data use, and career vocational technical education. These Department representatives, who operate as an integrated regional assistance team, offer districts a focused menu of research based assistance, customizing that assistance to meet districts’ and schools’ specific needs aligned to the Turnaround Practices. In 2017, the DSACs offered assistance and interventions to 56 districts that served 203,459 students (approximately 21 percent of the state’s student enrollment). Within these districts, DSAC offered support to 95 schools that were performing at Level 3 or Level 4, emphasizing access to rigorous instruction for all students, including those living in poverty, English learners, and students with disabilities. Approximately 36 percent of the students in these districts are economically disadvantaged, 9 percent are English learners, and 19 percent are students with disabilities.

⁸ For more information about the DSACs: <http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/accountability/support-for-level-3-4-and-5-districts-and-schools/district-and-school-resource-centers-dsac/>.

The following sections describe how the funds have been used (in some cases in combination with available federal resources) and the results for schools and districts at the different levels of accountability status (i.e., Levels 3, 4, and 5).

Summary of Interventions and Impact in Level 3, 4, and 5 Schools and Districts

In the past, the Department has reported on progress of schools in Levels 3, 4 and 5 using measures of average Composite Performance Index (CPI) scores and movement of schools into Levels 1 and 2. This report will describe impact using other measures as the state transitions to the Next-Generation MCAS and revised accountability system. Anticipating the shift to the Next-Generation MCAS, the Board voted in November 2015 that districts and schools administering the Next-Generation MCAS assessment in grades 3-8 in spring 2017 would not have their accountability results negatively impacted based on those test scores. That decision is reflected in the amended regulation⁹ that the Board adopted at its April 2017 meeting, which allowed the Department to limit the use of Levels 1-3 this fall for any school that enrolls students in grades 3-8, so long as the school has a participation rate of at least 90 percent in the administration of the spring 2017 MCAS tests and does not have a persistently low graduation rate.

Schools identified as Level 4 and 5 as in 2016 retained their level designation, and the Commissioner did not exit any of these schools from their underperforming or chronically underperforming status in 2017. In addition, no new Level 4 or 5 designations were made in 2017. The 2017 Next-Generation MCAS results for grades 3-8 will serve as the baseline for future accountability reporting.

At the high school level, the legacy MCAS tests were administered in 2017, and assessment and accountability results will be reported as in the past. High schools serving only grades 9-12 will continue to be placed into an accountability and assistance level based on their Progress and Performance Index (PPI) and school percentile data, with adjustments for those schools with persistently low graduation rates, or low or very low assessment participation.

Given these changes in testing and accountability reporting, providing impact results for Level 3 schools in this report are limited. However, the following are highlights of impact for schools in Levels 4 and 5.

2017 Grades 3-8 Data Highlights

Level 5 schools (chronically underperforming)

- o ELA: 20.9% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Math: 22.3% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Science: 9.5% Proficient or Advanced
- o ELA Student Growth Percentile (SGP): 53.0
- o Math SGP: 46.0

⁹ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2018/2017-10/spec-item2.html#1>

Level 4 schools (underperforming)

- o ELA: 20.8% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Math: 17.9% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Science: 9.2% Proficient or Advanced
- o ELA SGP: 45.0
- o Math SGP: 34.0

State

- o ELA: 49.0% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Math: 47.9% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- o Science: 53.3% Proficient or Advanced
- o ELA SGP: 50.0
- o Math SGP: 50.0

2017 grade 10 data highlights

Level 4 schools (underperforming)

- o ELA: 62.3% Proficient or Advanced
- o Math: 41.6% Proficient or Advanced
- o Science: 27.0% Proficient or Advanced
- o ELA SGP: 33.0
- o Math SGP: 40.0

State

- o ELA: 91.0% Proficient or Advanced
- o Math: 79.0% Proficient or Advanced
- o Science: 74.0% Proficient or Advanced
- o ELA SGP: 50.0
- o Math SGP: 50.0

The following descriptions present the strategies used to support turnaround in struggling schools and districts by state accountability level, moving along the intervention continuum from Level 5 through Level 3 schools and districts.

Level 3 Schools

Level 3 schools are those performing in the lowest 20 percent of aggregate school performance, or with one or more subgroups among the lowest performing 20 percent relative to other schools in the Commonwealth, and/or with persistently low graduation rates.¹⁰

¹⁰ Schools with “persistently low” graduation rates have cohort graduation rates of less than 67 percent for the most recent four-year rate and less than 70 percent for each of the three prior five-year rates for any subgroup.

Level 3 Districts

Interventions: As with Level 4 schools and districts, the Department has utilized the Turnaround Practices at the district level to build capacity, tools, and resources for district and school leaders to target specific areas of need in Level 3 schools so they can proactively implement effective turnaround strategies. Some of the strategies provided to Level 3 districts include: partnering with district leaders on school visits and classroom observations, providing expert guidance to identify areas of need and research based solutions, facilitating regionally based professional development and peer networks that reflect cross district regional needs, offering leadership development and coaching, assisting with self-assessment and planning, and providing support and resources to bolster district efforts to improve these schools.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Department provided several different direct grant programs to support efforts in the lowest performing schools in Level 3 districts. Most direct grants provided to these districts included a combination of both state Targeted Assistance funds ([7061-9408](#)) and federal Title I funding (7043-1001). Districts supplemented support to their lowest performing Level 3 and 4 schools using these funds to build instructional and leadership capacity, improve student learning in core content areas, support improved results for English learners and students with disabilities, and support students' social, emotional, and health needs. All strategies aligned to the effective practices research.

Additionally, the [Five District Partnership Grant](#) Program supported a multi-year development process to create a common set of coordinated and integrated curricula, assessments, materials, and instruction among some of the state's lowest performing districts (Chelsea, Malden, Winthrop, Everett, and Revere) in the Greater Boston region. These districts share a transient student population in common, as families move among the districts in the area. This coordination is intended to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students by enabling them to move among the districts without experiencing gaps in instructional design and approach. The promising practices under development will be disseminated to other districts.

The Statewide System of Support also oversaw two grant programs that were specified in the FY2016 state budget line item [7061-9408](#). The Parent Engagement and Supplemental Science grant to Randolph Public Schools was closely integrated with that district's AIP. The Milton Public Schools Early Literacy Program grant helped meet the needs of public school students from low income households within the community. Both of these grant programs were designed to improve student performance and develop promising practices that the Statewide System of Support can disseminate more broadly to other districts.

Impact: In 2016, of the 54 districts designated Level 3 and offered services by the Statewide System of Support, five districts improved to Level 2 because they no longer had any schools designated as Level 3.

Level 4 Schools

Level 4 schools are identified, from among the lowest percentiles of performance, as underperforming schools based on an analysis of four-year trends in absolute achievement,

student growth, and academic improvement trends. By statute under the Act, Level 4 schools are allowed flexibilities and autonomies to accelerate student achievement and are given targeted assistance from the Department.

Interventions: As noted earlier, the assistance provided to Level 4 schools is based on the [Turnaround Practices](#) research that has identified key practices in Level 4 schools that have seen achievement gains and have exited from Level 4 status. Tools, resources, coaching, grants, and networking opportunities provided through Department assistance are designed to promote these schools' implementation of these key practices. Examples of this assistance include: facilitating self-assessment processes based on the Turnaround Practices, assisting with data analysis to identify strengths and areas for improvement, engaging in school visits to inform assistance and resources needed, providing grants to address identified needs, enabling key stakeholders to participate in the development of turnaround plans, supporting schools with a monitoring site visit process, soliciting and vetting turnaround partners who provide expert assistance on the implementation of key Turnaround Practices, providing coaching and training aligned to priorities identified in turnaround plans, supporting the implementation of turnaround plans, and assisting leaders with monitoring implementation and revisions of turnaround plans.

A list of the schools currently in Level 4, in accordance with [M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J](#), can be found in Appendix II.¹¹

Level 4 Districts

According to the Massachusetts accountability system, district levels are generally determined by the level of the lowest performing school operating within the district. Level 4 districts can also be determined by district review findings and other evidence of systemic challenges.

Interventions: Districts with Level 4 schools receive the range of supports to implement Turnaround Practices that are outlined in the previous section. Additionally, the districts with significant systemic challenges receive targeted support through an Accelerated Improvement Planning (AIP) process. This process is intended to address need areas identified by the Department in district reviews <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/district-review/documentation.html> and serve as a strategy to respond to recommendations from the district review and promote strategic planning and implementation of effective practices for rapid improvement. AIP effectiveness as an assistance strategy was noted in an earlier [external evaluation](#)¹², indicating that it assists districts to: use data more effectively, improve structures for collaboration, and increase focus on developing principals' capacity to serve as instructional leaders, resulting in higher expectations for students.

Impact: In fall of 2016 Salem Public Schools was released from AIP monitoring after demonstrating they could effectively implement and monitor their district plan without support from the Department. The school district submitted an AIP for 2016-17 and will continue to

¹¹ M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J>.

¹² American Institutes for Research. "Evaluation of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) Process: Impact of AIP on District Capacity, Teaching Practices, and Student Outcomes in Underperforming Districts." February 2015, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2015/02AIP-Evaluation.pdf#search=%22Accelerated%20Improvement%20Planning%20model%22>

implement the systems they have developed through this intervention. New Bedford Public Schools implemented their 2016-17 AIP without support from a plan manager while monitoring by the Department continued. By spring 2017, the district demonstrated sufficient capacity to implement and monitor their district plan without support from the Department, leading the Department to release the district from AIP monitoring in July 2017 upon submission of their plan for [2017-18](#). Randolph Public Schools shifted from the AIP approach to the Department's new [Planning for Success](#) model for district planning in order to develop a new three-year district plan and one-year action plan. The Department provided support in the development of the plan, but the district implemented the plan without support from the Department. Monitoring continued until fall 2017 when the district was released from Level 4 status.

Interventions: Another targeted assistance and intervention effort provided to strengthen Level 4 capacity is the facilitation of and strategic support for the [Springfield Empowerment Zone](#) (“Zone”). The [Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership](#) (SEZP) is a voluntary partnership between the SEZP Board, Springfield Public Schools (SPS), and the Department, working in close collaboration with the Springfield Education Association (SEA) and aimed at rapidly improving outcomes for Springfield's middle and high school students. Created in 2014 to manage nine underperforming SPS middle schools serving roughly 80 percent of the Springfield district's students in grades six through eight, SEZP has supported leaders and educators to make bold changes in school programming by strategically exercising new autonomies.

In the school year 2016-17, SEZP made several organizational changes in schools including, but not limited to, bringing in a non-profit school manager (UP Education Network) and hiring school leaders with track records of success.

Level 5 Schools

Level 5 schools are those that are chronically underperforming, as defined by state law, [M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J](#).¹³ These schools, at the expiration of their Level 4 turnaround plan, failed to show enough improvement as required by the goals, benchmarks, and/or timetable of the turnaround plan. There were no new Level 5 schools identified in FY2017.

Interventions: The turnaround plans for the four Level 5 schools originally designated as chronically underperforming in October 2013, expired in May 2017 and were renewed for an additional three-year period in August 2017. These schools are: UP Academy Holland and Paul A. Dever School in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker School in New Bedford. UP Academy Holland is managed by a school operator (funded from state budget line item 7061-9408), while Morgan School and Parker School have superintendents as receivers to oversee their turnaround plans. The contract for the school operator that managed the Dever School expired and, effective July 1, 2017, the superintendent of Boston Public Schools was named as the person responsible for implementing the school's turnaround plan.

¹³ M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J>.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the four Level 5 schools placed significant emphasis on several key strategies. These included:

- Engaging teachers and staff in summer professional development and building structures for ongoing training throughout the school year designed to create and sustain healthy school cultures, develop curriculum, review student and school data, and involve families;
- Focusing on systems to reward and recognize staff in an effort to increase retention and overall satisfaction;
- Making use of data to identify essential areas of focus for students and schools; and
- Prioritizing family outreach and family engagement by creating specific plans and expectations for their schools and receiving training from partners, including community organizations, to design more effective strategies.

In addition, key activities related to implementation of turnaround plans continued from prior years. In FY2017, these schools continued their strong focus on the following: monitoring site visits and classroom observation training to assist schools with ongoing assessment and analysis of their educational programs, English language development incorporated into classroom activities, use of extended time, and establishment of additional supports for struggling students. These interventions were supported by local, state, and federal funds.

Level 5 Districts

Three districts have been designated as chronically underperforming, or Level 5, in accordance with [M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K](#).¹⁴ The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Board”) placed the Lawrence Public Schools under receivership as a Level 5 district in November 2011, the Holyoke Public Schools under receivership as of April 2015, and the Southbridge Public Schools under receivership as of January 2016.¹⁵ A list of these districts, in accordance with [M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J](#), can be found in Appendix III. Targeted strategic intervention and assistance from the Department began in 2011 when the first district was designated Level 5. These districts are in varying stages of implementing turnaround plans and research based turnaround strategies. An update about each of these school districts follows.

Lawrence Public Schools:

Interventions: In FY2017, students in Lawrence Public Schools continued to make strong gains - evidence that districts serving students from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds can meet high expectations. FY2017’s key initiatives included: fostering high-performing autonomous schools, bringing in partners to operate and support schools, increasing vacation-learning and summer-learning opportunities, increasing enrichment opportunities, implementing the revised teacher contract, expanding teacher leadership opportunities,

¹⁴ M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1K>.

¹⁵ The Department’s announcement that Holyoke Public Schools has been placed under receivership can be viewed at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=17923>; the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s determination to place Southbridge Public Schools under receivership can be viewed at: <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/392102/ocn663905261-2016-01-26.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

continuing the high school transformation, and expanding pre-school and kindergarten programs. Each school's program is tailored to the needs of its students.

Holyoke Public Schools:

Interventions: FY2017's key initiatives included: fostering autonomous schools through the use of individual school improvement plans, incubating partners to operate and support schools, increasing vacation-learning and summer-learning opportunities, increasing enrichment opportunities, expanding teacher leadership opportunities, and continuing the high school transformation and redesign. Each school's program is tailored to the needs of its students. The use of targeted assistance funds under line item 7601-9408 to assist Holyoke emphasized leadership training and turnaround plan development. The plan prioritizes providing:

- High quality instruction for all;
- Personalized pathways;
- Engaged students, family, and community;
- An effective and thriving workforce; and
- A system of empowered schools.

Southbridge Public Schools:

In FY2017, the use of targeted assistance funds under line item 7601-9408 for Southbridge emphasized leadership training and turnaround plan development. Under the receiver's direction, the district implemented a revised calendar which included more time for students and staff. The extended calendar coincided with the release of a new performance-based compensation system. The turnaround plan includes the following priority areas intended to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students:

- Ensuring an inclusive and supportive school community with high expectations and rigorous, equitable, and personalized instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners;
- Developing a district wide professional culture of highly effective teaching and leadership;
- Creating the conditions to enable and apply evidence-informed decision-making;
- Establishing systems and processes to cultivate and leverage family engagement and community partnerships; and
- Organizing the district and reallocating resources to ensure high-quality management, accountability, system wide coherence, and sustainability.

Cross-Cutting Assistance Themes

Some other practices and supports funded through state Targeted Assistance resources are cross-cutting and impact schools and districts across the three levels. The implementation of targeted assistance initiatives have resulted in changes in school and district performance, systems, and conditions. To achieve significant impact, the specific fund uses have been designed in partnership with the districts to advance practices that have been found through research to build capacity significantly for improvement in schools and districts.

The Statewide System of Support has provided extensive coaching, guidance, professional development, and networking opportunities for Level 3, 4, and 5 district and school leaders and educators. These strategic approaches to connecting key district and school leaders have yielded experiences that have informed systemic changes and resulted in improved systems across the districts.

In addition to building capacity to implement the Turnaround Practices research, additional cross-cutting strategies included the following approaches:

- Facilitating training and systematic implementation of programs designed to remove barriers to learning for high need students such as: Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Tier 1 Instruction, Tiered Math and Literacy Instruction, Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems, social emotional supports, and [Wraparound Zone](#)-related systems to provide effective access to learning for all students;
- Providing assistance, information, guidance, and networking for urban leaders through a variety of mechanisms, such as the Urban Superintendents' Network, the Urban Leaders' Network for School Climate & Student Support, and the District Turnaround Leaders' Network to build capacity through sharing of best practices and thought-partnering with others in similar roles to solve complex challenges that will improve student outcomes for every student;
- Coaching and networking for superintendents, principals, and teachers to facilitate and calibrate common understanding of effective instructional practices and the research based cycle of inquiry that leads to improved outcomes;
- Continuing partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents to provide a New Superintendents Induction Program that builds instructional leadership capacity across the state;
- Facilitating and offering high quality professional development at regional, district, and school levels on Learning Walkthroughs and data analysis that facilitate the cycle of inquiry, effective instructional and student support practices in academic content areas and for the needs of student subgroups, and integration of career vocational technical education shop classes with academic classes;
- Offering regionally based networking opportunities primarily for DSAC served districts, but open to Level 2 districts as well, which address a variety of topics specific to regional needs and focused on particular district and school roles, content, and student groups, including leadership for: principals, instructional leaders, instructional coaches, high schools, and career vocational technical education as well as literacy and mathematics instruction, data use, and the needs of English learners and students with disabilities;
- Assisting organization and implementation of improved schedules and structures, such as common planning time for teachers to collaborate on effective instructional practices;
- Offering direct grants and training to targeted districts for high quality professional development designed to support the implementation of research based effective instructional practices, aligning curriculum with the 2011 Curriculum Frameworks;

- Developing research and disseminating tools, partners, and resources that facilitate sharing of highly effective practices from rapidly improving schools;
- Facilitating use of federal funds, including School Improvement Grants, Commendation/Blue Ribbon grants, and supports for students living in poverty.

Some other practices and supports funded through state Targeted Assistance resources are cross-cutting and impact schools and districts across the three levels. The implementation of targeted assistance initiatives have resulted in changes in school and district performance, systems, and conditions. To achieve significant impact, the specific fund uses have been designed in partnership with the districts to advance practices that have been found through research to build capacity significantly for improvement in schools and districts.

The Statewide System of Support has provided extensive coaching, guidance, professional development, and networking opportunities for Level 3, 4, and 5 district and school leaders and educators. These strategic approaches to connecting key district and school leaders have yielded experiences that have informed systemic changes and resulted in improved systems across the districts.

In addition to building capacity to implement the Turnaround Practices research, additional cross-cutting strategies included the following approaches:

- Facilitating training and systematic implementation of programs designed to remove barriers to learning for high need students such as: Universal Design for Learning, [Tiered Systems of Support](#), Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems, social emotional supports, and [Wraparound Zones](#) to provide effective access to learning for all students;¹⁶
- Providing assistance, information, guidance, and networking for urban leaders through a variety of mechanisms, such as the Urban Superintendents' Network and District Turnaround Leaders' Network to build capacity through sharing of best practices and thought-partnering with others in similar roles to solve complex challenges that will improve student outcomes for every student;
- Coaching and networking for superintendents, principals, and teachers to facilitate and calibrate common understanding of effective instructional practices and the research based cycle of inquiry that leads to improved outcomes;
- Continuing partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents to provide a New Superintendents Induction Program that builds instructional leadership capacity across the state;
- Facilitating and offering high quality professional development at regional, district, and school levels on Learning Walkthroughs and data analysis that facilitate the cycle of inquiry, effective instructional and student support practices in academic content areas and for the needs of student subgroups, and integration of career vocational technical education shop classes with academic classes;
- Offering regionally based networking opportunities primarily for DSAC served districts, but open to Level 2 districts as well, which address a variety of topics specific to regional needs and focused on particular district and school roles, content, and student groups,

¹⁶Wraparound Replication Cookbook: <https://sites.google.com/site/masswazcookbook/resources> and Massachusetts Tiered System of Support: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/>

including leadership for: principals, instructional leaders, instructional coaches, high schools, and career vocational technical education as well as literacy and mathematics instruction, data use, and the needs of English learners and students with disabilities;

- Assisting organization and implementation of improved schedules and structures, such as common planning time for teachers to collaborate on effective instructional practices;
- Offering direct grants and training to targeted districts for high quality professional development designed to support the implementation of research based effective instructional practices, aligning curriculum with the 2011 Curriculum Frameworks;
- Developing research and disseminating tools and resources that facilitate sharing of highly effective practices from rapidly improving schools;
- Facilitating use of federal funds, including School Improvement Grants, Commendation/Blue Ribbon grants, and supports for students living in poverty.

Targeted Assistance Fund Use in 2016-2017

As described above, the Department applies funds from the Targeted Assistance to Schools and Districts account (state budget line item 7061-9408) to support key interventions in the Level 3, 4, and 5 schools and districts. Federal resources, primarily from Title I School Improvement funds and federal special education resources, were used in coordination with the state's Targeted Assistance funds to supplement and complement key assistance initiatives. While federal funds are used in a manner consistent with all statutes and regulations to help enhance some initiatives and expand their reach, state funding from the Targeted Assistance line is the main source of funds the Department uses to fulfill its obligations under [M.G.L. c. 69, §§ 1J](#) and [M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K](#), and, as noted earlier, to achieve strategic priorities designed to intervene in and strengthen districts and schools in the state's most challenging educational environments.¹⁷ The total expenditures from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 from line item [7061-9408](#) were \$7,515,435. The chart below summarizes the distribution of these funds.

Administration, staffing, etc.	\$2,017,416
Regional Supports to Level 3 Districts	\$762,554
Level 3, 4, 5 District and School Support Services	\$2,493,458
Evaluation Projects	\$291,047
New Superintendents Induction Program	\$249,636
<u>Grants to Level 3, 4, and 5 Districts and Schools</u>	<u>\$1,701,325</u>
Total	\$7,515,436

The vast majority of the state targeted assistance funds were used to enable Level 3, 4, and 5 districts to implement innovative, research based strategies targeted to advance the performance of the state's highest need students and close the achievement gap. The intensity and focus of assistance was based on district and school needs, interest, capacity, and accountability status. In FY2017, Targeted Assistance funds (line item [7061-9408](#)) continued to contribute to initiatives designed to achieve rapid improvement through capacity building and embedding of research based, effective turnaround practices in Level 3, 4, and 5 schools and districts. The support provided by Commissioner's Districts Liaisons, DSAC teams, and expert external partners, as well as the direct grants and targeted high leverage programs, were strategies that assisted districts and schools to achieve the improvements noted in this report.

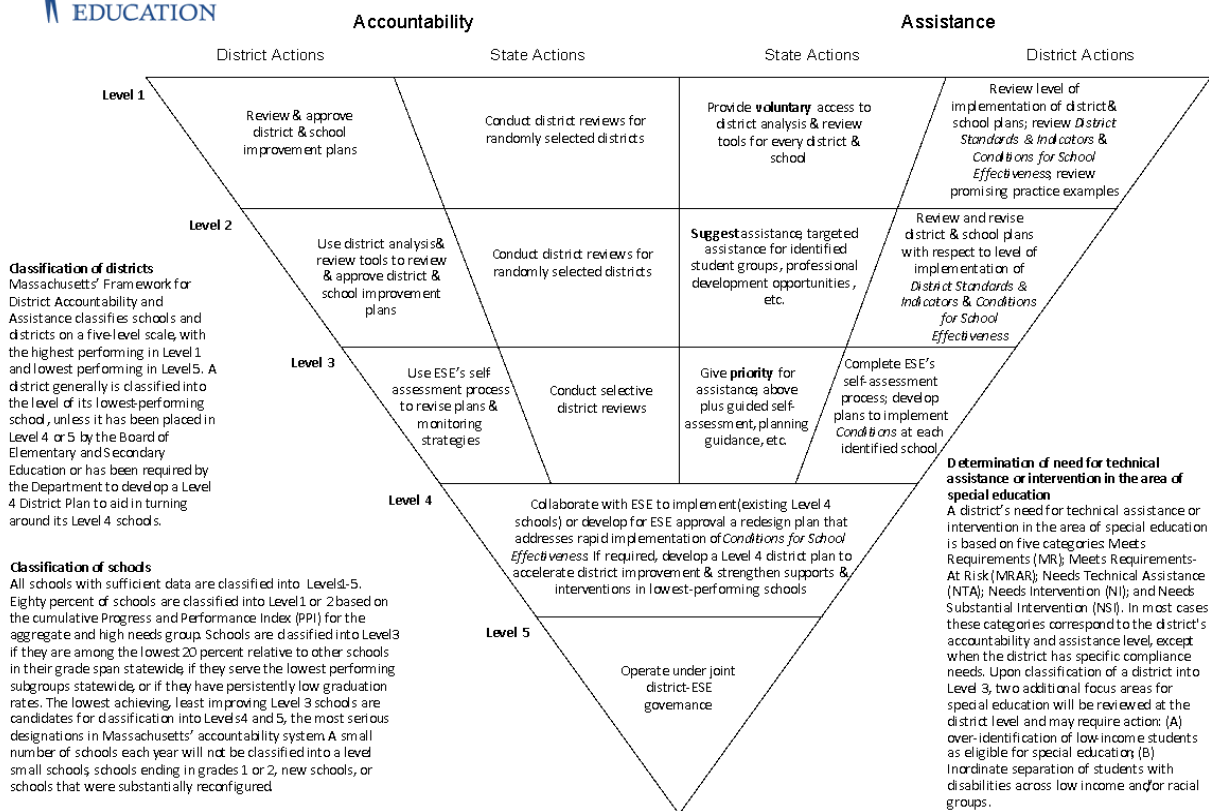
¹⁷ M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J> and M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1K>.

Appendix I



Framework for District Accountability and Assistance

August 2012



Appendix II

List of 2016-2017 Underperforming and Chronically Underperforming Schools

2016-2017 Level 4 & 5 Schools

<u>School Name</u>	<u>Accountability & Assistance Level</u>
Dearborn	Level 4
Henry Grew	Level 4
UP Academy Holland	Level 5
John Winthrop	Level 4
Mattahunt	Level 4
Paul A Dever	Level 5
William Ellery Channing	Level 4
Brighton High	Level 4
Excel High School	Level 4
The English High	Level 4
Madison Park High	Level 4
Dorchester Academy	Level 4
Mary Fonseca Elementary School	Level 4
Samuel Watson	Level 4
Morgan Full Service Community School	Level 5
Wm J Dean Vocational Technical High	Level 4
Oliver Partnership School	Level 4
UP Academy Oliver Middle School	Level 4
Business Management & Finance High School	Level 4
International High School	Level 4
Hayden/McFadden	Level 4
John Avery Parker	Level 5
New Bedford High	Level 4
Milton Bradley School	Level 4
John J Duggan Middle	Level 4
Forest Park Middle	Level 4
John F Kennedy Middle	Level 4
M Marcus Kiley Middle	Level 4
Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (North)	Level 4
Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (South)	Level 4
Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (Talented and Gifted)	Level 4
Van Sickle Academy	Level 4
Van Sickle International Baccalaureate	Level 4
High School Of Commerce	Level 4
Springfield High School of Science and Technology	Level 4
Elm Park Community	Level 4
Riverbend-Sanders Street School	Level 4

Appendix III

List of 2016-2017 Chronically Underperforming Schools

2016-2017 Level 5 Districts

Holyoke Public Schools
Lawrence Public Schools
Southbridge Public Schools