



# Supporting School Improvement *in Massachusetts*

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# From the Balcony

## A Decade of Education Reform in Massachusetts

- 1993–1995 Finance and Governance Reforms
- 1996–2000 Articulation of Standards and Assessments
- 2001–2003 Student and School Accountability
- 2004–2007 Capacity Building/Targeted Assistance
- *2007 and beyond* Transforming the System:  
Coherence, Cohesion, and Collaboration

# OLD versus NEW

Underperforming	Commonwealth Priority School
No framework or vision for improvement	Ten Essential Conditions
Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM)	District Plan for School Intervention (DPSI)
<b>Focus:</b> Measurement and Compliance	<b>Focus:</b> Assistance and Collaboration

# New Beginning – State System of Support

- **391** districts in the state
  - **9** Commissioner’s Districts
    - Boston (*approximately 150 schools*)
    - Springfield and Worcester (*approximately 50 schools*)
    - Smaller urban districts
  - **35** Districts with Corrective Action status or Commonwealth Priority Schools
- Theory of Action
  - Customized support
  - Regional support

# Theory and Approach with Commissioner's Districts

- **Theory**

- The Commissioner's Districts are large enough to have sufficient infrastructure to support and sustain improved student achievement in their schools.

- **Approach**

- Collaborate with district leaders to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of district systems to support and sustain school improvement
- Agree on dedicated resources and practices to enhance district systems and capacity

# Which systems? How do they work to support achievement?\*

- Leadership
  - Instructional leadership at school and district level
  - District systems of oversight and support for improvement
- Curriculum and instruction
- Assessment and evaluation
- Student academic support
- Deployment and management of personnel/human resources
- Professional development
- Financial system and asset management



# Implementation Support

## *Overview of Collaborative Process and Associated Tools*

# Vision: All students proficient

- Systems and structures at state, district, and school levels must be aligned.





# Ten Essential Conditions

- **Standards-based teaching and learning**

1. Curricula are aligned to state frameworks in core content areas
2. Two full-time English language arts (ELA) and math subject area coaches provide faculty with consistent classroom observation and feedback on the quality of instructional practices

- **Informing practice with data**

1. Interim assessments are aligned to state standards and are conducted 4-6 times per year in ELA and math; assessment results are tracked, analyzed, and used to inform curriculum, instruction, and individual interventions

- **Time for teachers and students**

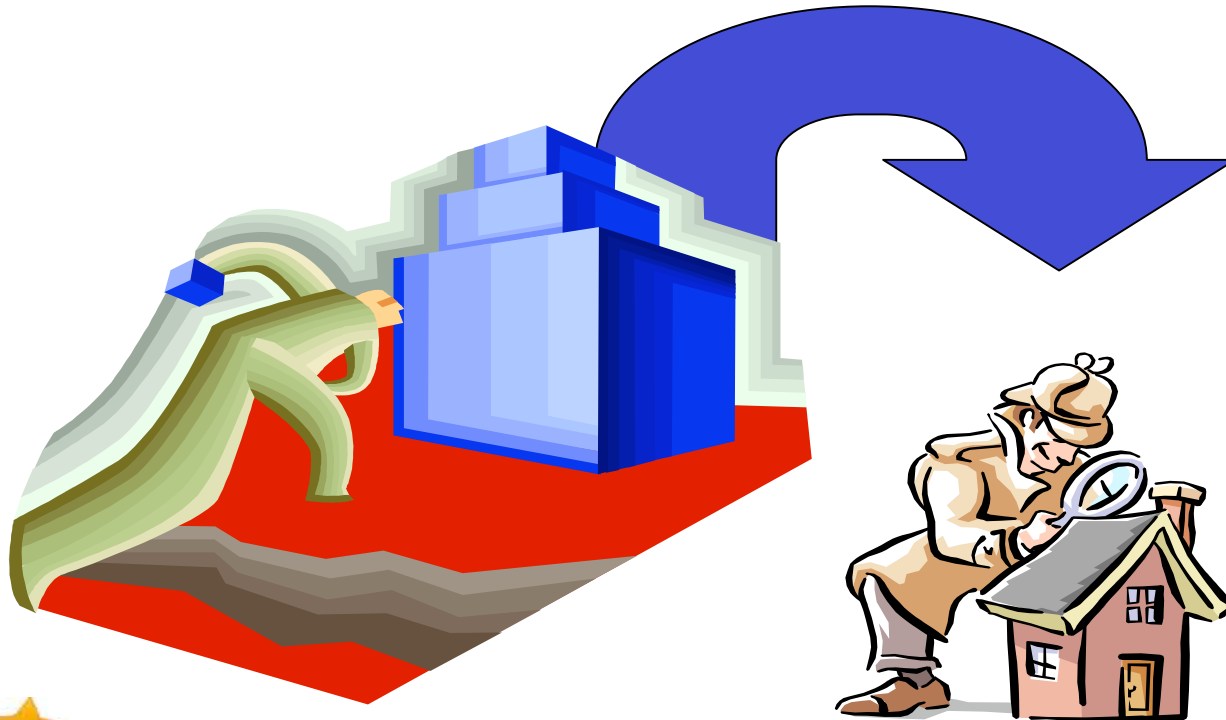
1. There is adequate time for student learning for ELA and math on a daily/weekly basis
2. Students who are not yet proficient receive at least 90 minutes daily of ELA and math instruction
3. After school tutoring and homework assistance are provided for students who need supplemental instruction and focused skill development
4. There is adequate weekly and annual time for teachers to discuss student progress, curriculum issues, instructional practice, and improvement efforts - in general no less than 1 hour/week of leadership directed collaborative work and 5 days/year professional development and planning

- **Instructional leadership**

1. Principal has authority to select and assign staff without regard to seniority
2. Principal has control over financial resources to successfully implement improvements
3. Principal periodically evaluates faculty, including direct evaluation of relevant content knowledge and annual evaluation of performance tied in part to growth in student learning and commitment to school's strategies

# Sources of Evidence

- Massachusetts State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), district, and school leaders collaboratively *look for evidence of impact of district systems* in schools



# Implementation Support

- A process designed to support the effective implementation of improvement efforts at school and district levels
- Features of the process
  - Collaborative problem-solving
  - Focused on teaching and learning
  - Scaled at the district level
  - Striving for coherence
  - Data driven
  - Focused disciplined discussions
  - Planned, carefully sequenced interactions

# District Oversight of Teaching and Learning

- Implementation support is intended to produce data about standards-based instructional practice to add to ongoing district conversations about student learning
  - MCAS item and gap analysis
  - Analysis of district level formative and summative assessment data
  - Reviews of student work

# Implementation Support Goals for 2007-2008

- Scale up to the district level
- Coordinate across content/student groups
- Provide consistent/high quality assistance
- Develop helpful data collection tools and processes to promote effective oversight and assistance

# Establishing a Focus for Implementation Support

- Challenges
  - Variety of directions
  - Multiple schools
- Reflections and Feedback
  - Data
  - Stakeholders

# Cross-Cutting Issues

- Instructional Leadership for Change
- Integration of programs and services for Special Education and limited-English proficient (LEP) students
- Stabilization of staffing

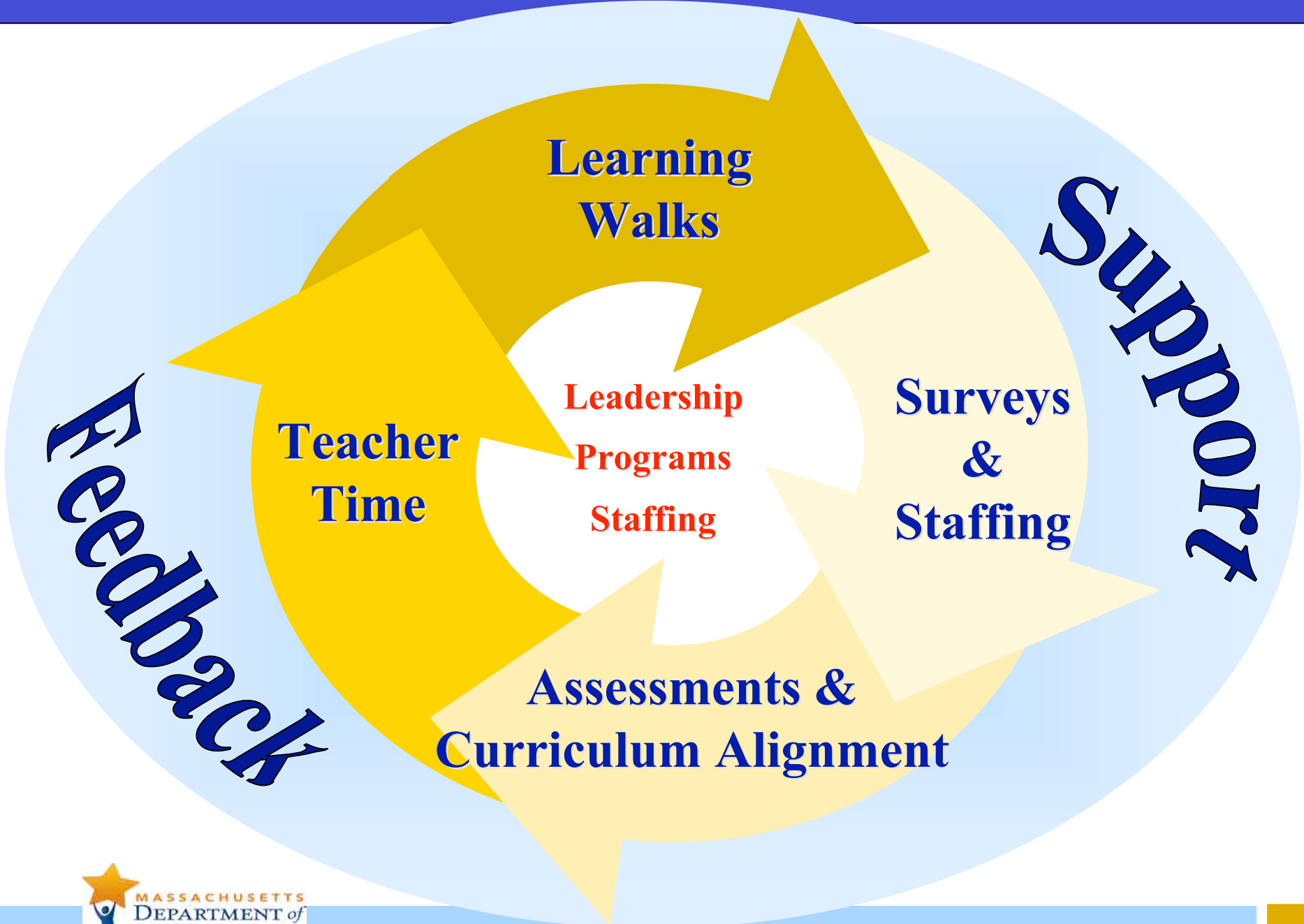
# Sources of Evidence

- Classroom practice and student learning
- Collaborative teacher time in which teachers are planning instruction
- Perception data from teachers and administrators
- Concrete, frequent staffing data



# Suite of Tools

- Confidential Teacher and Administrator Surveys
- Staffing Status Report
- Learning Walk Tools
- Teacher Time Tools



# Confidential Surveys



## Administrator and teacher surveys

- Anonymous
- Approximately 10 minutes to complete
- Pre and post surveys
- Climate data
- Aligned to the cross-cutting issues
- Results shared with schools and district



# Staffing Report



- School-based instructional positions
  - Professional instructional staff positions
  - Licensing and evaluation status
  - Attendance
- District-assigned instructional positions
- Vacancies



# Learning Walk Tools



- Learning Walk Guide  
Collaboratively developed with Boston Public Schools
- Learning Walk Continuum
- Learning Walk Data Instrument

# Learning Walk Tools



## Learning Walk Guide

- Aligned to NISL Principles of Teaching and Learning
- Vetted with stakeholders
- Contains characteristics and examples of standards-based practices



# Learning Walk Tools



## Learning Walk Continuum

- Developed to assist observers
- Breaks each indicator into stages of implementation:
  - Developing, Providing, and Sustaining
- Provides a description of each stage to ensure consistency
- Five power characteristics based on state and district inputs
  - Instructional Techniques, Questions, Thinking and Reasoning, Application, and Written Feedback



**Written  
Feedback**  
15

**Application**  
13

**Instructional  
Techniques**  
8

**Thinking &  
Reasoning**  
11

**Questions**  
9







# Learning Walk Tools



## Learning Walk Data Instrument

- Tool to enter data collected from observations
- Technology to facilitate the data collection process
- Allows more time to analyze data and plan next steps





# Sample Data SY2007-2008



- Sample data reports from classroom observations are generated by the following:
  - School
  - Grade span
  - Class type
  - Subject





# Phase 1 Roll-Out

## Fall/Winter 2007–2008





- District alignment and customization
- Training on learning walks
- Surveys for administrators and teachers
- Quarterly staffing report
- Implementation of learning walks for baseline data
  - Every classroom is observed



# Phase 2 Roll-Out



- Teacher Time Guide
  - **DRAFT** Establishing and Maintaining Instructional Teams – self-assessment guide
  - Characteristics and examples 
  - Collaboratively developed with Boston Public Schools 
  - Tool to enter data collected from observations
- Staffing Status Report
  - Vacancies, attendance, evaluation status



## Phase 3 and Beyond



- Summer 2008
  - Evaluate and revise Implementation Support processes with ESE and district stakeholders
- Collaborate across Accountability and Targeted Assistance (ATA) and ESE to:
  - Build additional assessment and data collection tools
  - Support networking among Commissioner’s Districts on common needs
  - Identify needed training and supports to build and enhance district systems using data from 2007–2008 activities
- Support new Superintendents appointed in most Commissioner’s Districts



## **For additional information**

*Massachusetts Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education's Web site:*

<http://www.doe.mass.edu>