

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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Back To School

Longmeadow Public Schools have always had a reputation for excellence. Recently, the Commonwealth's Educational Management Audit Council and the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability confirmed what Longmeadow residents have always know to be true- our schools are something to be proud of.

In July of 2000, the Massachusetts Legislature created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) to examine all the factors outside of test scores that affect student performance. Independent audits of schools and districts have been performed, and under the direction of the Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC), the EQA uses these audits to provide a comprehensive evaluation of each school district's performance; publish annual reports on selected districts' performance; monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and provide the public information that helps the state hold districts and schools (including charter schools) accountable.

EQA uses a three-tier examination process. All schools receive Tier I review annually, which seeks to answer some basic questions regarding the MCAS tests. Districts with MCAS test results that fall within certain thresholds of performance, particularly districts that score below average, may be selected to receive Tier II review. Tier II uses 15 standards to analyze district performance in five major areas: leadership, governance and organization; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; academic support services and business and finance. 117 indicators are examined to determine whether the district is meeting the standards and it provides a rating for each. The final review level, Tier III, goes a level deeper than the Tier II building level, and looks at what is happening in the classroom and how it affects school performance.

In 2004, the EQA examined 30 districts that received Satisfactory or Excellent ratings on more than 80% of the indicators related to district-level instructional expectations and policies, access to quality programs for all students, and general organizational management. Longmeadow was one of the school systems that went through Tier II review and was reported on favorably in FY2004.

Districts with strong, fully implemented policies and practices have high ratings on the EQA exam and are expected to perform better on the MCAS tests. Longmeadow falls in the category of moderate to high student performance and high EQA ratings.

The rate of improvement of test scores is another indicator of district progress. Districts with strong policies and practices and high EQA ratings are expected to make more substantial improvements in their test scores. Longmeadow is shown as having high rates of improvement from 2000 to 2003 and positive EQA ratings.

As the school year begins, send off your kids knowing in spite of tight budget and thanks to hard work of dedicated professionals, they will attend a statewide star, Longmeadow Public Schools.