

REPORT OF TWO-YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

Massachusetts Department of Education

The Arlington School Lawrence Public Schools

Introduction

The Two-year Follow-up Review is the fourth and final stage in the process used to assess school performance under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. The first stage identifies schools in the lowest MCAS performance categories that are in need of improvement. Stage Two, the Panel Review, involves the visitation of a Review Team to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether a school that has been identified as in need of improvement is under-performing and in need of state guidance to improve student performance. Schools declared to be under-performing are required to undergo the next stage of the process, the Fact Finding Review, to assist both the school and the Commissioner in determining the reasons for low student performance and in developing a factual basis from which to develop a plan to improve student performance. The Arlington School developed such a plan, and the Commissioner and Board of Education accepted the plan on January 23, 2001. The District is required to direct the implementation of this plan, and within two years the school must demonstrate significant improvement.

The Two-year Follow-up Review reports on progress at the end of this two-year period of implementation. The Commissioner and Board of Education will use the Follow-up Review Report to issue a judgment on the question of chronic under-performance at the Arlington School. The Follow-up Review was conducted on 28th and 29th May 2003.

The Panel's charge was to analyze data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts, visit the school, and meet with school and District officials in order to advise the Commissioner on the answers to the following five key questions:

1. Has the school shown improvement in student performance?
2. To what extent did the school implement the improvement plan, which was approved by the State Board of Education?
3. Are there other factors (changes in conditions or circumstances, i.e., policies, practices) in the school or district which have contributed to or impeded the school's ability to implement their plan?
4. Is there currently a sound plan in place to guide continued improvement in student performance?
5. Are the conditions in place to sustain the gains achieved and support continued improvement in student performance?

The Panel's responses to the above key questions that defined the scope of the review are included in this report. These findings and conclusions are the product of the Panel's analysis, discussion, and observation, based on the evidence available to it. A list of Panel members who participated in the review is provided in Appendix A. A detailed schedule of the Panel's activities is provided in Appendix B.

The Panel's findings and conclusions on the five key questions will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration, together with the school's status reports and student performance data, in determining whether the Arlington School is deemed to be chronically under-performing. The Panel was not asked to formulate a sound plan for school improvement {where such a plan does not presently exist nor to recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions at present do not appear to exist}

Executive Summary

The Arlington School has clearly made progress since the designation of under-performance in 2000. Adequate Yearly Progress has been made in English language arts and mathematics for the 2001-2002 rating cycle, but progress has been limited, particularly in mathematics. The most challenged learners continue to fail to improve their achievement.

The school has benefited significantly from new leadership at the superintendent level through to assistant principals. In particular, the District leadership is using the school improvement planning process as a measure of unified progress across the district. This has helped the school develop their own planning process so that it is now one that clearly addresses student need and in which all teachers are involved.

Other district-wide changes, such as the introduction of the Success for All Program, the provision of specialist staffing to support curriculum and instruction, and a comprehensive discipline code have also impacted positively on the school's progress. Some district-wide changes, however, while beneficial to long term stability (such as the 2001 "redistricting" initiative), are likely to have had a negative impact on test scores in the short term.

The priority areas identified in the School Improvement Plan accepted by the Board in 2000 have been, or are being, addressed. The school has been effectively reorganized on the middle school model for example, and this is having a positive impact on the learning environment. Opportunities for standards-based professional development have been stepped up, communications have been improved so that there is now school-wide confidence in the leadership, and active steps are being taken to engage parents in the planning process.

The Team has reported only on the middle school section at the Arlington. It should be acknowledged, however, that this is a unified K – 8 school. Based on data and some documentary evidence the elementary section of the school can be seen to be making progress. Many of the same positive initiatives apply also to the elementary grades and improvements at

this level are likely to impact on the middle school grades in the future. For this reason statistics are given in the profile section of this report for test results K-8.

Key Findings

1. The Arlington Middle School's performance continues to be Low in English language arts (ELA) and Critically Low in mathematics and the majority of students with learning disabilities and ELL students continue to fail. Overall performance over the last two rating cycles has been Low in Grades 7 and 8 in ELA and Critically Low in grade 8 Math. The school also has the lowest performance of Grade 7 and 8 schools in the District. The greatest improvement has been in students moving out of Warning and into Needs Improvement. In 2000, the school began addressing the literacy problem with low achieving students and this was supported by the subsequent adoption of Success for All (SFA) district-wide in 2001. In terms of the MCAS, these drives on literacy have enabled these students to achieve slightly better scores in ELA, and to raise their scores in mathematics by being able to read for understanding.

Most students with disabilities, however, remain in the Warning category in both ELA and mathematics, with the number in that category for ELA increasing slightly in 2002. All English Language Learners continue to score at the Warning level in both subjects. For both these subgroups proficiency scores are lower than the district average. Instructional strategies are not yet meeting the needs of students in these groups, and teachers generally lack the specific professional expertise to address the problems pedagogically. The SFA program is providing structure and direction for curriculum, instruction and assessment, and the redistricting initiative aims to reduce the transience of the student population. These factors are likely to impact positively on raising achievement in the Arlington Middle School over time.

2. There has been systematic implementation of the School Improvement Plan, (known as the Comprehensive Education Plan - CEP), using in part the Performance Improvement Planning (PIP) process. Coordinated and targeted assistance from a number of sources, the District, the Department of Education and the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS), has contributed to the successful implementation of the plan. The implementation of the plan has been enabled by the District mandating its format and some of its content, and using the plan as part of the administrator evaluation instrument. Scheduling common planning time and having teachers meet regularly to analyze student data has also impacted positively on implementing the plan.
3. District support for institutionalized change has had a positive impact on the environment for learning, staff morale and school culture at the Arlington. The move to a middle school model including a house system, teaming and looping strategies has created a more positive learning environment. It is resulting in closer supervision of student performance. The district-wide discipline code is being applied at the Arlington School effectively. The result is that suspensions and exclusions over the period have decreased. District staffing support has provided positive input from literacy and math coaches and an SFA coordinator. These personnel are visiting classrooms, giving feedback and

providing professional growth opportunities for teachers. This is increasing the quality of the learning environment.

4. The current CEP is part of a rigorous and consistently applied planning process. Progress towards goals is measured. The CEP is used actively in managing performance within the school. Teachers work in teams to review student achievement and plan instructional change. The plan is being implemented and action steps are being recorded and updated. Midterm modifications are being made. The Performance Improvement Planning (PIP) process is engaging all teachers in this continuing action planning process to raise student achievement. This results in teachers having a much firmer grip on current levels of student performance and appropriate targets. While teachers use Common Planning Time effectively to undertake this work, the purpose of Common Planning Time to develop curriculum, instruction and assessment is not sufficiently established, and the use of individual planning books is unsatisfactory. This results in teachers tending to teach *activities* rather than *objectives*. Insufficient differentiation in curriculum and instruction is currently being achieved to meet the needs of the most challenged subgroups, (those with disabilities and the large ELL population)
5. The climate for learning and the overall culture of the Arlington as a safe environment that expects and supports learning has improved dramatically. Leadership at the Arlington School has been stabilized. It is visible, effective and is now strongly supported by staff. Behavior in the school generally, and in classrooms in particular, has been positively impacted by clear measures, requirements and consequences. Generally, teachers work hard at this. Communication with parents has been strengthened and is also contributing to a positive climate for learning. Student attendance has increased, homework is expected by students and their parents and is regularly set. Success for All provides a meaningful structure for learning that is understood and taken seriously by students and staff. Staff absenteeism is high and staff turnover continues to be problem. Lack of teacher continuity, for whatever reason, impacts negatively on student learning.

Arlington School Profile

Enrollment

The Arlington School is one of 21 schools in Lawrence. The school serves students in Kindergarten through grade 8. Between 1999 and 2002, 92 percent of the school's student population was comprised of Hispanics, with seven percent White students, and two percent Black.

Ninety percent of the student body at the Arlington school was non-native English speakers, with Limited English Proficient (LEP) students accounting for almost 40 percent of the population. Due to the high percentage of low-income students (82 percent), there is a School-wide Title I Program in place at the Arlington School.

Between 1998 and 2001, attendance at the Arlington School averaged 93 percent, with students absent 13 days on average. Student retention during this period averaged two percent. In-school suspensions fluctuated between 6.4 percent and 12.2 percent—averaging 26 percent for the period covering 1998 through 2001—while out-of-school suspensions were 19 percent. Student exclusion during this period averaged 14 percent.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Arlington School are tested in the MCAS in grade 3 in English language arts (ELA), in grade 4 in ELA and mathematics, in grade 6 in mathematics, in grade 7 in ELA and in grade 8 in mathematics. In Cycle II (2001-2002) in grade 4, the school was found to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both years and in both content areas. In its grade 7/8 report, the school was also found to have made AYP in both content areas and in both 2001 and 2002.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

In Cycle II in grade 4 the school received a performance rating of *Very Low* for its proficiency index of 50.4 in ELA. Based on its 12.3-point proficiency index increase over Cycle I (1999-2000) the school received an improvement rating of *Above Target*. Student participation rates in that content area in Cycle II were 89 percent in 2001 and 83 percent in 2002.

At the grade 7/8 level, the school received a rating of *Very Low* for its performance in Cycle II. Its proficiency index of 55.8 that cycle was 11 points above the previous cycle results. For that improvement, the school received an improvement rating of *Above Target*. Student participation rates in that cycle were 92 percent in 2001 and 84 percent in 2002.

Regular Education

The grade 3 English language arts test was first administered in Cycle II. In the first year of Cycle II, 30 percent of Regular Education students performed at the Proficient level, 60 percent at Needs Improvement, and nine percent at Warning. In 2002, 28 percent of students were proficient, 43 percent in Needs Improvement, and 28 percent of scores fell in the Warning category.

At the grade 4 level, the performance of Regular Education students at the Arlington School marginally improved in Cycle II compared to Cycle I in ELA. In the first year of Cycle I, two percent of Regular Education students at this grade level performed at the Advanced level, 18 percent at Proficient, 47 percent at Needs Improvement, and 33 percent at Warning. In 2000, the percentage of students scoring Proficient fell by half to just nine percent. Forty-five percent of Regular Education students that year scored in Needs Improvement, and another 45 percent at Warning. In 2001, the percentage of students scoring Proficient rose to 21 percent, 43 percent of students performed at the Needs Improvement level, while 36 percent were at Warning. In 2002, two percent of students in this group scored at the Advanced level, 17 percent at Proficient, 60 percent in Needs Improvement, and 20 percent in Warning.

The performance of Regular Education students at the grade 4 level at the Arlington School in ELA has consistently lagged behind the district. When compared to other students at the same level in the state, the variation is much more significant. See Table 1.

Table 1. Comparing Grade 4 Regular Education Students' Performance in ELA (1999-2002)

Regular	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	2	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8	2	2	9
Proficient	18	21	53	9	21	50	21	27	50	17	26	52
Needs Improvement	47	48	33	45	50	35	43	54	36	60	56	34
Warning	33	31	6	45	28	8	36	18	6	20	16	5

Special Education

In 2001, 16 percent of Special Education students at the grade 3 level performed in the Needs Improvement category while 84 percent were in Warning. In the second year of Cycle II, 33 percent of students in this subgroup score at the Needs Improvement level and 67 percent at Warning.

The performance of Special Education students at the grade 4 level over the last four years has remained consistent in ELA. No student in this subgroup has scored at the Proficient level and the proportion of those at the Warning level has vacillated between 88 and 95 percent. Special Education students at the school have consistently performed below their counterparts in the district. For Arlington students to reach parity with their peers in the rest of the state there will need to be higher proportions of them scoring Proficient, and many fewer performing at the Warning level. See Table 2 below.

Table 2. Comparing Grade 4 Special Education Students' Performance in ELA (1999-2002)

Special	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Proficient	0	2	16	0	2	13	0	7	16	0	3	18
Needs Improvement	5	11	43	11	16	43	13	29	49	6	19	50
Warning	95	87	40	89	82	43	88	65	34	94	78	31

Limited English Proficient

The number of Limited English Proficient students tested in ELA at the grade 3 level in Cycle II did not meet the minimum sample size.

While in 2002 the performance of LEP students at the grade 4 level in ELA greatly improved, when comparing these students' performance in both years of Cycle II to Cycle I, the improvement is minimal. In the first year of Cycle I, 19 percent of LEP students at this level performed at the Needs Improvement level while the remaining 81 were at Warning. In 2000, eight percent were in Needs Improvement and 92 percent scored at the Warning level. In 2001, all students in this subgroup scored at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of LEP students scoring in the Needs Improvement category rose to 47 percent and the proportion of those in Warning fell to 53 percent.

The lack of LEP students scoring in the Proficient range and the high proportions of those scoring at the Warning level are the main factors behind the school's low performance relative to both the district and the state in ELA. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. Comparing Limited English Proficient Grade 4 Students' Performance in ELA (1999-2002)

LEP	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
Proficient	0	4	14	0	1	14	0	8	13	0	7	16
Needs Improvement	19	24	38	8	24	38	0	39	43	47	39	48
Warning	81	72	48	92	75	47	100	52	43	53	54	35

Student Performance in Mathematics

In Cycle II, at the grade 4 level, the Arlington School received a performance rating of *Critically Low* for its proficiency index of 34.5 in mathematics. Its minimal improvement merited a rating of *Improved Below Target*. In that cycle, student participation rates in the MCAS testing program was 96 percent in both 2001 and 2002.

At the grade 7/8 level, the school received a performance rating of *Critically Low* in Cycle II for its proficiency index of 28.0 in mathematics. For its minimal improvement of 2.8 points, the school received a rating of *Improved Below Target*. Student participation rates at that grade level in Cycle II were 100 percent in 2001 and 99 percent in 2002.

Grade 4 Student Performance

At the grade 4 level, there is no evidence of a sustained trend in the performance of Regular Education students at the Arlington School in mathematics. In 1999, four percent of Regular Education students scored at the Advanced level of performance, another four percent were at the Proficient level, 43 percent scored at Needs Improvement, and 49 percent at Warning. In 2000, two percent of students scored Advanced, another two percent Proficient, 31 percent were in Needs Improvement, and 66 percent in Warning. In the first year of Cycle II, 11 percent of Regular Education students at the grade 4 level performed in the Proficient category, 34 percent in Needs Improvement, and 54 percent in Warning. In 2002, three percent of students scored Proficient; the percentage of Regular Education students scoring at the Needs Improvement level rose to 47 percent, and 49 percent were at Warning.

The performance of Regular Education students at the grade 4 level in mathematics at the Arlington School over the last four years has lagged behind that of other students in the district. The disparities between the school's performance and the state's have remained constant over the last two cycles. See Table 4 below.

Table 4. Comparing Regular Education Grade 4 Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

Regular Ed.	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	4	2	15	2	3	14	0	3	12	0	2	14
Proficient	4	10	26	2	12	32	11	11	28	3	8	31
Needs Improvement	43	44	45	31	41	42	34	47	47	47	48	42
Warning	49	44	14	66	44	12	54	39	13	49	41	13

The performance of Special Education students at the grade 4 level at the Arlington School has remained relatively constant over the last four years. In 1999, six percent of Special Education students performed at the Needs Improvement level while 94 percent were at Warning. In 2000, all students scored at the Warning level. In the first year of Cycle II, six percent of students in this subgroup were found to be Proficient, another six percent scored in Needs Improvement, and the remaining 88 percent were at the Warning level. In 2002, there were no Special Education students scoring Proficient; six percent of scores fell in the Needs Improvement category and 94 percent in Warning.

Larger proportions of grade 4 Special Education students have performed at the Warning level at the Arlington School than there have been district-wide. To achieve parity with other students in this subgroup in the state, the school will have to reduce the proportion of students performing in the Warning level by more than half, and increase the percentage of those proficient. See Table 5.

Table 5. Comparing Special Education Grade 4 Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

Special Ed.	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	2	2	0	0	3
Proficient	0	1	10	0	1	13	6	4	10	0	1	13
Needs Improvement	6	18	44	0	21	45	6	22	45	6	15	42
Warning	94	81	43	100	78	40	88	73	42	94	85	42

The performance of Limited English Proficient students in mathematics at the grade 4 level at the Arlington School over the last four years has shown no improvement. In 1999, 14 percent of LEP students tested scored at the Needs Improvement level with 86 percent at Warning. In 2000, the percentage of those scoring in Needs Improvement fell to just six percent and those at

Warning increased to 94 percent. In the first year of Cycle II, the distribution of scores of students in this subgroup was exactly the same as the previous year. In 2002, nine percent of LEP students performed at the Needs Improvement level and 91 percent in Warning.

Over the last four years there have not been any LEP students scoring in the Proficient range at the Arlington School at the grade 4 level. The school's performance continues to trail the district, and is far from reaching parity with the state. See Table 6 below.

Table 6. Comparing Limited English Proficient Grade 4 Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

LEP	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2
Proficient	0	1	5	0	2	8	0	4	8	0	2	9
Needs Improvement	14	17	34	6	16	35	6	24	38	9	19	35
Warning	86	82	61	94	82	54	94	72	53	91	79	54

Grade 6 Student Performance

The grade 6 mathematics test was first administered in Cycle II. In 2001, one percent of Regular Education students at the Arlington School scored Advanced, four percent were at the Proficient level, nine percent in Needs Improvement, and 86 percent at Warning. In the second year of Cycle II, one percent of students in this group scored Advanced, nine percent performed at the Proficient level, 13 percent at the Needs Improvement level and 77 percent at Warning.

All Special Education students in grade 6 performed at the Warning level in both 2001 and 2002. The performance of Special Education students at the grade 6 level at the Arlington School mirrored that of the district. These students' performance, however, was far behind the state as a whole.

At the grade 6 level, in 2001 there were no Limited English Proficient students scoring at the Proficient level in mathematics. Six percent scored in Needs Improvement while 94 percent performed at the Warning level. In 2002, three percent of students in this subgroup scored at the Needs Improvement level with the remaining 97 percent at Warning. This performance was below both the district and the state.

Grade 8 Student Performance

In Cycle II, the performance of Regular Education grade 8 students improved marginally in mathematics. In 1999, one percent of students scored Proficient, 17 percent in Needs Improvement whole 82 percent were at Warning. In 2000, five percent of student scores were in the Proficient category. The percentage of students scoring at the Needs Improvement level fell to seven percent, while those in Warning rose to 88 percent that year. In the first year of Cycle II, six percent of students scored Proficient, 14 percent were in Needs Improvement, and 80 percent were at Warning. In 2002, one percent of Regular Education students at the grade 8

level performed at the Advanced level. The proportion of those scoring Proficient fell to just one percent, 26 percent were at the Needs Improvement level while 72 percent were at Warning.

The performance of Regular Education students at the Arlington School has always trailed district-wide performance at the grade 8 level. Over the last four years, the school has shown little progress in closing its performance gaps relative to the state. See Table 7 below.

Table 7. Comparing Regular Education Grade 8 Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

Regular Ed.	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	7	0	1	12	0	1	13	1	1	13
Proficient	1	5	26	5	6	27	6	7	27	1	6	26
Needs Improvement	17	20	34	7	17	29	14	24	37	26	28	36
Warning	82	75	33	88	77	32	80	67	23	72	65	25

The performance of Special Education students at the grade 8 level at this school over the last four years has shown little improvement. Nearly the entire population of Special Education students has consistently performed at the Warning level, mirroring a trend also observed at the district level. To bring the school's performance to par with the state, the Arlington School will need to decrease the percentage of those scoring at Warning and increase the proportion of students scoring at the Proficient level. See Table 8 below.

Table 8. Comparing Grade 8 Special Education Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

Special Ed.	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Proficient	0	0	5	0	0	6	0	2	6	6	1	5
Needs Improvement	0	4	18	4	1	16	0	6	23	0	4	22
Warning	100	95	77	96	99	77	100	91	70	94	95	72

All Limited English Proficient students at the Arlington School tested in grade 8 in mathematics have scored at the Warning level every year for the last four years. Table 9 below illustrates the school's performance relative to the district and the state.

Table 9. Comparing Limited English Proficient Grade 8 Students' Performance in Mathematics (1999-2002)

LEP	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	2
Proficient	0	2	3	0	0	7	0	3	5	6	0	6
Needs Improvement	0	4	8	4	2	14	0	20	22	0	2	20
Warning	100	93	87	96	98	77	100	76	71	94	98	72

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

KEY QUESTION 1: Has the school shown improvement in student performance?

The Arlington School has shown slight improvement in student performance. This determination has been made by considering data against a complex backdrop of proactive change that has had a complex initial impact on performance.

The school made Adequate Yearly Progress in ELA. The increase from Cycle I to Cycle II in the ELA Proficiency Index (PI) is characterized as “Above Target.” The PI change of 11.0 exceeds the target of 7.9 points. Slight but insufficient improvement has been made in mathematics. The increase from Cycle I to Cycle II in the mathematics Proficiency Index is characterized as “Improved Below Target.” The change of 2.8 points does not exceed the target of 10.7.

As noted in the profile above, overall performance of students on MCAS tests has been rated over the past four years as Very Low in ELA and Critically Low in mathematics. Most Special Education students and students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) continue to fail the grade 7 ELA and grade 8 mathematics MCAS tests. The greatest improvement has been made overall in decreasing the number of students scoring in the Warning category, in particular in the area of ELA. The least improvement has been made in moving students into the Advanced category and in mathematics. The level of improvement in student performance at the school was based on the Panel’s consideration of MCAS test results, including those from several other demographically similar schools in the district, and results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests and the Success For All (SFA) Assessments.

District and school leaders and teachers suggest that several factors may have contributed to the limited improvements made in student performance during the period under review. They point to a significant turnover in the students at the school that resulted from a new student reassignment policy implemented by the District in 2001. The reassignment decreased the numbers of students enrolled at the school by 236 (from 1262 in 2001 to 1026 in 2001). It also caused a significant flux in the composition of the student cohort. Although the demographic profile of the student population remained fairly stable, data provided by the Principal showed one-half of the 7th graders at Arlington were new to the school in 2001. At the same time, the numbers of LEP students at the Arlington who were no longer exempted from taking the MCAS tests increased from 19 students tested in mathematics in 2001 to 40 students tested in 2002. Similarly, in grade 7, 21 students were tested in 2001 in ELA increased to 34 students tested in 2002.

The District’s reassignment of students in 2001 in order to decrease enrollment and class sizes at the Arlington may well have effected the school’s improvement efforts during the past two years. However, the exact impact of these changes on student performance remains unclear in the absence of sufficiently detailed data on both the performance levels of the particular students

who left the school and the performance levels of student entering the school during the 2001 reorganization.

As noted in the school profile above, overall performance of students on MCAS tests has been rated over the past four years as Very Low in ELA and Critically Low in mathematics. Most students with disabilities and students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) continue to fail the grade 7 ELA and grade 8 mathematics MCAS tests. The greatest improvement has been made overall in decreasing the number of students scoring in the Warning category, in particular in the area of ELA. The least improvement has been made in moving students into the Advanced category and in mathematics. The evidence for improvement or lack of improvement in student performance is MCAS test results, including those from several other demographically similar schools in the district, and results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests and the Success For All (SFA) Assessments.

The overall MCAS performance of students at the Arlington School has been Very Low in grade 7/8 ELA and Critically Low in grade 8 mathematics for both Cycle I (1999-2000) and Cycle II (2001-2000). Majorities of students scored in the Warning categories on those tests in Grades 6, 7, and 8 over the past two years on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Similar majorities of students, particularly those in Grades 6 and 7, scored in the "At Risk" category of the SFA in 2001. When compared to other schools in the District, the Arlington remains the lowest performing, consistently achieving below the district average.

The greatest improvement overall has been made in decreasing the percentage of students scoring in Warning for both ELA and mathematics. While the percentage of 6th and 7th Grade students scoring as "Warning" on the Gates-MacGinitie has increased from 2001 to 2002, the percentage of 8th Graders has seen a significant decrease.

The least improvement overall has been made in students moving into the Advanced category on MCAS. The percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category from the ELA and Math MCAS tests has increased by only 1.6 and 0.3 percentage points, respectively, from 1999 to 2002. There is no program for gifted and talented students at the school.

While ELA test results for students with limited English proficiency (LEP) were not available for 2001, a majority of LEP Grade 7 students taking the ELA test scored in the Warning category. This low level of performance is confirmed by the SFA assessments. Students with limited English proficiency made no improvement in mathematics. All LEP students scored in the Warning category on the 8th Grade mathematics MCAS exam in both 2001 and 2002.

Most students with disabilities at the Arlington School failed the Grade 7 ELA test. The only area of improvement for students with disabilities has been in Grade 8 mathematics. In 2001, all of the Special Education students with disabilities scored in the Warning level. In 2002, students scoring in the Warning category had decreased by 6% to 94%. The least improvement for students with disabilities has been in the area of ELA. The percentage of such students scoring in the Warning category increased by 10 percentage points from 1999 to 2002.

The greatest improvement by content area has been made in ELA and reflects the curriculum development effort in this area through PIP and the SFA adoption. There was a 10.2% decrease in students scoring in the Warning category from 1999 to 2002 on the ELA MCAS test and a 25% decrease in the percentage of grade 8 students scoring in the “Warning” category on Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Results during this same period. Nevertheless, while the percentage of regular students scoring in Warning decreased by 7 percentage points, the percentage of students with learning disabilities scoring in Warning actually increased from 2001 to 2002. These figures suggest the need to review the SFA initiative in the context of these students.

The least improvement by content area has been made in mathematics. Although there was an overall 7.9% decrease in students scoring in the Warning category on the mathematics MCAS test between 1999 and 2002, the percentage of students with learning disabilities scoring in Warning decreased only slightly and there was no decrease of LEP students in this category.

Despite continuing low performance, the school is setting reasonable and achievable goals for student performance, both overall and by subgroups that the Review Team believes can be achieved within a longer timeframe and with a more stable school population. These goals take the form of measurable benchmarks in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).

The 2002 CEP indicates that a “measurable outcome” of implementing the literacy curriculum, for example, will be “a 10% increase in Grades 1-8 of students reading at or above grade level as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test administered in the spring of 2002.” Similar measurable outcomes, stated in terms of MCAS and SFA lexile increases, are to be expected as a result of teaching practices and professional development. Instructional practices that “will result in measurable student achievement for English Language Learners and Special Education students” are to be seen in “a 10% increase” in those students’ Gates-MacGinitie scores. These goals have been established by reviewing the Annual Yearly Progress of the school and the overall performance on tests the previous year.

This is painstaking attention to the detail of student under achievement and should complement the sound improvement planning begun through the PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANNING process to raise the performance of the Arlington School over time.

KEY QUESTION 2: To what extent did the school implement the improvement plan which was approved by the State Board of Education?

The improvement plan approved by the Board has seen two revisions. Known now as the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) this is a working document well used by the school and closely monitored by the District. Actions taken are checked and action planning within the CEP has been revised as the result of SRI and MCAS test data. The implementation of the following key objectives have been particularly effective in creating a more positive curriculum and culture: Success for All, middle school structuring and improved communications through increased faculty involvement. While the planning process has been strictly controlled by the District, the school is involved at all levels in developing their CEP, although the involvement of

parents is limited. Faculty involvement is through the Performance Improvement Planning (PIP) workshops which take place regularly.

The School Improvement Plan approved by the Board is used as a working document by the school and as an instrument for communication and monitoring by the Central Office. The Superintendent uses the CEP to evaluate the principal at Arlington, and others, by reviewing the plan each September and establishing its goals and objectives as benchmarks for success. The plan is then reviewed again in January for a status update where adjustments are made, if necessary, and then again in June at which time the "Action Taken" column is completed. Additionally, there was evidence through teacher focus group interviews that, as a document issued with approved status at the beginning of the school year, the plan is used regularly and is referenced at team meetings on a weekly basis.

The plan has been based on regular assessments including district-wide math assessment at 10-week intervals and SRI testing for reading every 8 weeks when groups are re-assigned based on reading level. In addition, results from Terra Nova and MCAS tests are tracked by the plan. Item-analysis of MCAS questions is performed annually by staff as part of the ongoing Performance Improvement Planning (PIP) process which the District has developed as a result of becoming familiar with the Department of Education's PIM process. The PIP process relates closely to the CEP planning process.

As part of a district-wide initiative to unify and increase the rigor of the work in schools, the plan's goals and objectives were initially determined centrally and focused almost exclusively on improving ELA. The school is increasingly involved in developing the plan and is guided closely by modifications at the district level to include mathematics improvement.

For the Arlington, the 'school re-structuring' and 'improved communications goals', which have been very successfully achieved, have been replaced by goals focusing on increasing student achievement in ELA, mathematics and writing, with special attention given to improving achievement for ELL and Special Ed students. There is now more focus on improving instructional leadership and teaching practices aimed at improving student performance.

Increased and improved professional development, and the implementation of Success For All Program (SFA) have been the most positive aspects of the plan. This is borne out in interviews with students and teachers, in the rubrics and progress charts for SFA on classroom walls and in the confidence to succeed noted in the many teachers interviewed. LETS and NETS and the Family Success team which aims at addressing student learning issues through multi-professional and family involvement, were identified as being of particular value.

Parental involvement in planning is currently limited to a group of four dedicated parents. The PTO has recently been reformed, however, and the enthusiastic chair will serve on the parental group that participates in improvement planning. The PTO is determined to broaden the involvement of parents in this process.

Having been declared under-performing by the DOE in 2000, the Arlington School benefited from a \$25,000 grant that was used for professional development and restructuring to a middle

school model using the New England League of Middle Schools as the agent of change. Additionally, the school received intensive professional development provided by the DOE, in the form of “turn-around” management training for administrators. This has evolved into the current PIM/PIP processes. The District supports Arlington School teachers by providing both mathematics and reading staff developers and a teacher mentoring program. Staff has received professional development on data analysis, and an item-analysis of MCAS questions involving all faculty members is performed annually.

Success For All support is provided both at district and local levels with daily monitoring of schedules, group interaction, classroom environment, parental approval of homework assignments, as well as identification of teachers’ strengths and next steps.

Based on teacher surveys and focus groups, the Review Panel feels strongly that the school administration and faculty understand the causes of improvement. Those cited most frequently include: achieving middle school restructuring into a house system that has given both students and staff a greater sense of community and belonging; improved professional communications; the introduction and enthusiastic adoption of Success For All; a school-wide commitment to focused professional development and the Performance Improvement Planning process supported by the District. Perhaps most significantly, the faculty have full confidence in an improvement driven, well-balanced principal who has raised expectations and self-respect in both the staff and students.

The CEP and planning process is being kept under review by the DOE, and the District monitors school performance indicators on a monthly basis. Regular monitoring and assessment is performed using a variety of instruments and reporting mechanisms at both school and district levels. Additionally, the Team saw evidence of: teams creating their own rubrics for writing and humanities; monitoring of writing folders and the active use of individual student success plans for low performers on MCAS.

KEY QUESTION 3: Are there other factors (changes in conditions or circumstances, i.e., policies, practices) in the school or district which have contributed to or impeded the school’s ability to implement their plan?

A number of factors have impacted positively on the Arlington School. There is no doubt that the district-wide adoption of the Success For All (SFA) program has raised student expectation and increased teacher use of progress benchmarking. The successful middle school restructuring has created a more positive learning environment and enabled professional staff to reap the benefits for the first time of working in teams. The district-wide discipline code has enabled the Arlington to evolve strategies for dealing with troublesome behavior effectively. The District has also supported the Arlington with key professional support appointments for literacy, math and SFA. Notwithstanding this, the single most powerful impediment to progress at the Arlington remains attracting good teachers and administrators and holding onto them. While the redistricting undertaken in 2001 will have a long term beneficial impact on the school, in the short term it may be partly responsible for some set backs in MCAS ELA performance.

The restructuring initiative at the Arlington School in the 2000-2001 school year has resulted in the creation of a school within a school and a move towards a middle school model for grades 6, 7, and 8. The focus of this model centers on how students and teachers are organized for learning. Designing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve teaching and learning with the inclusion of daily common planning is their pathway to improving student performance. This strategic priority in the school's CEP has resulted in the following organizational changes:

- **House System Model** of three teams with a vertical grade level format across Grades 6,7 and 8
- **Looping** of students in each house each year
- **Common Planning Time** five times per week
- **Team Leaders /Principal Weekly Meetings**
- **Middle School Professional Development**

Teacher in the focus groups were convinced that the house-based suspension room with a full time teacher has helped keep the number of out-of-school suspensions down. Out of school suspensions dropped considerably in the year 2001 recording 52 for Grades 6, 7, and 8, compared to 169 in 2000 and 174 in 1999. Other pro-active interventions to reduce suspensions and keep students in school are the Conflict Resolution program that facilitates mediations between students, Saturday morning detention programs and guided SFA behavior modifications strategies.

The District has provided support to the Arlington School over the past two years. These efforts include stringent District requirements (across all schools) in terms of improvement planning and accountability, and addressing under achievement through the SFA program. The commitment to providing continued support to the school was expressed in interviews with Central Office staff.

Administrators reinforced the fact that resources will continue to support the restructuring initiatives at the middle school level. They see professional development as key to the school's continuing improvement. They are committed to the professional development in Middle School restructuring using the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) as an agent of change and to continuing to provide support and coaching in Performance Improvement Planning (PIP). The District is also committed to curriculum development and will extend the SFA program to include Humanities through grade 8 for 2003-2004.

The District has provided valuable and effective human resources with the provision of in house SFA facilitators and staff developers for Math and Literacy. They are committed to continue this provision and also to provide stipends for the leadership team to advance the PIP work this summer.

In order to meet the CEP's 10% target increase in the number of teacher visitations to classrooms, and in a focused attempt to provide high quality instructional feedback to teachers, the District crafted a *Walk-Through Protocol* designed for Grades 1-8. The school's SFA facilitator uses this protocol along with the mathematics and literacy staff developers to celebrate "yes moments" in instruction and to address "next steps" when instruction needs to be supported. Each administrator is accountable to the principal for using *walk-through* ten times per week.

Accountability is reinforced by the requirement that these documents are collected and sent to central office.

Walk-through is distinct from, but complements, the formal evaluation instrument that has been in place for several years. Where evaluations take place they include pre- and post-observation conferences. However, there is some inconsistency in the evaluation process, and unless the formal instrument continues to be rigorously applied, professional performance cannot be adequately evaluated and improved. For example, all four team leaders in the Challenger House indicated they had been formally evaluated by the administration this year, but neither assistant principal responsible for the middle school had been evaluated or prepared for evaluation.

Teaming has created the foundation needed to tackle issues of decision-making and communication in the school. Supported by professional development these teams are establishing the skills needed to use common planning time as a means to address their students learning gaps and developmental issues that effect student learning. This instructional management system requires teachers to meet for one hour each day for planning together.

In line with the District's attempt to implement an aggressive campaign to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, a New Teacher Mentoring Support Program has been adopted at the Arlington. Since teacher stability at the school has been and continues to be a concern (see Key Question 5) this is a very appropriate initiative. The following statements from new teachers interviewed suggest the program is meeting with success. "My mentor is wonderful" and, "The principal and my mentor are the reasons why I want to stay at the school" or again, "I feel like I am valued at this school". The Resident Teacher Initiative supported by the District is a good model for celebrating exemplary teaching, and is in place at the Arlington School.

Staffing continues to be the principle factor that will impact the on-going revision, development and implementation of the CEP. Of the four administrators drafted for their particular skills to take key leadership positions in the school, two are not currently in place. While one administrator is on temporary maternity leave and both have been successfully replaced (in one case pro tem), this is, nevertheless of concern. Similarly, the unfortunate loss of all mathematics faculty members at the end of last academic year is very concerning. Qualifying the reasons for resignation provides some reassurance: one retired; one left the state; one contract was terminated; one married and resigned because of spouse's concerns related to teaching in Lawrence. While this teacher alone left the school because of issues relating to its culture (or at least perceptions of its culture), this information suggests that unless efforts to attract and retain teachers in Lawrence are enhanced, progress will be hard to sustain.

While the redistricting begun in 2001 will have a long term beneficial impact on the school, in the short term it may be partly responsible for some set backs in MCAS ELA performance. As a result of restructuring in 2002, 50% of the 7th grade students at the Arlington School were new to the school that year, and had not therefore benefited from instructional initiatives already begun by the school to address literacy issues in both ELA and mathematics testing.

KEY QUESTION 4: Is there currently a sound plan in place to guide continued improvement in student performance?

The current CEP is an effective working document based on a model and, to an extent, content prescribed by the District. Its' action steps relate closely to the Performance Improvement Planning (PIP) process. There is confidence in the plan amongst faculty members who are increasingly involved in its monitoring and modification. There is evidence of the analysis of poor performance, but action steps and teacher planning books are not yet sufficiently detailed in relating to this. The school is aware of this problem; action-planning steps are being tightened; planning books are regularly monitored and teachers whose planning lacks specification are being supported.

The school is using a variety of methods to identify continuing and new gaps in student performance. In common with other schools in the district the Arlington School is using the PIP (derivative of PIM) process to initiate new teaching strategies and learning objectives to meet the needs of targeted students. This process involves the analysis of a range of data undertaken by faculty members regularly in groups.

Item analysis is undertaken during common planning time and this forum provides opportunity for wider discussion of the curriculum and instructional needs of students on a regular basis. Common Planning Time is sometimes sacrificed to enable teachers to meet together with parents in groups. While this is also vitally important, unless common planning time for curriculum, and assessment review is safeguarded then it will be hard to sustain improvement.

The Success For All Program demands its own 8 weekly assessments and adjustments and mid year adjustments are being made as a result of reviewing the CEP targets.

There is a commitment in the CEP's 2003 Action Plan to use teacher plan books that include specific literacy modifications for students with learning disabilities and ELL students. However, generic plans supplied by SFA in Grades 6 and 7 were used being exclusively to guide instruction in several classrooms visited. These plans included agendas, objectives and teaching strategies for the lesson along with outcomes and assessment measures. However, lack of teacher input in the planning process is a form of disengagement from the point of learning. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, individual accommodations/modifications for students with learning disabilities or ELL students were not observed.

There is a good analysis of the reasons for poor performance in the introduction to the current CEP that could be improved in the future with more specific statements about those reasons.

There is evidence that target figures in the action steps of the CEP are being achieved (for example, there has been a 10% increase in visits to share/spread best practices as per the plan), but other figures seem impressionistic. 100% achievement targets must always be questioned for reliability and several occur within this plan. In discussion with the central office and school administrators, there was agreement that these target figures are sometimes derived from working knowledge, or disaggregated AYP demands rather than detailed analysis of students' work and needs. These targets are likely to sharpen with the development of the PIP process.

The current Improvement Plan specifies strategies such as scheduling block time for reading and introducing the new Math curriculum, but the steps that need to be taken against a detailed

timeline with clearly identified *individuals* responsible are currently lacking from the plan. The District administrators are aware of this and want to see the plan develop into a more detailed working document in this respect in its next iteration

The current Plan refers to the progress made in restructuring and the teachers interviewed understood these improvements and the further improvements that need to be made. This is because all staff members work on the Plan in team groups at regular half day planning sessions. In addition instructional leaders attend two release days to work on the plan with central office administrators. While there is every intention to involve parents in the development of the plan (for example, the current plan carries a parental sign-off sheet), such involvement is currently limited to three actively involved parents at the middle school level. There is evidence that the newly formed PTO will become more closely involved in the CEP process and the elected Chair will serve on the parent planning group next year.

There is clear evidence of monitoring and review of the CEP process, with actions completed or in progress from the 2001- 2002 plan being noted in the 2002 –2003 plan. The plan is also used by the District for regular meetings with the Principal and as basis for the Principal's evaluation. This is very good practice and is likely to be highly productive in ensuring the effective implementation of the plan.

Across the two-year time period under review the CEP has followed the same format and there is consistency in its goals and objectives. This is because the plan is not only linked to the District plan it actually derives from it. In order to ensure consistency and strategic focus the District chose, in the fall of 2000, to write common plans for schools and 'hand them off' gradually as site leadership gained confidence in the planning process through professional support. Goals and objectives are now the responsibility of the Arlington School, but the District continues to provide a high level of support. Achieved goals are not always checked off, and some 2001 – 2002 targets met have found their way back into the 2002- 2003 plan.

KEY QUESTION 5: Are the conditions in place to sustain the gains achieved and support continued improvement in student performance?

As a result of effective systems (e.g. accountability, behavior standards, homework policy) driven home by the District and endorsed by the school, the culture of the Arlington has improved considerably. This is no longer a school where chaos reigns, and high morale and generally high expectations were noted amongst the students and staff, including: custodians, security staff, teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators – all of whom were interviewed.

Team members were welcomed to the school staff and students and repeatedly met with courtesy and helpfulness from the students. In a focus group the students were articulate, confident and the older students were able to talk about improvements in the school culture. Teacher surveys indicate that 92% of faculty have confidence in and support the Principal, which is a strong vindication of the Principal's professionalism and the District decision to restructure the site administration.

Student attendance at the Arlington has increased dramatically and at 95.1% for the school overall now exceeds the state average. Students in general like coming to this school and want to do well. Retention figures have decreased by 90% since 2001.

There is a worrying number of students (58 in 2001) who are absent for 20 days or more. Also, staff absence remains high, however, with 25% of staff absent on the days of review, a figure that was said to be typical. This is of significant concern and unless measures are put in place to improve staff attendance the sought after improvements are unlikely to come to fruition and certainly will not be sustained.

Expulsion rates at the school declined between 1999 – 2001, and last year only one student was excluded. Similarly, suspensions decreased over the period under review by 11%. No doubt, the unified discipline code district-wide has helped in this respect, because it has provided consistency and clarity. Some inconsistency between rules at the different houses at Arlington was noted, however, and the school knows there is work to be done in this respect. NELMS (see above) is working with teachers on understanding early adolescence and achieving high expectations and could usefully support the drive toward consistency and clarity of behavior expectations, too.

Structured in house suspension rooms properly staffed and with appropriate programs and activities, support a positive culture around behavior expectations. Consistent levels of sanction and behavior modification strategies also support this, as do Saturday detentions. As well as increasing time on task and ensuring minimum disruption to learning in classes this also results in an orderly school environment. This was commented on by custodians and security officers, all of whom expressed the improvements to quality and consistency of leadership. Playground play is positive and safe and good behavior is reinforced by posters in classrooms and by peer remediation, atmosphere in corridors positive/ custodian security officers' comments/ courtesy.

However, while touring the school or observing lessons in adjacent rooms, the team did note 'shouting back' by teachers in more than one classroom. One teacher was heard using inappropriate language to call a student to task. Notwithstanding, the pressures of inner urban school life in a setting such as the Arlington, there is no place for such adult behaviors that provide very poor role models.

The Programs and Services report cites seven different programs/services available at the middle schools. No program or service for gifted and talented students was listed and none was found at the Arlington. In light of the school's mission/vision clearly announced at the beginning of the CEP and stating high academic standards for all students, the omission of such a program is puzzling.

Ten lessons were observed during the review and the learning quality of the environment for instruction and learning overall was satisfactory or better. Numbers in classes visited ranged between 15 – 24; all were of very manageable size. In the best classes, students engaged and attempted challenging tasks. In these classes, students were 100% on task and there were successful inclusion models of parallel teaching. Resources in the best classes were

imaginatively used and rubric assessments were in use (e.g. on what makes a good presentation). Overall the SFA program provides much needed consistency.

While there were examples of well-differentiated classrooms (e.g. using small groups and peer learning) there were also examples of opportunities for differentiation not being taken where it was needed and of small group work that lacked rigor. There was also a lack of evidence of prior learning in some classes and insufficient checking for understanding. There were also some cultural gaps in language understanding (e.g. where a key clue in a story comprehension was an English word obscure to most of the group because of its connotation). This suggests insufficient attention to detail in planning. Teacher planning books are said to be reviewed regularly by leadership. However, in 50% of classes observed planning books were either not available or lacked in quality (for example, the objectives were not specified) and did not meet the objective of the 2002 – 2003 CEP.

The Homework model that has been established is reported to be very effective. Homework is regularly set and reviewed and has to be “signed off” by parents in a two-way communication log that has really taken hold. This will be a vital key to the further involvement of parents with the school.

Faculty morale is high and this is largely due to a shared mission in SFA and involvement in the planning process. In particular, teamwork and team support facilitated by the move to the middle school model were cited as having a positive impact on school culture in this respect. Professional development was also highlighted as impacting positively. Some teachers did, however, note areas of professional development that they perceived as lacking. The major issue was with the provision of professional development in teaching ELL students, despite the ten-hour after school program provided by the District, which was felt to be inadequate.

CONCLUSION

It is the consensus of the Two-year Follow-up Review Team that priority initiatives in the School Improvement Plan as presented to the Board of Education in 2001 are being successfully implemented. There is now strong leadership and a committed staff team and good communications at the school and this is impacting dramatically on an improved climate for learning. *Efforts will need to be re-doubled to ensure stability in leadership and to continue to attract and retain high caliber staff.*

Many of the key areas of strength noted which the team believes will be sustained were connected to the successful transition to a middle school model of organization. These include staff teaming and common planning, looping, positive identification to a unit smaller than the school for students and improved behavior. *Now that a more collegial and open culture is developing, house teams would do well to take on collective responsibility to support individual planning so that this becomes sufficiently objectified and adequately differentiated.*

Other key strengths relate to curriculum development, and in particular the successful implementation of the Success for All Program, with coordinators in place to ensure continued

rigor in its use. The regular classroom visits providing support and feedback are impacting very positively on improving the environment for learning.

However, to date the most challenged learners are still not making progress and progress overall is limited. *It is paramount that efforts to address specific students' needs through regular review and analysis of test results are sustained. Urgent attention must now be given to curriculum provision for students with learning disabilities and students learning English. Teachers will need additional and continuous professional development in these areas.*

The school is now providing a safe and nurturing environment for its students. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document, enriched by the district's Performance Improvement Planning process and is providing a clear road map for success. The italicized issues above, however, are priority areas of need that the Arlington must address with the District's support, if the school is not to become chronically under-performing.

**APPENDIX A
Team Members**

Mr. Peter Davies, Chair, ClassMeasures
Mr. Mike George, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
Mr. Michael Coppolino, ClassMeasures
Mr. Frank Lillo, ClassMeasures

APPENDIX B
TWO-YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW SCHEDULE
Detailed Schedule for School Site Visit
Arlington School

The times specified on the following schedule may be adjusted slightly to align with the daily schedule and practices of the school being reviewed.

Day 1 on site schedule

All activities take place in the school

- 8:00—9:00* Panelists meet with the principal.
- 9:00—10:00.* Panelists meet with the district superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).
- 10:00—11:00.* Panelists meet with the school’s curriculum and instruction leadership team and members of the school site council.
- 11:00—1:00.* Panelists meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information; panelists may conduct an informal walk through with a focus on school culture and climate for learning.
- 1:00—3:00.* Panelists meet with teachers in focus groups.

	PANELIST A and PANELIST B	PANELIST C and PANELIST D
<i>1:00-1:30</i>	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #1	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #2
<i>1:30-2:00</i>	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #3	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #4
<i>2:00-2:30</i>	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #5	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #6

2:30-3:00 Panelists meet with parents and students in focus groups.

	PANELIST A	PANELIST B	PANELIST C	PANELIST D
2:30 - 3:00	PARENT FOCUS GROUP #1	PARENT FOCUS GROUP #2	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #1	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #2

3:00—5:00 Panelists synthesize information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for second day of the on-site visit.

Day 2 on-site schedule

All activities take place in the school

7:30—8:00 a.m. Panelists meet with the principal for follow-up questions

8:00—8:30 a.m. Panelists visit classrooms and interview teachers.*

	PANELIST A	PANELIST B	PANELIST C	PANELIST D
8:00- 8:30	Observe teacher 1	Observe teacher 2	Observe teacher 3	Observe teacher 4
8:30- 9:00	Interview teacher 1	Interview teacher 2	Interview teacher 3	Interview teacher 4
9:00- 9:30	Observe teacher 5	Observe teacher 6	Observe teacher 7	Observe teacher 8
9:30- 10:00	Interview teacher 5	Interview teacher 6	Interview teacher 7	Interview teacher 8
10:00- 10:30	Observe teacher 9	Observe teacher 10	Observe teacher 11	Observe teacher 12

10:30 - 11:00	Interview teacher 9	Interview teacher 10	Interview teacher 11	Interview teacher 12
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11:00—1:00. Panelists meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information.

1:00—2:00. Team structured time. Panelists will identify any gaps in the evidence collected and may request additional information from the principal in the form of documents, meetings with classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific individuals or groups who can respond to questions relevant to the panel review protocol.

	PANELIST A	PANELIST B	PANELIST C	PANELIST D
1:00 - 2:00				

2:00—2:30 p.m. Closing meeting with the principal to discuss next steps (all panelists are present)

2:30—5:00 p.m. Panelists deliberate and form conclusions.

*Instructions for classroom observations, teacher interviews, and focus groups

Please inform all school faculty and students that Review Panel members will be visiting a cross-section of classrooms during the site visit. The selection of classrooms will be determined mutually by the Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal using the staff directory information provided by the school. All faculty members are asked to be prepared to accommodate a visitor on the morning of the site visit. Panel members will make every effort to minimize the disruption of planned classroom activities.

1. Observations Each panelist will observe three class lessons (for a total of 12 classes observed overall) 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