

# **REPORT OF TWO YEAR FOLLOW UP REVIEW**

## **Office of Educational Quality and Accountability**

### **English High School, Boston Public Schools**

#### **Executive Summary**

The English High School has made moderate progress in student performance in mathematics and limited progress in English language arts during the period under review. When compared to the eight large (over 800 students), comprehensive high schools in Boston, on many student performance measures the English High School falls at the top of a lower tier of four schools but below the performance of a higher tier of three or four schools.

In terms of “ownership” of change in curriculum and instruction and “buy-in” to the newest School Improvement Plan (WSIP), there has been strong progress since January 2004. The development of the Four Models of Instruction as a backbone for improving learning began in 2003 and has begun to permeate the conversation and impact the performance of many teachers. However, implementation of the four models of instruction has appeared inconsistent during the inspection period.

Under the original board-approved plan, and still to a significant degree, the faculty and administration have had difficulty applying analysis of data to changes in the plan and in instruction. The complexity of benchmarks under the board-approved plan created a puzzle that was not to be easily solved.

The creation of a teacher leadership team by the headmaster to focus specifically on curriculum, instruction and data to monitor and revise planning has been a significant step forward, and this group has become a stronger agent for change in this school year. Major factors, both positive and inhibiting, have grown from the decisions and the activities of the Boston Triad C administrative office and the central district administration. District administrators have conducted “learning walks” that result in clear and strong statements to the headmaster and to teachers about teaching performance. District literacy and math coaches provide building-based professional development through the district’s Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model. The faculty voiced strong support to the review team for this model. The CCL system and the after-school content area meetings rest heavily on the shoulders of these coaches, who have no evaluative authority but spend considerable time at the EHS.

Other examples of external district impacts include the selection of the Glencoe math curriculum, with its pacing and assessment systems, the demand for the restructuring of the Small Learning Communities to incorporate grades 9-12, the reductions in budgets and staffing in fiscal year 2003, the assignment of 120 students, primarily freshman just before Labor Day of the 2003-04 school year, and the development of site-based scoring and analysis of formative assessments in English language arts and math.

The English High School, is still struggling to improve performance in English language arts in the aggregate and with three subgroups in particular, and it is still in the lower echelons of the eight high schools in the rate of change. The school has, however, made reasonably strong progress in the 2003-04 testing, and there is a developing atmosphere for sustained growth in curriculum and instruction, albeit still dependent on continued external support and pressure from the district.

### ***Priority Findings***

**1 The English High School has made moderate progress in student performance in mathematics and limited progress in English language arts. Relevant data from other Boston high schools has not been systematically used by the English High School in understanding its own performance gap**

The team saw no evidence that the EHS is looking at its progress in the context of the other large, comprehensive high schools in Boston except in an investigation of special education programs at Brighton High School. The eight comparable high schools share some of the same major characteristics for racial/ethnic populations, first language not English and LEP populations, and low-income students. These schools are also working with the same kinds of external district decisions as the EHS, so they provide the most logical comparison group, even though there are differences in the nature of the minority populations and the mix of special needs and LEP populations.

**2. The English High School struggled with the original board-approved plan. The staff reported that they did not feel a sense of ownership of the plan and that its complexity made it difficult to monitor. Nevertheless, important initiatives have taken root through work on the original plan**

The development of the Four Models of Instruction, the embedding of coaching and CCL processes, and the patterns of monitoring and supervision supported by district administrators have become positive elements of instructional change.

Various kinds of data collection forms such as teacher and student logs and teacher assessment portfolios were visible, but their impact appears to have been inconsistent. The effective collection and use of data is beginning to take place, including looking at student work, creating teacher-built assessment processes, and the use of “My BPS” data by individual teachers for their classes. There are clear signs of progressing the ongoing work of the teacher leadership team in gathering and studying data and suggesting revisions in objectives based on the analysis.

**3. A range of factors have both aided and inhibited change at the English High School, including: the development of small learning communities; the use of block scheduling; the introduction of Glencoe math by the Boston City Schools; and budget constraints**

The small learning communities provide a potential structure for meaningful improvement, but during the period under review, structural change has not always translated into improvement in teacher and student performance. The small learning communities are four years old, but the leadership has changed and the district has in the last year required their restructuring. The organizational structure of the SLCs to support change in collegial groups has not, therefore, had an unhindered opportunity to take hold. A positive climate and a sense of orderliness have resulted from the headmaster's priorities and actions which have included such practical changes as the use of security cameras.

The impact of budget cuts in the 2003 fiscal year were serious both in the loss of teachers and in the loss of program directors for supervision and evaluation. However, the district effort to assign coaches, program directors, and administrators to visit the school has been a significant positive force.

In curriculum, the switch to the Glencoe math program with its structures and accountability has significantly impacted instruction and may have impacted achievement.

**4. Currently there is a strong plan in place both for curriculum and instruction and for broader climate issues at the EHS. This plan builds on the original board-approved plan with a simplicity and clarity of focus that did not exist before**

The staff has participated more fundamentally in developing the current school improvement plan. This new plan is more strategically developed and integrates staff around a more focused set of objectives.

**5. Many conditions, such as the ownership by teachers of the plan and a shared responsibility for improving learning have grown stronger in the 2004 calendar year**

The school climate is welcoming and students and staff reported it to be considerably safer than at the time of the fact finding review. The leadership is committed to the plan's success. Attendance goals, however, which are still not being met, hinder the school from meeting the plan's goals.

Staff turnover has brought a large number of younger and more energetic teachers to the building and mentoring and coaching are mechanisms that provide supports for them. The headmaster has brought in a committed group of assistant headmasters, but the lack of in-house directors with strong content and instructional knowledge limits the effectiveness of the supervision and the evaluation process. However, one recently hired administrator was a literacy coach for the district and thus provides this sort of content expertise.

The Teacher Leadership Team and the Instructional Leadership Team are committed to the goals of the WSIP. The Four Models of Instruction provide a clear focus on priorities of teaching and learning, but the school has considerable further work to create an understanding for the importance of gathering and using data to monitor the plan and make revisions. Work is progressing in this area.

## Two Year Follow up Review Process

### 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 underperforming and in need of state guidance to improve student performance. Schools declared to be underperforming 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 **English High School** developed such a plan, and the Commissioner and Board of Education accepted the plan on **February 23, 2003**. The district is required to direct the implementation of this plan, and within two years, the school must demonstrate significant improvement.

The underperforming 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 underperformance at the **English High School**. The Follow-Up Review was conducted on **March 23-24, 2005**.

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 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 schedule of the panel's activities is provided in Appendix B.

The panel's findings and conclusions on the 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 **English High 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 or 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.

### **English High School Profile**

English High School (EHS) is one of more than 130 public schools in the City of Boston. Until very recently, there were 13 large schools with grades 9-12 or 7-12 in the city; three have selective enrollments, serving grades 7-12 and are not legitimately comparable to the other city high schools. Two of the older and larger high schools, South Boston High School and Dorchester High School, have been restructured into small schools within existing buildings. The Cycle III accountability information is subdivided for those schools. Their different structures make them difficult to compare to the eight large comprehensive high schools with 800 or more students. Therefore, throughout this report this “big eight” will be the comparison group.

The English High School has a student population that is 95% students of color, evenly split in 2004-05 between black and Hispanic students with approximately a 2% Asian population. Over the last four years the EHS's population has shifted to include a larger Hispanic and somewhat smaller black population and a slightly smaller white population, proportionally. The population of limited income students is 77%, second highest in Boston behind Brighton High School. At the EHS the low-income population has grown from just over sixty percent of students to 77% in the last five years. Half (50%) of students' first language is not English, second highest behind Brighton High School (51%) and equal to Madison Park High School. The EHS has the highest percentage of limited English Proficient students (23%) in the eight big high schools. The special needs population, at 21% of the student body, ranks the EHS fifth from the highest among the big eight, with percentages ranging from 30% at Madison Park to 18% at West Roxbury.

There is a school-wide Title I program at the English High School.

In comparison to the other seven schools, the EHS has lower student retention rates, dropout rates, and suspension rates than most. The three-year retention rate is 13.9% in a range across the eight schools of 9.6% to 20.0%. The retention rate has dropped steadily from 19.4% in 2002 to 13.6% in 2003 to 9.1% in 2004. The EHS's 9.1% retention rate in 2004 is the second lowest among the eight schools in a range from 6.1% to 20.6% for that year. The dropout rate for 2003 was the lowest of any of the eight schools at 4.8% in a range of 4.8% to 16.0%. The out of school suspension rate in 2004 at 0.8% is also the lowest among the eight, which show large differences from the 0.8% at the English High School to 24.3% at Hyde Park. The prior two years of data, however, show very erratic suspension rates with 11.6% in 2003 and 2.6% in 2002. The high rate of suspensions in 2003 appears to have been caused by the district assigning a large number of students to the school right before the start of the school year (discussed further under factors influencing the improvement process at a later part of the report). The 3-year average for out of school suspension places the English High School as third lowest out of the eight schools at 4.9% in a range of 2.3% to 23.7%.

The exclusion rate at the EHS, however, is relatively high. The exclusion rate is expressed as students' per thousand with the latest data for the 2003 school year showing the English High

School second highest at 12.4 in a range of 3.9 to a high of 19.8 at Madison Park High School. The 3-year rate places the EHS second highest behind Madison Park with 11.2 per thousand in a range running from a high of 12.3 to a low of 4.9. The three years for the English High School were 13.9 in 2001, 7.4 in 2002, and 12.4 in 2003. It is very likely that the exclusion rate for 2004 will drop because of the same policy and climate efforts that seemed to impact the suspension rate as well.

The attendance rate is the worst among the eight schools, a problem that is acknowledged in many of the planning reports and conversations. The EHS had 81.9% attendance in 2004, the other seven schools range up to 87.8% attendance. Attendance at the English High School has improved from 76.9% in 2002 to 81.4% in 2003 and slightly higher to 81.9% in 2004. However, the percentage of students chronically absent has actually increased. There are no discernible attendance patterns across gender and race. The attendance rate for junior and seniors was about 1.5% lower than that of sophomores in 2004. For all students in grades 9-12 in the City of Boston, the attendance rate actually increases from grade 9 to grade 12 by about 2%. This figure may reflect the relatively low dropout rate at the EHS compared to the other seven. There is reasonable evidence from teacher reports as well as from percentage rates for MCAS testing that there is a higher percentage of students participating daily in most classes than are checked into homeroom and therefore officially listed as present. The team observed classrooms that did not reflect a 20% absence rate. Because the building has multiple exterior doors that are hard to monitor, late students often call peers to open exterior doors for them, gain entrance to the building in other ways, and thus attend classes without checking into school. Informal estimates by faculty stated a classroom attendance rate of closer to 90%, but the team could not verify these figures. The school is concerned about attendance rate figures and is searching for more effective ways to manage the process. Some teachers report that some rules (e.g. the locking of doors and requiring a parent's personal appearance to allow a student into school after the initial tardy period) create a disincentive for some students to attend.

## **Staffing**

The EHS administration includes one headmaster, one chief academic officer, three assistant headmasters, a special education program director, and a director of English language learners. There is a school support specialist assigned to the building, and there are two staff assistants, a student support coordinator, four guidance counselors, one librarian, two nurses, a parent coordinator, and a registrar.

The headmaster and chief academic officer have served together for 5 years, but among the three assistant headmasters, two are in their first year and one in the second year at the school. The ELL director has been at the school for 14 years, but the director of special education has served for only 3 years.

The 2002 panel report indicates there are 87 teachers and 5 paraprofessionals for 1,214 students. The 2005 report indicates that there are 87 teachers and 6 paraprofessionals for 1,255 students. There has been significant turnover in the staff in the last 3-4 years according to numerous reports to the team. Analysis of the 2005 staffing report reveals that 37 of the 87 teachers are in their first two years in the school, 18 have 3-5 years in the school, 15 have 6-19 years in the

school, and 17 have 20 years or more in the school. Approximately 25% of the staff is on provisional status at this time. The heaviest proportions of newest teachers are in special needs, ESL, and math. In the math department four teachers are in their first year at English High School, two in their second, one in their third, three in their fourth, and three with 20 years or more. Of the 10 newer teachers three are not certified.

## **MCAS Results**

### **Overview**

Students at the EHS are tested by MCAS in grade 10 in English language arts (ELA) and in mathematics. In Cycle III, the EHS “improved below target” in ELA and did not meet AYP in the aggregate while improving “above target” in mathematics and meeting AYP in the aggregate.

In English language arts the special education subgroup and the African-American/Black subgroup also failed to make AYP, while limited English proficient (LEP), and Hispanic students did make AYP. In mathematics in Cycle III, only the special education students failed to make AYP among the subgroups at the school.

The City of Boston as a whole was “on target” in both English language arts and mathematics at the end of Cycle III, met AYP in the aggregate in both subjects but failed to make AYP in both subjects in the same three subgroups; they were special education, African-American/Black, and Hispanic students.

The 2004 results show improvement at the EHS, with participation rates between 90-95% in the various subgroups and with reasonably strong reduction in the percentage of students in the Failing categories in both English and math. However, the improvement is clearly stronger in mathematics than ELA by a number of different measures. In comparison with the similar sized comprehensive high schools in Boston, the rate of improvement at the English High School is uneven.

### **Student Performance in English Language Arts**

In Cycle III, the EHS received a performance rating of very low with a proficiency index of 48.1. The CPI gain was 5.7 points against a target gain of 9.6; and the improvement rating was “improved below target.” In terms of 2004 proficiency levels compared to the seven other large, comprehensive high schools, the EHS has 30% of its regular education students in the Advanced (A) or Proficient (P) categories, which falls fourth of eight among those schools, who have a range from a high of 52% in A and P to a low of 13%. 18% of the EHS’s regular education students fall into Failing, which ranks fifth highest among the eight, ranging from 9% to 26%. That 18% represents a solid 8 percentage point reduction from 2003, while the City of Boston across all grade levels for regular education students in ELA reduced those in Failing by 7 percentage points.

Similarly, for special education students the percentage in Failing, at 61%, falls in fourth place in a range from 46% up to 93%. The City of Boston as a whole for all grades tested is at 60% of special education students in Warning/Failing. English High School ranks sixth out of eight in

terms of the percentage of special education students in Advanced and Proficient with 3% in a range from 11% as the high to 0% as the low.

For LEP students the EHS is strongest of the three groups with a third place ranking among the eight schools both in terms of percentage of Advanced and Proficient and the percentage of those in Failing. The EHS has 11%, in a range across the eight schools of 18% to 0% in Advanced and Proficient and 40% in Warning, where the range for the eight schools runs from 22% to 78%. It is worth noting that Boston across all grades has 11% LEP in Advanced and Proficient, the same as English High School, and has 49% in Failing. As with the regular education students, English High School reduced the percentage in the Failing category from 2003 to 2004 at a considerably higher rate than the City of Boston as a whole across all grade levels.

Looking at the performance of the EHS on ELA in another way, however, indicates that the EHS did not make the progress that other large comprehensive high schools in the city did. The EHS was the only school of the eight that was not on target or above target in English. Its gain of 5.7 CPI points against a target of 9.6 represents 60% of the target gain. This was the lowest rate of change among all eight schools whose gains compared to the target ranged from 60% at the EHS up to 250% at Charlestown. Only two other high schools, Madison Park and Jeremiah E. Burke, fell below 100%; they were at 90% of gain target. Under the Adequate Yearly Progress measurement system, gaining only 60% of target in one cycle increases the rate of growth necessary in future cycles, which poses a significant challenge for English High School. The EHS was the only one of the eight which did not make AYP in the aggregate in ELA for failing in ELA performance rates; Hyde Park High School failed to make AYP because of the percentage of competency determination (CD) passage.

The two-year school status report states relative to student performance: "While examining data for the racially and ethnically diverse population at English, we realize that our most significant performance gaps were not racial/ethnic gaps but programmatic gaps, specifically programs for special education and LEP students." In review of the data by the team, the concern for special education students seems valid, but a focus on African-American/Black students and Hispanic students seems as important as a focus on LEP students, particularly in ELA. The EHS marked a slower rate of change in the CPI for African-American/Black students than all but one of the 7 comparison high schools. At the EHS the CPI gain was 4.4, with the next highest at 9.9 and others ranging up to 17.1. The 50.6 CPI for African-American/Black students in ELA at the EHS ranks fifth out of the eight schools in a range from a high of 70.6 to a low of 42.9.

Similarly, Hispanic students in ELA at the EHS had a CPI of 45.7, seventh out of the eight schools and the CPI gain (8.2) was the lowest among all eight schools with most of the others in the 10.9 to 16.7 range and two in the high 20's. For LEP students, the CPI in ELA at the EHS was 41.0, ranking fifth of the eight schools and the CPI change of 15.4 ranked lowest of the eight schools, with the others from 20.6 up to 48.5.

In special education the EHS students had a CPI of 33.6, ranking seventh of eight and, with a change of 5.4 points, were the lowest of the eight schools with two others in the 5 and 6 range and the rest from about 10 up to 21.7. It is noteworthy that three of the eight schools had fewer

than 40 special needs students tested and therefore are not faced with an ultimate yes or no on AYP.

### **Student Performance in Mathematics**

In the Cycle III Accountability Report, the EHS started at a “very low” performance rating and achieved an “above target” improvement rating, meeting the Cycle III AYP. The school achieved a CPI gain of 14.9, above their gain target of 11.2. In mathematics only the special education students failed to meet AYP as a subgroup; these students did not meet the CPI target, the improvement change target, or the CD Attainment target. While it is noteworthy that only 24% of schools in the Commonwealth achieved “above target” improvement ratings, seven of the eight large comprehensive high schools in Boston did achieve this level. In fact, if we look at the CPI gain as a percentage of the CPI gain target, the English High School was tied for second to last among the eight.

Comparing the position of the EHS among the eight large comprehensive high schools in math results by subgroups of students shows that the EHS falls about in the middle. For regular education students 19% rated Advanced or Proficient and 28% Failing in 2004. The EHS reduced the percent in Failing by 14 percentage points from 2003 to 2004, equaling the decline for Boston as a whole. The 19% in Advanced and Proficient ranks fifth among the eight schools, in a range from 66% to 10%. The percentage in Failing also ranks fifth, well above three schools with percentages in the mid to high 40’s and below four schools with ranges from 4 to 17.

For special needs students, the EHS had 10% in Advanced and Proficient and 68% in Failing but that 68% is a 30 percentage point improvement over 2003, double the improvement for Boston as a whole which had 60% of special education students in Failing. The EHS is third highest among the eight schools for special education students in Advanced and Proficient and ranks fourth for the percentage in Failing. That latter range runs from a strong 38% to a weak 87%.

To look at special education students in a different way, the CPI for special education students at the EHS, at (30.0) ranked sixth out of the eight schools in a range from a high 45.5 to a low of 29.1. The CPI gain at the EHS for special education students in 2004 was 7.1, ranking seventh out of eight in a range from a high of 23.0 to a low of 4.7. The EHS was the only school of the eight that failed to make AYP in math for special education students for reasons of performance. Madison Park did not make AYP for reasons of CD attainment. Again it is noteworthy that three high schools of the eight did not have 40 or more special education students to make them eligible for an AYP rating. In a four year perspective, the EHS has made steady gains reducing the percentage of failure from 75% in 2001 to 71% in 2002, to 63% in 2003 and a big step down to 38% in 2004.

For LEP students the EHS has 21% in Advanced and Proficient and 37% in Failing, an improvement of 28 percentage point reduction of those in Failing from 2003. For the City of Boston as a whole 31% of LEP students rated Failing, and that is only a 2 percentage point improvement from 2003. Excluding Charlestown High School with a unique 94% of LEP students in Advanced and Proficient and only 6% in Failing, the 37% in Failing at the English is the second lowest among the seven schools (range of 35% to 47%). The relative ranking is not as

strong in Advanced and Proficient, at fifth among the seven schools (range of a high of 38% to a low of 10%).

For African-American students the CPI for the EHS ranks fifth among the eight; it is 46.5 in a range of 65.3 down to 42.9. The CPI change for the EHS is third highest among the eight schools at 13.8 (range of a high of 26.0 to a low of 9.9).

For Hispanic students the CPI at the English is seventh out of eight at 48.2 (range of a high of 68 to a low of 43.3). The CPI change is fourth out of eight, 15.5 in range of 32.1 down to 10.0, although three of eight schools have too few Hispanic students to be eligible for an AYP decision.

LEP students at the EHS had a CPI of 46, ranking fifth out of eight (range from 66 to 37.4). The CPI change at the English in 2004 at 19.3 was the lowest of all eight schools; others ranged from a high of 48.5 to 20.6.

## **PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS**

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

Yes. The English High School has shown steady, reasonable improvement in math performance in the aggregate and in subgroups, with most significant improvement in the last year. The improvement in English has been adequate but not substantial with unimpressive CPI change results in 2004 relative to the other large comprehensive high schools. With regular education students, in both ELA and math the EHS ranks close to the middle of the eight schools in its percentage of students in Failing and its percentage of students in Advanced and Proficient.

For special needs students the percentage in Failing again ranks fourth out of the eight large comprehensive high schools with a percentage that is numerically about in the middle of a broad range. However, as measured by CPI scores, special education students rank lower than most others in the comparison group in both ELA and math. The CPI scores for special education students rank seventh out of eight in ELA and sixth out of eight in math, with the smallest CPI gain of any of the eight schools in ELA and the second smallest in math.

For LEP students, the EHS ranks third out of eight in terms of the percentage of students in the Failing category and has done better in moving its LEP English students to Advanced and Proficient than five of the eight schools. But the EHS has done less well in math, ranking sixth out of eight. Among the "big eight" in Boston, the EHS has the lowest CPI change in Cycle III for LEP students in both ELA and math.

The EHS does somewhat better with its African-American students compared to the other seven schools than with its Hispanic students. The Cycle III CPI for African-American students ranks fifth out of eight for both ELA and math. While the CPI change for the subgroups in ELA was the lowest of all eight schools, the CPI in math ranked third among the eight. With Hispanic students, the CPI for ELA and math ranks seventh out of eight among the large, comprehensive

high schools. The CPI change in Cycle III for ELA again is the lowest of the eight but in math ranks fourth out of the eight.

Many factors may have impacted improvement rates. The most significant factor appears to be the recent math curriculum change from Match Connections to Glencoe, mandated by the City of Boston School Department. This change may have helped all eight big high schools make significant gains in math achievement and in CPI scores for math. The allowance of Hispanic students, and therefore many LEP students, to take the math test in Spanish should have impacted the EHS more than most because of its relatively high percentage of Hispanic students. But the EHS must confront that its LEP change in CPI in 2004 was still the lowest among all eight large high schools. The impact of the Unz initiative in removing bilingual education programs and requiring many more students to take the ELA tests may have had an impact on achievement scores at the EHS, which has a broad array of language groups among its LEP population.

In general, the data suggests external factors having more of an impact than internal reforms in the improvements that were noticeable. However, the focus of the school on meeting the challenge for change is the strongest it has been among the faculty. The EHS's ownership of the need to improve at the building level is apparent in the latest WSIP, which was awaiting approval by the district office at the time of the review. This change does coincide with the most significant year of improvement in the last four for the EHS. The renewed sense of urgency may relate to the aggressive monitoring by Triad C and district employees, reinforced by the traction being gained by planning and change efforts within the school.

The English High School WSIP sets reasonable and achievable goals for student performance overall and for student subgroups that are tied to the AYP targets for the school.

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

The original plan was developed through the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process and approved in February of 2003. Three of the four student performance goals set in the plan in English language arts were not met, many by significant margins:

1. The school's goal was to have only 25% of students in Failing in English language arts. The actual result in 2004 was 35% failing.
2. Success in open response questions is 40 percentage points short of the goal, 43% of points earned vs. the goal of 83% of points earned.
3. The goal of students in Advanced and Proficient has been met with 17% in 2004 vs. the 15% that was set.
4. The percentage of special education students in Failing is 61% against the 40% goal that was set.

In math, all but two of the five performance goals were met, again primarily by major improvements between 2003 and 2004:

1. The goal for percentage of students in Failing of 42% was surpassed by an actual 2004 percentage of 38%.
2. The goal for students in the Proficient category was 11% and the actual in 2004 was 16%.
3. The percentage of points earned in the open response question met the 2003 goal with an actual percentage of 39 as compared to a goal of 35% but was not able to keep pace in 2004 with an actual of 43% of points earned as against a goal of 45%.
4. The goal of reducing special education students in Failing to 63% was not met with the actual in 2004 of 68%.
5. The goal for LEP students in Failing (63%) was easily surpassed with an actual percentage of 37 in 2004.

Some elements of the board-approved plan are in place. However, teachers interviewed did not tie the stronger positive areas of school growth to the plan itself and, except for those teachers directly involved with formulating the plan, did not consciously connect the plan to changes in the building.

In the 2004-05 school year, however, the rewriting of the plan into the current WSIP has built on the strong elements of the board approved plan, has much stronger internal support, and represents a synthesis of the important elements of the February 2003 plan as well as a broadening to include climate and other factors. A significant development that has created momentum for staff internally to take leadership on curriculum and instruction was the implementation in the 2003-2004 school year of the Teacher Leadership Team (TLT) to focus on moving forward the board-approved plan and on teaching and learning issues because the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), a district-mandated group, was charged with a much broader array of initiatives.

From February 2003 to January 2005 the major impacts on curriculum and instruction, some of which are embedded in the original plan, have been primarily from the district and city-wide

administration initiatives. Some of these were not in the board-approved plan, such as the small learning communities (SLCs) which were implemented initially in 2001-02 with a ninth grade unit and three 10-12 SLCs. Other district initiatives more focused on instruction included the readers and writers workshop models and the math workshop model. The district had also mandated the use of Math Connections as the math curriculum, which was seen as poorly implemented and because EHS staff perceived its text-rich nature as problematic for the EHS population. The shift of curriculum to Glencoe by the City created an additional transition in the middle of the plan but brought a program that was better aligned to MCAS and the district mandated assessments. District budget problems in fiscal year 2004 also created an external inhibiting force. These will be discussed more fully under question 3.

District monitoring commentary and the EHS's own assessment of the plan indicate that the use of data to track the plan and to impact instruction has been the slowest element to develop effectively. Ongoing improvement planning has not been based primarily on periodic assessment of progress that has been tracked and analyzed; rather, planning has concentrated on the need for focused effort and the accessibility of planning elements for the faculty.

One of the significant changes made to improvement planning has been the work of the EHS leaders to develop what is called the "Four Models of Instruction." The Instructional Leadership Team, the literacy coach, and the administration created these models in the late winter and spring of 2003. The leaders distilled from the workshop models and from the instructional change objectives of the board-approved plan a tight focus on the need for instructional methods of modeling, inquiry, student talk to build understanding, and in-class work time. This effort, in the words of the Department of Education monitor's on-site visit report of April, 2004, "established a common language that organizes the many strategies and practices outlined in the plan into four instructional areas and methods that characterize effective instruction . . . that are beginning to take hold at the school." In April 2005 the review team found strong evidence that the Four Models of Instruction is permeating the school, although many faculty members are in early stages of implementing two or three of the four models. Of the twelve classrooms visited, the team found four teachers using the models in a consistent and adept manner, five in learning stages of application of some of the elements of the model, and three teachers whose classrooms yielded little evidence of the four models.

ELA and math coaching time has been increased in the 2004-05 school year. This is an effort to reintroduce the level of support that was dramatically reduced in fiscal year 2003 when state and city budget constraints forced the school to cut eleven teachers and two administrators. This cut included four school-based program directors, which reduced the ability of the school to supervise and evaluate the curriculum and instruction in language arts, history, math, and science.

The TRIAD district office and the central office have provided consistent monitoring from the outside to support school-based supervision. The deputy superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the district Program Director for math, and the Program Director for ELA have all been involved in "learning walks" with the headmaster through classrooms at the English High School on a regular basis. In 2004-05 the

level of this supervision has increased with particular attention to special education services in meeting the general curriculum.

An additional initiative outside of the board-approved plan which absorbed considerable faculty energy was the implementation of block scheduling in the 2003-04. This restructuring effort provided 80-minute blocks that afford the opportunity to implement the workshop model and the Four Models of Instruction.

Additional elements of the board-approved plan that have taken root is the collaborative coaching and learning system (CCL) that brings groups of teachers together for sharing, visiting each other's classrooms, and discussion of instruction with the coaches. Also, there is evidence of teacher and student logs developed to get feedback about the instructional process. These have been monitored and were one source of data informing the creation of the four models. Teachers have been required to gather evidence of the different forms of assessment they use into portfolios. These were visible in classrooms, although it is not clear how the monitoring of them has changed assessment processes. Finally, the plan outlined the goal of creating classroom observations guides. These have evolved over time and continue to do so.

The elements of the plan with the least impact relate to looking at student work, creating teacher-built assessment processes and using data collected from in-building, district, and state sources. As noted earlier this has become more effective in the current school year.

The EHS has made strong progress in calendar year 2004 toward broad faculty understanding of the fundamental need for improvement. There are both internal and external reasons. Internally the development and growing strength of the teacher leadership team (TLT), created by the headmaster in the spring of 2002 has added a strongly representative group of teachers that are consistently working with the plan and with assessment information. TLT was created to focus on teaching and learning because the instructional leadership team (ILT) had a broader charge to look at climate and structural issues. The TLT networks back to content areas and to small learning communities. The current whole school improvement plan (WSIP) represents solid work by the TLT to reinforce the four models of instruction and to uncover the root causes of low performance. Whereas the original board-approved plan was very infrequently mentioned as a document of significance, there was much more common understanding of and discussion of the WSIP that is awaiting approval by the district.

There is a conscious effort to build capacity within the school through using the coaches to reinforce strong teachers as well as using them to improve the performance of targeted weaker teachers. It is still not clear how far the development of local master teachers has moved. Of twelve teachers visited by the team, all of whom knew of the observation, the team rated the lessons of five as exemplifying good practice in a highly consistent way, rated six as average, meeting an acceptable standard, and rated one as low, not meeting an acceptable standard. The focus at the EHS on the Four Models of Instruction incorporates steps to improve identified areas of instructional weakness.

The external forces which build faculty understanding of the need for improvement are the "learning walks" and other visits with faculty by district monitors. The views of teachers were

split among those who experienced these as threatening compliance checks with judgmental responses and others who had had constructive feedback focused on growth. In either case, these efforts have gained teacher attention. The assignment of English language arts, math, and language acquisition coaches was perceived widely as a positive force that helped teachers grow through direct coaching and through CCL activity.

The EHS is still in the early stages of using assessment to monitor student performance and the related data to effectively alter curriculum and instruction. Again, the TLT plays an important role in this effort. The chief academic officer is using teacher and student logs and other information. Teachers indicate increasing use of the scanning and analyzing systems for English and math formative assessment. The strongly imposed district testing processes in math are credited with assisting math performance. On the other hand, it does not appear that the “My BPS” data source is heavily used at this point. The EHS has not evolved use of data handling systems to re-aggregate student scores by class groups across years. The inclusion process for special needs students is in early stages, and evidence is that teachers are not engaging constructively in most cases with IEP accommodations. Nevertheless, overall, the movement is in a positive direction and there are leadership components in the school and outside of the school dedicated to advancing these practices.

**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?**

Yes. A considerable range of school and district factors have changed in the last three years that have impacted the ability to implement the plan for improvement. On balance, these contributed to positive improvement more than they have hindered the improvement process.

One program that is undergoing significant change is the restructuring of the small learning communities. The school had committed to four units, one for freshmen and three for students in grades 10-12 based on programmatic emphasis. The district has mandated that all programs be designed to cover grades 9-12. The EHS is working as part of the city grant from the Carnegie Corporation on high school renewal to redesign their small learning communities. The school administration was optimistic that the restructuring could provide continuity for teachers to see the development of students from ninth and tenth grade, but some teachers feel it as an unnecessary top-down mandate.

Another program change that created some dislocation but has been credited with very positive outcomes was the shift in math curriculum away from Math Connections to the Glencoe program. New Glencoe books were not available at the start of the 2003-04 school year, but became available in October 2003. The new program and texts are seen as better suited for students with English language difficulties, better aligned with MCAS and district wide assessments, and accompanied by assessment structures that are of significant help in monitoring student growth.

Another unforeseen set of program and service changes were imposed by the success of Question 2 (the 2003 Unz initiative), which impacted the EHS because of its significant number of

bilingual students in transitional bilingual education programs. The forced shift to sheltered English immersion programming (SEI) was another jarring transition, the impact of which is not yet clear. The presence of a language acquisition coach two days a week is helping teachers make the transition.

A third area of additional faculty service, while perhaps not entirely unforeseen, is the structuring of supplemental time for students that have failed MCAS. The school offers extra support during school, after school, and on Saturdays. Students and teachers credit this extra help with providing additional success on MCAS. Parents and teachers credit the pressure of high-stakes testing with changes in student attitude. Though the test has been in place since 2000, and the EHS graduating class of 2003 was the first to take the 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS in a high-stakes environment, at the EHS the emotional impact of high-stakes testing seems to have been delayed a year or two because parents, students, and school may have expected the state to lower the stakes and the standards.

School and district policy regulations have also been factors in the change process. Interviews with staff, parents, and students credit the Headmaster with improved student behavior in the school. He is respected for helping to create a supportive and caring climate in the building. The installation of cameras in strategic areas of the building is a change in school regulations that has had a significant impact on student behavior. In the statistics on reported incidence of crime at the EHS, the 2000-01 total is 286. It drops by more than 100 for 2001-02 and 2002-03; that level is reduced by half in 2003-04 to 84. Data for 2004-05 is incomplete, though as of late March the reported incidents appear to be considerably fewer than last year.

A change in district assignment practices at the very start of the 2003 school year was cited during interviews as a major disruption to the school. At the same time that the school was suffering staff reductions due to budget cuts, just before Labor Day 2003, the school faced an unexpected influx of approximately 120 students for the 2003-04 school year. That influx overloaded freshman classes with students who were poorly prepared and who in past years had been retained in grade eight. Teachers had to be reassigned from upper grade classes which created issues with preparation and class size within the SLCs.

School and district resource allocation has also been a challenge. During the 2002-03 school year the district cut 11 teachers and 2 administrators, a combination of direct budget cuts and the shift away from bilingual education under the Unz Initiative. This included cutting the four school-based program directors at the EHS which reduced supervision and evaluation.

On the other hand, the district has assigned additional attention from the deputy superintendent, the assistant superintendent, central directors of curriculum and instruction, and senior directors for math and ELA. The district has increased the ELA and math coaches by half time and assigned a language acquisition coach two days per week for the fiscal year 2005. Additionally, the school has been the beneficiary of part of \$650,000 held at the superintendent's office for underperforming schools. This has resulted in the assignment of two community field coordinators (CFC's) to assist in student management in order to free the headmaster and assistant headmasters for stronger attention to curriculum and instructional supervision.

New circuit breaker funding from the state formula has been reserved for professional development in the school district with a focus on special needs teachers, which is benefiting those teachers at the EHS. The school is benefiting from the Carnegie and Gates funding for high school reform, and there are students from local colleges and universities involved with the school through the Gear Up program.

The EHS has experienced a high rate of staff turnover in the last three years. This is in part the result of predictable factors such as retirement rates, but it is also the result of a renewed administrative commitment to creating transfers and imposing non-renewals on low-performing teachers. The result, as mentioned in the staffing overview, is that 50% or more of the faculty is in its first three years at the school. This turnover, along with the influence of coaches and mentors, is having energizing the faculty and introducing newer instructional techniques. However, there is concern about the number of non-certified teachers, especially in math.

A recent change in the collective bargaining agreement allows unlimited administrative access to classrooms. This has permitted walkthroughs and informal and formal visits that contribute to supervision.

Another change likely to have an impact is the movement toward inclusion of special needs students. The school is starting its first formal inclusion efforts for the placement of co-teachers in science classes. The special education staff has experienced considerable turnover, and the hiring process has emphasized learning in the general curriculum for all students. The introduction of inclusion has attracted support from the Assistant Superintendent in TRIAD C, in monitoring instruction in special education classrooms. School support specialists have also provided targeted coaching for special needs teachers in the content areas. Nevertheless, there is considerable work to be done in improving special education instruction and content knowledge.

The decision to move to block scheduling with 80-minute periods in 2003-04 has created a time structure that aligns with the Four Models of Instruction and enhances the focus on in-class work and student talking for understanding, as well as the use of the workshop model for inquiry processes and constructive learning in general.

The district has made available school-based analytical equipment in both ELA and math. The Formative Assessment of Student Thinking in Reading (FAST-R) provides a process for formative assessment in English language arts. RISO scanning equipment is in place for pre and post testing in math. Both systems are in active use.

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

Yes. There is solid evidence that the school has used important data and program information to accurately identify gaps and targets in the recently revised plan that is awaiting district approval. These data include teachers in the TLT spending time in the summer and through the school year analyzing MCAS data. District math assessment information, writing prompt information, student and teacher logs, staff surveys, and the Boston Plan for Excellence student survey in December 2003 have also been analyzed.

The primary student performance goals are clearly matched to Adequate Yearly Progress goals. There are also clear improvement goals related to the Four Models of Instruction as well as specific ELA and math performance growth. The instructional action plans are limited and focused; they clearly track student learning objectives through root causes, instructional change objectives, strategies, and outcomes. Importantly, the plan also includes climate goals that relate to improving attendance and building a culture with high academic and social expectations.

Improvements in teaching and learning are prominent features of the plan with a strong focus on the distillation of workshop model elements and other practices into the Four Models of Instruction.

The staff members have participated more fully in developing the WISP than the original board-approved plan. The TLT and the ILT have participated fully. Discussions with content and SLC groups have created awareness and knowledge levels that did not exist with the originally-approved plan.

Nevertheless, there is concern that the plan is too ambitious. The headmaster recognizes this concern but stresses the importance of the goals to be achieved for the benefit of students. Some members of the TLT and ILT find the accumulation of specific goals somewhat daunting, but this recognition is built on a clear understanding of the plan and its need, which was not true in 2003.

The new plan is more strategically developed with more focus on overarching and integrated efforts. Special needs teachers are required to work much more closely with content-area teachers. For instance, the CCL processes are integrating across special education and LEP areas; the workshop structure and the emphasis on the Four Models infuses many elements of the plan. The coaching and CCL processes are respected and ongoing. There is a solid month-by-month activity list.

The analysis of MCAS data in this report (pp.6-8) suggests that the school should be focusing more directly on issues of improving performance among African-American/Black and Hispanic as racial/ethnic groups. There is as much data pointing at the significance of improving these groups as improving within the LEP program area.

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

Yes. The leadership at the EHS, the headmaster and the assistant headmasters, are energetic, concerned about student learning, and committed to the direction the school is headed. The headmaster has shown insight in the development of the TLT and his work with the chief academic officer and district administrators. However, the ongoing work of evaluating teachers falls heavily on school administrators. This burden is increased because of the lack of program directors in the school and because of the large percentage of provisional teachers and teachers with more than 20 years of experience. The effective completion of those evaluation tasks

requires time, which has been freed up somewhat with the use of two community field coordinators, and expertise in evaluation processes, content knowledge, and instructional techniques. This district support with content experts and highly experienced and trained administrators is significant in providing instructional and content expertise. The chief academic officer has a daunting array of responsibilities, and the department head for special needs has not displayed the level of leadership desirable for a school with the issues of the EHS in special education student performance.

In general, then, the leadership has high energy, very strong intentions, an understanding for the need for change both in the techniques of instruction and also the culture and climate of the building. As previously mentioned, the TLT and the ILT are both very committed to the goals and objectives of the WSIP. They were the most direct participants in its development and they have helped to make other staff aware of the issues and the objectives. The SLCs have potential for engendering staff understanding and buy-in. But the SLCs are in transition. The leadership of them includes two assistant headmasters who are new this year, one who is in the second year, and a fourth who has longer associations with the EHS. The TLT and ILT network out to the SLCs, but they are school-wide groups. It remains to be seen whether the SLCs can become centers for faculty collegial development.

However, there is not a sense of cohesive school-wide or SLC-based departments by content. Monthly meetings are chaired by administrators in collaboration with coaches. The integration of special needs teachers with general education teachers has also introduced new issues in terms of departmental cohesion. In talking with teachers of math, for example, there were a variety of estimates of the number of teachers in the school who are “in the math department.” A common expression of camaraderie and solidarity exists in which teachers and administrators are growing increasingly proud of their ability to “carry the burden” on their own. After-school faculty meeting opportunities exist, some for longer periods twice a month. The clarity and focus of agenda, structure, and leadership of these meetings is at times strong and at other times inconsistent. Although the staff is considerably more committed to the new plan than the original plan, it is not clear what the most effective organizational supports will be for monitoring the success of the plan and creating changes for greater success.

Nevertheless, a positive climate in the school is growing. In the realm of instruction and curriculum, there is a commitment to coaching, to participation in the CLCs, and to the work of the TLT. The effort to provide mentors for new teachers was valued as a form of collegial support. There is a considerable level of buy-in to the Four Models of Instruction, to discussion about those Models and to sharing of practices related to them. There appears to be a 20/60/20 breakdown among faculty with 20% eagerly and expertly using the models at high levels, 20% primarily avoiding or ignoring the initiative, and 60% who are working at a variety of levels to build skills.

The climate in terms of safety and orderliness and positive interpersonal relationships is improving. The data relative to disciplinary incidents and suspensions supports this. The reports of the parent and student focus groups indicate that students feel the school has become comfortable and safe.

School leaders and faculty are clearly focused on the priorities of teaching and learning within the Four Models of Instruction and the Workshop model of instruction. Faculty did not talk as knowledgably and earnestly of student performance content targets of the plan as the instructional targets. The classroom observations showed some very strong and rigorous content and instruction but this also ranged to less effective forms of traditional, teacher-centered instruction without high expectations for all students. One noticeable area of inactivity in classrooms was the use of technology in instruction. In the time the review team spent observing, only one computer was used, and only for a short period of time. Despite a technology plan that is in place, there was little discussion of technology by teachers or by administration and little observable presence of technology leadership. Observed uses by teachers included accessing some student information from My BPS or other sources; receipt of district pacing charts, tests, and other curricular information.

The EHS is benefiting from the guidance and support of the district leadership. As documented earlier, there has been an increase in available time. As noted, a majority of teachers see this as an external compliance check rather than as growth-oriented and supportive supervision. However, it is clear to faculty members that the district leadership is intent on seeing improvement in student performance. The district provision of coaches and funding of other support staff is contributing to the positive climate and to school improvement.

**APPENDIX A  
Team Members**

Mr. Peter Davies, Chair, Senior Consultant Leadership and Accountability, Class Measures  
 Dr. Ethan Cancell, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability  
 Dr. Peter Clark, Leadership Consultant and Reporting Examiner, Class Measures  
 Mr. Joseph Nigro, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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

**Day 1 on site schedule**

All activities take place in the school

- 8:00—9:00 Team members meet with the principal...
- 9:00—10:00. Team members meet with the district superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).
- 10:00—11:00. Team members meet with the school’s curriculum and instruction leadership team and members of the school site council.
- 11:00—1:00. Team members 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. Team members meet with teachers in focus groups.

	<b>REVIEWER A and REVIEWER B</b>	<b>REVIEWER C and REVIEWER D</b>
1:00-1:30	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #1</b>	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #2</b>

1:30-2:00	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #3</b>	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #4</b>
2:00-2:30	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #5</b>	<b>TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #6</b>

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

	<b>REVIEWER A</b>	<b>REVIEWER B</b>	<b>REVIEWER C</b>	<b>REVIEWER D</b>
<b>2:30 - 3:00</b>	<b>PARENT FOCUS GROUP #1</b>	<b>PARENT FOCUS GROUP #2</b>	<b>STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #1</b>	<b>STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #2</b>

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. Team members meet with the principal for follow-up questions

8:00—8:30 a.m. Team members visit classrooms and interview teachers.\*

	<b>REVIEWER A</b>	<b>REVIEWER B</b>	<b>REVIEWER C</b>	<b>REVIEWER D</b>
<b>8:00-8:30</b>	Observe teacher 1	Observe teacher 2	Observe teacher 3	Observe teacher 4
<b>8:30-9:00</b>	Interview teacher 1	Interview teacher 2	Interview teacher 3	Interview teacher 4
<b>9:00-9:30</b>	Observe teacher 5	Observe teacher 6	Observe teacher 7	Observe teacher 8
<b>9:30-10:00</b>	Interview teacher 5	Interview teacher 6	Interview teacher 7	Interview teacher 8
<b>10:00-10:30</b>	Observe teacher 9	Observe teacher 10	Observe teacher 11	Observe teacher 12

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

*1:00—2:00.* Team structured time. Members 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.

	<b>REVIEWER A</b>	<b>REVIEWER B</b>	<b>REVIEWER C</b>	<b>REVIEWER D</b>
<b>1:00</b> - <b>2:00</b>				

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

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