

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

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

### **Dr. William R. Peck Middle School Holyoke Public Schools**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Dr. William R. Peck Middle School has experienced a number of challenges and changes during the period under review and the school's 2001-2004 MCAS test scores remain low and without sufficient improvement. Teachers report that many Peck students lack the skills to read and understand test questions, a particular challenge to the school's large population of special education and limited English proficient (LEP) students. Challenges to improving student achievement include chronic student absences, the absence of strong parent-school partnerships, the inclusion of the large population of special education and LEP students in regular classrooms, and staff transitions.

The Peck School has experienced recent staff transitions with more expected the upcoming year. In the 2003 school year, the Peck faced new leadership following the closing of the Holyoke Magnet Middle School of the Arts (HMMSA). The HMMSA principal became the Peck principal and HMMSA students and programs merged with the Peck. Peck experienced subsequent teacher losses due to a decrease in student enrollment, from over 900 to 600 students, to approximately 400 students expected for the 2005 school year. The principal reports difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and in building highly effective teams due to the movement of teachers. Further, the new principal recently announced her upcoming departure from the Peck, so the school will have new leadership again in school year 2005.

The school is implementing structures, programs, and practices to manage the school's challenges and to improve student performance. The principal quickly gained the support of teachers and parents and worked to create sustainable conditions for improvement. A new Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) operates with the support of the district School Support Specialist and a DOE monitor. The administrators and the ILT are increasing the school's efforts to use data to assess student progress and inform instructional practices. The school is organized into two houses with horizontal and vertical teams working together to improve student performance. Teachers have opportunities for professional development to improve student performance and are providing quality instruction. The school is providing supplemental programs and services to students who are under performing in math and ELA. School climate is positive and improving, with bright and colorful hallway murals painted by art students. The school expects to manage its challenges in a smaller school environment, with the decrease in the student population creating opportunities to further nurture a positive school climate.

## Priority Findings

### **I. Student MCAS performance overall is low. The performance of LEP and Special Education students is particularly low. The school is implementing a number of programs to address the low performance.**

Teachers report that comprehension of MCAS test questions may contribute to overall low performance. Language and literacy deficits make the MCAS a particular challenge for LEP students. The school's special education student population is higher than the district's because all Replacement Model students in the Holyoke district are assigned to the Peck School.

The Peck has increased its monitoring of student performance through summative and formative assessments using MCAS item analysis, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Math's Mate and SRI (READ 180). The school has increased the opportunities for students to improve their performance by providing supplemental instruction through READ 180, Math Plus, Computers Add Up, and after school programs; by adding Title 1 math teachers, and by implementing co-teaching of regular education and inclusion teachers.

### **II. Students have a record of poor attendance and chronic absences.**

Student attendance is "extremely problematic" according to the school's Two-Year Status Report, 2005. Peck lacks effective meaningful partnerships with families and school and district strategies and to address attendance problems.

### **III. Communication and decision making within the District has not created "ownership" of reform and improvement efforts.**

There is insufficient dialogue about change initiatives between district and school administrators and other staff. For example, there has been insufficient dialogue in the past over the choice of external partners to help facilitate school development. Furthermore, district reorganization has resulted in the movement of teachers and the reformation of teams, compromising the school's effectiveness in implementing and sustaining improvement initiatives over time.

### **IV. The school had strong leadership for improvement at the time of the site visit; however, the school faces a leadership change due to the recent resignation of the principal and potential staff changes due to anticipated decreases in enrollment.**

The current principal provides support for professional development. The Instructional Leadership Team is developing a new improvement plan with district support. The school has created effective horizontal and vertical teacher teams. Stakeholders now report honest and open communication at the school, although

parent participation is low. The T.O.P. program helps teachers transition new students into classes, although it increases the administrative responsibilities of the principal.

The continuation of strong leadership toward improvement at the Peck School is largely dependent on the skills of the incoming principal and the nurturing of new school systems that can sustain the school's improvement.

**V. The school climate is positive.**

At the time of the site visit, the Team found that the principal was an instructional leader with the respect of students, teachers and parents. The Team observed teachers committed to improvement and students focused on their work. Although the school faces leadership and staff changes, some elements contributing to the positive school climate are well established. The ENCORE Fine Arts program enriches the environment and engages students. The school's reduced enrollment has helped create a stronger sense of community, and the enrollment will be smaller next year.

**VI. The composition of the school creates yet unmet demands on instructional practice, but the school provides quality instruction for its students and is improving learning and instruction.**

The Team observed effective instructional practices at the school and found that teacher decisions are informed by the Board approved SIP. The school and its teachers are using data to inform and improve instruction with data analysis support from the district. The Transient Opportunity Program (TOP) program provides a smooth academic transition for new students coming into Peck classrooms during the school year. The READ 180 program is helping under performing readers to improve. Co-teaching is a Peck practice that serves the needs of LEP and special education students in the regular classroom.

However, current instructional practice has not yet resulted in adequate progress and achievement. Staff recruitment issues, retention and movement due to downsizing have been obstacles to the creation of effective and stable teacher teams. Providing effective education for Peck's large population of special education and limited English proficient students included in regular classrooms requires increased instructional skills and supports, such as differentiated instruction.

## **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 Dr. William R. Peck Middle School developed such a plan, and the Commissioner and Board of Education accepted the plan in March of 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 Dr. William R. Peck Middle School. The Follow Up Review was conducted on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 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 response 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. Appendix B contains a detailed schedule of the panel's activities .

The panel's findings and conclusions on the two 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 Dr. William R. Peck Middle 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.

### **Dr. William R. Peck Middle School Profile**

One of two middle schools in Holyoke, Dr. William R. Peck Middle School currently serves 590 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The school's population in 2004-2005 was 79% Hispanic, 16% White, 4% Black, 1% Asian, and 0% Native American. English is not the first language (FLNE) for 69% of the student body. Twenty-seven percent of the students are identified as having special needs. A school-wide Title I program is in place, with 76% of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, approximately triple the state average.

Enrollment at Peck declined from 925 in school year 2003 to 826 in 2004 and to 534 in 2005 (as of May 4, 2005, exclusive of the T.O.P. program's additional 79 students). Attendance has improved slightly with the declining enrollment. Attendance rates for 2002, 2003 and 2004 were 89.4%, 90.3% and 90.5% respectively. Average days absent were 16.0 in 2003 and 15.5 in 2004. Yet, the chronically absent student rate was 33.7% in 2004, more than three times higher than the state average of 10.0%. Most subgroup populations were stable between 2002 and 2005, including all racial subgroups, low-income students and FLNE students. LEP students increased from 22% to 30% between 2004 and 2005. Special Education students increased from 23% to 27% between 2004 and 2005.

The retention rate dropped from 7.5% to 3.9% between 2002 and 2003 and rose to 5.9% in 2004. The rate of in-school suspensions increased from 22.5% in 2002 to 34.3% in 2003 to 37.2% in 2004. Out-of-school suspension rates rose from 18.2% to 34.1% to 40.1% from 2002-to-2004. Peck's out-of-school suspension rates were approximately three to six times higher than the 2003 state average of 6.1%.

### **Staffing**

The Dr. William R. Peck Middle School staff in 2005 consisted of one principal; two building assistant principals; one assistant principal for the T.O.P. program; 33 teachers in core academic subjects; six teachers for ELL inclusion support; 14 special education teachers (Inclusion, Replacement Model, and Substantially Separate); eight support staff (Library/Media Specialist, Instructional Technology Specialist, Mediation, Guidance and In-House Suspension); one part-time inclusion facilitator, seven SPED paraprofessionals;

one part-time instructional coach; three part-time instructional coaches from NELMS (not in budget); and 15 teachers in ENCORE Fine Arts, including one health teacher, one long-term substitute in health, three physical education/health teachers, one instrumental music teacher, one botany teacher, four visual arts teachers, and four Title I Read 180 teachers.

The median number of years of teaching experience is 11. The median number of years teaching at the Peck School is six. The range of years teaching at the Peck Middle School is 1-32.

Sixty-six of the teachers have Bachelors degrees and seven have Associate or other degrees. Thirty-five of the teachers have Masters degrees and one has a Doctorate of Education.

Staff attendance rates to date for 2004-2005 for Grade 6 was 94.34%, Grade 7 was 94.01% and Grade 8 was 93.29%. The support staff rate was 91.23%.

Thirty-one teachers assigned to the Peck during the 2003-2004 school year are no longer on the faculty. Twelve of these 31 positions were eliminated because of downsizing. Eight new teachers were hired for school year 2004-2005. Four of these eight positions will likely be eliminated because of downsizing in 2005-2006. Ten teachers changed positions between 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

The Peck will have a new principal next year. The current principal of the school announced her resignation from Peck after the completion of the site visit.

### **MCAS Results**

Students at Dr. William R. Peck Middle School are tested in Grade 6 math, Grade 7 ELA and Grade 8<sup>1</sup> math. The school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA or math in 2003 and 2004. The current proficiency index (CPI) in ELA for all students is 59.1. The CPI change of 1.8 did not meet the improvement target. In math the 2004 CPI was 33.7 and the 3.6 point improvement did not meet the target for improvement. In ELA only LEP and white students made AYP. Only white students met both the performance and improvement targets. The CPI for white students was 82.5 and the CPI change was 4.4 points. No sub-groups made AYP in math. The Cycle III Performance Rating for ELA was 'Very Low' and the Improvement Rating was 'No Change'. The Cycle III Performance Rating for Math was 'Critically Low' and the Improvement Rating was Improved 'Below Target.' The accountability status for Cycle III AYP for ELA was 'Identified for Improvement' and Math was 'Identified for Restructuring.'

### **Student Performance in Grade 7 English Language Arts**

The Grade 7 ELA results for regular education (Table 1), special education (Table 2) and Limited English Proficient (Table 3) show that a significant performance gap between

Peck students and the students state-wide. In 2004, only 42% of Peck students scored at the level of ‘Proficient’ or above, compared to 78% of the students in the entire state. The performance gap is especially significant between special education students at Peck, with 70% in ‘Warning,’ and those across the state, with only 25% in ‘Warning,’

Between 2001-2004, Peck students moved out of ‘Warning’ and into ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Proficient,’ at comparable rates to the district of Holyoke except for special education students. In this period, the percentage of Peck special education students in the ‘Warning’ category decreased from 81% to 70% while the percentage of their district peers in the ‘Warning’ category decreased from 77% to 55%. In 2004, the percentage of Peck students scoring in each performance category of the MCAS are within four percentage points of their district peers except for special education students, with a 25 percentage point difference between the percentage of Peck students in ‘Warning’ (70%) compared to the percentage in the district (55%).

Table 1. Grade 7 Regular Education Students’ Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	7	1	1	10	0	0	10	1	1	11
Proficient	11	18	56	32	35	61	25	25	65	41	45	67
Needs Improvement	40	51	30	50	48	24	55	56	23	46	45	19
Warning	50	31	7	17	16	4	20	20	3	12	9	2

Table 2. Grade 7 Special Education Students’ Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Proficient	0	2	16	3	3	22	5	6	28	1	6	29
Needs Improvement	19	21	45	34	30	47	28	26	51	28	40	45
Warning	81	77	38	63	67	30	67	68	20	70	55	25

Table 3. Grade 7 Limited English Proficient Students’ Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Proficient	0	1	15	4	2	14	5	0	18	8	6	20
Needs Improvement	14	12	36	29	31	39	28	36	44	41	43	46
Warning	86	87	49	68	67	46	67	68	37	51	50	34

### Student Performance in Grade 6 Math

The following tables report MCAS math results for Grade 6 regular education (Table 4), special education (Table 5) and LEP (Table 6) students from 2001-2004.

Between 2001 and 2004, the percentage of Peck regular education students in ‘Warning’ decreased from 63% to 45%. In ‘Proficient’ or above there was no significant variation in performance. In 2004, Peck percentages were within five percentage points of the district percentages for all performance categories, although the district is moving students into ‘Proficient’ and above at a higher rate. The percentage of Peck students scoring at or above the proficiency level was the same as the district’s in 2001 (11%), but the gap increased steadily until 2004, with only 10% of Peck students scoring at or above the proficiency level, compared to 16% in the district.

There is a significant gap between the scores of the Peck and students state-wide. In 2004, state percentages for ‘Warning,’ Needs Improvement,’ ‘Proficient,’ and ‘Advanced’ were respectively 16%, 33%, 30% and 21%. Peck students’ scores were 45%, 45%, 8% and 2%. Thus, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficiency level was 51% in the state, but

Table 4. Grade 6 Regular Education Students’ Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	2	1	15	2	1	13	2	3	19	2	3	21
Proficient	9	10	27	7	10	28	12	14	30	8	13	30
Needs Improvement	26	28	32	25	28	29	37	35	33	45	42	33
Warning	63	61	26	65	61	33	49	48	17	45	42	16

For special education students, Peck School trend data for Grade 6 math is basically flat between 2001 and 2004 . District scores show slightly more improvement than Peck, especially in the last year of this period, . and state scores show a greater rate of moving these students out of the ‘Warning’ category, further increasing the performance gap between state and Peck special education students.

Table 5. Grade 6 Special Education Students’ Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	2
Proficient	0	1	7	2	1	10	0	2	10	0	2	10
Needs Improvement	4	6	22	0	6	23	4	6	23	6	12	28
Warning	96	93	70	98	93	65	96	92	65	94	86	59

While state MCAS results for LEP students show steady improvement between 2001 and 2004, Peck scores are flat, with 94% of the LEP students in ‘Warning’ and 6% in ‘Needs Improvement’ in 2004. The gap between district and Peck performance increased for this sub-group in 2004, when the district had 76% in ‘Warning’ and 22% in ‘Needs Improvement’. The gap between Peck and state special education student performance on the Grade 6 math test grew steadily during this period.

**Table 6. Grade 6 Limited English Proficient Students’ Performance in Math (2001-2004)**

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4
Proficient	0	0	3	0	0	7	0	0	3	0	2	10
Needs Improvement	0	0	14	0	0	17	2	4	23	6	22	27
Warning	100	100	80	100	100	74	98	96	66	94	76	60

### **Student Performance in Grade 8 Math**

The following tables report MCAS math results for Grade 8 regular education (Table 7), special education (Table 8) and LEP (Table 9) students in 2001-2004.

Peck Grade 8 regular education scores showed no improvement in this period until the last year. Between 2003 and 2004, the percentage of students in ‘Warning’ dropped from 74% to 58% and the percentage of students scoring ‘Proficient’ or above increased from 4% to 12% . Peck scores mirrored the district in 2004 but remained significantly below state scores.

**Table 7. Grade 8 Regular Education Students’ Performance in Math (2001-2004)**

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	1	0	13	1	0	13	0	0	15	2	2	16
Proficient	5	6	27	7	5	26	4	5	30	10	10	31
Needs Improvement	28	28	37	23	26	35	22	24	32	30	31	34
Warning	66	66	23	70	68	26	74	71	25	58	58	19

Peck special education student achievement on the Grade 8 math test decreased during this period, with a low of 0% of the students scoring above ‘Warning’ category in 2003. The slight move of 6% of the students into the ‘Needs Improvement’ category in 2004 still did not regain to the school’s low 2001 performance. The gap between Peck and state scores for this sub-group grew steadily during this period although state scores were largely flat. In 2004, the percentage of Peck special education students scoring in the ‘Warning category’ (94%) was 30 percentage points higher than their state peers scoring

in this category (64%). While 10% of the state's students in this group scored at or above the proficiency level in 2004, none of their peers at Peck scored at or above the level of proficiency on the Grade 8 math test.

Table 8. Grade 8 Special Education Students' Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Proficient	0	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	7	0	1	8
Needs Improvement	15	4	23	5	8	21	0	5	22	6	12	26
Warning	85	96	70	95	92	72	100	95	70	94	87	64

Peck Grade 8 math scores for LEP students decreased steadily during this period between 2001 and 2003, when none (0%) of the students scored above the 'Warning' level. The improvement in 2004 to 18% above the 'Warning' level only recovered the school's 2001 level of performance. From 2002-2004, Peck performance for LEP students mirrors the district, but is significantly below state performance, with an 18 to 29 percentage point difference between Peck and state's percentages in the 'Warning' category for this sub-group.

Table 9. Grade 8 Limited English Proficient Students' Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
School Level	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Performance Level Results %												
Advanced	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	4
Proficient	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	8	4	3	8
Needs Improvement	19	3	22	4	3	19	0	0	19	14	12	24
Warning	81	97	71	96	97	73	100	100	71	82	85	64

## PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

No. As the MCAS results section and the data tables above indicate, the school showed very little improvement in student performance. Peck students are underperforming compared with the state and compared with the district of Holyoke with respect to Grade 6 math for special education and LEP students and with respect to Grade 7 ELA for special education students.

In spite of flat student scores, the Team observed a firm commitment to improving performance from the school, its teachers and the district.

Teachers are committed to the use of performance achievement data and the district is encouraging data driven improvement initiatives. For example, the READ 180 teachers assess reading progress three times a year with the SRI. The instructional technology component of READ 180 provides teachers with daily feedback on student achievement. The district has implemented Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), designed to provide accurate measurement of student achievement and student growth over time in math. Students take the MAP three times a year. MAP shows performance in five areas: Number Sense and Operations; Patterns, Relations and Algebra; Geometry; Measurement; and Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability. The district has also made Math's Mate available to the Peck. The Math's Mate curriculum is based on earlier versions of MCAS tests. Math's Mate allows teachers to identify individual student's strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. The Peck also uses district writing prompts and open response questions, scoring these with the district writing rubric. The Team observed teachers using a number of traditional ways to monitor student progress, e.g., quizzes, tests, homework, and projects.

The Peck has implemented a number of programs to help students in math and ELA during the school day, including Math Plus, READ 180, Computers Add Up, and additional math help after school. Supplementary classes replace other classes in the regular curriculum such as ENCORE/Fine Arts. Math Plus provides an additional 51 minutes of math instruction per day to 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students get. Four READ 180 teachers use this program to provide under performing readers with an additional 102 minutes of daily reading instruction . Computers Add Up is a supplementary, technology-based math course that provides an additional 51 minutes of daily math instruction to a targeted group of 7<sup>th</sup> graders. A voluntary after school math program has been offered to all Peck students this year. Energetic outreach has increased the number of students enrolled for the spring.

Additionally, the school has reallocated its Title 1 funding to add four additional math teachers. Inclusion teachers are co-teaching in mainstream classes to reduce the student/teacher ratio. An instructional coach from the New England League of Middle Schools is providing sustained professional development and support in the implementation of differentiated instructional strategies and effective co-teaching practices.

The district is supporting the Peck by reorganizing the district to reduce the enrollment, providing support for the reorganization of Title 1 resources for increased instructional support in math, supporting the full implementation of the READ 180 program, providing ELA and math curricula aligned with the state frameworks, offering and supporting continued professional development for teachers, hiring an Assessment Specialist and a Data Coordinator, and providing a School Support Specialist to work with the Peck ILT in rewriting its school improvement plan.

Challenges to improving student performance include chronic absence, lack of sufficient differentiated teaching and support for special education and LEP students, and the changes in teaching team composition resulting from downsizing.

**KEY QUESTION 2: How effectively has the school implemented the improvement plan which was approved by the State Board of Education?**

Some teachers are using the Board approved School Improvement Plan (SIP) to inform their daily strategies and activities, as reported to the Team and confirmed by observations. However, the plan is not being used consistently throughout the school. The principal reported that the approved plan did not take into account important factors such as the reorganization of the district, leadership changes in the school, and changes in the math curriculum. The leadership team that developed the plan, approved in March 2003, has changed significantly.

The principal keeps records of ILT and other meetings and uses these records to assess progress. She has conversations with vertical and other teams about their accomplishments. She keeps records of class walkthroughs. Minutes of all school teams are collected and kept on file. Assessing progress on plan implementation is largely anecdotal and not annotated systematically. The Team did not see documented evidence of the accomplishment of the plan's goals. The Team has no evidence that formal or informal observations of teachers take into account the plan, or teachers' implementation of the planned strategies. No changes have been made to the approved plan. Grade level teams and the ILT, have, however, started the implementation planning process. .

In its Two-Year School and District Status Report, the school listed a number of initiatives that "represent some of the elements of the current SIP." Of these initiatives, the Team found several to be most conducive to improving student performance: focused implementation of the Connected Math Program (CMP); significant professional development support for content areas or units (especially CMP); increased time on

learning in math and reading for targeted students; and full implementation of the READ 180 Program.

The district has supported the school in its planning process. Leadership teams have received Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) training. The district School Support Specialist (SSS) meets with the ILT to assist it in its planning. Minutes of the ILT meetings for 2004-2005 reveal that math and ELA curriculum coordinators, however, seldom attend.

Teachers and administrators indicate their awareness about the school's failure to improve MCAS test performance, but there is a lack of clarity or consensus on the reasons for the school's flat performance on the MCAS test. Teachers and administrators cited possible reasons such as student weaknesses in reading and understanding MCAS questions, increasing demands from district and state mandates, constant changes in district mandates, changes in school enrollment and staff, difficulty in recruiting highly qualified math teachers, the lack of full engagement of parents, and the over representation of special education students. The Board approved plan addresses causes of poor performance in MCAS math and ELA, especially math. The additional programs and assessment initiatives are examples of the school's recognition of the need to improve math and ELA scores.

**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?**

Through interviews with teachers and focus groups, the Team found that changes in district policy and practice have significantly impacted the school, both positively and negatively.

District reorganization has resulted in a drop in Peck's enrollment from 900 to 600 over the last three years. As a result the Peck has lost teachers and experienced disruptions in effective team relationships. Further reduction in enrollment to approximately 400 students next year will increase the loss of teachers and the disruptions to teams.

Peck staff also articulated a positive effect of the decreased enrollment - the opportunity to create a more close-knit community. The data also reveals a positive correlation between Peck's decrease in enrollment and student attendance.

The school reported that district reorganization also resulted in an increased percentage of special education students at the Peck in 2004. At the beginning of the 2004 school year, special education students represented 60% of Grade 6 students. At the time of this report, special education students represent 39% of the Grade 6 student population.

The district has recently changed its attendance policy. The maximum number of days a student can be absent, and still earn promotion to the next grade has been reduced from 27 to 9 days. This policy change may lead to an increase in retentions.

The principal reports that the Transient Opportunity Program (T.O.P.) was located in the Peck because the space was available. This has resulted in increased demands for the Peck administration, but teachers report smoother transitions of new students into Peck classes at the beginning of terms.

The school reports that the district has supported a shift in Title I resources to support more math teachers.

Teachers reported that they have little input in the choice of instructional programs or education reform partners. For example, teachers had little input in the adoption of Turning Points as a school improvement partner, and this relationship did not take hold and is no longer in place. Teachers expressed concern that the district may implement further initiatives through a turn around partner in the future without teacher input.

The principal reported that the union contract limits school decisions concerning teacher hours beyond the school day and calendar year. The contract also influences decisions regarding staff transfers, but it is district reorganization that has had the greatest impact on staff transfers, and grievances have not been an issue.

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

Yes. The 2002-2004 School Improvement Plan (SIP) approved by the school board in March 2003 is still guiding the school's implementation of strategies . The SIP is an effective working document informed by extensive data analysis, PIM-based staff training, and student needs identified by staff. The SIP links potential school remedies and specific student learning objectives to address identified causes of poor student achievement. The SIP sets instructional benchmarks based on MCAS tested content areas and on the goal of high expectations for students.

The ILT is developing a new plan for 2005-2006. The principal shared with the Team examples of the new plan, which will be clearer and written in a PIM format.

School administrators and teachers are using data from a variety of sources to assess student progress and to guide instructional practice. The current year was the first year that teachers were required to perform item analysis of MCAS results. The district had previously introduced Test Wiz , but only three Peck teachers had been trained to use it. Teachers and the principal report the intention to train more teachers.

The SIP and the current school practices provide appropriate plans and measures to sustain school improvement if effective leadership is in place.

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

Yes. Instructional leadership is effective and there is a positive school climate. Teachers generally use student achievement data in their planning and provide quality instruction with sufficient resources. The district administration supports the school's work. These conditions are conducive to support improvement in student performance.

The principal and vice principals regularly visit and monitor classrooms. The Team found that administrator evaluations of teachers are well done. Evaluations include evidence supporting feedback and suggestions for improvement. Commentary in the evaluations is focused on curriculum and instruction, classroom management and interactions with students. Feedback is descriptive and prescriptive and consistently contains information about professional development opportunities. Teachers report that the principal supports professional development to improve student performance.

Of twelve rated observations of classroom practice, the Team found that six "exemplified high expectations," and six "met acceptable standards." The Team observed comprehensive lesson planning. Teachers made learning objectives clear and identified benchmarks and skills for students. The Team observed effective classroom management and students followed established routines. Teachers used a variety of teaching methods, co-taught effectively, posed challenging questions for students, and used technology appropriately. Students reported regular use of two computer labs and of computers located in the library and in classrooms.

Teacher teams meet three times a week to share planning, to offer mutual support where possible, and to discuss under performing students. Each team includes teachers of core academic subjects, special education and ELL teachers, and teachers of special programs like READ 180. Also once a week, same subject teachers meet in vertical teams to share planning and administrators meet in house teams to receive news from the ILT and respond to questions and concerns.

The Peck School has a positive school climate. During the site visit students were well behaved in classrooms and hall monitors were effectively positioned to maintain good order. Students reported an improvement in student behavior. Art students have painted murals in the hallways that contribute to an attractive school environment. Students report that the fine arts program, from Holyoke Magnet Middle School for the Arts (HMMSA), is a valued addition to the school curriculum. The positive school climate has the potential to contribute to the success of a new principal.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Peck Middle School has started to create conditions for improving student performance, even though there is not yet any significant improvement in MCAS scores, and the school still faces a range of challenges to its improvement.

The Peck School's major challenges are the inclusion of the large population of special education and LEP students in regular classrooms, further reductions in staff due to enrollment changes, a new principal next year, chronic student absences, and the absence of strong parent-school partnerships.

The school is implementing structures, programs, and practices to manage improvement and to create sustainable conditions to raise student achievement. The district has been supportive of Peck's improvement efforts. Further, Peck school climate is becoming more conducive to growth because of the improved quality of leadership, the commitment of its teachers, decreased enrollment, and the addition of the HMMSA fine arts program.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Team Members**

Mr. Peter Davies, Chair, President, Class Measures

Mr. Douglas Renick, Scribing Examiner, Class Measures

Dr. W. C. Wolf, Jr., Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Mr. Joseph Nigro, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

**OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
YEAR TWO FOLLOW-UP REVIEW  
DAY 1: MAY 3, 2005**

<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
7:00-7:30 A.M.	Panelists arrive and meet to organize the day's activities.	Conference Room
7:30-8:00 A.M.	Panelists meet w/ Principal	Principal's Office
8:00-8:30 A.M.	Panelists meet with School Council	Library
8:30-9:20 A.M.	Instructional Leadership Team I w/Panelists A and B	
8:30-9:20 A.M.	Parent Focus Group w/Panelists C and D	Library
9:45-10:45 A.M.	Panelists meet w/Superintendent's Designee(s): Curriculum Director (Superintendent was out of town re: Turn-Around Partner/ <i>America's Choice</i> )	Principal's Office
11:00-1:00 P.M.	Panelists meet to discuss findings and to plan the remainder of the day. Will do informal walkthroughs to focus on school culture and learning climate.	Conference Room
1:00-1:30 P.M.	<i>LUNCH IN CONFERENCE ROOM</i> TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #1 W/Panelists A and B	
	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #2 W/Panelists C and D	
1:30-2:00 P.M.	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #3 w/Panelists A and B	
	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #4	
2:15-2:45 P.M.	INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM #2 w/Panelists A&B	
2:15-2:45 P.M.	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP w/Panelists C and D* *Students must be released in time to catch the 2:55 P.M. Late Bus	
2:45-4:45 P.M.	Panelists meet to synthesize information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for second day of on-site visit.	

**OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
YEAR TWO FOLLOW-UP REVIEW  
DAY 2: MAY 4, 2005**

**TIME**                      **ACTIVITY**    **LOCATION**  
**7:20-7:50 A.M.**              **Panelists meet w/ Principal for**                      **Principal's Office**  
**follow-up questions.**

**7:50-10:49 A.M.**              **Classroom Observations and Follow-up Interviews**

	<b>PANELIST A</b>	<b>PANELIST B</b>	<b>PANELIST C</b>	<b>PANELIST D</b>
<b>7:50-8:20 A.M.</b>	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 7 READ 180 307S	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 8 READ 180 223S	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 8 Math Plus! 230N	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 8 READ 180 306S/TL3
<b>8:20-8:50 A.M.</b>	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:
<b>8:50-9:20 A.M.</b>	<b>Observation:</b> Grade 8 Maths 309N	<b>Observation:</b> Grade 6 Math and TI Math 322N	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 8 Soc. Studies 311N	<b>Observation:</b> Grade 7 Math 306N
<b>9:20-9:50 A.M.</b>	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:
<b>9:50-10:20 A.M.</b>	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 7 Math 220N	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 7 Social Studies and TI ELA Support 221N	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 6 Science 321N	<b>Observation:</b> Gr. 7 Science 238N
<b>10:20-10:49 A.M.</b>	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:	<b>Interview:</b> Coverage:

Follow-up Interviews with observed teachers will be held in the following locations:

Panelist A: Conference Room

Panelist B: Art Department Office (232S)

Panelist C: Testing Office (335S-main office)

Panelist D: Library

**10:50-12:50 P.M.**      **Panelists meet to discuss findings and to plan the remainder of the day. Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information.**      **Conference Room**  
***LUNCH IN CONFERENCE ROOM***

**12:50-1:50 P.M.**      **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 relative to the review panel protocol.**

	<b>Panelist A</b>	<b>Panelist B</b>	<b>Panelist C</b>	<b>Panelist D</b>
<b>12:50-1:50 P.M.</b>				

**1:50-2:20 P.M.**      **Closing meeting with the principal**      **Principal's Office**

**2:20-4:50 P.M.**      **Panelists deliberate and form conclusions**      **Conference Room**