

REPORT OF TWO YEAR FOLLOW UP REVIEW

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical High School Springfield Public Schools

Executive Summary

The Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School has made progress in improving student performance since the designation of under-performance in 2002. Adequate Yearly Progress was made in the aggregate for Cycle III in 2003-2004. African American students made AYP in Cycle III, but the other sub-groups did not. African American Students made AYP for participation, improvement and CD attainment in Cycle III – 2003/2004. No sub-group met the performance target in Cycle III. Participation was high and the school met and exceeded the targets for improvement in CPI. Most students were in Warning and Needs Improvement in 2004.

A new principal was assigned to the school in July of 2004. The principal and his new team are providing effective leadership for the school. The culture is positive and improving. Relationships among stakeholders are positive.

The quality of teaching is uneven based on the classrooms observed and administrative report. Expectations of students are low. Honors classes have been cut. Changes in teaching practices are happening slowly. Morale is low among teachers who have been without a union contract and pay review for the past four years. Many teachers are looking for work in other districts.

The proposed Small Learning Communities model has been slow to get started. Teachers and administrators are planning to implement SLCs across the school next year. Many hopes are based on this initiative and the concomitant addition of daily common planning time for the teams of academic and vocational faculty working together.

Resources for the school are lacking in several areas. The building itself is not conducive to high quality teaching and learning. Everyone recognizes this and the district has made progress toward funding a new building in the future. The school needs additional textbooks and technology. There is a \$3,000 per pupil spending gap when compared to per pupil spending across the state in similar schools.

Priority Findings

1. MCAS scores show improvement rates for both math and ELA. At the same time, most increases in CPI on the Cycle III AYP are a result of moving students out of Warning and into Needs Improvement. Percentages of students in Advanced and Proficient remain essentially unchanged except for LEP students who showed a 13% increase in those scoring Proficient, going from 0% to 13% between 2003 and 2004. In 2004 significant numbers of students are still in Warning. Forty percent (40%) of all students were in Warning; 25% of regular education students; 69% of special education students; and 60% and LEP students.
2. The current principal, who has been in his position for less than a year, is providing strong leadership. The culture of the school has improved. There is good discipline in the hallways. However, the team observed 3 classrooms with poor classroom management. All stakeholders report that the school is safe. Positive relationships exist between students and faculty, particularly in shop areas, between administrators and students, and between faculty and administration. Teachers report improved communications as a result of more positive relationships. A perceived threat of more changes to the current leadership of the school is widespread, and in some cases is a cause for concern.
3. The school faces an ongoing lack of resources. Textbook allocations have improved, but the team was told that there is still copying of texts and students frequently don't have their own or up-to-date textbooks. The building is old and in need of upgrading or replacing. The Superintendent reported that a new building is inevitable in the future. The existing building suffices for now, but high quality teaching and learning is not served well. A DOE Chapter 74 compliance review report states, "The current facility does not provide students with a safe and healthy school that meets the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's standards." There is a \$3000 gap in spending per student, when compared with the state average per student in vocational and technical high schools.
4. The quality of teaching varied in the twelve classrooms observed by the Team. Only one classroom exemplified good practice overall, and in most classrooms the team saw insufficient rigor or low expectations of students. In interviews and in observations the team found poor implementation of the inclusion model for special education students. In a few classrooms inclusion teachers with content knowledge worked effectively with the regular education teachers. In more classrooms the inclusion teachers were not part of the teaching team and didn't seem to be adding value to the teaching and learning.
5. The faculty is working at the integration of the academic and vocational sides of the school. The Team heard of several examples of projects that involved both elements. Apart from its scheduling, plans are developed for introducing the Small Learning Community (SLC) model across the school in the fall of 2005. The SLC's will provide daily common planning time in which academic and vocational teachers will

work together. Each SLC will involve three shops and will have its own ELA and math teachers. The introduction of the John Collins writing across the curriculum program has resulted in all faculty implementing a program with major benefits for students, faculty and the school. This provides a strong precedent for the work ahead.

6. The school has had success in recruiting new students by involving current students in the recruitment process. More than 700 students applied to the school for the 2005-2006 school year. The requirement for a personal essay has recently been dropped from the district admissions policy, which may effect school/student selection.
7. Student attendance rates for 2004 (84.01%) are up slightly from 2003 (82.96%) and from 2002 (79.57%), but are still 10% lower than the state average. The average number of days absent is down slightly from 2003, but at 25.1 days is still 15 days higher than the state average and 8 days higher than Springfield's average. Retention, dropout, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions and exclusion rates are all significantly above Springfield and State averages.
8. The scheduling of classes and assignment of students are a concern. Class sizes ranged from the very small (2 students) to the very large (30+ students). In the 12 classes we observed the smallest class had 7 and the largest 22 with an average size of 14. In some cases there were larger numbers of special education students in classes than expected or desirable. One 9th grade class reported 17 special education and 3 regular education students. Students have progressed to the next grade even if they have failed a course and must continue to pursue it to graduate. Hence, some students have been in two or three grade levels of English at the same time. Some ELL students have been unable to take needed ELL classes because of scheduling conflicts. The team was told that these promotion and program conflicts have been eradicated with the introduction of the new schedule.
9. The engagement of African American parents and community was reported to have influenced the successful AYP results for African American students. African American Students made AYP for participation, improvement and CD attainment in Cycle III – 2003/2004. The lack of engagement of Hispanic parents and students is an acknowledged challenge. Concern was expressed about how little planning has been targeted on this challenge., and how few Hispanic role models there are among the faculty and administration.
10. The twelve written teacher evaluations which were reviewed contained few suggestions for improvement or professional development, and they had no noticeable connection to SIP objectives, or to student performance data. Evaluations in general consisted of a checklist with no comments from the evaluator or the teacher being evaluated. The evaluations did not conform to MGL Chapter 71; 38 and 603 CMR 35:00.
11. Staff and administrators reported that many staff were exploring positions outside Springfield. This was perceived as a city-wide problem. Staff cite a variety of

contractual issues over the last four years as factors in their seeking work elsewhere. This is an unhealthy trend for a school that in recent years has been challenged by the need for stable staffing and leadership.

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 Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High 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 Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School. The Follow Up Review was conducted on June 1st and 2nd, 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. A detailed schedule of the panel's activities is provided in Appendix B.

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 Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical 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.

Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School Profile

One of five Springfield high schools serving grades 9-12, the Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School currently serves 989 students. Enrollment has declined from 1258 students in 2002. The school's racial composition in 2004-2005 was 1% Asian, 27% African American, 58% Hispanic and 14% White. English is not the first language (FLNE) for 16% of the student body. Twenty-eight percent of the students are identified as having special needs. The per cent of low income students has risen from 47% in 2002 to 76% in 2005. A school-wide Title I program is in place with 421 students being served in ELA and math programs. These Title I funds will not be available to Putnam in 2005-2006.

Attendance rates have risen from 74.9% in 2001 to 84.01% in 2004. The average number of days absent was 25.1 in 2004. The state average is 10. Retention rates were at 17.9% in 2004. Students in grade nine were retained at a rate of 30.6% in 2004. Drop out rates were 17.6% in 2003. In-school and out-of-school suspension rates in 2004 were 38.5% and 22.0% respectively. The in-school suspension rate rose from 21.8% to 38.5% between 2002 and 2004. The exclusion rate was 58.8% in 2003, the same as 2002.

Staffing

The Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School staff in 2005 included 1 principal; 4 assistant principals; a Chapter 74 program director; a supervisor of vocational programs; and a supervisor of vocational safety.

Fifty-eight members of faculty are regular education teachers, 30 teach special education students, 44 faculty are vocational/technical teachers, 7 are guidance staff and 7 are administrative staff. In 2004 the pupil-teacher class size ranged between 16/1 and 25/1. The % of core academic teachers identified as highly qualified is 82.9%. This compares

to 87% in Springfield and 93% in the state. (This data came from the 2004 School Report Card)

MCAS Results

Students at the Roger L. Putnam Vocational and Technical High School are tested in 10th grade for mathematics and English Language Arts. Students entering Putnam have selected this high school, and have taken the 7th grade ELA and 8th grade math MCAS exams at their sending middle schools.

Tenth grade students in the aggregate in ELA and math achieved AYP for Cycle III. African American students were the only sub-group to achieve AYP. African American Students made AYP for participation, improvement and CD attainment. No sub-group, met the AYP target for Performance. The state performance target for ELA was a CPI of 75.6. Putnam students scored 51.6, a 24 point gap. The state target for math was a CPI of 60.8. Putnam students scored 44.9, a 15.9 point gap. The lowest CPI among the sub-groups for ELA was that of LEP students who scored 33.2. The highest was African American students at 51.9. Hispanic students scored 46.8. The lowest CPI among sub-groups for math was that of Special Education students who scored 36.3. LEP students scored 37.3, Hispanic students 43.0, and African American students 43.8.

Achievement of AYP for the aggregate of students was a result of 100% participation, a CPI change of positive 21.5, and a CD attainment of 71%. African American students met AYP for math with a CPI change score of positive 19.6. The highest CPI change score was made by LEP students: positive 29.9. The lowest CPI change score was positive 11.8 made by Special Education students. Hispanic students had a CPI increase of 19.6.

For AYP Cycle III Putnam's accountability status for ELA and math was "*Identified for Improvement – Subgroups only.*"

MCAS scores for incoming freshmen show increases that indicate students are somewhat better prepared each year. This is particularly true for ELA. Scores for students entering in the fall of 2003, 2004 and 2005 show gains in the percentage of students scoring NI—46% to 56% to 55% respectively. The percentages of students scoring in the Proficient category for the same years are 15% (2003) to 18% (2004) to 32% (2005).

In math, incoming freshmen for Fall 2003 scored 80% W, 18% NI, and 2% P; in 2004, 76% W, 19% NI; and 5% P, and in 2005, students posted scores of 61% W; 30% NI and 7% P.

Student Performance in 10th Grade English Language Arts

Regular education students at Putnam are making progress. Students are moving out of W[arning] and into N[eeded]I[mprovement] and there has been a steady increase in the numbers of students scoring in the Proficient category (3% in 2002; 12% in 2003; 19% in 2004). Although 9% of Putnam’s regular education students have scored in the A[dvanced] category, the school lags behind the state averages in both P[roficient] (49%) and A[dvanced] (23%), a 52k% gap in combined A and P scores.

Table 1. Grade 10 Regular Education Students’ Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	2	18	0	4	22	2	6	24	1	9	23
Proficient	2	11	39	3	10	44	12	15	45	19	19	49
Needs Improvement	18	28	31	22	26	25	37	33	26	55	43	24
Warning	80	59	12	75	60	9	49	46	6	25	29	4

Special education students have shown movement out of W over two years, from 100% (2002) to 96% (2003) to 69% (2004). Scores in the Needs Improvement category have increased from 0 (2002) to 4% (2003) to 31% (2004). Special education students have yet to score in the Proficient and Advanced categories. Compared to the state average for special education students scoring Proficient (21%) or Advanced (2%), Putnam faces a 213% gap. Putnam special education students outperformed their Springfield counterparts in terms of moving students out of W.

Table 2. Grade 10 Special Education Students’ Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	2
Proficient	0	0	12	0	3	16	0	3	23	0	4	21
Needs Improvement	5	4	32	0	8	35	4	12	44	31	22	42
Warning	95	95	75	100	89	45	96	85	30	69	74	34

While data for 2002 was not available, LEP students showed significant improvement from 2003 to 2004. Ninety-eight per cent (98%) scored in W in 2003 and 60% in 2004, a

decrease of 38% and scores in the NI category increased from 2% (2003) to 27% (2004). Thirteen per cent (13%) of the LEP students scored P in 2004, outperforming their counterparts statewide (11%).

Table 3. Grade 10 Limited English Proficient Students' Performance in ELA (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	1	NA	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	1
Proficient	0	0	8	NA	6	12	0	10	11	13	17	11
Needs Improvement	0	13	30	NA	44	33	2	26	30	27	32	36
Warning	100	87	62	NA	50	54	98	65	57	60	48	52

Student Performance in 10th Grade Math

Regular education students are making progress moving out of W into NI. In 2001 87% scored W and by 2004 that had decreased to 37%. Scoring in NI increased from 12% in 2001 to 49% in 2004. Putnam had 86% of its students scoring W/NI in 2004, compared to the state average of 36%. Fourteen per cent (14%) of Putnam students tested scored in the A/P category, compared to the state average of 65%, a 51% gap

Table 4. Grade 10 Regular Education Students' Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	2	21	0	4	22	2	6	27	2	9	35
Proficient	1	11	30	2	10	26	12	15	30	12	19	30
Needs Improvement	12	28	31	7	26	32	37	33	28	49	43	27
Warning	87	59	18	91	60	20	49	46	15	37	29	9

Special education students are making progress moving from W to NI, but not in moving to P and A. In 2001, 98% of the students scored W; by 2004, the percentage had decreased to 70%. NI scores went from 2% in 2001 to 27% in 2004. In 2004 Putnam had 97% scoring W or NI while the state had 77%, a 20% gap. In 2004 Putnam had 3% of students scoring A or P and the state had 23% scoring A or P, a 20% gap.

Table 5. Grade 10 Special Education Students' Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	5
Proficient	0	0	9	0	3	9	0	3	16	3	4	18
Needs Improvement	2	4	27	0	8	26	4	12	32	27	22	36
Warning	98	95	62	100	89	62	96	85	48	70	74	41

LEP students have made progress in moving from W into NI. In 2001 100% of the LEP students scored in the W category. The number of students scoring in NI increased from 0% in 2001 to 40% in 2004. It is significant to note that in 2004, 27% of LEP students scored in the Proficient category, and 7% scored in the Advanced category. In 2004, 67% of Putnam students scored in W/NI compared to the state average of 73% (-6%); 34% of Putnam students scored in A/P compared to the state average of 27% (+7%).

Table 6. Grade 10 Limited English Proficient Students' Performance in Math (2001-2004)

Year	2001			2002			2003			2004		
	Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %			Performance Level Results %		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Advanced	0	0	6	NA	0	5	0	0	11	7	4	10
Proficient	0	0	12	NA	6	10	0	10	16	27	17	17
Needs Improvement	0	13	24	NA	44	25	2	26	30	40	32	34
Warning	100	87	57	NA	50	60	98	65	43	27	48	39

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

Yes. The school is making progress in moving students from W[arning] to N[eeded]I[mprovement] as the MCAS results above show. The school is not making progress in moving students into P[roficient] and A[dvanced] levels on the MCAS. Future achievement of AYP is dependent on the latter.

Gains in Student Performance

The greatest gains in student performance are in the movement of students scores from W to NI. Regular education and LEP students show some movement into A and P levels.

In ELA regular education, special education and LEP students all showed improvement in moving from W to NI between 2001 and 2004: regular education – 80% to 25%, special education – 95% to 69%, and LEP – 100% to 60%. Regular education (19%) and LEP (13%) showed movement from NI to P. LEP students at Putnam outperformed LEP students state-wide 13% v. 11%.

In Math a similar trend is noted. In 2002, 87% of regular education students scored in the W category; in 2004, 37% (-50%); 98% of special education students scored in W in 2002; in 2004, 70% (-28%), and 100% of LEP students scored W in 2002 compared to 27% in 2004 (-73%). Twelve per cent (12%) of regular education students, and 27% of LEP students moved from NI to P; while 2% of regular education students, and 7% of LEP students moved into A. In the combined A/P category, LEP students at Putnam outperformed LEP students state-wide 34% to 27%.

Gaps in Student Performance

The largest gaps in student performance are found in the per cent of students scoring A/P and the per cent of students remaining in W/NI.

In ELA in 2004, 20% of Putnam's regular education students scored in the A/P category, a gap of 52% when compared to the same sub-group state-wide, while 80% of Putnam students are still in NI/W. No special education students at Putnam have score A/P, a 23% gap when compared with the same sub-group state-wide. One hundred per cent of Putnam special education students remain in the W/NI category.

In 2004, for the math portion of the MCAS exam, 14% of regular education students at Putnam scored in the A/P category; state-wide, 65% of regular education students score in the A/P categories, a 51% gap. Eighty-six per cent (86%) of regular education students at Putnam remain in the W/NI categories. Three per cent (3%) of special education

students at Putnam scored A/P compared to 23% of their counterparts state-wide, a 20% gap. Ninety-seven per cent (97%) of Putnam's special education population scored W/NI in 2004. State-wide 77% of students scored W/NI, again a 20% gap.

All Students Summary

All 10th grade students at Putnam are making progress in ELA in decreasing the number of scores in the Warning category and increasing the number of scores in the Needs Improvement category. The percentage of students scoring W decreased from 82% in 2001 to 40% in 2004. The number of students scoring NI in 2001 increased from 17% in 2001 to 46% in 2004. In 2004, 86% of Putnam students scored in the W/NI categories and 14% scoring in the A/P categories. When compared to the state scores for the same years (38% in W/NI and 52% in A/P), the resulting gaps are 48% in W/NI and 38% in A/P.

All 10th grade students at Putnam are making progress in math, advancing from W (89% in 2001 v. 46% in 2004) to NI (10% in 2001 v. 42% in 2004). Those scoring in the Proficient category increased from 1% in 2002 to 10% in 2003 and 2004. In 2003 1% of students tested scored in the Advanced category; that increased to 2% in 2004. While the state average for students scoring W was 15% (2004), 27% less than Putnam. The state average for A/P was 57%, behind which Putnam lagged by 45%.

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

Administrators report that the board approved plan was created by a PIM team under a different administration, and that the plan has not been closely followed or implemented. When we asked teachers about the SIP, several reported that they knew of the plan and were working on it, but they could not readily identify actions called for by the plan. One department head who is also a C[ollaborative] P[rofessional] D[evelopment] T[eacher] said she used the SIP to give direction to her work. The Board Approved plan included 34 actions for ELA and 26 for math. The annotated plan provided by the principal indicated that 16 of the ELA actions had been implemented. Of the 26 math actions the annotations indicated that 18 of the actions had been completed. In terms of actions not implemented, there were 11 in ELA and 7 in math. Actions not implemented included developing a schedule for common planning time, implementing Project Based Learning in Small Learning Communities, math teachers developing rubrics, implementing and providing professional development for Cooperative Learning Strategies, and developing a Putnam grading policy. The completed actions of the plan most mentioned by teachers and administrators were the use of John Collins writing across the curriculum and the modification of the math curriculum for Putnam. Other actions the Team heard about that were in the Board approved plan were:

- implementing a 180 day schedule for 9th and 10th graders in ELA and math,
- use of Read 180 and the provision of professional development for 2 Read 180 teachers,

- creating a full-year prep year for underperforming students,
- in July 2004 designating 2 CPDTs—one for ELA and one for math—who serve as coaches,
- implementing a 6-period day,
- working on certification of new teachers (9 of 12 in ELA and 8 of 9 in math), and
- modifying the math curriculum for special education and ELL students.

There is no systematic process for tracking progress made on the original Board plan. The DOE monitor reported in August 2003 that “The school is still working on finalizing a monitoring process. This is still a very weak component of their PIM process. The school has made modifications to their action plans and strategies, but has not had a mechanism to capture the ‘why the change’ and the ‘outcomes of the changes.’” This situation results in a lack of program evaluation data to inform future planning.

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

A number of factors have impeded full and careful implementation of the plan.

Lack of consistent leadership has affected plan implementation. The plan was created by a PIM team and implemented for a year and a half (December 2002 through June 2004) under the leadership of one principal. That principal was removed by the district and a new principal assigned in July of 2004. The incoming principal found the existing planning over-laden with objectives and adopted different management guidelines.

The school does not have the resources it needs. There is a \$3,000 per student gap when Putnam is compared to other vocational and technical schools. The current facility detracts from high quality teaching and learning. Information technology resources are improving, but still not adequate for a vocational and technical school. The DOE monitor reported in August of 2003 that “Though the school has received a small number of computers since the last report, it is still not sufficient.” There is a shortage of textbooks requiring faculty to copy material for students.

The students in the school are increasingly from low income families. The percentage of low income students has gone from 47% in 2002 to 76% in 2005.

Percentages of African American and Hispanic students in the student body have not changed. They make up 85% of the student body. There is a lack of engagement of Hispanic parents and community.

Attracting and retaining high quality teachers is an issue. Union members have gone without a contract for four years. Teachers have not had pay reviews for four years and report low morale. The district will be withdrawing Title I funds from high schools. Historically, Putnam has used these funds to increase math and ELA teaching resources.

Putnam was found to be in non-compliance with Chapter 74 and the Vocational Technical Education Regulations 603 CMR 4.00. The school was placed under review on February 19, 2003. A follow-up review on January 20, 2005 led to a report on March 31, 2005. The report said that Putnam has made progress but is not meeting all standards and has until January 2006 to come into compliance. The report lists several actions that are required of Putnam like strengthening advisory committees, seeing that all technical programs have the requisite industry-validated equipment (installed), providing career and guidance services for all students, appropriately licensed staff in all teaching assignments (Putnam reported having 86.4% licensed), and closing the spending gap per pupil (the state average was \$11,154 and Putnam's was \$8,118).

Other factors have assisted Putnam in meeting the objectives in its plan.

The current principal and administrators are willing to take action to make things happen, such as hiring an electrician to install equipment (with district help and agreement of the relevant local union) and putting students to work renovating the school.

There has been considerable success in engaging of African American families and community in supporting the progress of African American students at the school. The school has involved students in recruiting efforts which has resulted in more students wanting to come to Putnam.

The district has provided support in a number of ways:

- extra textbook allocations (\$48,500).
- two administrators to oversee implementation of ELA and math.
- two CPD Teachers to coach in ELA and math.
- an additional position for the pre-engineering program.
- support for a 9th grade intervention program.
- support by district curriculum directors.
- establishment of a pupil progression policy (must meet standards to be promoted).
- provision of training in the inclusion model.
- working on a grant to support the implementation of the Small Learning Communities model.

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

No. The principal and other administrators we interviewed said that they did not see the current SIP for 2004-2005 as the school's plan. It was seen as too complicated with too many Instructional Change Objectives. The new principal who assumed his position in July of 2004 asked instead that all teachers follow a short list of common practices. A

Classroom Visits check list is used by administrators who visit classrooms daily to monitor the use of the agreed practices. The checklist includes a section of “Clear Expectations.” Practices listed under this section are:

- Agenda/plan/do/review (a posted lesson plan, a “do now” problem/task, work that follows the plan, a review that allows teacher to assess student learning).
- Organized for Success (teacher prepared, room set up for learning, routines in place).
- Posted Exemplars (changed frequently, student work on display is current and relevant).

A second section on the checklist is entitled, “Instruction.” Practices in this section include the following:

- Differentiated instruction (designed to meet needs of all students, appropriate use of technology/equipment).
- Evidence of frameworks/curriculum (lesson follows curriculum, pacing is consistent with frameworks).
- Evidence of implementing SIP recommendations (follows SIP instructional objectives, instruction displays teacher’s awareness of MCAS strengths/weaknesses)
- Evidence of challenging, rigorous work.

Apart from the random visits there is no systematic process or structure to gather data and measure progress on teachers’ doing what this checklist expects, especially the implementation of “recommendations” in the current SIP. We were told by teachers that administrators are frequently in their classrooms. The Team’s observations and interviews with teachers, found that some of the clearly identifiable practices on the checklist are being implemented, but not systematically. Formal teacher evaluations were aligned with the checklist or with implementation of SIP objectives. The formal evaluations included few concrete suggestions for the improvement of instructional practices.

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

No. There are a number of factors that will have a negative impact on the continued improvement in student performance, especially increasing the per centage of students scoring at the Advanced and Proficient levels.

The inconsistent quality of teaching, including classroom management, and the weak implementation of the inclusion model will hinder improvement. Teacher evaluations are not being used effectively as a tool for implementing SIP objectives or improving the instructional skills of teachers. Embedded professional development through the work of the CPDTs, Vice Principals and colleagues is in the early stages of implementation. The school does not have in place formative assessment processes that enable teachers to gauge on a regular basis the progress students are making. Uniformly, teachers see the

quarterly use of Step Up Springfield as not helpful and in some cases as a waste of instructional time.

The low expectations of students will hinder improvement. The Team did not see posted in classrooms the objectives or the standards being addressed by the lesson or unit. Only 1 of the 12 classrooms observed involved students in creating a rubric to assess the quality of their work. In academic classrooms the Team did not see consistent engagement of students through problem solving and inquiry. In the classrooms observed we saw few instructional modalities that addressed the diversity of learners. Provision for high achieving students is inadequate. The high daily absentee rate for students and the high rates of retention, dropouts, suspensions and exclusions, have a negative impact on student performance improvement. Hispanic students are the largest sub-group, but the school has not devoted sufficient time to reaching these students and to engaging the Hispanic community in doing so. Lack of Hispanic role models as administrators and as teachers was cited by school staff as a concern.

The lack of a school improvement plan that leads to program evaluation and provides data for identifying causes of success or failure will hinder improvement. Faculty and administration have not developed a common understanding of why student performance improves or fails to improve. Candidates for the causes of improvement are John Collins writing across the curriculum, double blocks of ELA and math for 9th and 10th graders, engagement of the African American parents and community, Gear Up and Read 180 and other supplemental reading programs. Chief candidate for low student performance is lack of reading and writing skills that results in students' faltering on open response and short answer questions (Students were correct on 28.2% of open response questions in math in 2004. They were correct on 46% of open response question in ELA in 2004.). Not understanding vocabulary used in MCAS questions is also an issue.

The uncertainty related to a number of factors, for example, the uncertainty about school leadership will hinder improvement. In the past the district redeployed leaders with little opportunity for anticipation or for participation of the schools in these decisions. Other issues relating to district administration are likely to hinder progress at Putnam unless addressed. These include: the building; the need for more textbooks and technology; math and ELA resources for students who are underperforming in reading and writing; closing the \$3,000 per student spending gap (\$3,000,000 for the school with an enrollment of 1000). The school knows it will lose Title I funding for next year. The lack of a union contract and therefore the lack of pay review, while outside the school's control, contributes significantly to teachers feeling unacknowledged and to low morale. The unsettled nature of staffing overall affects the implementation of key improvement initiatives. If scheduling practices and student assignments continue to negatively affect teaching and learning they will also remain obstacles to individual improvement. (The team were told that the new schedule will address this issue). A lack of structures and processes that ensure effective communication among all the stakeholders in the school will also hinder improvement.

The Team acknowledges that there are also factors in place or being implemented that can lead to further student performance improvement.

At the school level, the current principal and administrative team are providing strong leadership. The culture of the school has improved with positive relationships between stakeholders in evidence. Stakeholders say that the school is safe. Parents of African American students and organizations in the African American community have shown active support for African American students. The faculty at the school has shown an acceptance and a willingness to work on the integration of academic and vocational elements of the school. The faculty has participated in developing a plan for introducing small learning communities in 2005-2006. The faculty adopted and is using the John Collins writing across the curriculum program, and they are offering a double block of ELA and math for 9th and 10th grade students. Further changed scheduling practices are promising, as are supplemental program provisions for student achievement and personal development. Shop areas have strong advisory committees for most of the shops, encouraging them to stay up-to-date in their equipment and technology. The on-going Chapter 74 remediation with DOE will continue to nudge Putnam toward further improvement.

There are positive collaborations with Springfield College and Springfield Technical Community College. Local college students provide a tutorial program for Putnam students and a Saturday program is offered in conjunction with Westfield State College. There is also a Gear Up MCAS preparation program in place.

At the district level there is support for finding funding for a new school building and for creating small learning communities, as well as providing funding for vice principals focused on ELA and math and for CPDTs who provide coaching and support for teachers in ELA and math. The district has agreed to let Putnam design four days of professional development in August, specifically to achieve Putnam objectives. A district-wide promotion policy that ensures promotion based on meeting standards has led to better prepared students entering Putnam. An admission policy allows the school to select better prepared students who want to attend Putnam. An increasing number of students are choosing Putnam as their high school of choice. The school has a better image in the community and is using an effective recruitment strategy that involves current Putnam students.

In answering this question in the negative, the Team concludes that the factors that can impede sustaining the gains in student performance outweigh the factors that can contribute to sustainability of the improvement.

CONCLUSION

Putnam is a school that is making a turnaround and positive results are beginning to show. The current leadership team is strong and is working with urgency and tenacity. Despite difficult working conditions, many teachers are industrious and have helped to identify the appropriate reforms needed to raise levels of student achievement. In the final analysis, however, there is uncertainty about future leadership and faculty stability and therefore the capacity to sustain this momentum. The quality of teaching at the school is mixed, expectations of students remain generally low, and funding from the district remains uncertain. The recently appointed principal has a sense of mission that is infectious. Sadly, however, given these realities, it is hard to share in his optimism.

APPENDIX A

Team Members

Mr. Peter Davies, Chair, Class Measures

Mr. Douglas Renick, Scribing Examiner, Class Measures

Ms. Nancy Houle, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Ms. Eva Mitchell, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Mr. Charles Valera, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

**OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
YEAR TWO FOLLOW-UP REVIEW**

DAY 1: June 1, 2005

<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
7:30-8:00	Panelists arrive and meet to organize the day's activities.	Conference Room
8:00-9:00	Panelists meet w/ Principal	Conference Room
9:00-10:00	Panelists meet with Superintendent, Asst. Superintendent, School Support Staff	Conference Room
10:00-11:00	Panelists meet with Instructional Leadership Team	Conference Room
11:00-1:00 Room	Panelists meet to discuss findings so far and plan for the remainder of the day. (working lunch)	Conference
1:00-3:00	Panelists meet with teachers, parents and students in focus groups.	Various Rooms

	Panelists A and B	Panelists C and D	
1:00-3:00	Teacher Focus Group #1	Teacher Focus Group #2	
1:30-2:00	Teacher Focus Group #3	Teacher Focus Group #4	
2:00-2:30	Teacher Focus Group #5	Student Focus Group #1	Student Focus Group #2
2:30-3:00	Parent Focus Group #1	Parent Focus Group #2	Teacher Focus Group #6

3:00-5:00	Panelists meet synthesize information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for second day of the on-site visit.	Conference Room
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DAY 2: June 2, 2005

7:30-8:00 **Panelists meet with the principal for follow-up questions** **Principal's Office**

8:00-11:00 **Panelists observe and interview teachers** **Classrooms**

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

11:00-1:00 **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. (working lunch)** **Conference Room**

1:00-2:00 **Final interviews** **Various rooms**

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D
1:00-2:00	Vice Principal	Director of Vocational Education	Document Review	ELL Teacher

2:00-4:00 **Panelists deliberate and form** **Conference Room**

**conclusions, including brief closing
meeting with the principal**

4:30-7:45

**Panelist deliberate and form
conclusions**

Off-site