

School Panel Review Report Jeremiah E. Burke High School Boston Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of the School Panel Review Process is to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether State intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where students' MCAS performance is critically low and no trend toward improved student performance is evident from MCAS data. Jeremiah E. Burke met this criterion at the 10th grade level and was one of 14 schools selected for panel review in spring, 2003. The Panel review was conducted on February 11–12, 2003.

The Review 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 two key questions:

1. Does the school have a sound plan for improving student performance?
2. Are the conditions in place for the successful implementation of the school's improvement plan(s)?

The Panel's responses to the two key questions that defined the scope of its 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, as well as school performance data, will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration in determining whether the Jeremiah E. Burke High School is deemed 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 a sound plan where such conditions at present do not appear to exist. Diagnostic and/or prescriptive intervention that may be needed to assist an under-performing school occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

Jeremiah E. Burke High School Profile

Enrollment

The Jeremiah E. Burke High School is one of 135 schools in Boston and 22 high schools in the district. Enrollment at the Burke High School has been steadily increasing since 1999. The number of students enrolled in 1999 was 702. By 2002, it had increased to 817. Between 1999 and 2002, 85 percent of the school's population was Black. White students at the Burke High School averaged two percent, and Asians made up 3.5 percent of the student body.

More than half (55 percent) of the Burke High School's student population was classified as low-income during the 1999-2002 period. The school is also designated as a Title One school.

One-third of Burke High School's total student population, between 1999 and 2002, were Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. In addition, figures collected for this time period indicate that nearly 45 percent of the entire student body were not native English speakers.

The attendance rate at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School for the period of 1998-2001 averaged 87.5 percent, with an average number of days absent on a 180-day schedule of 23. Retention has steadily increased at this school since 1998. In 1998, the retention rate at the Burke High School was 9.8 percent; by 2001, it had risen to 20.7 percent. The drop-out rate during this time period averaged 15 percent. The school did not report any in-school suspensions, although its out-of-school rate remained over 20 percent during these four years. Exclusions at the Burke High School between 1998 and 2001 were close to 10 percent, except for a dramatic drop to 2.8 percent in 1999.

In 2003, the Burke High School reported: 153 students receiving Special Education services; 223 students receiving Transitional Bilingual Education; 229 students receiving English as a Second Language instruction; 60 students DOE- funded Academic Support services; 79 students receiving non-DOE funded Academic Support services; 116 students enrolled in the Gifted and Talented program; 12 students in Bilingual literacy Title I supported program; and 225 enrolled in an Extended Time Enrichment/Recreational program.

Staffing

The Jeremiah E. Burke High School has a staff of 97 that includes one Headmaster, three Assistant Headmasters, two Program Directors, one Clinical Coordinator, two Student Support Services Coordinators, four Guidance Counselors, two nurses, a Librarian and four paraprofessional staff in addition to the professional instructional staff. While the majority of teachers are certified in the subject that they teach, twenty percent of the teaching staff is on waiver. Half of the school's total staff members were hired in the last five years, with the only exceptions being the guidance counselors, the librarian, and most of the administrative staff. The Headmaster has been at the school eight years, but has served in that capacity for only three of those years.

MCAS Overview

The MCAS tests are administered at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School in grade 10 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The school received a positive Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination in both content areas in both Cycle I and Cycle II.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

With a proficiency index of 41.8, the school received a performance rating of "Very Low" in Cycle II (2001-2002) in ELA. Its improvement, in this content area, was rated "On Target." The school improved its MCAS participation rates in ELA in Cycle II compared to Cycle I (1999-2000). In Cycle I, the school's participation rates in ELA were 69 percent in both 1999 and

2000. In Cycle II, participation in the ELA test rose to 74 percent in 2001, and 92 percent in 2002.

Regular Education student performance in ELA at the Burke shows no clear patterns over the last two cycles, or four years. In 1999, six percent of Regular Education students were proficient; 29 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and 65 percent failed in ELA. In 2000, 13 percent of students in this group were proficient, 31 percent were in need of improvement, and 56 percent failed. In 2001, the school had one percent of students performing at the Advanced level of performance for the first time. That same year, the proportion of proficient students decreased by one percent, while students scoring in the Needs Improvement category increased to 49 percent, and the percentage of those failing fell to 38 percent. In the second year of Cycle II (2002), the percentage of students performing at the Proficient level of performance increased to 15 percent. Forty-two percent of students scored at the Needs Improvement level, and an equal percentage failed.

In every year, but in 2001, 95 percent of Special Education students failed the English language arts test, while the remaining five percent performed at the Needs Improvement level. In 2001, four percent of Special Education students performed at the Proficient level, another four percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, and 92 percent failed.

In the first year of Cycle II (2001), 24 percent of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students scored at the Needs Improvement level, while the remaining 76 percent failed. In 2002, eight percent of LEP students were proficient, 26 percent scored in the Needs Improvement category, and 66 percent failed.

Student Performance in Mathematics

In mathematics, the Burke High School received a performance rating of “Critically Low” based on its proficiency index of 37.2, and its improvement was rated “On Target”. In Cycle I, 71 percent of students participated in 1999, and 69 percent in 2000. In Cycle II, 75 percent of students participated in 2001, and 93 percent in 2002 in the mathematics testing.

Regular Education student performance in mathematics during the last four years shows no clear patterns. In 1999, one percent of Regular Education students at the Burke High School scored in the Advanced category and four percent were proficient in this content area. Ten percent of students scored in the Needs Improvement category, while the majority (84 percent) failed. In 2000, the percentage of Advanced students increased to three percent, and the proportion of proficient students rose to 10 percent; 16 percent of scored fell in the Needs Improvement category; and 71 percent of students failed. In 2001, the school had four percent of its students performing at the Advanced level; 13 percent at Proficient; 28 percent at the Needs Improvement level; and 55 percent failing. In 2002, there were no advanced students, and the percentage of proficient students fell to seven percent. The proportion of students in need of improvement rose to 35 percent, and those failing also rose, to 59 percent.

The proportion of Special Education students failing the mathematics test over the last four years has been 95 to 100 percent. In both years for Cycle II (2001 and 2002), 54 percent of Limited

English Proficient (LEP) students at the Burke High School failed the MCAS mathematics test, and over 30 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and eight percent at Proficient. In 2001, four percent of LEP students performed in the Advanced category.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

KEY QUESTION 1: DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A SOUND PLAN FOR IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Panel found that the school does have a sound plan for improving student performance. The Panel's review of the Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) and the interviews with school administration, faculty and parents, show that the school has examined their student performance data, reviewed existing programs, and has analyzed classroom instruction to inform their plan for improving student performance.

A. Has the school analyzed appropriate data and program information to accurately identify the gaps in student performance and determined why those gaps exist?

Yes. School administrators, teachers, and parents on the School Site Council used data analysis to inform the WSIP. The school analyzed a variety of data to pinpoint areas of weakness, identify gaps in learning, and institute curricular adjustments. For the most part, a comprehensive analysis of factors contributing to lagging student performance exists, with the exception of the goal embodied in Collaborative School Climate under Essential One of the Six Essentials of Whole School Improvement outlined by the district. Strategies outlined in the plan are comprehensive and can lead to improved student results.

The school has analyzed appropriate data such as MCAS, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Writing Prompts, MELA-O (Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral), and attendance to accurately identify gaps in student performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The school has partnered with the University of Massachusetts in Boston to conduct a deeper analysis of the students' strengths and weaknesses on the Writing Prompts. Further evidence of a formal process to involve a broad base of teachers in examining student data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses is present in the small learning communities. SLC meetings are used to norm teachers' scoring process, score writing prompts, and analyze students' writing needs.

The Burke uses district curricular guides aligned with the state standards in each core area at each grade level. The *Math Connections* pacing guide uses a timeline that outlines material for the teacher to cover on a daily basis. The curriculum provides assessment through monthly math tasks and mid and end-of-the year exams to monitor student and class progress through the program. Similarly, the ELA district guides scaffold teaching the common ELA strands tested on the MCAS from 9th to 10th grade, for example ELA strands 8, 11, are emphasized in the 9th grade and ELA strands 8, 11, and 15 are taught in the 10th grade. The school uses classroom visits, Term Objectives (which hold teachers accountable for material taught) and SLC team meetings to align and improve the effectiveness of their curriculum. Furthermore, Panel classroom visits to

both Special Needs and ESL classes showed that these groups were taught grade level material aligned to WSIP initiatives such as *Readers'/Writers' Workshop* and *Math Connections*.

A variety and range of instructional strategies are utilized at the Burke to address differences in student learning needs and modes of expression. For example, teachers observed at the Burke used a variety of questioning techniques to elicit student responses. Some teachers effectively used cooperative learning groups to engage students in instruction, while others used classroom lecture to deliver content knowledge. Current review of instructional practices includes teachers meeting by small learning communities three times a week to identify weaknesses in students' literacy and numeracy, analyze data, look at student work, and discuss literacy across the curriculum. Math and literacy coaches are utilized to train teachers and model the initiatives adopted by the district (*Readers'/Writers' Workshop* and *Math Connections*). Some teachers have inclusive classrooms while other teachers expressed that they need additional training in differentiated instruction as they move to an inclusive model with ESL and Special Needs populations. The Collaborative Coaching and Learning/Peer-Coaching model has been piloted in the district but this is the first year of its implementation district wide. In this model teachers have the opportunity of learning from observing their peers' instructional practices as well as sharing their knowledge with their colleagues to improve teaching and learning. At the time of the Panel's visit, peer-coaching which is "intended to provide ongoing mentoring and support for classroom teachers" is a goal of the school but not yet a reality.

The Burke has moved to a six period rotating schedule to ensure flexibility in providing additional instructional time, and safety net services including MCAS Prep classes, and Princeton Review to ensure that student learning needs are met (section 5.2 WSIP). This six period schedule also allows for teachers to meet across grade levels in small learning communities to discuss both the academic and socio/emotional needs of a common set of students. Teachers affirm that SLC meetings are helpful in that they allow students to establish closer relationships with staff, lessen feelings of alienation, and improve student performance. Based on their learning needs, some students are placed in flexible groups (MCAS Prep classes) to maximize targeted individual instruction in literacy and mathematics.

The school used last year's WSIP to complete a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and to plan for the following school year. The current WSIP template does not address issues of discipline and attendance. However, in interviews and the staff survey results, teachers describe discipline and attendance issues (absences and tardiness) as contributing to poor student performance. The school lost its Attendance Coordinator and Family Center due to budget cuts, leaving them to rely on teacher volunteers to make phone calls to parents of absent or tardy students. The school feels communication with parents has suffered due to the loss of these two staff positions.

Although Bilingual and Special Needs populations are not mentioned in the plan, the Headmaster has a vision of inclusion for these populations. She has begun by dismantling the bilingual small learning community and integrating it within the four regular education small learning communities. Bilingual teachers are feeling overwhelmed by the *Unz* initiative, which mandates students are taught in English rather than in their native language and what that will mean to them next school year. Non-native English speaking students are already behind academically

and will need to pass the MCAS regardless of their years in the U.S. Teachers expressed concern that students must be taught difficult concepts such as Physics in English.

In general, the Burke staff has used data analysis to identify the reasons for poor student achievement. Programs supported by professional development and monitored by coaches have been implemented to address student weaknesses in ELA and Math. Although external factors that contribute to poor student performance such as discipline, attendance, tardiness, language and preparedness are not reflected in the WSIP, faculty mentioned in interviews the connection between these factors and poor student achievement.

B. Does the plan set out specific improvement objectives that are grounded in the school's analysis of the reasons for poor student performance?

Yes. School goals are research-based, focused on improving teaching and learning, and aligned to literacy and math initiatives. Although most goals are reasonable and attainable, MCAS SMART goals appear unrealistic for one year's growth.

Improvement objectives listed in the WSIP have a specific focus on teaching and learning and are guided by the six essentials of Boston's whole school change model. The district's initiatives focus on literacy and math and are clearly specified in the Burke WSIP. The plan outlines six essentials in both areas including: an instructional focus, looking at student work and data, targeted professional development, best practices, aligning resources, and involving parents and community. Each improvement objective specified in the plan is grounded in the school's analysis of performance within one of the six essentials.

As mentioned in the school's Leadership Report, an analysis of student writing revealed the following weaknesses in ELA: (1) understanding the question or task, (2) using details and examples to support opinion or analysis, (3) using summary to support or argue a point, (4) practice in the use of Standard English Conventions, and (5) vocabulary development. Burke teachers are implementing Reader's/Writer's Workshops, Open Ended Response (OER) questions, Line of Inquiry (LOI), Looking at Student Work (LASW) and Literacy Across the Curriculum (LATC) to address above mentioned student weaknesses. The school's analysis of math data revealed weaknesses particularly in the areas of: (1) number sense, (2) operations, (3) geometry, (4) data analysis, (5) statistics and (6) probability. Math teachers are implementing *Math Connections* with the support of a math coach to address these weaknesses.

The team found most objectives to be reasonable and achievable, however the MCAS goals of 99 percent passing rate for ELA and Math seem unreasonable for one year's growth given current failing rate of 52 percent in ELA and 64 percent in Math. The team understands that the 99 percent passing rate is a goal set by the district and must be included in their WSIP. The parent involvement and technology goals appear to be reasonable and achievable.

C. In order to accomplish each improvement objective, does the plan specify strategies which appear likely to lead to improved student results?

Yes. The research-based strategies selected are directly connected to the identified root causes and the identified weaknesses. As a result the strategies specified in the plan should lead to improved student performance.

For example, the plan specifies that, “Most ELA teachers working with students in the 9th and 10th grade level will demonstrate the principles of *Readers’/Writers’ Workshop* (R+W Workshop).” The Panel visited six ELA classrooms including Special Needs, ESL and MCAS Prep and witnessed full implementation as well as components of R+W Workshop in all classrooms. The Panel also visited three math classes including ESL and witnessed full implementation of *Math Connections*. While implementation of school initiatives was apparent in classrooms visited by the team, there was some variance of resources. For example not all math teachers had graphing calculators for every student and teachers felt this hindered their ability to implement *Math Connections* to its fullest.

The school is also making great progress implementing Literacy Across the Curriculum (LATC) and Looking at Student Work (LASW) strategies. The plan states that, “All teachers will demonstrate the principles of Literacy Across the Curriculum (LATC) and effectively implement standards-based literacy instruction as demonstrated in written documents and classroom observations, LASW and improved scores on formative and summative data.” Teachers from many content areas (math, gym, art, computers, science and history) implement literacy strategies in their classes. One science teacher said that he is incorporating math strategies into his science class. Another teacher starts his Senior Math Seminar by reading. The music teacher described how she requires students to write about their performance experiences and keeps a writing portfolio for each student as part of her class. Such consistent implementation of literacy strategies is likely to lead to improved student performance. The Burke realizes that in order for student performance to improve it must pay close attention to their ESL and Special Needs populations (33 percent and 14 percent) and poor attendance rate (83 percent). Staff surveyed (41 percent) said they would benefit from professional development that addressed “effective instructional methods for diverse learners”.

In summary, the Burke High school’s improvement plan outlines strategies that can lead to improved student performance. These strategies can successfully improve student performance because they are supported by a systematic professional development process that engages a sufficient number of teachers. The school is making progress implementing such a system.

D. Are the school’s written improvement planning document (s) clear and specific enough to guide their implementation of planned improvement initiatives?

Yes. The Burke’s WSIP is comprehensive, easy to understand, and provides direction for implementation of planned improvement initiatives. The plan outlines a reasonable course of action, identifies benchmarks and actions steps, as well as the individuals responsible and the resources required for carrying them out. The plan demonstrates clear linkage between identified objectives and planned solutions.

The school's improvement plan is clearly focused on math and literacy, and the plan has specific evaluation methods accompanied by benchmarks to check the periodic progress of student performance. The Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is administered to 9th graders three times a year in September, January and May. The SRI evaluates students' reading levels/Lexiles. Students who do not meet the reading benchmark are enrolled in literacy support classes during and after school. Math tasks are used as benchmarks in the 9th grade. Students must score Level 2 or higher on 5 out of 8 math tasks or score 60 percent or better on the end of the year final examination as a promotion requirement.

The plan also identifies a whole school writing prompt that is administered three times a year in September, January and May. Students must meet a benchmark of Level 2 or better. Analysis of students' writing prompts result in common writing practices revised by the Burke Instructional Leadership Team (BILT) and used to improve classroom instruction across the curriculum.

In summary, the school's written improvement plan provides reasonable direction and tracking of activities. Timelines give a sense of focus to the school throughout the year. The plan is clearly focused on identified needs in math and literacy, outlines progress and next steps, and identifies the professional development needed to guide improvement.

E. Was the School Improvement Plan developed through a process that will support its successful implementation?

Yes. The Burke School Improvement Plan was developed through a comprehensive school wide process utilizing the district's Whole School Improvement Plan model. The school's Small learning communities along with the Burke Instructional Leadership Team collaborated on completing a needs assessment and developing the final product with input from the School Site Council and the approval of the Deputy Superintendent. The plan is clearly understood and used throughout the school and is periodically reviewed for annual revisions as required.

The teams' review of three years of improvement plans shows progression and growth. In writing this year's WSIP, the Burke staff completed a needs assessment based on last year's improvement plan. The information was turned over to the Instructional Leadership Team who formatted the feedback into the six essentials template. Small learning communities reviewed the plan then the entire staff completed it together in a day of professional development. In addition, School Site Council members were involved in analysis and crafting of the plan.

The plan is reviewed by the Deputy Superintendent, Instructional Leadership Team, and small learning communities. The plan is written to include timelines with intervals for review. Two of four Small learning communities have Whole School Improvement Plan Champions who are responsible for ensuring proper implementation. The plan is tied to professional development to ensure proper training and support of district initiatives such as Readers'/Writers' Workshop, Math Connections, Looking at Student Work, Literacy Across the Curriculum, and Peer-Coaching to name a few.

Staff understands their responsibility to implement the plan as mentioned in the staff survey. 76 percent of staff surveyed 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that their school has a well-defined plan

for reaching student performance goals. When teachers were asked how the plan changes what they do in the classroom, they responded that LASW has been very helpful, and that they have gotten insight as to how to use literacy in math. Other teachers developed strategies such as 'Line of Inquiry' where students follow themes of loyalty, revenge, identity and choices while reading Hamlet. Staff and administration are aware that the school has focused on helping juniors and seniors pass the MCAS since that is the most pressing population. However, they realize that they must prepare freshman and sophomores to pass the MCAS as well.

The school has a process that is district-driven for developing its school improvement plan. This process supports the plan's implementation and it includes all stakeholders in the process.

KEY QUESTION 2: ARE THE CONDITIONS IN PLACE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN(S)?

The Panel found that the conditions are in place for the successful implementation of the improvement plan. A clear vision and mission statement has been articulated by the administration. Evidence from interviews and focus groups indicate that important stakeholders in the education process, parents and teachers, were sufficiently involved in the improvement planning process. Therefore, support for its successful implementation is likely. Furthermore, district level support of the improvement planning process as well as financial and personnel support for the school appears sufficient to meet the Burke's improvement needs.

During interviews, members of the School Site Council, Burke Instructional Leadership Team (BILT), Administration, and teachers all voiced a unanimous concern about budget cuts. These budget cuts have left Burke High School in a state of transition and change. The following changes have occurred in the past two years: (1) a new administrative staff, (2) 12 fewer teachers, (3) 200 additional students, (4) an influx of teachers new to the building, (5) a change in remaining instructional staff and (6) a reconfiguration of Small learning communities (SLC) which integrates the bilingual population across all SLCs. The administration and staff at the Burke are working hard to compensate for positions lost and recognize that it takes time to acclimate to the numerous changes mentioned above. However, the administration and staff feel confident that they have the capacity to improve student achievement and that it will improve.

A. Does the school have effective leadership and sound management?

Yes. School leaders at the Burke have effectively communicated the WSIP to all facets of the school community. The vision/mission statement has been clearly articulated; is recognizable to staff, students, parents, and the community-at-large; and serves as the cornerstone for successful implementation of the plan. The Burke has dedicated itself to remedying its deficiencies and remains confident that successes will emerge through the cooperative efforts of all involved in the process.

The Headmaster of the school is an experienced educator with many years of administrative experience. During the Panel's visit, she was a visible presence in the school corridors,

interacting with students, participating in Panel meetings, and thoughtfully responding to the Panel's questions. Her concern for the improvement of the school was obvious and she has been able, in large part, to put in place and effectively communicate a vision for improvement to her faculty, staff and parents. Parents on the School Site Council are well informed, participate in improvement planning, and expressed their strong support of the Headmaster. Staff recognizes their responsibility in implementing the improvement plan and can clearly articulate how the implementation of the plan changed the work they do in the classroom. Results of the instructional staff survey indicate that 75% of the staff said they were "well informed about the initiatives that are undertaken by our school leadership and staff to improve student performance". Responses in teacher focus groups corroborate this assertion. Some teachers voiced their desire for more support from administration in the area of discipline.

Leadership has nurtured and supported a positive school climate and recognizes the importance of strong morale. The Headmaster is positive and supportive of her staff and their suggestions to improve teaching and learning. For example, one teacher found that students enrolled in his Calculus class were doing so simply to meet a 4th year math requirement but were not concerned in passing since graduation requirements only require students to pass 3 years of math. This teacher was given administrative support as he designed a math class called "Bridge Engineering." The headmaster not only supported the idea but also allotted resources to ensure the class would succeed.

The Panel Review team learned that the staff is very committed to students and that teachers have built positive rapport with students and 'go the extra mile' to understand how external factors affect their academic lives. For example, during a teacher focus group the ROTC Sergeant described numerous socio/emotional issues affecting 5-7 of his cadets who are struggling in school. He was obviously concerned about these students and their access to support services that could help them deal with their issues. Likewise, students in focus groups said that the staff is always helpful, after school, during lunch and in the classroom. Students said that "teachers here 'expect' you to go to college".

Staff survey results show that 93 percent of staff expressed confidence in the Headmaster's ability to guide and support staff efforts to improve academic performance. This was corroborated by teacher interviews and focus groups. The Headmaster positively communicates the school's vision/mission and sets high expectations, and teachers post expectations in their classrooms. The Burke High School vision, as described by the Headmaster, is "continuous improvement both of staff and students" and "taking pride in becoming a community of learners 'education becomes how we can do things better'." Administrators are involved in and head up Small Learning Communities. They also provide direction for their staff as they implement improvement plan initiatives. The staff is supportive of one another and feels that administration supports them. In focus groups, teachers said that leadership visits classrooms and give feedback in the form of emails, notes left in mailboxes, and detailed color-coded feedback aligned with the 'walk-through' protocol.

Generally, Burke High School has effective leadership and sound management to effectively implement its school improvement plan. The Headmaster communicates effectively and has set high expectations for all staff to focus on improved student results. Leadership recognizes that

work still remains and is motivating teachers and creating a climate that is committed to the school's improvement efforts.

B. Is there evidence that the school's faculty supports the planned improvement efforts?

Yes. It is clear the faculty supports the planned improvement efforts. The entire staff lent their voice to the needs assessment section of the WSIP. Also, the faculty's implementation of the literacy and math initiatives aimed at improving student performance is a strong indicator of support. The Burke learning community clearly agrees with improvement strategies identified in the WSIP. However, data survey results as well as student and teacher focus groups indicate that external factors such as attendance, discipline and student's social emotional issues also have an important impact on student learning. These factors are not reflected in the WSIP.

Staff agrees with the school's assessment of identified student needs. All staff participated in the needs assessment conducted at the end of school year '01-02, including support staff. The Headmaster incorporated the voice of the staff by including the needs assessment completed by SLCs into the WSIP. Teacher surveys revealed that 75 percent of staff believe that the Burke has a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals. In addition, the Burke believes that improvement planning will result in measurable and improved student performance. The Panel asked teachers in focus groups, "What is your estimation of the plan as a clear guide for making needed improvements to teaching and learning at the school?" Teachers felt that the timeline is realistic because it rolled out the work over time. The timeline also helps them align goals to standards, as well as hone in on using assessment to guide teaching. A process for regular review and assessment of instructional practice is present in teachers' class level term objectives and was also seen during class visits.

Evidence indicates that faculty supports the school's planned improvement efforts. Strategies likely to lead to improved student results are demonstrated in classroom practices (*Readers'/Writers' Workshops* and *Math Connections*). The inclusion of Bilingual and Special Needs populations in these improvement strategies should impact identified weaknesses in student performance and yield results. All teachers across content areas are implementing aspects of the plan; especially in literacy (writing prompts, open-ended responses, LATC and LASW) and math. For example, during an observation of an English class students were working in pairs to edit each other's writing of a persuasive essay. A review of the editing sheets and the writing assignment showed the students were writing in accordance with MCAS writing standards. During the focus groups, students expressed they regularly do open-ended response questions at the beginning of their classes. However, some staff expressed a need for more consistency in implementation of district discipline and attendance policies. There was not enough time within the scope of the Panel's visit to investigate whether or not technology and parent involvement goals mentioned in the improvement plan are being met. Some staff expressed concern for a lack of current technology, specifically mentioning outdated or nonfunctioning computers. Also, some of the classes belonging to the school's technology pathway have been cut over the last two years. The Boston Public Schools have defined an implementation schedule for technology that targets the Burke High School in 2004.

C. Is the school receiving adequate guidance and support from the district leadership?

In most cases. For the most part, the Burke receives equitable guidance and support from the district leadership. After interviewing the district deputy Superintendent, her instructional leader and the operational leader, the Panel judged that the level of guidance and support from the district leadership is adequate to lead, oversee and support sound school improvement planning. District leadership is involved in the process of developing and writing the WSIP. The district has a willingness to support the Burke and, as budget dictates, provides professional development, as well as human and financial resources.

District leaders are well-informed of the needs of the Burke school. The deputy Superintendent knew the history of the Burke and how the school is losing 'exception positions' allotted to the school in 1995 when the school lost accreditation. She mentioned the numerous partnerships the school has with local universities such as Harvard, BU, BC and UMass. The partnership with UMass supports the Burke's data analysis, especially of the writing prompts.

The district is directly involved in the development of the WSIP. The district provides the template format that defines the Six Essentials of Whole School Improvement. The instructional leader reviews plans prior to their approval by the deputy Superintendent. The district looks closely at the plan's alignment of data analysis to professional development and to classroom instruction. The Burke school receives feedback as needed from the Instructional Leader or Deputy Superintendent. The district believes that the plan needs to be a "living document" for schools. The Instructional Leadership Team uses the plan to guide the work at the school, and the district evaluates whether the school is on course through mid-year and end-of-year assessments as well as informal conversations throughout the year.

The district provides financial and human resources to support improvement efforts as the budget dictates. The district acknowledges the progress the Burke has made since losing NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation in 1995 and realizes that the school is in transition. The district does not want to see the Burke decline and is willing to do all it can to prevent that from happening. However, at the school level, supplies are lacking to implement district initiatives--not enough books for classroom libraries in *Readers' Workshop*, not enough graphing calculators for *Math Connections*. The school has seen an increase in student population (200+), a decrease in personnel (-12 FTEs), a loss of programs such as dance, art, theater, and the loss of its Family Support Center in the last two years. Staff, students, parents, and administration fear that these and additional budget cuts will have a severe effect on their performance. Some students feel that school is 'not fun' anymore because of the loss of specialty classes.

The district provides human resources in the form of math and literacy coaches who work to train teachers and to support implementation of math and literacy programs. Headmasters are trained in district initiatives and can see initiatives implemented in lab schools throughout the district.

In summary, Burke High School is receiving reasonable support and guidance from district leadership. The school is supported with financial and human resources and professional guidance in some areas. There is concern that budget cuts will have a severe impact on the school's implementation of its planned school improvement initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Based on evidence from documents, interviews and observations, the Panel Review team found that Jeremiah E. Burke High School does have a sound plan for improving student performance. The Panel's review of the school's improvement plan and interviews with school administrators and faculty show that the school has thoroughly examined student performance data and completed a sufficient review of programs and, most importantly, classroom practice. This is the first step of effective planning. The school's ability to analyze data to inform classroom instruction is a key factor in lending confidence that the school will reach its improvement targets.

The Panel found that the conditions are in place for the successful implementation of the Burke Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP). The school administration has articulated a clear vision and mission statement for the school. Important stakeholders in the change process, parents and teachers, were involved in the planning process. District level support of the improvement planning as well as financial and personnel support for the school is sufficient, at this time, to support the improvement needs of the school.

**APPENDIX A
Team Members**

Janet Schulze, Team Chairperson, SchoolWorks Consultant, Beverly, MA

Emilys Peña, Co-Chair, SchoolWorks Consultant, Beverly, MA

AnnMarie Costa, Team Member, Assistant Superintendent, Revere Public Schools, MA

Bernard Welch, Team Member, Principal, Fitchburg High School, MA

Robert Johnson, Team Member, Assistant Principal, Randolph High School, MA

Cheryl Stuart, Team Member, Administrator Secondary Education, Triton Regional School District, MA

APPENDIX B

UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE

Detailed Schedule for Review Panel School Site Visit

Day 1

- 10:30—12:00* Panel chairperson and panel coordinator meet to discuss and clarify roles, prepare for the first team meeting, and review general logistics/schedule for the review. [location: hotel]
- 12:00—2:00 p.m.* **Team meeting # 1:** team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist's individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgements on key questions. [location: hotel]
- 2:00—3:00 p.m.* Panelists meet with the district Superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate). [location: hotel]
- 3:30—4:30 p.m.* Panelists meet with Principal (and one other school-based individual, if appropriate). [location: the school]
- 6:00—8:00 p.m.* **Team meeting # 2:** panelists synthesize interview information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for Day 2 of the review. [location: hotel]

Day 2

All activities take place in the school

- 7:30—8:00 a.m.* Panelists meet with the Principal
- 8:00—8:30 a.m.* Panelists meet with the School Council
- 8:30—9:00 a.m.* Panelists meet with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized, as appropriate, to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students, classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific inquiry groups.

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group

- 9:00—11:00 a.m.* Classroom observations and teacher interviews

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
9-10 a.m.	Observe teacher 1 and teacher 2	Observe teacher 3 and teacher 4	Observe teacher 5 and teacher 6	Observe teacher 7 and teacher 8	Observe teacher 9 and teacher 10

10-11 a.m.	Interview teacher 1 and teacher 2 individually	Interview teacher 3 and teacher 4 individually	Interview teacher 5 and teacher 6 individually	Interview teacher 7 and teacher 8 individually	Interview teacher 9 and teacher 10 individually
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11 a.m.—12:30 p.m. **Team meeting # 3:** panelists meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch)

12:30—1:00 p.m. Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information; panelists are encouraged to roam the entire school and visit classrooms not yet seen.

1:00—2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teachers in groups; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
1:00-1:30	Teacher	Focus Group 1	Teacher	Focus Group 3	Prepare report
1:30-2:00	Teacher	Focus Group 2	Teacher	Focus Group 4	

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

2:30—5:00 p.m. **Team meeting # 4:** panelists deliberate and form conclusions