

## **School Panel Review Report Hyde Park 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. Hyde Park met this criterion at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and was one of 14 schools selected for panel review in spring, 2003. The Panel review was conducted on February 25–26, 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 Hyde Park 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, where needed to assist an under-performing school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

### **Hyde Park High School Profile**

#### **Enrollment**

Hyde Park High School is one of 135 schools in Boston, and 22 high schools in the district. Enrollment at the Hyde Park High School has been steadily increasing since 1999 when 879 students were enrolled. In 2002, the number of students attending the school reached 1161. The student population at Hyde Park High School, between 1999 and 2002, was primarily Black; this group accounted for 73 percent of those enrolled at the school. The Hispanic population

accounts for 17 percent of students for that period, while the White population averaged 8 percent.

More than 50 percent of the students at Hyde Park High School are classified as low-income. The school is also designated as a Title One school. Students whose native language is not English represent approximately one third of the school's student population. An average of 23 percent of the student body is designated as Limited English Proficient.

The attendance rate at Hyde Park High School averaged 83 percent between 1998 and 2001. On average, students at this high school are absent 32 of the 180 school days. Retention for the period averaged 13 percent at Hyde Park High School. The dropout rate at this school was 19 percent. Out-of-school suspensions between 1998 and 2001 fluctuated between 7.5 percent in 1998 and 16.0 percent in 2001. During the same period, exclusions averaged 14.0 percent.

In 2003, the school reported that: 294 students receive Special Education, 164 students receive Transitional Bilingual Education, 179 students receive English as Second Language instruction, 346 students participate in Academic Support Service programs, 38 students partake in Talented and Gifted Advanced Placement studies, and 524 students are enrolled in Extended Time Enrichment/Recreation activities.

### **Staffing**

Hyde Park High School has a staff of 99 that includes six administrators, four guidance counselors, one librarian, one nurse, four teacher aides, two curriculum facilitators, and 81 teachers. Twenty percent of the total staff is not certified in the area in which they teach. Sixty-eight percent of the school's 99-person staff was hired within the last five years.

### **MCAS Overview**

The MCAS tests are administered at Hyde Park High School in grade 10 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. In contrast to Cycle I (1999-2000), in both years in Cycle II (2001-2002) the school was found to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

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

In Cycle II (2001-2002), the school received a proficiency index of 34.1 in ELA, which translated into a performance rating of "Critically Low." The school was found to be "On Target" in its improvement toward meeting the national goal of all students achieving proficiency by 2014. Participation rates in the MCAS testing program in ELA at this school have been low in the last four years. In Cycle II, 62 percent of students were tested in 2001 and 57 percent were tested in 2002.

Although the performance of Regular Education students improved in Cycle II in ELA, this group's performance continues to be characterized by high proportions of failing students and very low proportions (less than 10 percent) of proficient students. In both years of Cycle I, 80 percent of Regular Education students' scores were in the Failing category, with the remaining

primarily in the Needs Improvement category. In the first year of Cycle II, eight percent of students were proficient, 37 percent in need of improvement, and 55 percent failed. In 2002, nine percent of students in this group were proficient, 31 percent fell in the Needs Improvement category, and those failing rose to 60 percent.

The distribution of the ELA scores of Special Education students in Cycle II concentrated in the failing category, where almost 95 percent of students scored in both years. In 1999 all Special Education students failed the test while no students were tested in 2000.

No Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were tested in ELA in either cycle at this school.

### *Student Performance in Mathematics*

In Cycle II, Hyde Park High School registered a proficiency index of 21.7 in mathematics that earned the school a performance rating of “Critically Low”. For that Cycle, improvement was found to be “Below Target.” Participation rates at this school have remained low over the last two cycles. In Cycle II, 65 and 62 percent of students were tested in 2001 and 2002 respectively.

The performance of Regular Education students in mathematics has been characterized by high percentages (80-96 percent) of students failing the test. In Cycle II, for the first time, the school had one percent of students in this group scoring proficient in each of the two years.

In Cycle II, 96 percent of Special Education students at this high school failed the math portion of the test. In Cycle I, students were tested in 1999 only. In that year all (100 percent) failed the test.

No Limited English Proficient students have been tested in mathematics at this school.

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

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

Hyde Park High School is in the midst of successfully implementing district-designed initiatives for improving student performance in literacy and math. During the Panel’s visit to the school, it was clear from interviews and focus groups with teachers, parents, students, and administrators that the school does have a plan to move forward. The entire school is focused on improving instruction in literacy and math while also working on building a positive school culture. Many of these initiatives are teacher led and a clear process for communicating both the expected initiatives and their progress exists in the school. The school’s Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) was written in June of 2002 and does not adequately capture the current focus and direction of the school. The current Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP), developed by the school’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), was the result of a school-based process of analyzing student needs and program data. The plan is primarily comprised of action steps for

implementing district improvement initiatives. It does not set forth a clear, focused link between the school's analysis of student needs and the strategies being implemented to address those needs. Furthermore, the plan does not include actions for measuring progress. The existing written document lacks the specificity and comprehension that exists in the school's oral communication of its plans for improvement.

Due to the contrast between the school's written plan and its articulated plan, the majority of the team's responses under this section refer to the school's articulated plan as evidenced during the site visit. While the written plan was unclear, the team felt all stakeholders at the school were clearly able to articulate the school's plan, including the goals and corresponding strategies. Specific weaknesses of the written plan are addressed under question 1D.

**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. For the most part the school has used a variety of data and program information to accurately identify the gaps in student performance and determine why those gaps exist. It is evident from the visit that Hyde Park High has examined statewide, district, and school formative and summative assessments. It has also studied its own instructional practices and school structure.

The school uses a variety of formative and summative assessments including: Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI); MCAS; district math tasks; mid and end-of-the-year math assessments; ESL/CRT (Curriculum Reference Test); MELA-O (Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral); Language Assessment Scales (LAS) and writing prompts. The level and depth of these analyses varies.

The written documents and information gained from interviews with the administration show the school does not currently have a clear, systematic way of testing students, especially on the SRI or of using that information to make any program or curricular decisions. For example, the written documents show a lower percentage of students tested on the SRI than are enrolled. It was unclear if the school uses the SRI for making program or instructional decisions. Student participation in the MCAS is also lower than the district average, with only 57 percent of the student population taking the ELA and 62 percent of the enrolled students taking the math MCAS. The school did complete an analysis of the MCAS. The headmaster attended district training on how to interpret the MCAS results. She then conducted training with her administrative team, each of whom belongs to a small learning community (SLC). Each of them then went through the MCAS results with the staff of their respective SLC's. In addition, teachers are being trained in *MyBPS*, a district website that allows teachers to access student formative and summative assessment data. *MyBPS* summarizes data giving teachers a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual students as well as whole classes. For example, one teacher observed during the visit was one of the first to use *MyBPS* to develop a profile of her level 4 ESL class. Along with the school to career coordinator, she used *MyBPS* to create individual profiles for each of her students. Then she and the coordinator worked with students to have each of them analyze their own results and determine the areas where they

missed answers. The teacher realized most of her students were very close to passing, but were missing questions where the vocabulary, such as literary terms, was unfamiliar to them as English language learners. She then used that information to focus on literary terms with that particular group of students.

It was reported in teacher focus groups and interviews that the school analysis of the writing prompt involved a broad range of stakeholders. Norming and scoring writing prompts involved administrators, teachers, and students. During student interviews many mentioned “learning a lot” from scoring their own writing prompts. Based on the analysis of writing prompts, Hyde park teachers developed the *Blue Stars Writing Essentials*, a list of practices deemed necessary to improve student writing. Teachers across grade levels and content areas focus on these essentials with their students. Laminated posters of the *Blue Star Essentials* were visible in classrooms and hallways.

HPHS is using its data analysis to assess weaknesses in students’ literacy and numeracy skills as well as to place students into accelerated programs, extra math and ELA classes, MCAS Prep classes, and after school tutoring sessions. The school is also using its analysis to make decisions on professional development and the structure of the school. The analysis of students’ weaknesses in literacy and math has led to professional development sessions designed to improve teachers’ instruction. Many of these sessions are offered at the district and some are mandated by the district. Regardless of the reason for attending the sessions, the teachers at Hyde Park demonstrate a willingness to learn and incorporate the new strategies. Professional development training includes: *Reader’s/ Writer’s Workshop*, *Math Connections*, Looking At Student Work (LASW), Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL), Research for Better Teaching (RBT), and Cooperative Learning. Panel members observed that the staff at HPHS has taken ownership of and used the initiatives to “empower” their teaching and their students learning. For example, numerous teachers expressed during interviews their commitment to volunteer after school and weekends to focus on aligning their practice with different initiatives. Teachers meet after school on Fridays to discuss instructional strategies learned in RBT classes that may inform their practice. Teachers further described the importance of meeting with their peers to debrief about strategies, enhance their knowledge through readings, to support essential school initiatives through modeling. Groups of 5-8 teachers meet all day once a week for 5-8 weeks to focus on CCL and LASW. All inquiry groups and teacher meetings are structured in a way that allow teachers to read professional books such as Janet Allen’s “Yellow Brick Road”, Randy Bomer’s “Time for meaning”, Ruth Schoenback’s “Reading for Understanding”, “Literature Circles” by Harvey Daniels, and “When Kids Can’t Read—What Teachers Can Do”, by Kylee Beers. It is evident from classroom observations and student interviews that teachers are effectively modeling instructional strategies listed in the literature and learned from inquiry groups and teacher meetings. One teacher stated that “if this is what we expect our students to do—‘work cooperatively’—then they must see me model what I expect them to do.”

The quality and appropriateness of the written WSIP for Hyde Park High School is currently under review by the school’s ILT (Instructional Leadership Team). While the current plan identifies the core components the school is addressing, the ILT review and evaluation has identified a need to more clearly delineate the link between data analysis, student needs and improvement initiatives. Two key sections have been added to the Essentials section of the

WSIP; (1) implementation (classified as ‘full,’ ‘in progress’ or ‘not yet’), and (2) assessment- (how does HPHS know that the priority makes a difference in student learning?). These revisions to the school’s plan have resulted in a deeper analysis of student performance. For example, an analysis of formative (SRI, writing prompts) and summative (MCAS) data indicated a weakness in students’ reading and writing skills. As a result, *Reader’s/ Writer’s Workshop* was adopted by the school to help address literacy needs. The school is now keeping track of the implementation of adopted initiatives by listing how many teachers have been trained and are incorporating *Reader’s/ Writer’s Workshop*. All ELA, SPED, and ESL teachers have been trained in *Reader’s/ Writer’s Workshop*. The revisions also provide how improvement initiatives will be assessed. For example, increased scores on the SRI and anecdotal evidence of students’ independent reading would be indicators that *Readers’ Workshop* is having an impact on student performance. Further monitoring of the plan’s implementation is done by walkthroughs conducted by the administrative team. Teachers said in interviews that administrative presence in their classroom was “welcome and non evaluative”. Such administrative support encourages teachers to take risks rather than shy away from trying out new strategies.

**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. The school’s plan as articulated during the visit does set out clear improvement goals. The staff at HPHS is aware that the goals are to: (1) improve student learning in literacy and mathematics through professional development addressing both pedagogy and content, and (2) improve school culture through self-reflection and scheduling changes. These goals are grounded in the school’s analysis of classroom practice, school and district-based data, and teachers’ self-examination of their own instructional practices. Although most goals are reasonable and attainable, MCAS SMART goals appear unrealistic for one year’s growth.

Based on document review and interview information, the school appears to be at an important juncture between understanding student performance data and exploring to what extent and in what ways the school’s curricular and instructional practices are responsible for present levels of student performance. Improvement objectives listed in the WSIP have a specific focus on teaching and learning and are guided by the six essentials of Boston Public School’s whole school change model. The Six Essentials in literacy and math are: an instructional focus, looking at student work and data, targeted professional development, best practices, aligning resources, and involving parents and community. Each improvement objective is grounded in the school’s analysis of performance within one of the Six Essentials. These district initiatives are clearly specified in Hyde Park’s WSIP. The Panel noted that under Essential One, instructional focus, HPHS only focused on literacy, when the district expects the focus to be both literacy and math. The visit confirmed that the school does focus on math, however, it is not reflected under Essential One in their own written plan. Administration and staff recognize this needed revision.

In addition to focusing on literacy and math, Hyde Park’s plan focuses on school culture under essential five. HPHS is not limiting their view of culture to discipline and absenteeism, they are also focusing on teaching and learning, incorporating high expectations for all students, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate and reflect about their own instructional practices. The

Panel's visit to the school found the culture piece appears to be serving as the catalyst for change and reform at HPHS. Since Hyde Park's definition of culture encompasses teaching and learning, it is clear how the school's priorities such as ELA and math are woven together within the framework of changing the school culture. The Panel's review of three years of WSIPs and the Headmaster's assertion "that each plan looks different", however they "all carry the same three themes—literacy, math and culture" was evident during the visit. Interviews and focus groups showed faculty, parents, students, and administrators clearly understand the school's priorities in terms of literacy, math and culture.

The strategic objectives in HPHS plan were developed by the district and are used across the district to drive school improvement. As mentioned in the school's Leadership Report, an analysis of student writing revealed the following weaknesses in ELA: (1) students avoided responding to the short answer questions, (2) students provided limited details and examples, (3) students demonstrated a lack of use of conventions, (4) students did not clearly respond to what the question was asking, and (5) student reading and comprehension skills are weak. HPHS is implementing *Reader's/Writer's Workshop*, CCL, LASW, common open ended questions, short answer questions, writing across the curriculum, and *Blue Stars Writing Essentials* to address above mentioned student weaknesses. The Leadership Report recognizes math skills as a weakness but fails to note student skill areas that are problematic. However, interviews with math teachers revealed the following areas of weakness: (1) analytical reasoning, (2) problem solving, (3) vocabulary, (4) study skills, and (5) reading math connections text. For example, students struggle with reading the problem in the text and miss the concepts. Math teachers expressed their expectation that the school's focus on literacy will improve math scores. As one teacher stated, "Get the reading scores up and you will see math improvements." Also all math teachers including SPED and Bilingual teachers have been trained in and are implementing *Math Connections*. Teachers attend one workshop a month on Saturdays to address the *Math Connections* curriculum and pacing guides.

The team found most objectives to be reasonable and achievable, though ambitious. The MCAS SMART goals of 99 percent passing rate for ELA and Math seem unreasonable for one year's growth given current failing rate of 65 percent in ELA and 83 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 school's formative goals of 75 percent scoring at Level 2 or better in reading and writing assessment was difficult to measure since summaries of the assessment and prior student performance were unclear. The parent involvement goals appear to be reasonable and achievable.

While the objectives of professional development, (RBT, training for 30 teachers, *Reader's/Writer's Workshop* training, and LASW) are all measurable, they lack specificity. The Panel felt a specific goal would set a benchmark and plot the growth. For example, "We are moving to get 6 percent of our parents involved in school activities which would mean an increase of 3 percent from last year"; "90 percent of ELA teachers will implement *Reader's/Writer's Workshop*, an increase of 30 percent from last year."

Overall, improvement goals are grounded in the school's analysis of the reasons for poor student performance, focused on teaching and learning, reasonable, achievable, and measurable. The

Panel thought that more specific objectives were lacking. However we understood that the school works within the district guidelines and template to create their WSIP. It was not clear from reading the WSIP guidelines if the district required schools to be any more specific than they were with their objectives.

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

Yes. The school's focus to improve literacy, math and the school culture has lead to a selection of strategies that provides a framework for teachers to improve their instructional practice. Each identified strategy is research-based or has a demonstrated level of effectiveness that sets a foundation for success through proper implementation. The plan articulated at the school specifies the strategies and includes the professional development necessary to support the teachers; therefore the strategies specified in the plan should lead to improved student performance.

The plan specifies strategies which appear likely to lead to improved student results. The activities in the plan are directly connected to identified root causes. For example, the plan specifies, "HPHS is highly invested in improved teaching as demonstrated by the quality of professional development offered at the high school...The Panel interviewed 60 + teachers who echoed that the professional development opportunities at HPHS are empowering them to become better teachers. Teachers also expressed how professional development has enhanced their instructional practices in the classroom. Review of professional development agendas provided by the Headmaster revealed the following professional development choices for January 3, 2003: Introduction to *Reader's/ Writer's Workshop*, An Agenda for *Reader's/ Writer's Workshop*, Developing a Climate of Respect, MCAS Alternative Assessments, Technology in the classroom, Microsoft Office Technology, Professional Burn Out: A Teachers Worst Enemy, Inquiry groups for Guidance Counselors, Research for Better Teaching, *Math Connections*, and Gear-up courses through Curry College. The staff at HPHS is taking advantage of the professional development opportunities. This is demonstrated by the number of teachers participating and is supported by interview commentary as to the usefulness of the workshops. This is due in large part to the fact that they are led by in-house teachers/colleagues versus outside consultants. When an outside consultant is used s/he co-facilitates with a HPHS teacher.

In sum, successful implementation of the research based strategies at Hyde Park should impact the identified weaknesses in student performance because they are connected to identified root causes and supported by on-going, meaningful, teacher led professional development.

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

No. Overall, the school's written improvement-planning documents are not clear or specific enough to serve as guides in and of themselves. It is difficult to clearly locate identified problems, casual factors, measurable goals and objectives, or specific strategies to reach those

goals. The written plan does not adequately reflect the clear and comprehensive plan articulated by all stakeholders during the visit.

The Panel found the WSIP difficult to follow and not particularly user friendly especially in light of how clearly administrators, teachers, students and parents articulated student needs and the strategies to address them. It was difficult to identify the goal under each Essential since it was listed as a priority not a goal. The reasons listed for selecting each priority lack any explanation using data analysis as the basis for their selection. For example, under Essential Two the selected priority is "LASW". This is followed by an explanation as to why the school chose this priority which reads: "HPHS has been practicing LASW sessions since 2000SY. This year each SLC maintained LASW sessions with different team members facilitating the group presentation and discussion". Nowhere in the stated reason for choosing LASW as a priority does the school mention data analysis that led them to choose LASW as a priority. The written plan also lacks timelines for implementation and completion of tasks, resources/assistance needed, persons needed for implementation/oversight of specific actions, benchmarks for periodic progress, and specific methods of evaluation for overall results.

The ILT has begun a review and revision of the WSIP. The work began January 23, 2003 and a draft was completed on February 13, 2003. This draft document was made available to Panel members. After careful review of the revised draft, it is clear that HPHS is heading in the right direction with the revisions of the WSIP. For example as the draft plan for Essential One states, "In response to formative (SRI, School-Wide-Writing-Prompt) and summative (MCAS) data on our students' achievement, reading and writing has been the primary instructional focus area for HPHS students since 1999". The draft plan also lists the instructional method and the rationale for choosing it. "...teachers have been introduced to the rationale and methods of Workshop instruction. . .this model enhances students' engagement with text and works to improve their written expression . . . Workshop has been embraced as an approach to teaching and learning that empowers students and assists them in becoming more responsible for their own learning." The revisions the ILT is doing to the WSIP are better aligned with DOE protocol for Panel Reviews.

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

Yes. Hyde Park's Whole 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 Hyde Park's Instructional Leadership Team collaborated on completing a needs assessment and on developing the final product with input from the School Site Council and with the approval of the Deputy Superintendent.

The themes found in the WSIP (math, literacy and culture) were developed through a collaborative process that supports their successful implementation. Small learning community representatives acted as liaisons between the SLC and the Instructional Leadership Team. School Site Council members were also involved in the plan's review. The ILT at HPHS is comprised of representatives from each SLC as well as support staff at the school. This group of teachers, administrators and support staff completed a needs assessment based on last year's improvement

plan. The ILT incorporated the information into this year's WSIP. ILT members then paired up to write sections of the WSIP. Drafts were taken to SLC meetings and feedback was brought back to the ILT. The plan went through several drafts between the ILT and SLCs until a final draft was written. That final draft went to the School Site Council for review and back to the ILT for final revisions and submittal to the Deputy Superintendent. The plan was then reviewed by the Deputy and the instructional leader and returned for revisions if deemed necessary and eventually approved.

Although there is no specified formal assessment interviews with staff indicate involvement not only in the initial planning phase, but also through frequent discussions about on-going needs and planning for progress.

The Panel concluded from its review that teachers understand their role in and responsibility for implementation of strategies. As evidenced from the staff survey 71 percent of staff 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that their school has a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals. During the site visit, the team had a chance to speak with the teachers about their role in implementing the plan. When teachers were asked how the implementation of the improvement plan changed the work they do, the responses included, "Teachers are sincerely interested in seeing students succeed." "I've incorporated literary circles." "I use journals." "I ask the students to write daily." "Using the initiatives in place has improved student performance." "I use portfolios now." "Professional development provides different ways to teach." "Reader's/Writer's Workshop has modified my teaching"; and "I try new methods and techniques as well as peer sharing and modeling." All of the staff that the team spoke with during the visit were able to give examples of the ways in which the strategies have changed their teaching. They also spoke about the school's three areas of focus: literacy, math, and school climate. Teachers from the specialty classes such as music, art and theater articulated how they incorporate writing through open ended responses and start up activities in their curriculum now.

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

The clarity, focus and support provided by the district's improvement initiatives, coupled with dynamic, supportive and effective building leadership provided by the Headmaster, have created commendable conditions for ongoing improvements at Hyde Park High School. The school's literacy, math and school culture initiatives are being implemented. The school is clearly focused on student achievement and appears committed to ongoing improvement. District support will further assist HPHS in meeting students' needs.

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

Yes. The Headmaster's leadership is effective, supportive, nurturing and inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders. She communicates her vision by modeling and empowering teachers to reflect on their practice and have high expectations for themselves and for students. She is

described as an “agent of change” by staff, parents and students, and is credited for creating a culture of professionalism and respect. Administrative team leaders have provided consistent leadership in helping the school move forward with high expectations for teaching and learning.

The Headmaster is an experienced educator with 13 years of administrative tenure in prior assignments and is currently in her third year at HPHS. From the visit, it is apparent she is clearly respected by the Superintendent, her staff, parents, students and her administrative team. During the visit the Headmaster was visible in the hallway. This corroborates comments made by students during focus groups that the Headmaster is easy to talk to and present in classrooms and in the hallways. During the visit, teachers, parents, and students all stated that she has an open door policy and is very approachable. The Headmaster has created many opportunities for the dissemination of information for the various stakeholders in the school to be involved in the improvement dialogue and decision making process. For example, she shared all correspondence from the DOE with her staff so that they would be as informed as she was about the Panel Review process. She writes daily memos, has an easel in the front office informing staff of upcoming events, and writes a Bulletin that goes out several times a week. Parents interviewed credit her with creating a sense of “family” at the school, and further state that, “she has all this education but you never feel like she is talking down to you”. Parents also stated that, “it makes a difference if you can be in a place where your voice is listened to, but not only that, they do something about it”. Teachers feel supported and empowered to investigate new and promising educational practices. To build on this existing base of support, it is the judgment of the Panel, that although existing professional development initiatives are beneficial, the Headmaster needs to more narrowly focus efforts on assessing the impact of improvement initiatives on student performance. Parents, students and teachers feel the Headmaster has created the conditions at HPHS to improve student performance. These stakeholders feel that the entire administrative team is facilitating the change process under the Headmaster’s leadership.

The Headmaster and her administrative team inspire a positive school culture and strong morale. The student centered school climate and culture is clearly identifiable at Hyde Park. Staff energy is focused on students. Teachers reflect on their teaching to motivate, help and educate students. One teacher described the Headmaster’s role as “helping teachers help students”. The schools’ culture allows teacher’s to drive their professional growth through professional development opportunities that are teacher initiated, teacher driven and teacher led. She participates in the improvement initiatives taken on by HPHS. For example she was part of two CCL inquiry groups as well as active in RBT training. The Panel was able to witness and hear about high quality practices that enable the transformation and evolution of reflective practitioners. For example, the Literacy Coach, with the support of the Headmaster, is working with different groups of teachers one whole day a week for a cycle of 5-8 weeks. They have learned about “metacognition” to explore how to help students make predictions and connections, to ask questions, and to develop a repertoire of strategies to help students work effectively with challenging text. Students interviewed use the word metacognition and recognize that metacognition makes “them accountable for their reading”. The quality of professional learning experiences is likely to enhance the literacy instruction for Hyde Park students.

The school leaders effectively focus on high expectations and guide improvement efforts with confidence, energy and purpose. A schedule was created that allows teachers to engage in

professional development during the school day as well as volunteer extra hours after school and on weekends without pay in an effort to improve their teaching and their students learning. Teachers are trained as facilitators and overall have bought into the professional development plan. Teachers perceive the changes taking place as “deep and meaningful change, not formulaic problem solving.” The Headmaster is credited with “bringing in teachers who will make this work.” Students express that “teachers push them,” that “they are preparing us for college” and that AP classes are challenging.

School leaders effectively involve a broad range of stakeholders in decision-making. For example, math teachers expressed they are concerned with the current math curriculum sequence and textbook because it does not align with material tested on the MCAS. With the Headmaster’s support, they petitioned the district to use a different textbook and sequence that exposes students to MCAS math their freshman year and half of their sophomore year before they take the MCAS. School staff expresses their confidence in the leadership. Staff survey results show that 75 percent of staff expressed that their Headmaster provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of our students. Teachers interviewed claimed that HPHS is a “very different school since the Headmaster came, it has improved greatly”, they also claim that there is a “core group of teachers working together to get things done”. They also made statements such as, “I look forward to coming to school every day.” One science teacher described teaching at Hyde Park as the ‘best job.’ Administrative walkthroughs keep administration abreast of instruction, although the headmaster expressed a need to visit classrooms more frequently. One of the ELA teachers said that her SLC team leader visits her class at least four times a week and the ELA department chair at least once a week..

In summary, Hyde Park 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. There is abundant evidence that the school’s faculty support the planned improvement efforts. There is a strong expectation that consistent implementation of improvement strategies along with review and assessment of their impact on student achievement will lead to improved teacher and student performance.

HPHS staff agrees with the school’s assessment of identified needs and the focus on the three areas of literacy, math, and school culture. Instructional staff survey results show that 80 percent feel “well informed about the initiatives that are undertaken by our school leadership and staff to improve student performance.” The evidence gathered by the Panel indicates that the school’s faculty supports improvement efforts. During focus groups and interviews, the staff commented that the process of change at the school is “bottom up”. Staff are involved in numerous committees that address literacy, math and school culture. A Panelist noticed during a class visit that a Social Studies teacher posted the WSIP themes of literacy, math and school culture, and

then listed what he is doing in his class to address all three. 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 the “plan was visionary and provided meaningful information”, “plan is clear and dictates what is happening in the classroom”, “the plan is aggressive due to its professional development and self-assessment components, it brings empowerment to the building,” “the plan has brought teaching up a notch, and increased the sense of accountability”.

There is strong buy in, support and implementation of the school’s improvement initiatives. Staff members across the school express a firm belief that the school’s literacy improvement efforts are resulting in much needed improvements and teachers in all subject areas are making an effort to incorporate more literacy strategies into their classrooms. A science teacher told the Panel “I see the difference in lab reports from using writing in his classroom”. A bilingual teacher has seen an increase in writing fluency after incorporating start up activities. A math teacher stated he places more emphasis on math problems, is excited about teaching, is trying new methods, sharing with his peers, and feels as if he is part of the school culture now. During a classroom visit to a chemistry class, the Panelist observed a mini-lesson on accuracy and precision. Students were creating a brochure explaining and defining accuracy and precision. Teachers at HPHS are not only incorporating literacy in their classroom, and implementing *Reader’s/Writer’s Workshop*, but also are continuously evaluating their practice through participation in inquiry group such as CCL and LASW. According to the teachers, the literacy CCL inquiry groups have been so successful, that math teachers are interested in and participating in inquiry groups that discuss math strategies. Staff has identified common RBT practices such as start up activity, objective and agenda which have been adopted school wide and were present in all 12 classes visited by the Panel.

Inquiry groups such as CCL and LASW allow for assessment of instructional practice as well as feedback from peers visiting each others classrooms. Recently the staff engaged in analysis of MCAS data to see what adjustments the school needed to consider to further support students. Currently, the school lacks a method for assessing the impact of the improvement initiatives on student performance. The school is currently working on a way to cohesively capture all of the assessments in order to demonstrate progress and make informed program decisions based on all of the available data.

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

In some aspects. The district leadership clearly supports the school in all of its improvement initiatives. District leadership are well informed of both the school’s past and current issues and provide support through district initiatives as well as regular contact with the Headmaster. Given the inadequacies of the written report as discussed in section 1 D, it is unclear if district leaders provided sufficient guidance and feedback on the contents of the school’s improvement plan.

District leaders are well informed of the needs of HPHS. From the interview, it was clear that the Superintendent is very familiar with Hyde Park and aware of its current strengths and challenges. He informed the Panel that since being appointed headmaster three years ago, the school leader

has guided the school towards changing its culture and focusing teachers on improving instruction through professional development. He believes the school has come a long way since the appointment of the current Headmaster and sees the most pressing needs of the school as going deeper in improving teaching and learning and successful implementation of small learning communities.

The district is directly involved in the development of the WSIP. The district provides the template format which defines the six 'essentials.' The school's 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. Hyde Park high 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. 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. Given the extent of the possible feedback the district provides to the schools, it appears that Hyde Park did not receive adequate feedback on its written WSIP. As discussed in ID, the written plan does not reflect the clarity of the plan that was communicated to panel members by all stakeholders during the visit. The process the district has in place for review and feedback would indicate there were opportunities for the district to communicate with the school and provide guidance about developing a more comprehensive plan.

The district provides a variety of financial and human resources to support improvement efforts. For example, the faculty at Hyde Park voted to move from a seven period day to an 80-minute block schedule. The district supported this transition by hiring a consultant to work with Hyde Park and other schools to develop their schedules. School administrators reported that the district has called the school on three different occasions to inform it of grant opportunities for which they should apply. The district offers help in the application process. The school received all three grants recommended by the district, including a Comprehensive School Reform grant. The district has Annenberg grant money that it has used to hire coaches to support the literacy and math initiatives mandated by the district. HPHS has a Literacy Coach who is instrumental in implementing CCL, *Reader's/Writer's Workshop* as well as professional development. The district also provides formative assessments in literacy and math that support the mandated initiatives. There are many professional development opportunities through the district, including RBT training, sessions on *Readers' and Writers' Workshop*, data analysis training for administrators, as well as data training on *MyBPS*. The district conducts a yearly walkthrough where they spend half a day at the school visiting classrooms and giving feedback to Headmasters on the progress of their school. The Headmaster at Hyde Park stated she feels very supported by the Superintendent. She cited an example of emailing him on a Friday and receiving a response that night either at home or at school. She also feels that the deputy is very approachable and that she can call her or her Instructional Leader any time.

In general, the district is well-informed of the needs of the school, is directly involved in the development and review of the whole school improvement plan, and provides financial and human resources that support improvement efforts. There is a process in place for district review

and feedback of the school's written WSIP. It appears that the district did not offer adequate guidance or feedback to the school during the development of its WSIP.

## **CONCLUSION**

Hyde Park High School is implementing district-designed initiatives understood by all stakeholders but not clearly reflected in their written plan. It appears the instructional leadership teams' current review of the plan will result in a sound written plan for improvement that more clearly reflects the school's initiatives. The districts' support of HPHS improvement initiatives coupled with dynamic building leadership and staff participation lend confidence that these initiatives will be successfully implemented and lead to improved student performance.

## **APPENDIX A Team Members**

**Janet Schulze**, Team Chairperson, SchoolWorks Consultant, Beverly, MA  
**Emilys Peña**, Co-Chairperson, SchoolWorks Consultant, Beverly, MA  
**Robert Sullivan**, Assistant Superintendent, Middleborough Public Schools, MA  
**Bethe McBride**, Math Supervisor, 6-12, Haverhill Public Schools, MA  
**Lisa Bryant**, Director, Lowell Middlesex Academy, MA  
**Pat DiPillo**, Teacher, High School, Acton-Boxborough, MA

## APPENDIX B UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE

### Detailed Schedule for Review Panel School Site Visit

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

#### 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

### Hyde Park High School

DOE Visit

February 26, 2003

***Panelists are encouraged to roam the entire school, visit classrooms not yet seen and speak with staff and students as they see fit.***

- 7:30 – 8:00 a.m.* Panelists meet with the Headmaster in room 126F
- 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.* Panelists meet with ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) members in room 122:
- 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.* Panelists meet with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Headmaster 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/B CCL (Collaborative Coaching & Learning), LASW (Looking at Student Work), ELA Room 116	Panelist C (students) Room 122	Panelists D/ E (Teachers) Room 119	Panelist F (Support Services) Guidance Conference Room

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Classroom Observations and teacher interviews\* (Period 2)

Panelist A Room 223	Panelist B Room 233	Panelist C Room 115	Panelist D Room 120	Panelist E Room 148	Panelist F Room 206

10:00 – 10:20 a.m. Break

10:20 – 11:20 a.m. Classroom observations and teacher interviews\* (Period 3)

Panelist A Room 119	Panelist B Room 204	Panelist C Room 211	Panelist D Room 116	Panelist E Room 248	Panelist F Room 125

11:20 a.m.– 12:30 p.m. 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, visit classrooms not yet seen and speak with staff and students as they see fit.

1:00 – 1:30 p.m. Panelists meet with teachers in groups; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

Panelist A (students) Room 116	Panelist B (students) <b>Room 118</b>	Panelists C/D (Math/Science) <b>Room 114</b>	Panelist E/F (Administrators) <b>Room 112</b>

1:30 – 2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with parents and administrators in groups\*; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

Panelists A/B (Parents) Room 117	Panelists C/D (Parents) Room 114	Panelists E/F Room 120

2:00 – 2:30 p.m. Closing meeting with the headmaster in room 126F to discuss next steps in the process (all panelists are present)

2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Panelists deliberate and form conclusions