

## **School Panel Review Report Gerena Community School Springfield 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. Gerena Community School met this criterion at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and was one of 14 schools selected for panel review in spring, 2003. The Panel review was conducted on February 26-27, 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 Gerena Community 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.

### **Gerena Community School Profile**

#### **Enrollment**

The Gerena Elementary School is one of 49 schools in Springfield and 33 elementary schools in the district. Enrollment at the Gerena Elementary School between 1999 and 2002 fluctuated between 800 and 878 students. During this time period, Hispanic students accounted for over 65 percent of the total student population. Black students made up 27 percent of the enrolled students at the Gerena School. The population of White students has been on a steady decline, going from 13 percent of total student body in 1999 to seven percent in 2002. The school's percentage of Low-Income students for this time period averaged 85 percent, except for in 2000

when only 11 percent of students were reported to be low-income. Gerena Elementary School is also designated as a Title I school.

Attendance at Gerena Community School averaged 91 percent between 1998 and 2001. The average number of days students were absent on a 180-day schedule at Gerena was 15 for the period 1998-2001. The school's retention rate for this period averaged 6.0 for those four years. In-school suspensions at the Gerena School fluctuated between 18.8 and 34.0 percent between 1998 and 2001. Out-of-school suspensions also fluctuated between 13.6 and 18.8. The most dramatic fluctuations are found in the school's exclusion rates. In 1998, Gerena Community School's exclusion rate was 3.1 percent; there were no exclusions in either 1999 or 2000; in 2001 20.1 percent of the school's population was excluded, a reflection of the district's mandated policy for specific infractions.

In 2003, the school reported that: 153 students are receiving Special Education; 132 students are receiving Transitional Bilingual Education; 132 students are receiving English a Second Language instruction; 41 students are receiving DOE-funded Academic Support Services programs; 80 students are enrolled in non DOE-funded Academic Support Services programs; 778 students are enrolled in Title I-funded supplementary education programs.

## **Staffing**

Gerena Community School has a full-time staff of 116 that includes three administrators, two adjustment counselors, one librarian, one long-term substitute, one school-wide nurse and three nurses for Special Education Developmental Preschool Students, 78 teachers, and 28 teacher aides. Fifty percent of the school's staff was hired in the last five years, including all three administrators who were hired within the last two years. Only one percent of teachers at this school are not certified in the subject they teach.

## **MCAS Overview**

Students at the Gerena Community School are tested in the MCAS in grade 3 in English language arts (ELA), and in grade 4 in ELA and mathematics. In Cycle II (2001-2002) as well as Cycle I (1999-2000), the school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both ELA and mathematics.

### *Student Performance in English Language Arts*

In the Cycle II School Performance Rating Report based on the grade 4 ELA test, the school received a performance rating of Very Low, having attained a proficiency index of 48.2. Compared to the previous cycle, the school was found to have made no improvement, earning a formal improvement rating of No Change. Participation rates in the MCAS testing program in ELA in 2001 and 2002 were 93 percent and 88 percent.

In 1999, seven percent of Regular Education students at the Gerena School were proficient, while 51 percent were in need of improvement and 42 percent scored at the Warning level. In 2000, the percentage of proficient students rose to 17 percent, 65 percent of scores were at the Needs Improvement level and 18 percent at Warning. In 2001, 14 percent of students were proficient, 56 percent at the Needs Improvement level, and 30 percent at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient Regular Education students fell to eight percent. A greater proportion of students (69 percent) performed at the Needs Improvement level, while 23 percent were at Warning.

Over the last four years, very high proportions of Special Education, ranging from 75 percent (2001) to 94 percent (1999, 2001, 2002), have scored at the Warning level. Only in 2001 were there any proficient students (three percent).

The proportion of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students scoring in the Warning category in 1999 was 75 percent, with the remaining falling in Needs Improvement. In 2000 and 2001, all of the LEP students tested in ELA at this school scored in the Warning category. In 2002, fewer than 10 were tested.

### *Student Performance in Mathematics*

In Cycle II, the Gerena School received a performance rating of “Critically Low,” based on its proficiency index of 37.5. Comparing its Cycle II performance to the previous cycle, the school was found to have “Declined.” Participation rates in the mathematics portion of the MCAS were 97 percent in 2001 and 90 percent in 2002.

Over the last four years, the percentage of proficient Regular Education students at the Gerena School has not exceeded 10 percent, and in most years has not exceeded five percent. In 1999, only two percent of Regular Education students at this school were proficient, while 31 percent were in need of improvement, while a majority (67 percent) scored at the Warning level. In 2000, the percentage of students scoring at the Proficient level rose to 10, as those in the Needs Improvement category increased to 66 percent and the percentage of those in Warning fell to 23 percent. In the first year of Cycle I, the proportion of proficient students fell to five percent, as did students in need of improvement to 50 percent, and those in Warning doubled to 26 percent. In 2002, the Regular Education student distribution remained the same as the previous year’s.

During Cycle II, a greater proportions of Special Education students scored at the Warning level, compared to Cycle I. In Cycle I, between 70 and 80 percent of students performed at the Warning level, with the remaining in the Needs Improvement category. In Cycle II between 88 and 91 percent of scores fell in the Warning category, with the remainder at the Needs Improvement level. No Special Education students at this school have been found to be proficient or advanced in mathematics.

There were not enough Limited English Proficient students tested in both cycles to validate a cross-cycle analysis.

## PANEL REPOSSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

Although the School Improvement Plan includes action steps, goals, timelines and resources, the likelihood that the schools' efforts will lead to improved student performance is compromised by (1) the lack of connection between selected programs, strategies and data analysis, (2) the lack of specificity regarding the skills and knowledge students lack, (3) the lack of a systematic process to aggregate data to inform improvement planning, and (4) the omission of a clear understanding and articulation of the reasons for low 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?

No. Although the school collects and organizes several sources of student performance data, it has not yet linked its analysis of this data to its improvement planning process nor clearly articulated its understanding of why student performance is low. Teachers report reviewing several sources of data to identify skills and knowledge students lack and track student performance on "accountability sheets"; however, the connection between their data analysis efforts and the school's improvement planning is unclear. For example, while the Principal and teachers report participating in broad discussions pertaining to school data, they have not effectively created a process that would identify the specific skills and knowledge student's lack.

In its improvement planning process, the school considered its organization and schedule. The Principal reports that the previous structure was designed to create three separate K-5 schools within the same facility. The Principal implemented an organizational structure which created three learning communities (K-1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup>). The schedule is set up in a way as described in the SIP to ensure that teachers follow state frameworks, standards, and curriculum to improve student performance in all classrooms. The Principal implemented the Gerena Scholars Program which allows two classrooms at each grade level to provide accelerated programs.

Gerena is involved in several activities related to data analysis. The school has looked at different sources of data such as district assessments and MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) scores. They aggregated the data and presented it in a way to provide a general overview of student performance, but did not identify specific learning gaps. Gerena administers the Springfield Public Schools district assessments in reading and math three times a year to all students. The school does report using DRA (Diagnostic Reading Assessment) data as an ongoing tool to monitor the progress of students in grades K-3. Teachers working at these grade levels received training from the district to use information gathered from DRA as an ongoing tool to track student performance.

In their SIP (School Improvement Plan) the Gerena data analysis efforts do not clearly articulate the reasons for low student performance. Teachers track student progress through the examination and reporting of data on "accountability sheets"- a school wide system used to track

student performance data. The DRA assessments provide the school with a substantial amount of diagnostic information which is then recorded on accountability sheets. Teachers were able to show panel members examples of accountability sheets used to track student performance. However, the way in which the school uses the information to develop strategies to improve student performance on a systemic level is unclear. Despite the numerous data analyses, the reasons for student weaknesses remained undefined.

The school presents the results of the 2001 MCAS tests, reporting the results for students in grades 3-5. The information presented in the SIP details the average scaled scores for students in the upper elementary grades and the average test scores in grade equivalent for the 1998-2001 ITBS scores, but does not provide an analysis that would identify the areas and specific skills student's lack. For example, the SIP talks about overall trends in student achievement but does not detail a process for item analysis that would allow them to identify the areas of weakness and proficiency students demonstrate.

Individuals who are part of the School Centered Decision Making Team (SCDM) report having a role in the process of data analysis. Every Monday the SCDM team at Gerena participates with the full staff in meetings and activities that are part of the school's weekly one hour extended day program. Monday sessions cycle weekly among full staff meetings, grade level meetings, "pod" team meetings and parent contact opportunities. The SCDM team meets twice a month, and members reported that there are opportunities for discussions pertaining to the analysis of data at these sessions. At some meetings, the Principal suggest specific instructional modifications (such as re-teaching the topic of measurement) to coincide with the administration of tests. However the Panel review team could not determine what process is in place to assure that strategies discussed at SCDM meetings influence classroom instruction.

In addition to the omission of a comprehensive analysis of English language arts data, the SIP does not address the way that math assessments are used to identify gaps in student achievement, or make a determination of why those gaps exist. The plan mentions using *Math Investigations* units to supplement the existing math curriculum, but offers no insight detailing a process to determine 1) what skills students' lack, 2) why those gaps exist, 3) the correlation between the scope and sequence of *Math Investigations* and the existing mathematics curriculum. In general, the Panel could not determine whether these strategy selections would identify areas of weakness and determine why those gaps exist.

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

No. Although the SIP identifies improvement goals it does not include a description of current student performance or specific improvement targets. The goals and objectives are not clearly linked to the school's data analysis efforts. As indicated in the previous section, the school has not clearly articulated its understanding of the reasons for poor student performance and has not identified the skills in ELA and mathematics that students lack.

The SIP identifies four broad goals that were designed to develop "a culture of achievement" through the district's Principles of Learning Initiative.

The goals are:

1. To incrementally maximize student achievement and learning for all students in all curriculum areas in order to increase test scores on the MCAS, standardized tests and other assessments.
2. To increase parental and community involvement in our school.
3. To develop a wide array of professional development opportunities for staff that will improve the quality and value of the work that is done with students.
4. To decrease the number of SPED referrals.

Teachers, the Principal and the Superintendent all mentioned the high percentage of ELL (English Language Learners) as a pressing issue faced by the school. The school is 69 percent (526 students out of 763) Hispanic and has a high percentage of ELL (English Language Learners). Eleven percent of students (84 students) at Gerena are categorized as FLNE (First Language Not English), and 14 percent (122 students) are categorized as LEP (Limited English Proficient) students. The SIP addresses this issue through Goal # 3 which is designed to provide professional development to teachers funded by a Comprehensive School Reform grant to help teachers work more effectively with English Language Learners. The Principal discussed with the Panel his belief that this will improve instruction; however, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal plan in place that would allow him to monitor the impact of the professional development activities on student achievement.

The school's plan does not identify specific goals that are designed with a clear focus on teaching and learning. Specific findings in areas of identified weakness are not embedded in the SIP, and objectives do not focus on the instructional adjustments that are based on data analysis. After reviewing the plan, the team was unable to clearly determine the link between the school's objectives and a plan to improve student instruction. For example, Goal # 1 states, "To improve achievement of all students in curriculum areas to increase test scores on the MCAS, standardized tests and other assessments." Although the SIP lists activities and an evaluation, the measures are not clear as to how the activities will move the school toward the specified target.

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

No. Because the school does not clearly articulate its understanding of the reasons for low student performance or the specific skills and knowledge that students lack, it is unclear how the school's strategies will lead to improved student achievement. While some of the action steps appear to be promising strategies to help the school achieve its goals, these strategies are not linked to its data analysis, or to an articulated understanding of the root causes of low student performance or to specific instructional guidelines for classroom teachers.

The Superintendent identifies literacy as one of the most pressing needs in the district. The literacy plan adopted by the district creates opportunities for teachers to assess students based on very specific benchmarks. Teachers are required to record benchmark results on accountability sheets. In the case of math, the Superintendent describes similarities between the math and

reading assessments in that they are administered three times a year, but the benchmarks for the math curriculum lack specificity. While the district mandates numerous assessments, the analysis of the results is insufficient to provide guidance for school's improvement planning efforts. Some teachers reported in interviews an effort to use the benchmarks developed by the district to inform instruction by providing them with a way to monitor the progress of their students. Teachers reported that tracking benchmark data for their students was helpful to their informing instructional planning.

While the instructional strategies in use at the school are not explicitly linked to an analysis of student achievement, there is evidence they may be addressing important needs. During classroom observations, the team reported seeing a set of practices that consistently reflected elements of a balanced literacy program being used during the 2.5 hour literacy block. Practices observed included 'read aloud' followed by key questions which checked for understanding, and instruction designed to allow children to use strategies such as prediction and inferencing as a means to comprehend text. The strategies observed were not specifically written into the SIP but appeared to be consistent, agreed-upon efforts throughout the school to address literacy weaknesses. In addition, the Superintendent described the research-based reading program as effective in taking a holistic approach to reading with significant time allocations to silent sustained reading, self directed work and well defined benchmarks which allow teachers the opportunity to track student performance.

The Gerena action plan states, "MCAS, ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) scores and other assessment data will be reviewed to determine the areas of weakness and needs." Although the Principal reports discussing analysis of data with staff, the SIP does not mention a process for a comprehensive plan to use the analysis of data to inform classroom instruction. The Principal reports that he is in the process of receiving district support to better understand the way data is used to drive instruction. Without a process in place for an accurate identification of the areas of student weakness as identified by analyses of student results, the Panel could not predict whether the specific improvement initiative will have a positive influence on student performance.

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

No. While the school improvement plan identifies specific actions linked to the school's overarching goals (see 1B) and includes responsible personnel, needed resources, timelines and evaluation methods, none of these are presented in a specific enough way to guide implementation nor are they connected to a clearly articulated understanding of the reasons for poor student achievement. In addition, the (2001-2002) Gerena SIP lacks meaningful strategies for monitoring implementation.

The SIP follows a district-mandated format that includes an action plan and which identifies the goals, needs assessments, action steps, a general timeline for administering district tests (fall, winter, spring), and persons responsible. Although there are some specific action steps identified in the plan, the document does not explain how it relates to the implementation of improvement initiatives. For example, the action plan states that the school will evaluate MCAS results and provide remediation. The person responsible is the Principal and staff, the resource needed is the

MCAS report. The measure used for this action item is school wide discussions. Without more information about the areas needing remediation, the Panel was not able to determine if 'school-wide discussions' would lead to improved teaching and learning at Gerena.

The school's planning documents do not include (1) a statement of the problem, (2) an analysis of the causal factors contributing to poor student achievement, (3) measurable goals, and (4) objectives linked to specific strategies. Without these components, it is difficult to predict whether the planned strategies will lead to improved learning for students. Although there are benchmarks established in the district - adopted reading and math curricula, they have not been described in the school's planning documents in a way that indicates a system has been established to check for periodic progress based on student evaluation.

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

Not fully. Gerena stakeholders did not have opportunities for extensive involvement in the development of the SIP, although the plan has been shared with staff members. However, several staff members indicated they do not have a clear understanding of their roles in and responsibilities for implementing the plan. In addition, the school lacks a systematic process for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the strategies identified in the SIP.

Teachers reported having minimal input in writing and developing the SIP. The Principal received the template from the district in May, 2002, and he, along with representatives from the SCDM team, proposed a draft of the plan to staff members. The staff had input on the reorganization of Gerena School by providing feedback to the Principal on what grade they wanted to teach and the criteria for students enrolled in the Gerena Scholars Program, which is the accelerated instruction provided at each grade level. Without input on the plan's specific goals and objectives, the staff contribution to the development of the plan was minimal. In addition, at the time the plan was written and throughout its implementation, there is no indication that the school is engaged in an ongoing review of the quality of implementation of its specified strategies or of the effectiveness of the methods outlined in the plan.

The Staff Survey indicates that some teachers were unaware of the goals and objectives in the SIP. During the writing of the plan, the Principal reports receiving little support from the district. The Superintendent and principal reported that currently there is a new template for the SIP that is designed to use data to drive the goals and objectives of the plan. Some teachers report knowing the goals and objectives for the SIP, however a number of faculty members are not able to articulate their specific roles in implementing the plan. For example, goal 4 seeks to reduce the number of SPED referrals. Some teachers reported being conflicted with this goal because they believe some children need services. Without specific criteria for referring SPED students, there is not a clear, objective way for teachers to aid in the implementation of this goal.

Parents participating in the focus group report being familiar with the SIP goals. Service providers, such as the Director of Brightwood Medical Center and the Recreational Supervisor, were able to articulate their role in helping the school but did not explain the specific connection

to the strategies in the improvement plan. For example, service providers discussed outreach efforts such as encouraging parents to come to the health center, and support services for students who have parents currently incarcerated. While helpful to parents and students, this effort may or may not have a direct link to improved student learning.

In general, there is familiarity with the existence of the Gerena SIP and with some of its efforts, but little clear understanding of individual responsibilities for implementing the SIP's actions.

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

Yes. The school is optimistic about the district's recent efforts to support improvement planning and implementation. The Principal is applying new knowledge gained through district training to drive the new SIP. Although the Panel found the current SIP to be insufficient, the conditions for the successful implementation of a suitable plan are in place. Leadership is adequate in some areas and strong in others, with less strength in overseeing instruction.

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

In some ways. Gerena appears to be a well managed school whose principal effectively engages a broad array of community support. While the Principal leads the school with confidence, energy and purpose, school leadership is less effective in providing on-site instructional support for classroom teachers.

The school's governance structure includes two assistant principals who monitor the three learning communities (K-1, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>). This system effectively maintains an atmosphere conducive to learning, helping to create a safe and orderly environment. Despite some initial resistance to the reorganization, the Principal reported a positive response from teachers to the new system.

The Principal is skilled at building community partnerships and obtaining outside resources. The teachers and parents interviewed by the Panel commented on how well connected the Principal is within the community. The Principal uses these skills and connections to build community involvement at the school (Goal 2). For example, the Principal secured grants and community based organization support to open and sustain the operation of the family resource center, recruited community members to be part of the SCDM team, established an after school tutoring program with Smith College, and provides ELL training for staff through Rigby (a company that provides ELL training). Stakeholders express confidence in his ability to create a community school.

The Principal monitors conditions prior to implementing a plan designed to change the school culture. The Principal describes building a positive school climate for staff by observing the structure of Gerena without implementing major changes during the first year. Staff was required to fill out surveys indicating the instructional level they wanted to teach. The Principal reports incorporating staff response into the restructuring efforts; however, teachers did not always get

their first choice. As expected, teachers reported varied levels of satisfaction with their placement. Teachers who are teaching at their desired grade level reported high levels of satisfaction, whereas some teachers felt that their input was not acknowledged.

The Principal and teachers indicated that the primary source of support for instructional matters comes from the district. If teachers request assistance, the Principal and/or teachers contact the curriculum leaders at the central office to provide assistance. Teachers indicated that the Principal visits classes regularly but does not provide abundant feedback on their instruction. The Principal reported he is receiving training through the district to better serve the needs of classroom teachers in the future.

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

Yes. The Gerena faculty supports the district's plan for literacy and appears to be actively engaged in implementing it at the school. Although some staff is unsure whether implementing the school plan will result in measurable gains in student performance, they support the Principal's efforts to address needs related to parental and community involvement in the school.

The Principal is supporting his faculty's desire to successfully instruct English language learners. The school provides professional development opportunities for teachers in this area through the Rigby Company. Many teachers report that the high percentage of students who are described as living in poverty will make it difficult to improve student achievement. Teachers conveyed their judgment of the need to address low income and ELL student improvement initiatives. For example, there was concern expressed over whether SPED students will not receive needed services due to the school's efforts to reduce the number of SPED referrals. Since the plan's strategies for ELL students are not tied to measurable results it is not clear whether the school will be able to demonstrate and monitor the impact of changes as they take place.

Overall, teachers are supportive of the district plan to improve student achievement as evidenced by their adoption of the literacy program. Teachers appear to support the district's focus on balanced literacy. Teachers are administering ongoing assessments in an attempt to identify student weaknesses; however, the information about student strengths and weaknesses gathered from these assessments is not linked to the specific goals presented in the SIP.

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

Yes. Although the district provided little guidance in the school's previous planning efforts, it is currently providing more support in data analysis and improvement planning. The school district's literacy plan provides resources and guidance to improve classroom instruction.

District leaders are well informed of the school's need to focus on literacy. The district program in reading is designed to support teachers by providing resources for teachers and assistance in instruction upon request. In addition, the Principal and teachers report that district personnel spent one month at the school in the beginning of the year assisting teachers with the implementation of the revised reading program.

Teachers reported receiving instructional support from the district upon request. The district had reading and writing personnel assist teachers in implementing the district adopted reading program. The Principal meets the instructional needs of his staff by contacting district personnel upon request and by providing professional development. Some teachers interviewed report that the Principal visits classrooms and frequently does walkthroughs but the feedback received on their instructional practice is minimal. In the Panel's judgment, the Principal is less skilled at providing leadership that would lead to improved classroom instruction than at other management tasks.

The Superintendent reports a greater emphasis on English with LEP students. The district uses the RISE program, which uses data to identify problems students have with reading. Panel members were not able to determine the effect this program has on student performance at Gerena. In addition, the Harcourt series was adopted which has Spanish language editions and explicit strategies for English language learners. Teachers use materials associated with the Harcourt series as part of their ongoing assessments. The district adopted a three phase plan, begun this year, which focuses on 'sheltered' English for second language learners. The plan is designed to focus on assessments and benchmarking student progress. The sheltered English plan is designed to provide 80 percent of instruction in English using ESL strategies to improve verbal and written usage.

The district mandates four days of professional development in August to assist teachers with the implementation of the Reading, Math, Science, and ELL plans adopted this year by the Springfield School Committee. The Superintendent reports that the topics addressed during professional development sessions are designed to meet the needs of Gerena students and staff as evidenced by the large percentage of ELL students and the newly adopted literacy plan. In addition, the district provides ongoing monthly professional development that is tailored to the needs of specific schools in the Springfield district. The district has a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh which assists school leaders and staff in understanding the "Principles of Learning," "accountable talk," academic rigor and clear expectations.

The Principal reported that, until recently, there was little district support pertaining to the analysis of data to inform classroom instruction. Although measures are in place that may provide support to the Principal in his efforts to effectively analyze data, the Panel was not able to confirm that these newly implemented efforts will impact classroom instruction or student performance. Overall, the district has been active in implementing programs that support and guide the school. The Superintendent reports that this is the first year these programs have been implemented. Although, there are numerous initiatives coming from the district designed to support the school, the instructional impact these newly adopted programs remains unclear.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Panel found that Gerena Community School does not have a sound plan for improving student performance. While the school identified some areas of weakness, it did not identify the reasons for low student achievement or specific skills student's lack. As a result, the plan's goals

and strategies are not clearly linked to specific areas of weakness in student performance or classroom instruction.

The district has implemented numerous initiatives designed to improve student achievement. The effects of these initiatives are undetermined due to their recent implementation. The initiatives currently being implemented are positively received by the teachers who believe that it will improve student achievement over time. Furthermore, although school leadership successfully develops community partnerships and school management, it is less successful in providing instructional support at the building level to the faculty, relying primarily on district resources.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Team Members**

**Tom Buffett**, Panel Chairperson, SchoolWorks Consultant

**Harrington Gibson**, Panel Coordinator, SchoolWorks Consultant

**Dr. Helen Gibson**, Panel Member, K-8 Science & K-5 Math Coordinator, Holyoke Public Schools

**Susan Shurtleff**, Panel Member, Assistant Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Lynn School District

**Wendy E. Woods**, Panel Member, Principal, (PK-4), Gateway Regional School District

**APPENDIX B**  
**UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE**  
**Detailed Schedule for Review Panel School Site Visit**  
**Gerena Community School**

**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**

- 7:30 – 8:00 am** Panelist meet with Principal  
**8:00 - 8:30 am** Panelist meet with the School Council (SCDM)  
**8:30 – 9:00 am** Panelist meet with Focus Groups

<b>Panelist A</b>	<b>Panelist B</b>	<b>Panelist C</b>	<b>Panelist D</b>	<b>Panelist E</b>
Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4	Focus Group 5

**9:00 – 10:00 am Teacher observations**

<b>Panelist A</b>	<b>Panelist B</b>	<b>Panelist C</b>	<b>Panelist D</b>	<b>Panelist E</b>
Observe	Observe	Observe	Observe	Observe

**10:00 – 11:00 am Teacher interviews**

<b>Panelist A</b>	<b>Panelist B</b>	<b>Panelist C</b>	<b>Panelist D</b>	<b>Panelist E</b>
Interview	Interview	Interview	Interview	Interview

**11:00 – 12:30 LUNCH - Team Meeting**

Team meets to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day.

**12:30 – 1:00 pm** - Panelists use time to analyze findings and to gather more information; panelists are encouraged to roam the entire school and visits classrooms not yet seen.

**1:00 – 2:00 pm** - Panelists meet with teachers in groups; consultant co-chair is free to work on report.

**Teacher focus groups**

**1-1:30 pm**      **Panelist A/Panelist B**

**Panelist C/Panelist D**

**1:30-2:00 pm**      **Panelist A/Panelist B**

**Panelist C/Panelist D**

**2:00 – 2:30 pm** Closing meeting with the Principal to discuss next steps (all panelists are present)

**2:30—5:00 pm** Panel collates evidence and findings and completes deliberations