

REPORT OF TWO YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

John J. Duggan Middle School Springfield Public Schools

Executive Summary

Duggan Middle School has not made adequate progress in improving student performance. With minor exceptions, Cycle III and Mid-Cycle IV Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for both performance and improvement targets were not met. For both English Language Arts (ELA) and math, the school's aggregate student performance as measured by the Composite Performance Index (CPI) continues to lag well below other schools in the district of comparable demographics (-18 points in ELA and -20.2 points in math) as well as against state averages (-32.6 points in ELA and -44.3 points in math). Special Education (SPED) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students have been among the poorest performing groups with 98-100 percent of students consistently scoring in the 'Needs Improvement' (NI) or 'Warning' (W) levels.

The school's improvement efforts have been hampered by the rapid succession of administrative and staff turnovers since 2001. The current principal follows two short-term interim principals and one failed new hire lasting only a brief period. While the current principal is strong, his restructuring of the school leadership team and the implementation of whole-school culture and curriculum reforms are too recent to demonstrate documented improvement in student performance. Focus on changing the school's culture was seen as essential to enabling a learning focus and improving instruction in the school. The uniform code of standards guiding interpersonal relationships known as *Duggan Way* was instituted in the fall of 2005. The school instituted a block schedule design to enhance time on learning and adopted a whole-school curricular reform known as the *Expeditionary Learning* (EL) Program with Magnet focus areas designed to be both engaging of student interest and, thereby, eliciting higher levels of student performance. Initial assessments of the Duggan Way initiative seemed to indicate an improved attendance and reduced number of student suspensions for fighting. Teachers reported that the block schedule allows more depth in subject matter instruction while substantially reducing opportunities for student conflict and other behavioral disruptions by reducing the number of transitions. While these changes may have future promise, their overall effectiveness is yet to be determined.

The quality of teaching at the Duggan Middle School remains a major concern. The panel found that the school's achievement of its identified student performance goals requires classroom instruction of consistently outstanding levels of rigor and pedagogical skill if this school is to achieve its identified student performance goals. However, in addition to the high number of teachers (22 of 62) and administrators (4 of 4) with less than four years at the Duggan Middle School, 20 teachers (30 percent) are teaching with licensure waivers. Further, of the 12 classrooms observed by the panel during scheduled classroom visits, the panel found that 10 (88 percent) exhibited either average or below average instructional pedagogy.

The school leadership used the Program Improvement Mapping (PIM) process to assess the implications of student data analysis for the design of its School Improvement Plan (SIP), student performance goals, and instructional strategies. The process engaged all of the school's major stakeholder groups and achieved wide acceptance and support. Improvement goals appeared reasonable and achievable so long as significant enhancement of instructional pedagogy and curriculum rigor are boldly addressed. While the school leaders appeared to understand these requirements, it remains unclear if this understanding is shared by the teachers.

Finally, there is concern for the level of resources being made available to this school. Some key positions such as the Math Collaborative Professional Development Teacher (CPDT) remained unfilled in 2004-2005. The lack of a settled teacher contract has continued to be a distraction in the last year along with questions as to whether salary levels are sufficient to attract and retain highly-qualified teachers who are fully licensed in the content areas they are assigned to teach.

The challenges that lie before the Duggan Middle School are significant. If the school is to achieve its student performance goals, bold action will be required by empowered leadership together with a highly-qualified and inspired teaching staff. While the current leadership appears skilled and capable and while some initial initiatives show promise, the school did not prove to the panel its readiness to improve student performance to acceptable levels.

Priority Findings

- I. The Duggan Middle School has shown only limited improvement in student performance over the period of this review.
 - Results of Cycle III (2003 and 2004) testing showed that while AYP Improvement targets were met for all but the special education subgroup, the school failed to meet performance targets for all subgroups in English Language Arts (ELA) and only the White student subgroup met the performance target in math.
 - Results of Mid-cycle IV (2005) testing showed a significant decline in student performance with no performance or improvement targets met for any subgroup. With the exception of the special education student subgroup in math, all other CPI changes in both ELA and math were negative.
 - The school's curricular changes focused priority on math through the adoption of the *Connected Math2 Program* and on ELA with adoption of the *Six plus One* writing program. Professional development was provided for these initiatives together with implementation monitoring by administrators and curriculum leaders.
 - The Collaborative Professional Development Teachers (CPDTs) are regarded as positive supports to classrooms but the math CPDT position was not filled in 2004-2005.
 - Content and academic expectations of students are not sufficiently rigorous and challenging. Teachers reported that students arrive unprepared for rigorous class work as a result of a past

practice of social promotions rather than promotions based on assessed performance standards.

II. The school's implementation of its School Improvement Plan (SIP) has not resulted in the continuous improvement of student performance.

- Major change initiatives have only recently been implemented and therefore have no conclusive data upon which to judge their effectiveness. Those with the most promise of positive impact are the cultural change initiative known as *The Duggan Way* which has received support and universal praise from major stakeholder groups (including students); and the implementation of a 90-minute *Block Schedule* that provides increased time on learning.
- The adoption of the *Expeditionary Learning* program as a curricular change model that comes with Magnet Schools grant funding has provided some valuable assistance to the school's curricular and instructional program through the support of Magnet teachers. However, the appropriate fit of this program to address the unique challenges presented within this urban minority middle school setting, remains an open question.
- While the school's leadership team appears to understand the underlying causes for the lack of improved student performance, the team did not find sufficient evidence that the faculty shares this understanding to the same degree. Therefore, the panel did not find that school leadership has effectively communicated this in a sufficiently urgent, explicit, and forthright manner.

III. The history of change in the school's leadership has impeded the staff's ability to focus on student achievement and to effectively plan and implement remediation strategies. Further, the continuing stalemate over teacher contract negotiations has been an impediment to the full attention and energy of the faculty to school reform and curricular improvement initiatives. However, some changes appear positive:

- The hiring of the current principal in January 2004, appears to have brought much needed stability to the school and allowed essential planning and decision making to go forward.
- Problems of student behavior and attendance have been addressed through a school culture change initiative known as *The Duggan Way* that has begun to yield desired results as evidenced in reduced numbers of suspensions for fighting and enhanced rates of student attendance.
- Adoption of the 90-minute Block Schedule has reduced the number of opportunities for fighting and other misbehavior; thereby improving the sense of safety and academic focus for students and teachers. Daily team and planning block time has facilitated teacher communication, curriculum coordination, and focused student assistance.

- The *Expeditionary Learning* Magnet Program together with the magnet grant funding has enabled additional support from Magnet specialists; some of whom have picked up the slack resulting from the lack of a Math CPDT replacement in 2004-2005.
 - The continuing stalemate over teacher contract negotiations has been an impediment to the full attention and energy of faculty to school reform and curricular improvement initiatives.
- IV. Since few student gains have been achieved, sustainable conditions are not yet in place. The single most promising condition that has been put in place over the period of this review is the hiring of the new principal and his leadership team.
- The principal and leadership team have initiated some promising practices for improving both curriculum soundness and instructional effectiveness. The establishment of a Curriculum Leadership Team that includes key district leaders, classroom support, coaching by CPDTs and Magnet teachers, and daily *Learning Walks* by administrators are examples of the promising practices.
 - The staff is generally supportive of the curricular and structural changes to date. The teachers share the principal's vision for the school and are stakeholders in the current improvement plan.
 - The school's success partly depends on the district's ability to assign a sufficient number of highly qualified and fully-licensed teachers to teaching positions at the Duggan Middle School.

Two Year Follow-Up Review Process

Introduction

The Two Year Follow-Up Review is the fourth and final stage in the process used to assess school performance under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. The first stage identifies schools in the lowest MCAS test performance categories that are in need of improvement. Stage two, the Panel Review, involves the visitation of a review team to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether a school that has been identified as in need of improvement is underperforming and in need of state guidance to improve student performance. Schools declared to be underperforming are required to undergo the next stage of the process, the Fact Finding Review, to assist both the school and the Commissioner in determining the reasons for low student performance and in developing a factual basis from which to develop a plan to improve student performance. The **John J. Duggan Middle School** developed such a plan, and the Commissioner and Board of Education accepted the plan in **November, 2003**. The district is required to direct the implementation of this plan, and within two years, the school must demonstrate significant improvement.

The Underperforming Follow-Up Review reports on progress at the end of this two year period of implementation. The Commissioner and Board of Education will use the Follow-Up Review

report to issue a judgment on the question of chronic underperformance at the **John J. Duggan Middle School**. The Follow-Up Review was conducted on **December 19 and 20, 2005**.

The panel's charge was to analyze data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts, visit the school, and meet with school and district officials in order to advise the Commissioner on the answers to the following four key questions:

1. Has the school shown improvement in student performance?
2. Is the school effective in using an improvement plan that results in continuous improvement of student performance?
3. Are there other factors (changes in conditions or circumstances, i.e., policies, practices) in the school or district which have contributed to or impeded the school's ability to implement their plan?
4. Are conditions in place to sustain gains achieved and support continued improvement in student performance?

The panel's responses to the above key questions that defined the scope of the review are included in this report. These findings and conclusions are the product of the panel's analysis, discussion, and observation, based on the evidence available to it. A list of panel members who participated in the review is provided in Appendix A. A detailed schedule of the panel's activities is provided in Appendix B.

The panel's findings and conclusions on the key questions will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration, together with the school's status reports and student performance data, in determining whether **John J. Duggan Middle School** is deemed to be chronically under-performing. The panel was not asked to formulate a sound plan for school improvement where such a plan does not presently exist or to recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions at present do not appear to exist.

John J. Duggan Middle School Profile

The John J. Duggan Middle School is one of six middle schools in the Springfield Public Schools district serving grades six through eight. Duggan enrolls 866 students ranking it number five in enrollment size with only the JFK Middle School enrolling fewer students (726). However, according to the 2005 Department of Education (DOE) statistical profile, Duggan Middle School enrolls the lowest percentage of White students (11 percent) of the district's six middle schools. Duggan's student population is 89 percent minority: 57 percent Hispanic, 30 percent Black, and 2 percent Asian. This compares to a district profile that is 81 percent minority: 50 percent Hispanic, 28 percent Black, and 3 percent Asian.

While ranking fifth in enrollment size, Duggan ranks second (together with Kiley Middle School) with 82 percent of students from low income families. It ranks number one of all six middle schools for the percentage (31 percent) of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). As of January 3, 2006, Duggan has the highest percentage (25.7 percent) of students

receiving special educational services compared to an average of 22.8 percent for the other 5 middle schools in the district and the 20 percent average of the entire district.

**Table 1. Duggan School in Comparison to the District
By Subgroup Population
SY 2005**

	Enrollment	% Low Income	% LEP	% SPED
Duggan	866	82	23	22
Chestnut	1,212	79	21	24
Park	925	76	3	21
Kennedy	726	80	2	24
Kiley	1,024	82	16	19
Van Sickle	1,056	84	17	22
District	25,975	76	14	20

The Duggan Middle School attendance rate was only 85.2 percent, a 3.5 percent decline from the 2003 school data; the state attendance rate for 2005 was 94.4 percent and the overall district rate was 89.6 percent. The Duggan Middle School reported that the average number of days students were absent was 24.8 (approximately 5 school weeks) for males and 21.6 (more than 4 school weeks) for females. In contrast, the district average was somewhat less with 16.9 days for females and 16.7 days for males. The percentage of chronically absent students (those with more than 10 percent of days enrolled) was 59.2 percent for males and 50.6 percent for females compared to an overall district rate of 34.3 percent; a significant gap of 24.9 percent for males and 16.3 percent for females between the school and the district.

Despite this significant student attendance gap, the rate of retentions at the Duggan has remained relatively low; ranging from only 1.5 percent in 2003 to 2.6 percent in 2004. These rates are comparable with the state rate of 2.5 percent in 2003 to 2.6 percent in 2004 but are well below the local district rate of 6.3 percent in 2003 and 7.6 percent in 2004.

Staffing

Data reported by the district to the Department of Education in the 2005 District and School Staff Report reflect the following staffing profile: 1 principal; 3 assistant principals (one dedicated to curriculum and instruction); 62 teaching staff; 2 guidance counselors and 1 social worker; 1 librarian; 1 nurse; 11 paraprofessionals; and 5 administrative support staff; for a total of 87 staff. Of the 62 teaching staff, only 28 (45 percent) are identified as “highly qualified” while 20 (32.2 percent) are currently listed as holding licensure waivers within the following areas: math (3 of 8); biology/science (2 of 6); bilingual/ELL (4 of 7); foreign language (2 of 3); library media (1 of 1); and special education (8 of 12). An examination of personnel records, however, revealed that of the 20 teachers listed on waiver, five waivers have expired and five other waivers are “pending” approval. Two significant student subgroup populations (ELL and special education) have greater than 50 percent of instructional staff without regular licensure. Further, staff turnover has continued to be an issue for the Duggan Middle School. According to 2005 data, of the 66 professional staff, 40.9 percent (23 teachers plus all 4 administrators) had three or less years

at Duggan. The principal explained that five new teachers chose Duggan because of the school's adoption of the *Expeditionary Learning* (EL) program. Given an enrollment of 866 students served by 62 teachers, the student to teacher ratio at Duggan was 13.9:1, as compared to 11.6:1 at the district level and 13.3:1 at the state level (district and state include grades K-12).

Staff support has been provided through the services of two district-wide, Title I-funded, Collaborative Professional Development Teachers (CPDT): one for ELA and one for math. The visiting team was informed by administrators and teachers that the ELA position was not filled in 2004-2005 due to staffing turnover. In addition, a Federal Magnet Program grant provided funds for the services of 5 EL specialists: 1 EL resource specialist plus 4 Magnet Program resource specialists (math/science curriculum; ELA/social studies curriculum; law, journalism, and forensics resources; and multi-media/technology curriculum integration). The Magnet program, however, was not fully implemented with all positions filled. For example, the position of "Law, Journalism, and Forensics Resource Teacher" has remained vacant.

MCAS Test Results

From 1999 to 2002, Duggan Middle School failed to meet AYP Performance targets in the aggregate for both English/Language Arts (ELA) and math. In 2003, while the AYP target for performance was met in the aggregate in ELA, the school failed to meet the performance targets for all subgroups and also failed to meet the AYP performance targets in math, both in the aggregate and for all subgroups. Cycle III data which combined results for both 2003 and 2004 reflected that while the performance targets were not met in either ELA or math, improvement targets in ELA were met in the aggregate as well as for four subgroups: Limited English Proficient (LEP), Low Income, African-Americans/Black, and Hispanic. However, improvement targets in ELA for special education students were not met. Similarly, in math, AYP performance targets for Cycle III were not met in either the aggregate or for all subgroups. With the exception of the White student subgroup, the AYP improvement targets were not met in either the aggregate or for all subgroups. Mid-cycle IV data for 2005 testing reflect continued failure to meet AYP performance and improvement targets both in the aggregate and for all subgroups. With the exception of the LEP subgroup in 2003 and 2004, AYP participation targets have been consistently met.

The Composite Performance Index (CPI) for the Aggregate in both ELA and math demonstrate negative trends. From Mid-cycle III (2003) to Cycle III (2003 and 2004), the Aggregate performance CPI showed declines of 1.6 points in ELA and 0.2 points in math. Subsequently, from Cycle III to Mid-cycle IV (2005), the Aggregate performance decline was 11.4 points in ELA and 3.0 points in math. Comparative data for aggregate CPI for both the district and the state showed students at the Duggan Middle School are performing well below both CPI levels: ELA is 18.0 index points below the district and 32.6 index points below the state while in math, the Duggan CPI is 20.2 index points below the district and 44.3 index points below the state.

**Table 2. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
CPI Comparative Data, ELA and Math**

	Mid-Cycle III 2003	Cycle III 03 & 04	Change	Mid-Cycle IV 2005	Change	District 2005	State 2005
ELA	64.1	62.5	-1.6	51.1	-11.4	69.1	83.7
Math	31.3	31.1	-.2	28.1	-3.0	48.3	72.4

Proficiency levels are summarized in the tables below:

**Table 3. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
Grade 6 MCAS Test Math Results
2001-2005**

	Duggan			District			State		
	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F
2005	1	17	81	12	26	62	46	30	23
2004	4	16	81	11	26	63	42	32	25
2003	3	23	73	10	27	62	42	32	26
2002	7	19	74	11	22	67	41	29	30
2001	2	19	79	9	22	70	36	30	33

**Table 4. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
Grade 7 MCAS Test ELA Results
2001-2005**

	Duggan			District			State		
	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F
2005	11	50	39	32	46	23	66	27	7
2004	25	43	31	35	41	23	68	25	7
2003	23	53	24	30	47	24	65	28	7
2002	19	47	34	32	40	29	64	28	9
2001	14	46	40	23	42	35	55	32	12

**Table 5. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
Grade 8 MCAS Test Math Results
2001-2005**

	Duggan			District			State		
	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F
2005	3	13	83	9	22	69	39	30	31
2004	5	19	76	9	24	67	39	32	29
2003	2	20	77	7	21	72	37	30	33
2002	2	20	77	6	24	70	34	33	33
2001	2	17	80	9	23	68	34	34	31

**Table 6. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
Grade 8 MCAS Test Science & Technology/Engineering Results
2001-2005**

	Duggan			District			State		
	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F	Adv/Prof	NI	W/F
2005	1	26	73	8	34	58	33	41	28
2004	4	18	78	8	22	70	33	35	31
2003	1	20	79	5	23	71	32	38	30

In Grade 6 math, the percentage of students at Duggan MS scoring at the ‘Advanced/Proficient’ levels has languished at 7 percent or less, while the district has performed only somewhat better; maintaining proficiency levels between 9 percent and 12 percent. State-wide student performance at the ‘Advanced/Proficient’ levels has remained consistently three to four times stronger; increasing from 36 percent in 2001 to 46 percent on 2005. From 2001 to 2003, the percentage of Duggan Grade 6 students performing at the ‘Warning’ level slightly decreased from 79 percent to 73 percent. However, in the last two years (2004 and 2005) a full 81 percent of Grade 6 students at Duggan have scored in the ‘Warning’ level. This is compared to the district percentage of 62 percent and the state average of 23 percent.

For Grade 7 ELA, only 11 percent of students scored at ‘Advanced/Proficient’ levels; a significant drop from the 2003 and 2004 levels of 23 percent and 25 percent respectively. This compares to 32 percent of students in the district and 66 percent of students in the state for the 2005 Mid-cycle IV MCAS testing. Conversely, 39 percent of Duggan Grade 7 students performed at the ‘Warning’ level, as compared to 23 percent for the district and only 7 percent for the state.

For Grade 8 math, only 2 percent to 5 percent of Duggan students annually score in the ‘Advanced/Proficient’ levels (3 percent in 2005). In contrast, the percentage of Duggan Grade 8 students scoring in the ‘Warning’ level has remained constant over the same five-year period, with between 76 percent and 83 percent of students scoring at this level. This compares to district levels of 67 percent to 72 percent (69 percent in 2005), and state performance levels ranging between 29 percent and 33 percent (31 percent in 2005).

For Grade 8 science and technology (STE), a new testing area added in 2003, Duggan student performance has remained flat with a full 99 percent of students in 2005 scoring at either the ‘Needs Improvement’ or ‘Warning’ levels. This is compared to a district average of 92 percent and a state average of 66 percent of students performing at these levels.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

No. With the exception of the Cycle III (2003&2004) ELA Improvement targets, the Duggan Middle School did not meet its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets in the aggregate for

ELA performance, math performance, or math improvement. In Mid-cycle IV (2005) testing, with the exception of ELA Performance for the White student subgroup, the school met no other performance or improvement targets either in the aggregate or for any significant student subgroup including Limited English Proficient (LEP), special education, African American, or Hispanic. Indeed, a comparative examination of the Composite Performance Index (CPI) for the aggregate in both ELA and math reflects a negative trend from Mid-cycle III (2003) to Mid-cycle IV (2005). The Cycle III CPI in the aggregate for ELA was 62.5 while in Mid-cycle IV it was 51.1; a drop of 11.4 index points. Similarly, in math, the aggregate CPI in Cycle III was 31.1 while in Mid-cycle IV testing, the CPI dropped to 28.1; a drop of 3.0 index points. The Duggan Middle School significantly underperformed both the district and the state in both ELA and math:

**Table 7. Duggan School in Comparison to the District and State
Mid-Cycle IV Aggregate Performance CPI
SY 2005**

	Duggan	District	Difference	State	Difference
ELA	51.1	69.1	-18	83.7	-32.6
MATH	28.1	48.3	-20.2	72.4	-44.3

With the exception of the LEP subgroup in the 2004, AYP participation targets were met in the aggregate and for all subgroups in both 2004 and 2005.

Between 2001 and 2005, student MCAS test results have remained essentially flat with one year's slight gains offsetting the next year by a similar decline. In 2001, 98 percent of Grade 6 students scored at the NI or W levels in math. The slight improvement in 2002 (93 percent) was eroded in 2003 (to 96 percent), and in 2004 and 2005 levels returned to 97 percent and 98 percent respectively. In Grade 7 ELA, the percentage of students in NI and W steadily improved between 2001 (86 percent) and 2004 (74 percent). However, in 2005, 89 percent scored in either NI or W; effectively erasing all gains. Student scores in Grade 8 math have shown little variation over the four-year period with 89 percent in 2001 at the NI or W levels dropping back to 83 percent in 2002, and then steadily climbing back each year over the next three years to 92 percent in 2005.

The special education (SPED) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) student subgroups have consistently underperformed both the district and state performance levels. With the exception of 2001 when 2 percent of Grade 6 SPED students achieved proficiency in math testing, 100 percent of students in both of these subgroups have consistently scored at the NI or W levels in each of the testing years between 2001 and 2005. Although an improvement trend may be seen in the declining percentage of SPED students scoring at the 'Warning' level for Grade 7 ELA testing (72 percent down to 46 percent); 100 percent in 2001 and 98 percent from 2002 to 2005 of Grade 7 SPED students have continuously scored in the NI or W levels each year. In addition, 100 percent of Grade 7 LEP students scored in the NI and W levels in both 2001 and 2002. While there was slight improvement in 2003 with 98 percent and in 2004 with 93 percent, in 2005 the percentage of Grade 7 LEP students in the NI or W levels returned to 97 percent. Grade 8 math MCAS test results were similarly dismal with 98 percent to 100 percent of students in both SPED and LEP subgroups consistently scoring in the NI or W levels for each of the five years 2001 to 2005.

Relative to the subgroup performance in other schools in the district, among the three other middle schools comparable to Duggan MS in 2005, only one met all its AYP improvement targets in ELA for all subgroups except Whites. A second school failed to meet any performance or improvement targets for all subgroups except African Americans, and a third school also failed to meet any of its ELA performance or improvement targets. All four comparable middle schools failed to meet any of its performance or improvement targets in math. Nonetheless, a comparison of CPI data revealed that the performance levels of Duggan MS students lag well below students in other comparable middle schools.

**Table 8. Duggan School in Comparison to the District
Aggregate Performance CPI
SY 2005**

School	ELA	MATH
Duggan	51.1	28.1
Chestnut	73.9	45.6
JFK	72.0	38.6
Van Sickle	67.5	38.9

Among subgroups, the greatest area of improvement in 2004 was ELA for LEP students with a CPI increase of 22.5 index points. The least improved for that testing cycle was among White students in ELA who only increased 0.8 index points. Special education students lost ground in the 2004 math testing with a negative 1.8 index points (CPI 18.4). In 2005, however, the special education student subgroup was the only one to post a positive gain with a restoration of the 1.8 index points lost in 2004. All other subgroups lost ground in both ELA and math with the greatest decline experienced by the Black subgroup with a decrease of 11.8 index points (CPI 58.0) in ELA. Despite this decline, however, the overall performance of this subgroup remained second only to the White subgroup (CPI 66.7).

Data on staff turnover, teacher licensure, student attendance, and student suspensions suggests that student performance may have been negatively impacted by a lack of continuity among both administrative and teaching staff. There have been three principals in the last four years and 40.9 percent of the professional staff (23 teachers plus all 4 administrators) has been at this school for three years or less. Such a high rate of turnover, for whatever reasons, had a negative impact on the continuity of teaching and learning. Further, of the 62 teaching staff, 20 teachers (1/3) were listed as teaching with a waiver and, thereby, not fully licensed in their assigned teaching role. Juxtaposed to the lack of improvement in student performance, these data are troubling.

The student attendance rate at Duggan for 2005 was only 85.2 percent, as compared to a district rate of 89.6 percent and a state rate of 94.2 percent. The average number of days absent rose to 23.4 between the years 2002 and 2005 which represents more than four weeks of missed instruction. The in-school and out-of-school suspension rate for 2005 was 38.8 percent or 3 times the state average of 10.6 percent. Days of instruction missed by significant numbers of students for any reason will likely have a negative impact on student learning as well as student testing results.

The school appears to have set reasonable and achievable goals for student performance in ELA that are consistent with student performance gains in the recent past. However, the SIP goals most recently set were, in fact, not achieved. Indeed, performance targets have actually regressed given the 2005 negative CPI change in ELA of -11.4 and in math of -3.0. In an interview, the Curriculum and Instruction Leadership Team acknowledged that the SIP goals are “ambitious.” However, one member of the leadership team alluded to the perception of “tipping points” which he believes are at hand and that a dramatic turn-around in student achievement is possible. Despite this optimism, the panel finds that the most recent School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals may not be achievable under current conditions. In math, the school is clearly not setting goals that appear reasonable or achievable within the identified timeframe.

KEY QUESTION 2: Is the school effective in using an improvement plan that results in the continuous improvement of student performance?

No. While the current SIP appears to have been carefully and thoughtfully drafted to include clearly articulated goals together with strategies for implementation, identified accountability, timelines, and on-going assessments, student testing results have, nonetheless, not demonstrated continuous improvement in student performance.

Major strategies of the plan that have had the greatest impact on the school thus far include the development of and training for a whole-school cultural change known as *The Duggan Way*; a restructuring of the school day through implementation of the Block Schedule; the availability and use of the Collaborative Professional Development Teachers (CPDTs); the development and ongoing support of the SIP; and adoption and initial implementation of the *Expeditionary Learning Magnet* program.

The Duggan Way is defined by the principal as “a code of character” that is intended to govern how everyone at the Duggan Middle School interacts. The code is based on personal (and mutual) “Respect, Responsibility, Courage, and Quality.” The first two weeks of school is focused on *Duggan Way* training for staff and students. Faculty builds connections to parents and initiates home visits. The idea is to build relationships of trust and mutual support. The resulting community of support is directed at improving student behavior. Teachers in interview sessions reported that the change in discipline this year “has been remarkable.” The program is on-going and has been consistently reinforced. Teachers, administrators, and parents expressed a hope that the need for student suspensions can be substantially reduced as a result of the *Duggan Way* program.

The shift to a Block Schedule, in which students move through a schedule of only four classes daily, is a notable change. Each class is approximately 90 minutes in length; structurally allowing for extended in-depth teaching, interfacing with fewer numbers of students per day, and significantly reducing the amount of time wasted by students passing in the hallways as well as reducing the number of opportunities for disruptive behavior. The principal reported widespread support for the change on the part of teachers and that a group of approximately 20 teachers worked on the schedule plan. The schedule includes a daily 45 minutes for team meetings and another 45 minutes for individual teacher planning and break period. The Collaborative Professional Development Teachers known as the CPDTs (one for ELA and one

for Math) participate in team meetings for support to the development and implementation of new curriculum initiatives such as *Connected Math 2* and the *Six plus One* writing process.

The current SIP was developed from a review of data from the 2003-2004 SIP. Sources of data included Cycle III MCAS data, school-based monthly data, District Formative Assessments (DFA) or “Step-up,” quarterly district-wide assessments, and teacher surveys. As a result, the special education subgroup was identified as needing focused attention. Student performance goals were developed for ELA, math, and science with specific performance targets identified. From item analysis, specific skills were identified for targeted instruction: In ELA, literary genres were identified together with higher level thinking for “interpretation and making inferences.” In math, the focus was on developing skills for “reading, analyzing, solving, and explaining solutions to multi-step problems.” The plan addresses specific skills, learning and assessment activities, as well as essential professional development. Overall, the panel found the plan to be well-done with clear and specific goals focused on enhancing student performance. The SIP includes adequate detail for implementation such as baseline testing and on-going performance assessment.

There is ample evidence in documents and from interviews to confirm that the SIP was developed through a process of broad engagement of stakeholders including teachers and parents who are sufficiently familiar with its contents to support implementation. Chief responsibility for implementation rests with the principal along with his leadership team and the active participation of teachers and parents. Specific items are managed by the school’s Curriculum and Instruction team. The principal was responsible for reporting SIP progress information to the district which, in turn, provided open support for the school’s efforts.

The school has received significant support from the district through participation on the school’s Curriculum and Instruction team that meets regularly to coordinate the implementation of the SIP goals and activities. The district has provided professional development for the principal and assistant principals through the LEAD program and every principal received support from a mentor colleague. On-going professional development was also provided for teachers as new programs and instructional initiatives were adopted. The support of CPDTs received universal praise from teachers and building administrators.

As demonstrated so far in this key question, the school has used an improvement plan with the implementation of *The Duggan Way*, the Block Schedule, and the use of CDPTs. However, the plan has not resulted in sufficient improvement in student performance thus far. Further, the school’s adoption of the EL program, the current level of instructional quality, and the pace of instructional improvements provided insufficient evidence that the school will attain acceptable levels of student performance in the near future.

The *Expeditionary Learning* program was adopted as a whole-school reform strategy. The program is intended to engage students in exciting activities-based learning activities that will be attractive to students and engage their interest. The program brings with it a Magnet Schools grant to fund program resources including the services of Magnet specialists who have provided supplemental instructional services for teachers and students. In addition, the EL program adoption is funded by a Magnet Programs grant that has provided additional professional

resource specialists that supported classroom teachers and provided direct instructional services to students. Interviews of administrators, teachers, parents, and students reveal that the program has, thus far, had a positive impact on the school culture.

However, the school and/or district decision makers did not provide evidence to panel members that they considered available data on the EL program to inform its selection as an effective whole school reform strategy for this particular school setting. While school leaders selected the EL program because of the potential positive cultural impacts for staff and students, they provided no evidence that the EL program is likely to increase student achievement.

Although the principal and his assistant for curriculum and instruction articulated understanding of the lack of progress to date and what it will take to move ahead, the faculty did not demonstrate understanding of the high level of pedagogy and academic rigor that will be necessary to achieve the established student performance targets nor the connections between assessment and instruction. The leadership has not reviewed formative assessment practices either at the class or at the whole school levels and has yet to provide sufficient support to help teachers make the connection between assessment, instruction, and achievement of curriculum standards.

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

Yes. There have been significant changes in conditions, policies, and practices that have impacted the school's ability to implement their plan. The district has implemented a quarterly pupil performance monitoring plan, known as District Formative Assessment (DFA) or "*Step-up*," that has not as yet shown positive or negative impacts. The school has instituted week-to-week monitoring of pupil progress through team meetings that focus on student performance data, curriculum, and discussing student work using the "tuning protocol." Teachers reported general satisfaction with the team meeting structure and confirmed the focus on student learning. However, they also expressed some concern that, with increasing frequency, team time has infringed on personal planning time.

New attention to the student attendance problem appears to be yielding positive initial results. A new attendance officer has been assigned to work with the Duggan MS to follow-up on attendance issues as they become apparent. Early intervention strategies include enhanced monitoring through the daily attendance check-in, implementation of *Connect Ed* parent messaging system, increased use of home visits, and the implementation of four-week progress reports. Early awareness of absences along with sure consequences is deemed positive by administrators, teachers and parents. Teachers expressed hope that these measures will address past failures to consistently follow attendance and promotion policies designed to prevent "social promotions" of students without sufficient academic skills to be successful at the next grade level or school. One veteran teacher (12 years) complained that, in the past, too many students arrived at Duggan not ready for academic work.

While there have been no unforeseen changes in programs and services, the development of the *Duggan Way* plan is reported to have significantly reduced teacher/pupil confrontations. One teacher compared the situation this year as a “night and day” difference from last year. They cited less fighting among students and a more visible administration. These changes appear to have resulted in reducing the frequency of suspensions since September 2005 while increasing the rate of both student and teacher attendance. According to DOE data, the rate of daily attendance at Duggan in 2005 was 85.2 percent. During the two days of the team visit, the attendance rate was 91 percent and 90 percent respectively. The school further reported that for the period September 2005 to November 2005, the attendance rate was 88.75 percent; reflecting a marked improvement over the same period last year. The rate of “chronic” student absence (10 percent of the period of enrollment or greater) during the period 9/6/05 to 12/20/05 was 8.7 percent, as compared to the DOE data for 2005 that reported a chronic absence rate of 55.3 percent. Further, the number of student suspensions for fighting in the three-month period of September-November 2005 was down 48.9 percent over the same period in 2004. Given these data, there are indications that the *Duggan Way* cultural reform initiatives may hold promise in addressing critical attendance and behavioral issues that have, heretofore, had a negative effect on student academic performance.

The receipt of grant funds in support of the *Expeditionary Learning* (EL) whole-school reform initiative has provided the school with additional financial resources. To date, these funds have provided salaries for additional instructional support specialists in Magnet areas. These individuals have provided some instructional team stability in light of other staffing changes resulting in the lack of a math CPDT and turnover of the ELA CPDT in 2004-2005. New CPDTs are in place for the current 2005-2006 school year.

The current principal was appointed to this position in January of 2004 after a series of three previous interim and short-lived principal appointments in three years. The long-term principal left for active military duty following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. An interim was assigned for the balance of the academic year. A new principal was hired for 2002-2003 but was replaced in mid 2003-2004 by an assistant superintendent. This turn-over in school leadership spawned much instability at the Duggan MS including significant staff turnover that the current principal has worked hard to reduce since his appointment. Changes in staffing have been an opportunity and a problem. The opportunity is the potential to appoint new, qualified, energetic staff that can help the school reverse negative performance trends. The problem is identifying and reallocating highly-qualified staff to fill vacant positions.

Adding to the overall atmosphere of instability is a collective bargaining agreement that remains stalled. The prolonged and tense negotiations process has led the teachers union to enact an organized work slow-down (“work-to-rule”). The overall impact on change efforts can only be characterized as negative.

Changes in the student population may impact student performance in unexpected ways. In an interview, the assistant superintendent estimated that 60 percent of students were new to Duggan this year. The district’s new assignment plan for the 2005-2006 school year redrew enrollment boundaries to establish a renewed “neighborhood school” concept. Most students are now within walking distance of the Duggan MS. It is unclear how, if at all, this change will impact the

school's student demographics. Further, the school's new EL Magnet program has yet to be fully implemented. How family choice of this program will change the student demographics of this school also remains unclear.

KEY QUESTION 4: Are the conditions in place to sustain the gains achieved and support continued improvement in student performance?

No. Despite many changes that appear to hold promise, conditions are not currently in place to sustain the gains achieved or promote continued improvement in student performance. The team did find evidence of promising change. The current leadership appears to have the vision and skill to provide positive change at the Duggan MS. Although only in post since January 2004, the principal has taken some promising steps to effect positive change in the culture and academic rigor of this school. His distributive decision-making model has developed, among faculty and parents, a positive sense of participation in and ownership of the school program and its improvement goals. His designation of one of the three assistant principal positions as assistant principal for curriculum and instruction signals to all stakeholders his personal commitment to an instructional improvement agenda at the Duggan Middle School. The additional support resources of two CPDTs (one each for ELA and math) as well as the EL Magnet Specialists have already had significant impact on teaching and learning through direct leadership and support to classroom teachers.

The teaching staff is both familiar with and supportive of the goals of the SIP. They reported that they were significantly involved in the development process for the SIP and recognize their responsibility to ensure its successful implementation. Their primary response to the curricular and student performance goals of the school is through the team meeting process wherein they share information, do group problem solving, engage in the curriculum "tuning protocol," and facilitate coordination across curricular areas. Team meetings have been attended by CPDTs and Magnet facilitators who provide assistance and support to the curricular initiatives and needs.

There is some evidence of a positive change in the school climate. Most notable is the school culture initiative known as *The Duggan Way* which has been previously described in some detail. Students interviewed were positive about this initiative as were parents and teachers. When asked, all were able to successfully name the principal elements of the code and articulate their meaning. Administrators, teachers, and parents credit the initiative for significantly reducing the incidences of student to student and student to staff confrontations; resulting in reduced levels of student suspensions and enhanced levels of student and teacher attendance.

School leaders and faculty are focused on priority improvements in teaching and learning. However, the school did not show that the adopted initiatives are likely to substantially increase student achievement. The panel did not find that the adoption of EL and current SIP goals reflected the need to make significant and steady gains in student performance. Additionally, instructional quality is inadequate and the school faces several obstacles to improving instructional practice: staff turnover, the difficulty of recruiting qualified teachers, and limits in the current teacher evaluation and supervision process.

The decision to adopt the EL program for a middle school with the student demographics and performance profile of Duggan MS is questionable. The panel questions the extent to which available EL program data was used in the adoption decision and the potential for this program to deliver results for this particular school is unclear.

There is no evidence that the goals so clearly and well defined within the SIP are, in fact, regularly reviewed in the context of current practice or student performance. While documents allude to on-going monthly and quarterly assessments of student performance, there is no evidence within the SIP that these assessments have been used to guide changes and adjustments to its goals. Instead, there appears to be an annual process of after-the-fact data analysis that guides the crafting of new SIP goals and objectives. For example, nowhere in the 2005 SIP no focus is found on the fact that student performance targets for 2004 were not met or, indeed, that student performance outcomes were worse than in the previous year.

Given significant staff turnovers, the apparent inability of the district to reassign highly-qualified teachers to the Duggan MS, the large number of novice teachers, and the large number of faculty (20) on licensure waivers, the capacity for necessary superior quality of instruction is doubtful. From interviews with school leaders, it was agreed that only “exceptional level” teaching would be sufficient to turning around student performance. Despite the assurances of the principal that many of the new hires are of exceptional potential, only 12 percent of classrooms observed by the panel were rated as “high” in instructional quality. The panel found that the quality of classroom instruction they observed at this school is not sufficient to the task at hand.

Teacher evaluation practices during the period under review have been poor. Review of teaching and feedback to teachers has been largely limited to “learning walks” that have lacked specificity around issues of rigor. However, the school leadership recognizes and acknowledges the lack of rigor in the institution, and there is planning to address this that has already begun. In the 2004-2005 school year, the current leadership team began implementing a teacher evaluation system where, in conjunction with the required district evaluation forms, each teacher receives a summative evaluation using evaluation practices from Research for Better Teaching. In addition, the required district evaluation does not show that every teacher is meeting or exceeding expectations as had been the practice in prior years (cf fact finding report). The current evaluations show an accurate depiction of the current state of instruction at Duggan Middle School with recommended changes in order for teachers who are not meeting expectations. However, the move to a block schedule that permits greater time on learning, the weekly review of lesson plans by administrators, and the supervisory focus on classroom procedures and routines that enable teaching and learning are all positive developments.

While the district has provided significant guidance and support for Duggan reform initiatives as evidenced in its approval of reorganization initiatives such as EL, a restructured leadership team, facilitation of a Magnet grant, and professional development including mentor support to the principal, there remains critical areas of need yet to be addressed. The assignment of highly qualified teachers to the school, an apparent shortage of books that prevents students from taking them home to complete homework assignments, the large number (20) of teachers on multiple-year (and some expired) licensure waivers, and the continuing unresolved teacher contract

dispute are among the key issues to be addressed by the district if the Duggan Middle School is to have any hope of sustained student success.

CONCLUSION

Despite some promising initiatives, many of which have been implemented only recently, the Duggan Middle School has shown no significant improvement in student performance for the period of this follow-up review. Student performance continues to lag behind that of other schools in the district of similar demographics. Results of student MCAS testing have remained essentially flat over the five-year period 2001-2005; with the small gains for individual subgroups essentially disappearing with the 2005 testing. In the Cycle III (2003 and 2004) testing, while the school failed to meet any of its AYP performance targets, it did meet AYP improvement targets for all subgroups except special education. Subsequently, however, in the Mid-cycle IV (2005) testing, only the white subgroup met its AYP performance target while all subgroups failed to meet improvement targets.

Appointed in January 2004, the principal is making positive strides towards addressing the pressing needs of the Duggan Middle School. His major initiative for instituting a whole-school culture change known as *The Duggan Way* has received wide support and praise from all of the school's stakeholder groups including students. Initial data on student attendance and student suspensions is promising; giving hope that improved academic performance may soon follow. A second major change of significance was the implementation of a Block Schedule that doubled the amount of instruction time per class and reduced by one half the amount of time spent on moving between classes. The initial assessment of stakeholders is that this has significantly enhanced both the quantity and quality of learning time while significantly reducing opportunities for student disruptions such as fighting. Despite promising initial results, these new changes have yet to take root and bear fruit and to demonstrate success in increasing student achievement.

The Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process was employed to develop a well-designed and detailed SIP. It is clear that MCAS student performance data were analyzed to identify instructional priorities as well as implementation strategies. Again, stakeholders reported that they were significantly engaged in the development of the SIP and support its implementation. Despite these efforts, however, the SIP goals have not been met. Furthermore, there is little evidence that performance assessment results are used to adjust plans to ensure student success. Goals of the SIP were characterized by curriculum leaders as "ambitious" but attainable. This view is questionable given the lack of substantive or sustained student progress over the last three years (2003 to 2005).

The adoption of the EL program as a whole-school curricular reform model received much local support and praise. Its adoption enabled access to a substantial Magnet Schools grant to fund program development activities. Implicit in the "Expeditions Learning" approach is the engagement of learners in interesting and novel learning activities which will be appealing and motivating; thereby, provoking curiosity and engaging higher-order problem-solving skills.

While an attractive vision, the suitability of this particular program to meet the identified needs of this particular population of learners remains an open question.

Critical to this school is the need for stability. The staff and administrative turnovers since 2001 are noteworthy. Twenty-three teachers and all four administrators have been at Duggan for only three years or less. In addition, 20 faculty were listed as holding licensure waivers. The panel's investigation found that of these 20 waivers, ten were found to be either expired or "pending." In interviews with the principal and the curriculum leadership team, there was agreement that only "exceptional level" instruction would be sufficient to turn this school around. While the principal acknowledged the relative inexperience of these new teachers, he offered that, in his opinion, they are gifted and have great potential. However, in 88 percent of classrooms visited by the panel, only average to below average instruction was observed. Thus, the capacity of the existing faculty to deliver the exceptional quality instruction required by this school's students remains in doubt.

The adequacy of district resource allocations continues to be of concern. While clean and well maintained, the building is old and, in the opinion of some teachers and parents, in need of refurbishing. Budget constraints experienced by the district have required some reductions in school spending and a failure to fill some key vacant positions such as the math CPDT in 2004; also cited was the lack of adequate numbers of texts in all subject areas and in sufficient numbers to allow students to take them home for homework; the inability to settle the teacher's contract and provide teacher salaries that attract and retain highly-qualified teachers. Despite the availability of grant funds, some interviewed teachers expressed frustration with complex paperwork requirements that discourage teachers from planning and implementing EL Magnet Grant activities.

On a positive note, the leadership of the school is effective. The panel was favorably impressed by the strong principal who together with his newly established administrative team has, in a relatively short period of time, taken significant steps towards positive change in this school. School leaders were well able to articulate, with some amount of candor, the scope and depth of organizational and instructional issues facing Duggan Middle School. The panel believes that the current school leadership is properly focused on student achievement goals and has the skills necessary to effectively communicate visions and build the essential support among teachers and parents to move the school in a positive direction.

APPENDIX A

Team Members

Peter Davies, Chairman, Senior Consultant and President, Class Measures
Eva Mitchell, Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
Lisa Bryant, Associate Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability
Malcolm Patterson, Senior Consultant, Class Measures
William Wolfe, Consultant, Class Measures

**APPENDIX B
TWO YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW SCHEDULE
Detailed Schedule for School Site Visit**

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

**Day 1 on site schedule
All activities take place in the school**

- 8:00—9:00 Team members meet with the principal.
- 9:00—10:00 Team members meet with the district superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).
- 10:00—11:00 Team members meet with the school’s curriculum and instruction leadership team and members of the school site council.
- 11:00—1:00 Team members meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information; panelists may conduct an informal walk through with a focus on school culture and climate for learning.
- 1:00—3:00 Team members meet with teachers in focus groups.

	REVIEWER A and REVIEWER B	REVIEWER C and REVIEWER D
1:00-1:30	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #1	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #2
1:30-2:00	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #3	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #4
2:00-2:30	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #5	TEACHER FOCUS GROUP #6

2:30-3:00 Panelists meet with parents and students in focus groups.

	REVIEWER A	REVIEWER B	REVIEWER C	REVIEWER D
2:30 - 3:00	PARENT FOCUS GROUP #1	PARENT FOCUS GROUP #2	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #1	STUDENT FOCUS GROUP #2

3:00—5:00 Panelists synthesize information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for second day of the on-site visit.

Day 2 on-site schedule
All activities take place in the school

7:30—8:00 a.m. Team members meet with the principal for follow-up questions

8:00—8:30 a.m. Team members visit classrooms and interview teachers.*

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

	REVIEWER A	REVIEWER B	REVIEWER C	REVIEWER D
10:30 - 11:00	Interview teacher 9	Interview teacher 10	Interview teacher 11	Interview teacher 12

11:00—1:00 Team members meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Members use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information.

1:00—2:00 Team structured time. Members will identify any gaps in the evidence collected and may request additional information from the principal in the form of documents, meetings with classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific individuals or groups who can respond to questions relevant to the panel review protocol.

	REVIEWER A	REVIEWER B	REVIEWER C	REVIEWER D
1:00 - 2:00		Principal Assistant Principal for Curriculum & Instruction	Principal Assistant Principal for Curriculum & Instruction	

2:00—2:30 Closing meeting with the principal to discuss next steps (all members are present)

2:30—5:00 Members deliberate and form conclusions.

*Instructions for classroom observations, teacher interviews, and focus groups

Please inform all school faculty and students that Review Panel members will be visiting a cross-section of classrooms during the site visit. The selection of classrooms will be determined mutually by the Review Coordinator and the Principal using the staff directory information provided by the school. All faculty members are asked to be prepared to accommodate a visitor on the morning of the site visit. Team members will make every effort to minimize the disruption of planned classroom activities.

1. Observations Each reviewer will observe three class lessons (for a total of 12 classes observed overall) in order to obtain a representative sample of the school's individual classrooms. The purpose of the classroom observation is to judge the quality of the learning environment, which is a critical aspect of the school's overall conditions, and a determinant in whether or not the school will be able to successfully implement its improvement plan. The learning environment includes:
 - The physical setting—space, lighting, size, classroom temperature, etc.,
 - The classroom organization—desk arrangement, resources available to students, orderliness, etc.,
 - The level of the teacher's preparation for instruction; the students' readiness for learning
 - The level of the teacher's expectation for student learning and performance
 - The interaction between teacher and students—the students' level of engagement or withdrawal.
 - The level and quality of instructional practice in the school (Panelists are not evaluating individual teachers).
2. Individual Teacher Interviews The purpose of the teacher interview that follows the observation is to:
 - Clarify the evaluator's impressions of the classroom dynamic and learning environment
 - Determine what the teacher considers to be the chief learning needs of students across the school and within his or her classroom
 - Determine the teacher's understanding of the school's plan to address those needs and to improve student performance
 - Determine the teacher's role in the overall mission and improvement plan of the school
3. Teacher Focus Groups The purpose of the teacher focus groups is to:
 - Determine what each teacher considers to be the chief learning needs of students across the school and within his or her classroom
 - Determine each teacher's understanding of the school's plan to address those needs and to improve student performance
 - Determine each teacher's role in the overall mission and improvement plan of the school