

**Panel Report
Candidate Compass School Review
Glenwood Elementary School
Springfield Public Schools**

INTRODUCTION

The Program

The Commonwealth Compass Schools Program is one part of the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. The purpose of the Compass Schools Program is to recognize and celebrate improvement in Massachusetts' schools, and to disseminate information and encourage networking and sharing of ideas, effective practices, and models for success. The program is intended to provide a means for the schools to share their expertise with other schools in the state.

Based on the Cycle II (2001-2002) School Performance and Improvement Ratings issued in December 2002, the Department identified 291 elementary, middle and high schools that showed significant improvement over their Cycle I MCAS test results. These schools were invited to participate in the program by applying for consideration as candidates to serve as 2003 Commonwealth Compass Schools. One hundred and forty-four schools chose to apply by submitting completed two-part applications. Part 1 of the application asked for written responses to three questions on the initiatives they have undertaken to improve student performance that they think have had the most positive impact on their students' performance. Part 2 of the application was an on-line survey asking for a more detailed profile of the school and information on significant changes in recent years. Five high schools and six elementary schools were selected as finalists. Those eleven schools were scheduled for closer review to learn more about their highlighted programs and to determine willingness and capacity to serve in the program. Data and information gathered from the applications, surveys and review process of these schools will be published in a report this fall.

The Commissioner will designate up to eleven schools to serve as 2003 Commonwealth Compass Schools. Compass Schools receive special recognition and a \$10,000 grant to support the participation of their administrators and staff in information sharing and dissemination activities over the next year.

The Report

This report summarizes the findings and analyses of a small team of education professionals during a one-day visit to the Glenwood Elementary School on April 16, 2003. The report will assist the Commissioner in determining which schools from among those visited will be designated to serve as 2003 Commonwealth Compass Schools.

The Panel evaluated data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts, including the school's two-part Compass School application; and then visited the school

to meet with school leaders, staff, parents and students and visit classrooms in order to answer the following two key questions:

1. Is this school using effective improvement initiatives that could be replicated in other similarly profiled schools?
2. Are the conditions in place for this school to serve as a model of effective practices and successful improvement initiatives?

The Panel's responses to these two questions frame the report. In the process of answering these questions, the report focuses primarily on the initiatives that the school identified in its application as having had the most positive impact on student performance.

The findings and conclusions presented here are the product of analysis, discussion, and observation, and are based on the evidence made available to the Panel before and during their visit. A list of Panel members who participated in the school review is provided in Appendix A. A detailed schedule of the Panel's activities is provided in Appendix B.

Glenwood Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

Glenwood Elementary School is one of 33 elementary schools in Springfield. The district services 49 schools in total. Enrollment at the school between 1999 and 2002 averaged 380 students. During this time, White students accounted for a third of the student body, Hispanics 50 percent and Blacks slightly more than 15 percent.

Between 1999 and 2002, the proportion of non-native English speakers at the Glenwood School steadily rose from 19 percent in 1999 to 32 percent in 2002. The size of the Limited English Proficient population, on the other hand, remained constant—averaging just 19 percent for those four years. Eighty percent of students at Glenwood were low-income. As a result, there is a school-wide Title I program in place at the school.

Between 1998 and 2001, attendance at the Glenwood averaged 95 percent, with students absent for an average of 10 days on a 180-day schedule. The percentage of students retained during these four years fluctuated from three to nine percent. There were no in-school suspensions recorded during this time; however, out-of-school suspensions averaged two percent. No students were excluded during those four years.

Staffing

At the Glenwood Elementary School, there are 17 classroom teachers, 14 specialist teachers, eight paraprofessionals, one administrator and one School Adjustment Counselor. All teachers at this school are certified in the subjects they teach. Twenty-one teachers have more than 15 years of experience, and only one has been teaching for fewer than five years.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Glenwood Elementary 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), the school received positive Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations in both ELA and mathematics.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

In Cycle II, the Glenwood School received a performance rating of *Very High* for its Proficiency Index (PI) of 90.0. The school's improvement in Cycle II compared to Cycle I (1999-2000) was rated *Above Target*. Student participation rates in Cycle II were 84 percent in 2001 and 91 percent in 2002.

The performance of Regular Education students in ELA at the Glenwood School improved greatly in Cycle II. The school saw greater percentages of its students scoring at the Advanced level of performance, and fewer at Needs Improvement. In 1999, 50 percent of Regular Education students were Proficient, 43 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level and seven percent at Warning. In 2000, three percent of students scored in the Advanced category, 81 percent in Proficient, and 16 percent in Needs Improvement. In the first year of Cycle II, 11 percent of students were Advanced, 68 percent were Proficient, and 20 percent of all Regular Education students were in Needs Improvement. In 2002, the percentage of Advanced students rose again to 23 percent, 74 percent were Proficient, and the proportion of students at the Needs Improvement level fell to just two percent.

The performance of Special Education students at the Glenwood School does not display the same pattern of improvement as that of its regular education students. In 1999, 21 percent of Special Education students were Proficient, 64 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, and 14 percent at Warning. In 2000, the proportion of Proficient students soared to 43 percent, with 57 percent in Needs Improvement and none at the Warning level. In 2001, the percentage of Special Education students whose scores fell into the Proficient range was 13 percent, with 75 percent performing at the Needs Improvement level, and 13 percent in Warning. In 2002, 31 percent of students in this subgroup were Proficient, 54 percent in Needs Improvement and 15 percent of scores fell in the Warning category. In all four years (1999-2002), significantly fewer special education students at Glenwood scored in the Warning category as compared to district and state averages for grade four.

Student Performance in Mathematics

Regular education student performance at the Glenwood School in mathematics in Cycle II was notable in that it showed a movement of students out of the Needs Improvement category to Advanced and Proficient. In 1999, 31 percent of Regular Education students were Proficient, 67 percent in Needs Improvement and three percent in Warning. In 2000, six percent of students were Advanced, 50 percent scored at the Proficient level, and 44 percent at Needs Improvement. In 2001, 14 percent of regular education students scored in the Advanced category, 34 percent

were Proficient, and 52 percent in Needs Improvement. In the second year of Cycle II, 19 percent of all students in this group were Advanced, 65 percent were found Proficient, 14 percent in Needs Improvement and two percent in Warning.

In Cycle II, fewer Special Education students were Proficient, and higher proportions scored at the Warning level, as compared to Cycle I. In 1999, seven percent of Special Education students were Proficient, 71 percent were in Needs Improvement and 21 percent scored at Warning. In 2000, 31 percent of students performed at the Proficient level, 50 percent at Needs Improvement, and 19 percent at Warning. In the first year of Cycle II, the percentage of Proficient students fell to just five percent. Forty-seven percent of students were found to be in Needs Improvement, and another 47 percent scored in the Warning category. In 2002, eight percent of students in this subgroup performed at the Proficient level, 69 percent were at Needs Improvement, and 23 percent at Warning. In all years except 2001, significantly fewer special education students at Glenwood scored in the Warning category in comparison to district and state averages for grade four.

In the first year of Cycle II, 20 percent of all Limited English Proficient (LEP) students scored within the Proficient category, and 80 percent were in Needs Improvement. In 2002, 25 percent of all LEP students performed at the Proficient level and 75 percent in Needs Improvement. The number of LEP students tested in 1999 did not meet the minimum sample size. In the three years for which data is available (2000-2002), LEP students at Glenwood performed significantly better than their counterparts at the district and state level.

Panel Responses To The Key Questions

KEY QUESTION 1: Is This School Using Effective Improvement Initiatives That Could Be Replicated In Other Similarly Profiled Schools?

The Panel found that the Glenwood Elementary School is using a variety of improvement initiatives that have led to significant improvement in student achievement and that could successfully be replicated in similarly profiled schools. The initiatives include a school-wide focus on literacy; district developed sequencing guides for the math curriculum; school-wide grade level and student support “service” teams; and the use of assessment data to inform improvement planning and decisions involving curriculum, instruction and professional development. The foundation for these efforts consists of an inventive, forward-thinking Principal, a site council focused on providing teachers the tools and resources they need to succeed with their students, and a collaborative staff and school culture that strongly supports change and shares decision making processes. The Panel concluded that these initiatives have positively impacted student performance at the school and that they can successfully be replicated in other similarly profiled schools.

A. Which improvement initiatives have had the greatest impact on student performance results?

The school's balanced literacy initiative was found by the Panel to have improved student achievement in both English language arts and mathematics. The components of balanced literacy observed at the school include guided reading, shared reading, independent reading and read aloud. The school has also made modifications to the balanced literacy program by extending the literacy block, implementing Reading Recovery and incorporating First Steps writing. Teachers and the Principal point to improved student performance on the citywide writing assessment as well as improved open response MCAS scores in ELA and mathematics as further evidence of the effectiveness of the programs.

Teachers were observed during the literacy block conducting read aloud with students in small groups and asking questions related to content and meaning to which students eagerly responded. In one classroom, two teachers led two reading groups in the reading of different texts while approximately 10 students worked independently. Although these activities (two teacher-led groups and independent student work) were taking place in the same classroom, each was conducted in a quiet and orderly fashion free of distraction and in which student focus on the task at hand was clearly evident.

Panel members also noted continuity between the exploratory question and discussion activities during the literacy block and the activities in math classrooms. In both cases, children were called upon to verbalize their thinking and work in small groups to solve common, practical tasks that require the making and explanation of meaning. Teachers who were observed by the Panel confirmed, during individual interviews, that alignment of the content areas is due to the fact that all teachers follow the same literacy program that focuses on writing skills, reading, speaking and spelling. It is this consistency across grade levels, teachers maintain, that is largely responsible for the gains in student achievement across all student groups at the school. When asked whether achievement gains could be substantiated with assessment data, teachers referred Panelists to the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA; for grades K-2), the Iowa test, and the La Prueba (Spanish achievement) for grades 3-5.

First Steps writing is the writing component of balanced literacy and has been fully implemented in all grades K-5 since 1999. The program provides a common means for measuring and communicating the progress of children in the area of writing through a writing continuum and a portfolio of writing samples. The Glenwood School also uses the program to help teachers target instruction that will facilitate progress towards achievement of the standards. All teachers interviewed during the visit were familiar with the First Steps writing program and spoke to its benefits for students. One teacher indicated that "nothing I have seen has been as effective as the First Steps plan—it leaves 5th grade students with a repertoire of writing skills." Evidence for the effectiveness of First Steps was observed through the strong support of teachers as well as teacher reports of student improvement through citywide and classroom assessments.

In addition to the school-wide focus on literacy, the sheltered English model of instruction is an additional initiative that has reportedly been highly effective in improving student achievement among English language learners. The model was piloted at a single grade level in 1999, and by 2001 it was fully implemented at all K-5 grade levels. The program provides native language support (but not instruction) through the use of a more limited vocabulary and makes the full curriculum available to all English language learning (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP) and special education (SPED) students. According to teachers involved in sheltered English, the program has proven its effectiveness in two ways: (1) by making the regular education curriculum available to all ELL, LEP and SPED students and (2) by measurably increasing the language skills of those students. As the Principal explained the philosophy behind the program, the program allows teachers to tailor instruction to the individual needs and abilities of students. Student readiness to move out of sheltered English, the Principal continued, is not determined by amount of time in the program but rather by student achievement. It is not until students are deemed able to compete with students outside the program are they moved out of the sheltered English program. Evidence demonstrating improvement presented to the Panel included La Prueba for grades 3 and 5, the Iowa test, and monthly analysis of building-administered assessments, and improvement in open response MCAS questions in both ELA and mathematics.

A third program-based initiative that has provided additional achievement gains in mathematics is the district's creation of monthly "Planbooks" to supplement math instruction. Created by the district math department for each grade from K-5, the Planbooks map out the curriculum on a periodic basis (which in most cases is monthly) for teachers. Each year the Planbooks are revised by the department as based on the analysis of assessment data. Both teachers and administrators in interviews cited improvement in mathematics as measured by MCAS, Iowa, end of unit assessments and the city wide math assessment. Planbooks for each grade consist of the following:

- a running schedule that shows which units are to be taught and the sequence and recommended date of the unit's delivery
- a statement of the outcome of each math unit
- a space for teacher-developed end of unit assessment questions
- references to all learning standards in the unit
- a section titled "literature connections" that references materials currently being read by students in the literacy block
- an appendix containing a checklist, organized by math unit number, to monitor individual student mastery of the knowledge and skills cross-referenced in the frameworks
- an additional appendix containing an end-of-year test, teaching strategies for key foundation skills, a "Content Focus" calendar for each grade for major content areas (language arts, math, science, social studies) showing a calendar of topics and skills to be taught throughout year.

Supporting the programmatic improvement initiatives cited above are collaborative efforts that have become part of the culture and daily schedule of the school. These efforts include the formation of grade level teams, what the school calls "Service Teams," and the regular analysis of data across the school community. The focus of the grade level teams is on issues of

curriculum and instruction, and these teams meet once a week to discuss instructional strategies, review student work, share best practices and coordinate instruction across content areas. The Service Teams are made up of volunteers who form a team that focuses on proactively supporting the needs of at-risk students. As a problem-solving body, the Service Teams are the first resource teachers and staff turn to when students' academic, emotional or health needs require a more critical level of support than that available in the classroom. The Service Teams have immediate access to "Level III" experts both within and outside the building and which can include health clinicians, family and adjustment counselors, and reading and other academic specialists.

The collaborative efforts, as well as the program initiatives/enhancements cited above, are broadly supported by multiple assessments and the school's integration of data analysis into all phases of the decision-making process. Teachers in interviews and focus groups made frequent references to MCAS, Iowa and citywide assessments as evidence of their students' academic improvement. Furthermore, the grade level teams are adept not only at looking at student work but also in looking at assessment data to identify weak areas in the curriculum, to improve instruction, to identify students who need additional regular school day instruction and to identify students who would benefit from before and after school support resources. Students identified and grouped by ability for supplemental school day instruction or academic support are reassigned to higher level groups through a dynamic monitoring process (based on multiple forms of assessment) that insures program rigor and challenging instructional content.

Data analysis also guides improvement planning at the school, and the Principal is primarily responsible for collecting, analyzing and presenting data to the School Centered Decision Making (SCDM) team. As evidence that data analysis informs improvement planning at the school, the SCDM was able to cite multiple opportunities available to them throughout the school year to review student performance data and provide examples in which data enabled the SCDM team to make decisions related to curriculum and also to monitor the school's improvement efforts. For example, evidence of the school's strategic use of data was provided to the team in circumstances surrounding identification of a geometry "gap" within the Addison Wesley math program. The team learned, through the Principal's presentation of assessment data that students were consistently underperforming in geometry. After attempting to re-map the math curriculum to the frameworks, the Principal and grade level teams in math identified the geometry gap and subsequently acquired a supplementary unit that more adequately addressed geometry. The resulting integration of these two components into the math program has resulted in the delivery of a curriculum that is aligned to the frameworks and that reflects the knowledge and skills tested by MCAS.

B. How did the school plan their improvement initiatives and put them into practice?

After interviewing the Principal, SCDM team, teachers and district facilitators, the Panel reached the conclusion that the improvement initiatives are largely the product of a dynamic, proactive, forward-thinking Principal who is both an instructional leader and an excellent manager of resources, both within and outside the building. Many of the initiatives reported on for the

review are the result of the Principal's efforts to be the first to try new strategies and take advantage of initiatives made available to schools on a "pilot" basis by the district. This has resulted in a school culture that embraces change because they have seen first hand its benefits on teaching and learning.

The decision-making process in place at the school facilitates the introduction of new program initiatives because it is proactive, broadly collaborative and informed by the analysis of multiple forms of assessment data. The SCDM team is made up of individuals that include the Principal, four teachers (voted in for two year terms by the staff), four parents and a community partner (the community partner was not available for the review team meeting). The Principal introduced the SCDM team by saying that it has been invested with somewhat greater authority than the Education Reform Act of 1993 requires: it is the SCDM team, and not the Principal, that is ultimately responsible for the decisions made at the school.

A subcommittee of the SCDM recruited by the Principal developed the school improvement plan. With the Principal's guidance, this subcommittee analyzes assessment data (MCAS, Iowa, La Prueba, district math tests, city writing assessments, DRA) to identify areas in need of improvement and to formulate the improvement plan. The SIP is then presented to the entire school community of parents, teachers, and building staff for comment. The finalized version is then presented to the SCDM team for approval.

The first major improvement initiative that reportedly improved student performance came in 1994 when the Glenwood school, along with five other schools in the district, piloted Reading Recovery, a reading program which targets at-risk first grade students. Despite the fact that the district was not able to provide financial assistance, the school used its Title I funding to obtain its Reading Recovery teacher. Two years after the successful implementation of Reading Recovery at Glenwood and other schools, the district in 1996 adopted Reading Recovery system wide. This initiative has worked so well that in 2001 the Glenwood School became the only school in the district to add a second Reading Recovery teacher. The result is that every at-risk first grade student is able to take advantage of the program.

In 1996, the First Steps Writing program was introduced to improve the writing skills of the school's regular education, SPED and ELL students. The school did not begin to see significant improvement until 1999 when the program was expanded to require writing every day and was fully implemented across all K-5 grade levels.

Two years later, in 1998, the first grade level teams were formed at the school. The structure of this effort requires all teachers to serve on the teams, which are responsible for monitoring the quality of curriculum and learning, to coordinate instruction and to share best practices for their respective content areas within grade levels. The extended day block has allowed the grade level teams to meet for 1hr and 15 minutes every week.

In 1999, several improvement initiatives were implemented simultaneously. Coincident to the school's being awarded Title I Distinguished School in 1999, the Principal attended the

International Reading Association Conference and learned about the benefits of an expanded literacy block. Taking this idea back to obtain the approval of the faculty and SCDM team, the Principal obtained approval to extend the literacy block to two hours per day. Also in 1999, the Glenwood Elementary School trained teachers in and began implementing balanced literacy. The program currently implemented at all K-5 grade levels.

According to the Principal, the school's balanced literacy initiative required convincing the staff and district that literacy is the lynchpin of school improvement. As the Principal states in the Compass School application, "our primary focus has always been literacy." Support for literacy was established by the Principal, with the help of the SCDM team, who presented the faculty and district with data showing not only that students were not obtaining the necessary literacy skills but that faculty needed additional professional development in teaching those skills. As a district literacy coach commented in a focus group, "The school looked at data and contacted the district to request professional development to address these weaknesses [in student performance]." The Principal also pointed out that the balanced literacy initiative did not require the hiring of additional staff as the school utilized existing staff to reduce student-teacher rates. This was confirmed by the Panel's observation of two classes during the literacy block. During this time two teachers worked individually with groups of five to six students while other students worked quietly and independently on their own pre-assigned projects. The result is a student-teacher ratio of 10 to one or less.

The Glenwood was also one of 5 schools in the district in 1999 to pilot the Service Teams initiative. This is a building-based teaming effort, initiated by the district, which established interdisciplinary teams to develop a problem solving support group for students' academic and emotional needs. The teams are all volunteer, and the school has successfully staffed them with experts from within and outside the building. This initiative also paved the way for the school's implementation of comprehensive remediation and enrichment services to at-risk and special education students. The Service Teams allowed the school, also in 1999, to assume the responsibility from the district for the clinics necessary to the administration of special education services. As a result, Level III experts (school or outside academic, counseling, or health specialist) are available for at-risk students, and all special education support services now originate at the building level. The Principal, who is certified in special education, along with the SCDM team and four special education teachers oversee the school's building-based special education support initiative. As a result, full inclusion now supplements pullout and inclusion (up to 502.4 classrooms), with approximately 95 percent of special education student needs serviced at the building. This initiative has also resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of special education referrals. The success of the Glenwood and other schools that piloted this initiative resulted in the district-wide implementation of the service team model.

The year 2000 saw the piloting of sheltered English for a single grade. After a successful trial, the program was fully implemented two years later in the current (2002-2003) school year. The sheltered English program continues the theme, established in earlier initiatives, of providing individualized instructional and support services for at-risk students. Also in 2000, after demonstrating the success of the literacy block to the faculty and SCDM team, leadership at the

school petitioned the district to increase the literacy block from 2 to 2.5 hours per day. This has been accomplished and, according to teachers interviewed, has increased teachers' ability to deliver language instruction and coordinate literacy efforts across the curriculum.

C. Does the school think these initiatives can be successfully used in similar schools? Why?

The Glenwood School staff and leadership stated in interviews and focus groups that the implementation of balanced literacy, First Steps writing, sheltered English, service and grade level teams, and the use of data to guide instruction and drive professional development could easily be replicated in other schools. Staff indicated that the initiatives have been achieved with limited financial resources with the bulk of effort coming from a school schedule enhanced for instructional and common planning time, an organizational structure in which leadership and accountability are shared, and clearly communicated goals and expectations. The Principal also stressed that all the initiatives are research based and have demonstrated their effectiveness at the Glenwood School. Key to the success of these efforts appeared to the Panel to rest in the staff's positive attitude toward leadership, colleagues, students and a faculty empowered by evidence of the effectiveness of their efforts. Statements from two teachers reflected what was found to be the prevailing attitude at the school: "Success breeds success," and "It's all in the implementation." Such statements, encountered in varying forms, indicated to the Panel that the initiatives are replicable because they are grounded in beliefs and processes that are indicative of a positive school culture.

In addition to the efficacy of the school's initiatives demonstrated by the sustained increase in student performance across multiple indicators, the faculty cited substantial district support in terms of coaching and professional development in insuring that the initiatives are properly implemented and that implementation is carried through to the classroom. In focus groups, the faculty indicated that the commitment of personal time is not expected or required, but that staff do make themselves available when the need arises. However, staff also stressed that the increased meeting and planning time are built into the school's schedule and reflected in the collective bargaining agreement. Teachers have the benefit of seven professional development days per year, three of which are building based during the school year and four during the summer months. The Panel thus concluded that the implementation of the cited initiatives could be achieved without the reliance on uncompensated work time.

The embedded nature of professional development is another indication that the practices and processes in place at the Glenwood School could successfully be replicated in other schools. Because of the frequent availability of common planning time, teachers are able to carry on extended dialogues, including small-scale demonstration/workshops, based on best practices. The professional development and training the staff received in implementing the literacy and site-based teaming initiatives were acquired by a small core group of teachers who brought back and shared their knowledge at monthly faculty meetings or during the grade level team meetings. The Principal indicated that embedded professional development was the method of disseminating knowledge of balanced literacy, guided reading, first steps writing, sheltered English, the service team and other periodic content-specific opportunities offered by the district.

All parties interviewed by the Panel agreed that the success of improvement initiatives is not inherent in the programs themselves but rather in their implementation. Teachers uniformly praised resources within the building as well as from the district in providing the time, professional development and ongoing support needed to integrate academic programs with successful teaching practices. According to statements made by the Principal, the district facilitators and teachers, successful implementation of the initiatives requires common meeting / planning time, professional development, the availability of student performance data and a strongly supportive collegial atmosphere.

Because the same curriculum is used for regular education, special education and the sheltered English program, the implementation of the initiatives does not require duplication of human resources to develop separate academic programs for different subgroups. Rather than developing custom curricula for each group, the school has focused on developing and disseminating teaching strategies best suited for subgroups. For example, teachers cite job-embedded professional development as key to learning to teach to different learning styles, abilities and language groups. And because of the continuous availability of on-site support in the form of grade-level and service teams, teachers are able to collaborate on problem solving techniques and strategies that proactively maintain an effective environment for learning.

KEY QUESTION 2: Are The Conditions In Place For This School To Serve As A Model Of Effective Practices And Successful Improvement Initiatives?

The Panel believes that the school is both capable and well positioned to showcase the successful practices they have highlighted and to substantiate to visitors the effects their efforts have had on improving student performance. Throughout the Panel's visitation with leadership, teaching faculty and building staff, the Panel encountered a highly collegial school community eager to talk about and share the successful strategies they have employed. Furthermore, they appeared able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their efforts in terms of student performance gains and able to convey professionalism, high standards and accountability for teaching and correspondingly high expectations for student learning.

A. Do leadership and staff have a shared understanding and use a common language to describe the changes/initiatives that have led to improvements in teaching and learning?

Leadership and staff demonstrated a shared understanding and a common language for the initiatives they have implemented and for the improvement that Glenwood Elementary students have shown. When asked by the Panel, in individual interviews and focus groups, what teachers believe are the causes of high student achievement at the school, teachers consistently responded with a list of efforts in their areas of expertise that included: the school-wide focus on literacy (and the expanded literacy block); staff collegiality, targeted support and coordinated delivery of the curriculum resulting from frequent service and grade level team meetings; the ability of the sheltered English program to make the curriculum available to all ELL students; the institution of

special education services, including clinics, at the school level to reduce the number of referrals; the frequent use of assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching practice and learning outcomes; and the mapping and monthly sequencing of the math curriculum to the frameworks.

Panelists found broad agreement between initiatives identified in the Principal's Compass School Application, the initiatives teachers identified in the narrative survey as having had "the most positive impact on student performance," and the corresponding strategies observed in classrooms visited by the review team. For example, during math and literacy classes, Panelists observed teachers requiring responses in complete sentence form; questioning students as the lesson moves forward; the use of manipulatives to enhance understanding and differentiate instruction; continuous reinforcement of vocabulary and content-specific terminology; the presence of teacher aides to assist struggling learners; the placement of grading rubrics on walls; student explanations of how answers were found; math and literacy word walls. In literacy classrooms, the Panel also observed the following balanced literacy activities in small groups: independent reading, read aloud, shared reading, interactive reading, and guided reading. Math classrooms displayed a similar focus on math literacy.

The visiting Panel also found, throughout the day and across the visited community, a notable confluence in language and ideas among staff surrounding the principles and methods supporting the improvement efforts. The SCDM team was able to talk about the collection and analysis of assessment data with the same familiarity and language used by teachers, and it became clear to the Panel that these different groups were using the same data in different and highly effective ways. For example, in its morning interview with the SCDM team, Panelists heard team members describe a cyclical improvement planning process that occurs on a monthly basis. Assessment data is gathered by the Principal and presented to the SCDM team for analysis and prioritization of issues; data is then distributed to teachers at faculty meetings for further analysis and action planning, with key members of the grade level teams reporting back to the SCDM team with the results of team meetings. Teachers, for their part, displayed equal facility in describing how they use assessment data to identify struggling learners, monitor the effectiveness of instruction, and zero in on "trouble spots" that may crop up in the curriculum. Overall faculty support for the effectiveness of the curriculum is high, reflected in the Instructional Staff Survey in which 100 percent of respondents "strongly agree" (the highest rating) that the curriculum is "effective and appropriate." The Panel also noted that buy in for the initiatives on the part of teachers is particularly strong. This appeared to be a result of the fact that the grade level teams have the ability to set their own schedules and timelines for monitoring and support, to develop individual remediation plans for students and to request professional development based faculty needs as reflected by assessment data. This has created, in the Panel's view, a culture in which leadership and decision making are shared. The resulting organizational structure has resulted in a high degree of accountability on the part of the staff.

B. How effectively do leadership and staff articulate the connections between the specific changes and improvement initiatives they have implemented, and the gains made in student achievement?

The interviewed staff, as well as staff members who responded to the narrative survey, can articulate connections between the improvement initiatives they have undertaken and the subsequent improvements in teaching and student achievement. The Principal and teachers characterize the improvements as ongoing over the last nine years (beginning in 1994), but the most significant enhancements to teaching and learning, as well as measurable improvements in student achievement, have occurred over the last three years, since 1999. As confirmed by teachers and the Principal, the timeframe for improvements in achievement correspond to the timeframe for implementation of improvement initiatives.

In another example of teachers adequately demonstrating the connections between initiatives and improved student performance, teachers who were asked to make those connections spoke to the components of the initiative and why they believe it has been successful for their students, including what forms those efforts take in the classroom, the professional development received, and the ongoing support available. For example, teachers cited the implementation of reading recovery at the first grade in improving reading scores as reflected by the DRA, which is administered three times per year to first and second grade students. But teachers also pointed out that the literacy block, adequate meeting time, high expectations for students, and adequate professional development are all supportive of the success of reading recovery. Improvements in writing, measured by the city writing assessment as well as open response performance on MCAS, were characterized by teachers and the Principal as a direct result of the First Steps writing program.

It appeared to the Panel members that the culture of collaboration and change at the Glenwood School runs across the entire school community, and staff consistently referred to multiple student assessment data, in addition to classroom assessments, as evidence of the connection between improvement initiatives and improvements in student achievement. For example, several teachers drew parallels between the implementation of initiatives in their areas of instruction and students' improved performance on classroom and citywide reading and writing assessments. Staff were careful to state that improvement does not occur in isolation or as a result of any single improvement initiative; the Glenwood staff consistently see improvement in the larger context of district support, greater opportunities for shared meeting and planning time, and the increasingly targeted support offered for at risk, special needs and English language learning students. Teachers are just as quick to point out that the success of their efforts are supported by an effective behavior policy, involved parents, and dedicated colleagues that function collaboratively. "It works," one teacher said, "because we're all in it together." Another teacher confirmed this sentiment: "You're never on your own. Help is always available."

Additional evidence for the direct relationship between improvement initiatives and student improvement was offered by the faculty responsible for literacy. In this focus group, teachers and a district facilitator stated that student needs drive teachers' assignments at the administrative level while those same needs drive instructional decisions at the classroom level. Further, the small group instructional setting that characterizes the balanced literacy program provides increased opportunities for inclusion and allows teachers to monitor student needs and modify

instruction accordingly. "If you don't use the assessments to guide instruction," one teacher said, "they are useless."

C. Is there a school wide focus on, and sufficient staff investment in, continued improvement of student performance?

The Glenwood School has developed school-wide improvement initiatives, improvement planning processes and monitoring procedures that indicate to the Panel substantial investment in the continued improvement of student performance. Although the SCDM team has primary responsibility for setting the course that the school takes toward improvement, the entire school community participates in the analysis of data and the diagnosis of weaknesses in curriculum, instruction and student learning. The broadly cooperative organizational structure that is in place indicated to the Panelists that the school is well-positioned to continuously monitor the effectiveness of current efforts and to identify any new areas of weakness that appear.

An indication that the Glenwood School is poised to sustain improved student performance is present in the school improvement plan. The 2002-2003 S.I.P. is structured around five goals that correspond to the five goals of the No Child Left Behind (N.C.L.B.) act of 2002. The five goals of the Glenwood S.I.P. are:

1. Improve student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics so that all students reach the Proficient or Advanced levels on MCAS by 2013-2014.
2. Improve L.E.P. student performance so that all students become proficient in English and reach high academic standards in core subjects.
3. Ensure that all students are taught by highly qualified teachers by 2005-2006.
4. Ensure that all students are educated in a learning environment that is safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.
5. Engage parents and members of the broader community in collaborative efforts to improve students' attendance and academic performance.

Each of the above goals is supported by the following: required activities and/or professional development; responsible persons or resources; timeline for completion; and methods of determining the degree of improvement gained. Improvement is continuously monitored at the school through the following assessments: Harcourt and district assessment materials for math; Developmental Reading Assessment; Stanford tests; Aprenda Tests; MCAS; Citywide writing assessments; First Steps Developmental Continuum; LAS tests; and teacher-made assessments. The fact that all teachers interviewed are familiar with assessments in their content area led the team to believe that the school is fully invested in using assessment results for the identification of student weaknesses and for continuous improvement planning.

Other processes that insure continued improvement of student performance include the use of student peers with strong language skills for tutoring underachieving or at-risk students; the school's comprehensive extended day and summer academic programs for students identified and recommended for extra help by grade level teams; and the school's enrichment and support

program that provides more challenging materials in language arts, mathematics and technology for more advanced students who would benefit.

When asked about the prospects for continued improvement of student performance, one teacher captured the staff's overall attitude in this area with the statement, "success breeds success." That sentiment was discovered by the review Panel across the school and was expressed by the Principal, teachers, counselors, and support staff alike. The Panel judged student achievement gains likely to continue because the initiatives that have produced improvement are stable and in a relatively advanced stage of implementation. Reading Recovery, now in its ninth year, continues to be a driving force behind the preparation of children to score highly on the state and district reading assessments. The addition of a second reading recovery teacher in 2001 is evidence that the initiative will remain a prominent feature of instructional support for first grade students. The institution of the two hour literacy block and First Steps writing in 1996 has been strengthened over the last six years by the adoption of balanced literacy in 1998, the introduction of the sheltered English model in 2000, and the increase in the literacy block to 2.5 hours per day in 2000. The fact that ongoing review and evaluation of improvement initiatives has become an established practice with which all interviewed stakeholders are familiar indicated to the Panel that improvement has become ingrained into the school's culture.

The Panel was persuaded that teachers view the initiatives within their content areas as key to sustaining student improvement gains. One teacher in the school's English language learners program stated that the sheltered English program "is most important to sustain student performance" while teachers in the math focus group indicated that continuous improvement is a product of instruction targeted by the analysis of assessment data to identify weaknesses in teaching and student learning. The conviction of this group was expressed by one team member who in responding to the question of sustaining improvement gains, stated that "If we don't do well in a skill area, we nail it," and another who followed up by saying, "We expect kids to learn, no matter what." The fact that school's grade level and service teaming initiatives are a well-established feature of the weekly schedule, with common meeting and planning time built into the school's schedule and the collective bargaining agreement, further supports the conditions necessary to sustain improvement. A number of other key practices that have been proven successful are in place to insure broad emphasis on learning, including: writing across the curriculum; a focus on higher order thinking; journaling in all subject areas; math problem of the day; the continuing development of the district pacing guides in math; and professional development that is driven by student assessments and the curriculum frameworks.

D. Does the school appear to have the capacity to host site visits and to participate in various activities to share effective strategies and practices with other schools in the state?

The staff's broad understanding of the process of school improvement as indicated in question 2C above, and their detailed sense of how initiatives are responsible for improvement in the content areas, led the Panel to conclude that the Glenwood School appears well well-positioned to showcase its efforts and to host on-site visits to share effective strategies with other schools and education administrators in the state.

The Panel's interviews and focus groups with approximately 20 of the 31 full-time teachers revealed a staff with specific knowledge of and enthusiastic buy-in for the efforts underway. The affirmation and support came from across the visited school community and not solely from leadership or from English language arts and mathematics staff. Thus it appears that a critical mass of the school community understands, is currently implementing and strongly supports the improvement efforts. Teachers described the changes that have occurred in terms of the collaboration that was required of them and the high standards to which the Principal holds them. As one teacher said of the Principal in a focus group, "He is demanding, exacting. He sets the bar high and then gives us what we need to get the success he expects from us."

The school's capacity to successfully serve as a model of effective practice is reinforced by the leadership qualities of the Principal. He is an effective communicator who combines the qualities of an instructional leader with those of an expert manager of resources. The Principal demonstrates these qualities by keeping the entire Glenwood Elementary School community informed through multiple channels of communication as to the current issues and objectives of the school; by frequently visiting classrooms and providing informal feedback to teachers; by being able to obtain staff volunteers to serve on multiple sub-committees of the SCDM; by making assessment data available to staff and guiding staff in its analysis; by obtaining and sustaining faculty buy-in to pilot new initiatives offered by the district; by developing relationships with parents to involve them in the education of their children; by obtaining partnering relationships with community business leaders; and by sharing decision-making authority in a way that enables grade level teams to identify and communicate their needs to the SCDM team. The Principal is also a popular figure among students, as was made evident from the number of children who greeted him and attempted to engage him in conversation when passing in the hallways.

The building staff demonstrated professionalism and enthusiasm for what they do and have accomplished. All interviewed staff displayed a willingness to share what they have learned with others, including best practices, organizational changes, uses of data and the professional development of which the staff have taken advantage.

The facility is clean, well lighted and in excellent repair. There appears to be sufficient space within classrooms for teaching observations and in the centrally located library to conduct workshops or host other activities.

E. Does the Panel recommend that this school be designated to serve as a Commonwealth Compass School?

The Panel recommends that the Glenwood Elementary School be designated to serve as a Commonwealth Compass School.

CONCLUSION

The evidence gathered and cited above led the Panel to conclude that effective improvement initiatives in literacy and mathematics are being employed and could be replicated in similarly profiled schools. The initiatives are particularly effective for the school's population in that they focus resources on supporting students with special needs, students with limited English language skills, and in general students who are identified as being at-risk. The initiatives have been successful because they are grounded in the analysis of student assessment data and are used to identify struggling students as well as drive professional development decisions. Multiple opportunities also exist for the staff to collaborate in developing and delivering school day and after school services to meet the needs of all students.

APPENDIX A
Panel Members

Erin Furey, Vice Principal, Rupert A. Nock Middle School, Newburyport Public Schools,
Newburyport, MA

Scott Kelley, Ph.D., Coordinator, MA Department of Education, Malden, MA

Maureen Wesolaski, D.Ed., Curriculum Coordinator, Spencer East Brookfield Regional School
District, Spencer, MA

Ed Winter, Instructional Technology Specialist, McKinley School, Revere Public Schools,
Revere, MA

APPENDIX B
Compass School Candidate Panel Review Schedule

All activities take place at the school.

- 7:30—8:00 *a.m.* Panelists meet with the Principal
- 8:00—8:30 *a.m.* Panelists meet with the School Council
- 8:30—9:00 *a.m.* Panelists meet with parents and students

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D
Student Focus Group	Student Focus Group	Student Focus Group	Parent Focus Group

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

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D
9-10 a.m.	Observe teacher 1 and teacher 2	Observe teacher 3 and teacher 4	Observe teacher 5 and teacher 6	Observe teacher 7 and teacher 8
10-11 a.m.	Interview teacher 1 and teacher 2 individually	Interview teacher 3 and teacher 4 individually	Interview teacher 5 and teacher 6 individually	Interview teacher 7 and teacher 8 individually

11 *a.m.*—12:30 *p.m.* Panelists meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day
(working lunch)

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

1:00—2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teachers in groups*

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

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

2:30—5:00 p.m. Panelists deliberate and form conclusions

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

1. Classroom Observations Each Panelist will observe at least two class lessons in order to obtain a representative sample of the school’s classrooms. The purpose of the classroom observations in candidate Compass Schools is to find evidence of the extent to which the improvement initiatives the school has described as having the most positive impact on student achievement are in practice in the classroom. Observers will also gather additional information on those programs and practices.
2. Individual Teacher Interviews The purpose of the teacher interview that follows the Panelist’s observation of that teacher’s classroom is to:
 - Clarify the evaluator’s impressions of the classroom dynamic and learning environment
 - Determine each teachers’ understanding of the initiatives cited in the application as having had the most positive impact on student achievement; and the extent to which the improvement initiatives are guiding their classroom practice (for instance, curriculum, instruction and assessment).
 - Determine what has changed at the school over the past three years.
 - Determine each teacher’s role in implementing the improvements made to student performance at the school.
3. Teacher Focus Groups The purpose of the teacher focus groups is to:
 - Determine each teachers’ understanding of the initiatives cited in the application as having had the most positive impact on student achievement; and the extent to which the improvement initiatives are guiding their classroom practice (for instance, curriculum, instruction and assessment).
 - Determine what has changed at the school over the past three years.
 - Determine each teacher’s role in implementing the improvements made to student performance at the school.

Taken together, the observations, individual teacher interviews, and teacher focus groups will provide a comprehensive view of the staff’s understanding of, and participation and investment in, the programs and strategies to improve student performance.