

**Panel Report
Candidate Compass School Review
Hyannis West Elementary School
Barnstable 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 Hyannis West Elementary School on May 9, 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.

Hyannis West Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

Hyannis West Elementary School is one of 12 schools in the Barnstable district and nine elementary schools in the district. Between 1999 and 2002, Hyannis West Elementary experienced a steady decline in the number of students enrolled. In 1999, there were 459 students enrolled at the school, but by 2002, enrollment had fallen to 324 students. The population of White students between 1999 and 2002 was 70 percent; Black students during this time period averaged 18 percent, and Hispanic students, eight percent.

The percentage of students for whom English was not the native language steadily increased during that time frame, from five percent in 1999 to 10 percent by 2002. Forty-four percent of students at the Hyannis West Elementary School between 1999 and 2002 were designated as low-income. There is a school-wide Title I program in place at the school.

The attendance rate at the Hyannis West between 1998 and 2001 averaged 95 percent, with the average number of days absent during that period being 10. Retentions during these years averaged one percent, and there were no students excluded during that time.

Staffing

At the Hyannis West Elementary, there are 20 classroom teachers, 11 paraprofessionals, four specialist teachers, one administrator, and one guidance counselor. Eleven teachers at this school

have 15 or more years of experience, while five have five have been teachers for five or fewer years. All teachers are certified in the subjects they teach.

MCAS Results

Students at the Hyannis West Elementary School are tested in the MCAS in grade 3 in English Language Arts (ELA) and in grade 4 in ELA and mathematics. The school was found to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Cycle II (2001-2002) in both ELA and mathematics.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

In Cycle II, the Hyannis West Elementary School received a performance rating of *Very High* based on its proficiency index of 90.2 in ELA. For its 17-point improvement over its Cycle I (1999-2000) performance, the school received an improvement rating of *Above Target*. Student participation rates in Cycle II were 95 percent in 2001 and 93 percent in 2002.

In Cycle II, Hyannis West Elementary School saw greater proportions of its Regular Education students performing at the Advanced and Proficient levels of performance in ELA. In 1999, only three percent of students were Advanced, 36 percent were Proficient, 52 percent in Needs Improvement and nine percent scored at Warning. In 2000, 16 percent of students were Advanced, 45 percent were Proficient, 31 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, and eight percent at Warning. In the first year of Cycle II, 11 percent of Regular Education students tested were Advanced, the proportion of students scoring Proficient jumped to 64 percent, 24 percent were at the Needs Improvement level, while only one percent scored at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of Advanced students rose to 24 percent, 58 percent were Proficient, and 16 percent were in Needs Improvement and two percent at Warning.

Student Performance in Mathematics

In Cycle II, the Hyannis West School received a performance rating of *Moderate* due to its proficiency index of 76.9. In Cycle II the school's proficiency improved by 9.3 points. For this improvement, the school received a rating of *Above Target*. Participation rates in the mathematics portion of the test in Cycle II were 96 percent in 2001 and 92 percent in 2002.

In Cycle II, the performance of Regular Education students at Hyannis West Elementary was focused on moving students into the Advanced category in mathematics. In 1999, eight percent of Regular Education students tested were Advanced, 19 percent were Proficient, 54 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, and 19 percent at Warning. In 2000, 12 percent of students were Advanced, 32 percent scored at the Proficient level, 46 percent were in Needs Improvement, and 10 percent were at Warning. In 2001, 12 percent of Regular Education students scored in the Advanced category, 31 percent in Proficient, 45 percent in Needs Improvement and 12 percent in Warning. In the second year of Cycle II, the proportion of students scoring at the Advanced level rose to 28 percent, 33 percent of students were Proficient,

another 33 percent scored at the Needs Improvement level, with only six percent scoring at Warning.

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?

Yes. The Hyannis West Elementary School is using a number of inter-connected improvement initiatives that could be replicated in other schools with similar profiles. The Hyannis West school community has effectively employed a site-based strategic planning process, founded on data analysis and review of educational literature and practices, to develop and implement a continuous improvement model of shared decision-making. The Hyannis West Elementary School has implemented school-wide strategies and programs that maintain high expectations for students' academic performance, writing across the curriculum, social skills and behavior.

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

A careful review of school documents, data provided by the Department of Education, classroom observations, individual teacher interviews, and focus groups with teachers and parents corroborated the Principal's prioritized outline of school improvement initiatives that have had the greatest impact on student performance.

The Hyannis West Elementary School has implemented the following models and practices:

- ❑ Inclusive/ Data Driven Approach to school governance and improvement planning.
- ❑ Co-Teaching Model: The dedication of Title I school-wide project funds and other school resources to provide each classroom in Grades 1 - 4 with a co-teacher for ninety minutes per day.
- ❑ MCAS Instructional Plans created by each classroom teacher, which contain learning profiles of the class as a whole and each individual student. These classroom based instructional plans aim to incorporate the recommendations of the school's MCAS Action Team and results of MCAS Item Analyses into each classroom.
- ❑ An instructional focus on writing across the curriculum supported by uniform professional development in three writing programs, namely LINKS, John Collins Writing Process, and the Empowering Writers Program.
- ❑ Extensive parent involvement and parent volunteer programs.
- ❑ School-wide adoption of "The Responsive Classroom" and "Cooperative Learning" Models
- ❑ Budget allocation priorities, which include low class size and adoption of an inclusionary model of instruction, wherein students receive special support services primarily within the mainstream homeroom environment.

Throughout the on-site visit, school and district leadership, teachers and parents credited improvement initiatives which serve to structure the manner in which the adults within the Hyannis-West School community interact and conduct their practice for student success. All stakeholders affirmed the relationship between the school's strategic planning process and efficacy in implementing and sustaining improvement efforts.

The Hyannis West School has successfully employed a continuous improvement model for school governance and improvement planning. Indeed, the Principal characterized the elementary school he leads as "an evolving school." Nevertheless, firmly established guideposts structure this evolutionary process. These include goal setting over three to five year strategic planning cycles as well as coming to consensus on student learning needs and targeted initiatives to address identified needs. There was substantial evidence that faculty and parents have embraced the inclusive planning process envisioned and established by the school's Principal. The Panel was repeatedly told that the Principal values the input and professional expertise of faculty members; parents characterized the Principal as sensitive and responsive to parent concerns. The professional culture that has evolved at the Hyannis West was described as "collegial" and "collaborative" as well as "supportive of risk-taking."

In addition to the professional and community interaction underlying this model of school leadership, teachers stressed key initiatives that have served to re-define and re-structure their own classroom practice as contributing to advances in student performance. In individual interviews, focus groups and the Instructional Staff Survey conducted by the Department of Education, faculty members cited the centrality of the MCAS data analysis and the MCAS instructional plans. In identifying student strengths and weaknesses in specific skills and content area knowledge defined by the Frameworks, the MCAS Instructional plans in essence provide learning profiles at three different levels: the student population as a whole, each classroom of students, and each individual student. The requisite narrative overviews of individual and classroom learning objectives, instructional strategies and assessment practices have served as important mechanisms for teachers to reflect upon and refine their classroom practice. The Co-Teaching and Inclusion models were lauded for providing collaborative teaching models to differentiate instruction and lower student-teacher ratios and, importantly, were regarded as a pivotal vehicle to reflect upon classroom practice.

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

The primary initiatives regarding school governance and school improvement planning have evolved during the Principal's fourteen-year tenure at this school. Teachers, parents and School Council members credited the Principal with bringing a vision of research-based shared decision-making into reality. As stated in the Compass School application, the School Council's "primary mission is to establish a clear blueprint for learning at our school that is focused, coordinates resources, clearly identifies individual responsibilities, assesses student progress, and is closely monitored and adjusted." The on-site interviews, in the Panel's judgement, provided substantial evidence of the School Council's strong decision-making role and deliberative processes.

Central aspects of the council's strategic planning process included a reliance on the Comer Model of School Governance, establishing goals and mission statements over three to five year cycles, and maintaining high expectations for student academic performance and social development. All stakeholders are either directly involved or are represented in decision-making. The School Council operates under a "no-fault problem-solving" model and is dedicated to utilizing data and research to inform practice and planning. All decisions are made by consensus.

With the goal of constant improvement, the Hyannis West School Council and faculty has used a similar cycle of research and problem solving over the last ten years to identify core teaching techniques and programs for school-wide implementation. The School Council in concert with Faculty Sub-Committees goes through a process which begins with data analysis to identify key problems and establish mission statements, and which is followed by conducting research to problem-solve and identify interventions that meet the needs of the school's diverse population.

Within the first cycles of strategic planning, data analysis focused on the school's demographics, school discipline and student behavior, and special education. In the past five years, data analysis has focused on MCAS and Stanford 9 testing results, the school's primary sources for assessment. The school's research strategies commence with a review of relevant educational literature and the theoretical foundations, indeed the research-base, of national and state programs and models. A core group of teachers attend workshops and professional conferences as well as visit other schools as part of their research into best practices. Designated members of the council sub-committee present abstracts of the literature review and overviews of their training experiences in the programs under examination to the faculty as a whole. Then, the school's faculty and leadership in turn must come to a collaborative judgment as to whether a particular program should be adopted. In similar language, both teachers and the Principal emphasized that once a collective commitment is made, there is the accompanying expectation that adopted practices will be implemented in all learning environments.

The school's initial focus, ten years ago, was on disadvantaged student learning and student behavior. The Hyannis West serves a socio-economically diverse student population of approximately 340 students. However, approximately one-half of the student body are from low-income families. Other student demographics presenting challenges are high rates for student mobility and homelessness. The Principal reported that the average number of students who transfer in and out of the school during each academic year has averaged over 200 students for each of the last ten years. Each year between 8-10% of students at Hyannis West meet state criteria to be classified as homeless.

The initial goal was to implement "a systematic approach to reducing disruptions to instruction due to student behavior." Acknowledging that "children from families under stress display serious behavior problems," the school stressed the need to implement programs which would provide social skills that would enable students to monitor their own behavior and become aware of consequences of their behavior for themselves and for others. Secondly, removing this

roadblock to learning would allow greater opportunity and time to improve classroom instruction and concomitantly focus on higher order learning goals. The school chose to adopt the Responsive Classroom social skills program. The emphasis on responsible behavior was reinforced by the adoption of a Cooperative Learning model that promotes social skills and academic responsibility within the context of the completion of common instructional tasks.

For the last six years, the school has been organized into multi-grade “family groupings” in order to maintain consistency of social and behavioral norms outside the classrooms and to create a further sense of community within the school. Lunch and recess schedules are now organized into family groups containing one class from each grade level. The expectations for student interaction and behavior have thus been extended to more unstructured settings. Faculty members and the Principal reported that the older students are expected to be role models for younger students and that the number of behavior incidents has been reduced.

The intense focus on the analysis of student performance results and identification of student learning strengths and weaknesses began four years ago. A team of teachers yearly reviews MCAS results by question type, Learning Standard and Strand. For two years, the MCAS Action Plans consisted of recommendations regarding instructional strategies, curricular adjustments, and assessment practices based on analyses of patterns in student performance overall. For the last two years, each individual classroom teacher has been required to design an MCAS Instructional Plan in reading, mathematics, and written and oral language.

The classroom instructional plans contain a learning profile for the class as a whole and profiles of each individual student derived from an analysis of MCAS and Stanford 9 testing. Narrative overviews, which set forth group and individual instructional goals, teaching strategies, curricular mapping and assessment practices, are submitted to the Principal by October 1st of each year with written updates in December, March and a final summary in June.

The MCAS item analyses revealed the significant need to improve vocabulary development and writing skills to meet standards for written communication inherent in the Frameworks and MCAS. Subsequently, the school has adopted three different structured writing programs: LINKS, John Collins Writing Process, and The Empowering Writers Program.

The allocation of budget funds and assignment of personnel were key elements in the implementation of improvement initiatives. The Principal and Assistant Superintendent acknowledged the district’s role in providing additional funding in response to the Hyannis West School Council’s articulated priority of maintaining student-teacher ratios of fifteen-to-one in grades K – 4. The development of a Title I school-wide project funneled Title I resources and other school resources in order to establish the co-teaching and inclusionary models of instruction, which provide each classroom in grades 1-4 with a co-teacher for ninety minutes each day.

While the district’s professional development program allocated funding to support training for Hyannis West staff in school-based initiatives, the Principal, in keeping with the school’s

deliberative process for coming to consensus, was credited with insuring that “a critical mass” of teachers were trained in selected programs. A key element in the sustainability of Hyannis West improvement efforts is uniform professional development. All staff members have been trained in the Responsive Classroom and Cooperative Learning Models. The adoption of the different writing programs was staggered, so some classroom teachers are now receiving training in the Empowering Writing Program. Another indicator of the Principal’s efforts to ensure continued commitment to and implementation of programs is that granting of professional status to teachers at Hyannis West is contingent on the successful completion of professional development in these selected programs.

Strong parental involvement is a critical component of the school’s improvement initiatives. Communication with parents and opportunities for parental involvement are key district goals. Despite serving a more diverse transient population, the Hyannis West School has shown remarkable success in creating more structured programs to encourage parental involvement and volunteerism. The “Project Appleseed” parent involvement program is staffed by over 240 volunteers and is organized by the Parent Volunteer Coordinator, a part-time position. Parents at the school are asked to sign a pledge dedicating 10 hours of service to the school. The PTO and School Council have created over twenty job classifications for volunteer opportunities described in flyers distributed to parents and community members. The wide array of projects includes classroom support to teachers in small group instruction, one-on-one reading and review of math facts, photocopying and other administrative tasks and, even, playground reconstruction. Over thirty-one percent of families return the Appleseed pledges, and over 4000 hours of volunteer service was given to the school. A mainstay of the parent volunteer program involves staffing for the school’s after-school extra-curricular enrichment and recreational activities. The program is organized into five-week sessions held over the course of the school year.

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

The Hyannis West leadership and faculty believe, and the Panel agrees, that the school’s data driven approach to shared decision-making and the continual examination of teaching and learning that underlies classroom instructional practice can be replicated successfully in other schools. First, the strategies of working with MCAS and the cycle of problem solving, research and coming to consensus on school-wide interventions and programs could be duplicated in other schools. Teachers and the Principal are enthusiastic about sharing the classroom instructional plans as well as the scheduling strategies and collaborative activities associated with the co-teaching models with other educators.

In the words of both the staff and the Principal, Hyannis West teachers “had always worked hard.” Yet when “MCAS raised the bar,” in requiring students to demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving and written communication skills inherent in the Frameworks, they had to learn ways “to plan together to work smarter.” At Hyannis West that “Working Smarter” has come to be defined as an institutionalized process of individual and collaborative reflection on assessment results and classroom practices. Teachers acknowledged that the components of the MCAS

Instructional Plans – instructional materials and instructional strategies to be used, time allocations, remediation and enrichment strategies, and assessment procedures – were always central aspects of their instructional planning. However, they stressed that the cyclical process of re-evaluating individual and group performance profiles in collaboration with co-teachers has aligned instruction with the Framework Learning Standards. As one teacher put it, the “continuum of reflecting” on classroom instructional plans serves as an important mechanism for teachers to be more accountable “to themselves and to the Principal” for using assessment data to guide “multi-level” instruction. Teachers also acknowledged that the Principal reads every MCAS instructional plan with a careful and critical eye towards monitoring adopted practices. Thus, in an very important sense, this cycle of identifying and addressing student needs within the context of classroom instructional practice embodies the strategic planning process evident in the school’s culture overall.

Furthermore, the experience of the Hyannis West School, in the opinion of faculty members and leadership, serves as a model of effective implementation and sustaining of research-based programs such as the various writing across the curriculum initiatives and the Responsive Classroom Model. Finally, faculty, parents, school and district leadership emphasize that the extensive parent volunteer and outreach programs could be replicated in schools showing a wide range of demographics.

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

Yes. The Hyannis West Elementary School demonstrates the willingness and capacity to serve as a model of effective practices and successful improvement initiatives. The faculty and school leadership share a common vision and sense of purpose to continuously improve school-planning efforts and raise student achievement. Teachers and the Principal used common terms to describe established cycle of collective problem solving, research, reflection and feedback to meet the needs of a broad range of students. The Principal is a fluent and effective communicator, and teachers are comfortable with having their practices scrutinized.

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 have a shared understanding and use a common language to describe the initiatives that have led to improvements in teaching and learning. The ‘inter-connectedness’ of numerous programs and practices which serve to maintain high expectations for students

academic performance, behavior and social development surfaced as a primary theme. In addition to employing an interwoven collection of strategies and high expectations for all children, common themes centered on the strong leadership of the building Principal, and the notions of voice, empowerment, consistency and community.

The school review demonstrated the impact of establishing a culture of high expectations and high achievement for all children. The staff, the Principal, and parents consistently emphasized the importance of consistent expectations for academics and student behavior and the necessity of providing a “safe haven” where all students are respected and respectful. Descriptions of the school’s democratic planning process continually made reference to how everyone’s “voice” – parents, faculty and community – was listened to and taken into consideration. .” The Assistant Superintendent asserted that the Principal’s leadership skills particularly lie in “empowering teachers and parents to become leaders.” The uniform professional development is viewed as empowering all staff members. The third writing program implemented at the school, the Empowering Writers Program, was adopted to provide a vehicle for students writing to become more expressive, i.e. to contain a “personal voice.” In describing her fourth grade daughter’s writing, one parent commented that, “Expression and animation has now replaced frustration.”

The leadership skills of the building Principal were identified the catalyst for implementing and sustaining improvement initiatives. In terms that were remarkably similar, teachers, parents and district leadership credited the school’s Principal with giving key direction in nurturing the collegial climate that exists within the building and in directing the assignment of financial and human resources towards comprehensive and strategic planning. Faculty members repeatedly emphasized how the Principal “trusts the faculty to have input” and “trusts our professional judgment to accommodate students.” This professional trust was then cited as the foundation of the shared decision-making process adhered to by the school.

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?

School leadership and faculty at the Hyannis West Elementary School clearly articulate connections between established practices and improvements in teaching and learning. Individual teacher and administrator interviews as well as focus group discussions demonstrated a shared understanding of student learning strengths and weaknesses. Teachers and the Principal pointed to the MCAS data analysis and correlation of student performance results to Framework Strands and Learning Standards as the foundation for meeting individual student needs and student performance overall.

The MCAS data is utilized to get a picture of individual student’s strengths and weaknesses, which is further refined and evaluated in the quarterly written reflection required by the classroom instructional plans. Faculty members emphasized that their instructional practice is guided, not only by this reiterative process of updating classroom learning objectives, but fundamentally by the opportunity to collaborate daily with another teacher. Teachers

emphasized that the co-teaching models have helped them broaden their skill set in providing “multi-level instruction” and to address state Standards.

Continuity and consistency in the language of the writing and behavioral programs were also emphasized in meeting student learning and social needs. The common professional development has led to a common language and common implementation of programs and practices throughout classroom learning environments at every grade level. Classrooms are utilizing the same management strategies and techniques, and throughout the school environment less time is spent on behavior issues.

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

The staff and leadership at the Hyannis West School provide an interesting, challenging educational experience for their students as a direct result of a common belief in high expectations and have collectively directed their efforts towards the goal of continuous improvement planning for students’ academic and social success.

There is substantial evidence of a school-wide commitment and focus on improvement goals. Indeed, throughout the on-site visit, all stakeholders credited the school’s inclusive decision-making process and collaborative culture for establishing a sense of shared ownership and collective investment in improvement initiatives. The school’s commitment to the continuous goal of improvement serves to focus decision-making as well as professional development and collaboration on student achievement and social success.

All of the improvement initiatives cited in school documents and described during on-site interviews were clearly visible in classroom observations and displays of student writing. Student writing samples and classroom lessons revealed the school-wide focus on writing across the curriculum. The adoption of the different writing programs, in itself, demonstrates the evolving, progressive nature of school planning at the Hyannis West. Classroom lessons and student work reflected the use of graphic organizers emphasized in the LINKS program, the methodology and types of writing associated with the John Collins program, and the emphasis on descriptive, expressive language tied to the Empowering Writers program. Classroom observations provided clear evidence of an established focus on multi-level instruction, co-teaching and inclusion. Examples of co-teaching activities included: working with small groups, parallel lessons, whole group discussion and child observation, and one-to-one conferencing. Classroom lessons observed were uniformly well planned, well structured and well implemented. Math lessons emphasized the use of word walls and manipulatives to support student problem-solving and writing in mathematics. Language Arts lessons across grade levels involved shared and guided reading, brainstorming activities on parts of speech and the elements of short stories, and reading comprehension skills such as identifying the main idea or key concepts in sample passages or texts. Effective questioning techniques provided students with varied opportunities to review previous lessons, apply new skills and vocabulary, and to think creatively in response to open-ended questions. The effective incorporation of cooperative

learning strategies was evident a number of lessons observed. Students overall were attentive and fully engaged in lessons, an indication that classroom objectives coordinated with a wide range of abilities and learning styles. Finally, without exception, students behaved responsibly as individuals and as members of a group, and they showed respect for their teachers and for each other.

Parental feedback is an additional source for assessing the effectiveness of improvement initiatives and efforts to build a strong parent-school relationship. In focus groups with parents and the School Council, the school's priority on home-school communication and seeking parental input in improvement planning was evident to Panel members. Parents lauded the Principal's "open-door" policy and spoke in detail about the value of weekly newsletters, which were jointly written by the Principal, classroom teachers, and PTO officials. Parents characterized the school's faculty as "working hard for every child to succeed." In a school whose demographic profile includes increasing numbers of transient and homeless children, parents similarly articulated their own roles, as parents and as parent volunteers in classrooms, in supporting the school's mission to support "all of our children."

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 Hyannis West Elementary School is proud of its accomplishments and has the capacity to host visitors from other schools and districts. The school has successfully served as a Vanguard School this year, so it is confident and enthusiastic about presenting school-wide and classroom-based improvement initiatives. In terms that echoed the Principal's characterization of Hyannis West as an "evolving school, more than one teacher told Panel members that, "We are not content where we are now. We are always looking for ways to improve." One member of a faculty focus group vividly summarized the staff's commitment and enthusiasm to become an exemplar of best practices. "For ten years, we have worked to make inroads in improving instruction and creating multi-level, responsive classrooms. We have made some progress because of our own research. Now, we would like the opportunity to become a part of other schools' research."

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

The Panel agreed without exception that there are no reasons why the Hyannis West Elementary School should not be designated as a Commonwealth Compass School.

CONCLUSION

The Hyannis West school community has effectively employed a site-based strategic planning process, founded on data analysis and review of educational literature and practices, to develop and implement a continuous improvement model of shared decision-making. The Hyannis West Elementary School has implemented school-wide strategies and programs that maintain high expectations for students' academic performance, writing across the curriculum, social skills and behavior. . Teachers and the Principal used common terms to describe established cycle of collective problem solving, research, reflection and feedback to meet the needs of a broad range of students.

**APPENDIX A
TEAM MEMBERS**

Geri Lyn Ajemian, Ed.D., MA Department of Education, Malden, MA

Patricia Creighton, Director of Curriculum, Uxbridge Public Schools

Brian Abdallah, Principal, Roosevelt Middle School, New Bedford Public Schools

Maureen Scala-Freeman, Administrative Intern and Teacher, Medford Public schools

**APPENDIX B
COMPASS SCHOOL PANEL REVIEW VISIT 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.