

School Panel Review Report Michael J. Perkins Elementary School Boston Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of the School Panel Review Process is to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether State intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where students' MCAS performance is not at a level that reaches the school's Adequate Yearly Progress targets in English language arts or mathematics or both. The Michael J. Perkins Elementary School met these criteria and was one of sixteen schools selected for panel review in winter, 2004. The panel review was conducted on January 21-22, 2004.

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

1. Does the school have a sound plan for improving student performance?
2. Are the conditions in place for the successful implementation of the school's improvement plan(s)?

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

The panel's findings and conclusions on the two key questions will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration, together with school performance data, in determining whether Perkins Elementary School is deemed under-performing. The panel was not asked to formulate a sound plan for school improvement where such a plan does not presently exist or to recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions at present do not appear to exist. Diagnostic and/or prescriptive intervention, where needed to assist an under-performing school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

Michael Perkins Elementary School

Enrollment

The Michael Perkins School is one of 83 elementary schools in Boston. This school serves students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Preliminary tabulations based on the October 1, 2003 data collection show that 203 students are enrolled in the school this academic year. Enrollment trends for the period 2001-2004 at the Perkins Schools show a steady decline from 250 in 2001 to 203 this year. During this period slightly above 10 percent of the school's total population has been Asian. Black students have comprised nearly 45 percent; Hispanics, 15

percent, and whites almost 30 percent. Over 90 percent of students at the Perkins School qualify as low-income.

The proportion of students for whom English is not the first language has fluctuated between 17 and 26 percent over the 2001-2004 period. The percentage of Limited English Proficient students at the Perkins School increased considerably over the same period, from one percent to 13 percent. Special education enrollment in 2003 and 2004 were 16 and 13 percent respectively.

Between 2000 and 2003, attendance at the Perkins Elementary School steadily declined from 93.7 to 82.8 percent. The number of days students were absent, however, fell by almost 50 percent from 11.3 to 6.3 percent. Out-of-school suspensions during this period were between zero and one percent. No in-school suspensions or exclusions were reported during that period.

Staffing

The 2003-2004 Perkins School's staffing report indicates that the school is composed of 19 administrators, teachers, and guidance personnel. Fifteen percent of educators at this school have taught there for fewer than five years. All but three staff members are certified in the subject that they teach.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Perkins Elementary School are assessed in grades 3 and 4 in English language arts (ELA) and in grade 4 in mathematics. Since 1999, the school has never been found to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In the mid-cycle III (2003-2004) report, the school failed to make AYP in ELA and for its Free/Reduced lunch subgroup.¹ The school only made AYP for its African-American subgroup. In mathematics, the school has not made AYP since 1999. In addition, in mid-Cycle III it was found to not have made AYP in the aggregate and for all qualifying subgroups.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

Regular Education

At the grade 3 level in Reading, the performance of regular education students has worsened since the test was first introduced in 2001. In 2001, 48 percent of students were found proficient, 45 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level and six percent at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students fell to 45 percent while Needs Improvement increased to 55 percent. In the most recent administration of the MCAS test, the percentage of students who

¹ In accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, student performance is disaggregated by the following subgroups: Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Free/Reduced Lunch, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White. A minimum of 20 students per subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at the Perkins School in 2003 were African-American/Black and Free/Reduced lunch in ELA and Free/Reduced Lunch in mathematics.

scored at the Warning level was further reduced to 38 percent, and the proportion at Needs Improvement increased to 67 percent.

At the grade 4 level in ELA, the performance of regular education students has fluctuated widely over the last four years. In 2000, 10 percent of students were found proficient; 83 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and seven percent at Warning. In 2001, the proportion of students who scored at the Proficient and Advanced levels increased to 48 percent of students, while 41 percent were at Needs Improvement, and 11 percent at Warning. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students fell to 24 percent. The percentage of students in need of improvement increased to 57 percent and those at Warning also increased to 19 percent. In 2003, the percentage of proficient students further decreased to 17 percent; 67 percent of scores were found at the Needs Improvement level and the remaining 17 percent in Warning.

Special Education

Fewer than 10 special education students were assessed in 2001 through 2003.

Limited English Proficient

Fewer than 10 limited English proficient students were assessed in 2000 through 2003.

Student Performance in Mathematics

Regular Education

The performance of regular education students at this school steadily worsened between 2000 and 2003. In 2000, 28 percent of regular education students were proficient; 55 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level, and 17 percent at Warning. In 2001, the proportion of proficient and advanced students fell to 15 percent, while those in need of improvement increased to 48 percent and those at the Warning level also increased to 37 percent. Results from the 2002 math assessment show 10 percent of 4th graders proficient. Forty-eight percent scored at the Needs Improvement level and the remaining 43 percent at Warning. In 2003, no students were proficient. Student performance was divided between the Needs Improvement level, where 56 percent of students performed and Warning where 44 percent of scores were found.

Special Education

Fewer than 10 special education students were assessed in 2001 through 2003.

Limited English Proficient

Fewer than 10 limited English proficient students were assessed in 2000 through 2003.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

Generally no. The Perkins has a Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) for improving student performance. The WSIP includes an analysis of both formative and summative assessments to identify gaps in student performance. It sets out specific improvement objectives that are grounded in the school's preliminary analysis of the reasons for poor student performance. However, the WSIP specifies strategies that do not appear likely to lead to improved student results and lacks specific measurement benchmarks to support its successful implementation.

A. Has the school analyzed appropriate data and program information to accurately identify the gaps in student performance and determined why those gaps exist?

Yes. A group of five teachers led by the school's lead teacher and funded by a Title I grant conducted a systematic analysis of the 2002 MCAS data. The school also analyzed formative assessment data to validate analysis of MCAS results. Subsequent analysis and discussion, including a survey of the staff to determine the school's English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics strengths and areas of weaknesses, led to identification of root causes. Deeper analysis of MCAS data is needed to help the school focus on teaching skills that will lead to improved student performance.

The school has considered both summative and formative assessment in identifying its priorities/weaknesses to be addressed. The MCAS analysis group looked at trends of performance, specific student performance, and conducted a careful item analysis. The data was used to identify the reasons why the school has not made adequate yearly progress and to identify ways to effectively address concerns. A copy of the "MCAS Study Project" was provided for the Review Panel team to review. In addition, the deputy's review of the Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) suggested the school analyze formative assessment to confirm MCAS findings. The formative assessments analyzed in ELA were: rubric-scored writing prompts, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), running records, Observation Surveys, reading logs, writing notebooks, conference notes, and student-published writing. Formative assessment analyzed in math included mid-year and end-of-the-year assessments. The schools' 2003 WSIP Fall Addendum reveals a correlation between students performing at Level 1 on formative assessments also scoring Level 1 or Warning on summative assessments in both ELA and math.

The school identifies and prioritizes its problems and concerns. However, the lack of direct involvement from the larger faculty in the analysis of MCAS has limited the impact of the process to those immediately involved. Sub-groups of faculty do not appear to have had direct training in the process of analysis. The absence of this direct involvement in the process has created a barrier to having the MCAS analysis inform instruction. The Panel Review team questions teachers' direct understanding and buy in of the root causes of learning deficiencies.

Data analysis is still at a very superficial level. The analysis conducted by the MCAS project group outlined recommendations that, if included in the WSIP, implemented, and monitored, would likely lead to improved student performance. For example, an error analysis of multiple choice questions revealed that students need instruction in identifying the “main idea”, “sequencing” and “interpretation.” However there is no mention of these areas in the WSIP. The sub- skills students require to effectively identify the main idea, to interpret, or to sequentially organize their thoughts would not only help them on the ELA test but also with solving multi-step math problems (one of two math priorities listed in the WSIP).

Similarly, the ELA priority the school chose to focus on was “students have difficulty identifying, analyzing, and applying knowledge of the purpose, structure, and elements of non-fiction or informational materials providing evidence from the text to support their understanding”. The important student skills to prioritize are “identifying, analyzing, applying knowledge, providing evidence, and supporting their understanding.” Rather than focus teaching strategies on such important skill sets, the WSIP plan focused on exposure to non-fiction and identified the majority of the root causes (three out of four) on increasing the number of non-fiction books, directly teaching elements of non-fiction, conferring around non-fiction, and independent reading of non-fiction. A close look at Massachusetts’s standards will reveal the same list of skill sets (identifying, analyzing, applying knowledge, providing evidence, and supporting their understanding) are the staple for numerous of the ELA standards. With 71 percent of third graders and 89 percent of fourth graders scoring in the Needs Improvement and Warning categories, priorities, root causes and actions steps that encompass more than just “non-fiction” are essential if the school is to see growth and improvement.

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

Yes. Student improvement targets are articulated in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) system of SMART Goals. MCAS goals are usually established by the BPS Office of Research and Development however not all of the priorities include an MCAS goal. The Panel Review team, however, did not find any evidence that the school has made a thorough determination of the root causes of low student performance. The school knows in what areas student performance is low but it has not yet probed deeply into identifying priorities that encompass the range of student weaknesses identified.

The WSIP contains objectives (“priorities/weaknesses to be addressed”) that are directly tied to specific findings in areas of identified weakness. A careful review by the team of the MCAS data analysis completed by the school unveils a wide range of student weaknesses both in ELA and math. With help from the district “support specialist” the school was asked to streamline the number of priorities. The school chose one ELA priority and two math priorities. Given the number of students scoring Needs Improvement and Warning, it is necessary to identify priorities that will have the greatest impact on student achievement. As mentioned in Question 1, sub-question A, the school focus on Massachusetts English Language Arts Standard #13 which deals with non-fiction is based on MCAS item analysis, however as the school identified root

causes, it focuses solely on “non-fiction” to the exclusion of the sub-set of skills needed to read and respond to non-fiction text.

Not all of the SMART Goals and objectives are reasonable and achievable. Some of the goals measure achievement against MCAS and others against formative assessment. The MCAS goal for ELA is for students to increase their overall average score from 45 percent to 55 percent by 2004 in the Literature section of the MCAS. One of the math goals is for students to increase from 22 percent to 37 percent of students scoring Level 2 on Open Response questions. It is unclear to the team whether these goals will help the Perkins meet AYP in ELA or not. It is also unclear what the school means by “increase overall average score in Literature”. The team also questioned whether or not striving to only move 37 percent of students into the students into Needs Improvement category with no mention of moving students into the Proficient category is rigorous enough for a school whose scores are declining and who has failed to meet AYP for five years.

The MCAS goals listed for Special Needs students are listed in terms of scaled scores expecting students to reach a minimum of 220—Needs Improvement. When the team questioned the leadership about this goal, they simply stated that it seemed reasonable. The time allotted for the Panel Review visit did not allow adequate time to probe into the expectations for Special Needs students.

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

No. The WSIP identifies instructional strategies that are not clearly linked to an articulated understanding of the reasons for low student performance; therefore successful implementation of the strategies would not directly impact identified weakness in student performance.

Strategies focus more on curriculum procedures and materials than improving student performance.

Priority	# of strategies listed	# of strategies focused on curriculum procedures and materials
Focus on non-fiction	4	3 (provide non-fiction text, expand reading time & confer regularly, develop and implement non-fiction units)
Focus on number sense	4	3 (build investigations lessons, Implement 10 minute math, expect the use of manipulatives)
Focus on multi-step math problems	4	2 (familiarize teachers with Investigations, structure lessons)

The WSIP lists twelve strategies, eight of which are focused on the use of curriculum materials leaving it uncertain that these actions will directly improve student performance.

The strategies selected which focus on curriculum implementation are research-based since the curriculum the school is implementing is TERC *Investigations* and the methodology of *Readers'/Writers' Workshop*. Currently the staff is concerned with addressing the learning standards through mini-lessons in *Readers'/Writers' Workshop*. In response, the school purchased supplemental materials (*Making Meaning*) to help teachers address the standards. The MCAS study project group made final recommendation at the end of their report, the first of which is, "Adhere strictly to standards-based instruction and grade level curriculum guides." While an admirable goal, the statement is too vague to guide specific practices or actions teachers might take to improve instruction. The recommendations listed in the MCAS study project could be revisited in an effort to identify priorities and strategies that can explicitly guide improvement.

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

No. Even though the WSIP is clear and specific, it lacks focus on key skills needed to have a greater impact on student achievement. The Perkins WSIP provides some direction for implementation of planned improvement initiatives. The plan lists three improvement objectives, four root causes, and strategies. However, the improvement objectives are limited, the root causes too narrow, and the strategies predominately focus on curriculum materials.

Boston has revised the WSIP and aligned it to the PIM model. In previous years the WSIP focused predominately on implementation of literacy and math programs adopted by the district (evidence of the previous plans' focus on whether programs are being faithfully followed still remain). There was a section in the previous WSIP which required schools to analyze data, but the results of the analysis were not the focus of the plan. This year the Panel Review team found improvements in the plan. For example, the plan's objectives listed as "priorities" were based on MCAS analysis. The identified causes are focused on teaching and learning, and the strategies are aligned with the causes. This is coupled with a layout and format for presenting the plan that is easy to understand and user friendly. The weakness with the Perkins plan as mentioned in Question 1A is that it does not cover a wider range of ELA skills that, if taught consistently, would help students answer questions of a variety of genres.

The skills of identifying, analyzing, applying knowledge, providing evidence, and supporting ones' understanding not only apply to ELA but cross over to math as well. While it is true that the WSIP documents are articulated in writing, include a statement of the problem, casual analysis, and a list of measurable goals, objectives and strategies, the Panel Review team felt it was not enough for an effective improvement plan. The improvement planning has to dig deep into the data analysis to truly identify aspects of teaching and learning that are likely to lead to student success.

The revised WSIP implementation format and template lies out on one page the objective to be addressed, strategies, sub steps to address the strategy, timeline, person responsible, measurement and professional development. The benchmarks used to measure improvement are not specific enough to actually measure progress. For example a measurement stating that students will be able to identify and articulate strategies seemed really vague to the team. Rather if the measurement was more explicit, realistic and short term, the plan would be enhanced. In the Panel Review team's judgment, teachers not only need to know what the benchmarks are but how they will be held accountable to lead students toward the desired learning outcome.

Another measure under this same priority states, "The teacher will assess student comfort and success in independent and small group work, sharing data with ILT four times across year". The team questioned how student *comfort* is measured. In addition, the ILT is listed numerous times as the body that will oversee the implementation of the WSIP. Due to teacher contracts the ILT is not meeting formally at the Perkins, leaving the critical role of the ILT to individuals not identified in the WSIP.

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

No. The WSIP was inclusive in informing all teachers of the plan's contents, but the data analysis that led to the identification of priorities was the work of only five teachers. The lack of direct involvement from the larger staff in the analysis of MCAS data has limited the impact of the process to those immediately involved. After several interviews with administrators and individual interviews with each of the teachers, the team questioned the overall level of support for the WSIP.

Many sub committees were involved in developing the WSIP. The 2002 MCAS data was analyzed by the MCAS project group comprised of five teachers. This analysis laid out the important groundwork. The group wrote a report and designed actions steps to improve performance levels. The staff was surveyed using a self-assessment tool designed to elicit their impressions of the school's current literacy status. The ILT reviewed the self-assessment data, and held meetings to develop a better understanding of the new WSIP format and to chart a course for the 2003-2004 WSIP development. Additional meetings by the Math Leadership Team (MLT) and the Primary Literacy Team (PLT) were held to try to deepen the analysis of the school's needs in ELA and math. The MLT analyzed mid-year formative assessment data. The information was shared with the staff. An all day professional development day was dedicated to the WSIP development. Subcommittees for ELA and math were asked to prioritize the identified weaknesses and to explore possible root causes with each. After a lot of fine-tuning and final revisions to the plan, a copy of the WSIP was made for every teacher.

During our Leadership interview the team was informed that the information learned from careful analysis of data was not new. These areas of concern had arisen in previous years. Perkins school leaders could not answer why the same concerns keep surfacing every year and more importantly why they thought listing them in the WSIP plan this year would make a

difference. They voiced a lot of hope that things would change but admitted they had not examined prior data before constructing the current WSIP.

The Perkins supervising deputy asked for a mid-year review of the WSIP, which was submitted January 2004. Reviewing the report confirmed for the Panel Review team that a weakness of this plan is the school leader's ability to monitor its implementation (see Question 2A). Learning Walks are conducted but feedback is not substantial enough to lead to improvement. Learning Walks consist of the principal visiting a number of classrooms and providing general feedback to the staff in a newsletter. The feedback is vague, not directed at any teacher or instructional strategy in particular, poses questions the principal had after visiting classrooms that do not seem likely to generate change. The ELA and math rubrics created by the District and used by school leaders to assess the level of program implementation and by teachers to self-assess level of implementation, assess compliance with the curriculum methods and pacing, but are not closely aligned with the strategies listed in the WSIP that are intended to enrich students' learning experiences. The ILT is listed the body that will review the plan but they are not meeting this year. A subset of the ILT (which is also the Leadership Team) is taking over some of the responsibility for review of the WSIP. According to reports from teachers interviewed during the panel visit, there is no requirement that teachers will talk about WSIP implementation during common planning time.

The Panel Review team conducted 14 classrooms observations. Six of the 14 observations focused lessons directly connected to the WSIP priorities. However a concern remains as to the school's ability to evaluate the plan's implementation or make adjustments when needed as a result of on-going monitoring.

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

No. The principal is not providing instructional leadership that will guide, support or monitor improvement initiatives at the school. The staff is not cohesively implementing strategies outlined in the WSIP. While the district offers financial and human resources to the school, its support is limited as the Perkins is one of forty-four schools needing assistance.

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

No. The instructional leadership at Perkins Elementary is not effective at identifying student weaknesses and monitoring implementation of selected programs. School leadership is focused on sound management and developing community partnerships, but is less adept at improving the quality of classroom instruction. Further, evidence from interviews revealed that the school leader has failed to communicate a common vision centered on improving student achievement. Contributing to this is a discrepancy in the school culture surrounding teachers' responsibility for improvement.

In interviews with the school leader, School Site Council, ILT and teachers, the Panel Review team found few common statements of the school's purpose or vision. Teachers and the school leader referred to the implementation of the WSIP as their primary goal; with a focus exclusively on the actions teachers must perform to implement the WSIP. There were no comments noting a focus on the impact of teacher and administrators' actions on student achievement. Few teachers interviewed talked about high expectations, and lower elementary teachers expressed confusion about their role in implementing the priorities identified in the WSIP. The school leadership has failed to communicate a clear message that focusing on MCAS improvement is the responsibility of all teachers' not just those teaching MCAS-tested grades. This lack of focus on a communicating a vision for improvement impedes progress at Perkins Elementary.

The evidence suggests that school leadership excels at operational management. Students are well behaved, the corridors are clean and proudly display student work, and classrooms reflect an environment rich for learning. Several teachers interviewed by the team characterize the school leader as accessible, hard working, inclusive, and explain that she has created a positive school climate with a family atmosphere, and is very open to new ideas. Recently she has reached out to a wider range of teachers for decision-making and offers opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development.

One byproduct of the ineffective communication of a vision is the principal's inability to engage teachers in the school's efforts to improve. A teacher on the School Site Council responded to the question "what is your vision for the school" by saying, "I suppose every child passing or doing better on the MCAS". Teachers feel they are working hard therefore, if their hard work does not yield improvement, it cannot be their teaching it must be the ability of the students in front of them. A teacher on the instructional leadership team expressed that she "has a whole large group of students that will not make grade level; I know right away they are not going to meet grade level". Another teacher referred to her students by saying that she "teaches 'what' we have". The school leader and several teachers mentioned, "We do the best we can," echoing an acceptance of low student performance and exempting themselves from having full responsibility for the success of every student. Comments such as these left the Panel Review team seriously questioning teachers' expectations. Regardless of the WSIP's written quality, if teachers do not believe that their students can learn and will succeed, this plan or any plan is unlikely to improve student performance.

The Panel Review team saw little evidence that the principal is the guiding force behind the improvement efforts at the school. During interviews, teachers talked about the principal's characteristics but failed to mention her ability to help them change their instruction. The principal conducts three to four "Learning Walks" a week and provides written feedback to the staff. The feedback reviewed by the Panel Review team was vague and general and not directed at any one teacher. The principal indicated she relies on coaches (math, literacy, and change) to provide her with instructional feedback. If she notices a teacher in need of help she will assign a coach to help and rely on the coach to let her know of the outcome. The team did not hear her mention or give examples of direct, substantial instructional feedback she has given teachers other than the contractual evaluations mandated by the union. This lack of instructional oversight, inability to communicate a clear vision, and minimal hands-on involvement in

critiquing teachers leads the Panel Review team to conclude that the school is lacking effective leadership toward improvement.

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

No. Absent from most teacher interviews was an expressed and firm belief that improvement planning will result in measurable improved student performance. Teachers can articulate the priorities listed in their WSIP and results from the DOE survey demonstrate a high level of awareness of the priorities; however the Panel Review team gathered some evidence that a segment of the school staff is not committed to the planned improvement efforts, and the team is concerned whether teachers believe that implementing the WSIP will result in student progress. This, in addition to the lack of a systematic process for regular review and assessment of instructional practices, makes the likelihood for improvement low.

Most teachers agree that the weaknesses identified through data analysis are a fair representation of the skills students struggle with. The Deputy Superintendent confirmed that the school's analysis is representative of what most students in the district are struggling with (number sense, exposure to non-fiction, and working with multi-step math problems). All staff received a folder, which included the latest WSIP revisions. In general, evidence indicates that some faculty supports the school's planned improvement efforts, but a segment of the staff is not committed to the school's efforts. It was not possible within the scope of the panel review to fully investigate the balance between supportive and non-supportive faculty groups.

Some staff members are implementing the school's improvement initiatives. In six out of fourteen classroom observations, teachers' lessons were aimed at non-fiction, number sense, or multi-step problems. Teachers report engaging in frequent informal conversations about the priorities listed in the WSIP, and discussing it during common planning time, however, teachers could not articulate how implementing the strategies listed in the WSIP have impacted or changed their instruction. One teacher interviewed said, "It's a plan. If implemented it will result in improvement." This laid back, no urgency attitude voiced by teachers, leave grave doubts that the WSIP will be the driving force that will lead to improved student achievement.

A process for regular review and assessment of instructional practice is not in place. As mentioned in Question 2, A, the feedback teachers receive on instruction is general, and lacks substance. None of the feedback provided for the team to review would likely lead to changes in instructional practice. The literacy coach is facilitating CCL (Collaborative Coaching and Learning) cycles where teachers can talk about classroom instruction, receive coaching, and observe peers. This forum of teachers talking about instruction holds promise, however the coach is limited in his role, which is to support, teachers not evaluate them. Again, the absence of strong direct guidance to improve instruction highlights the absence of implementation and monitoring of enhanced instruction as key ingredients to improvement.

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

Somewhat. For the most part, the Perkins receives equitable guidance and support from district leadership. After interviewing the Deputy Superintendent the Panel Review team judged that the level of guidance and support from district leadership is adequate to lead, oversee and support sound school improvement planning. District leadership is involved in the process of reviewing and approving the school's WSIP. The district has a willingness to support the Perkins and as budget dictates, provides financial and human resources, which support the Perkins WSIP priorities.

The district leader is well informed of the needs at the Perkins School. The Boston public schools identified for corrective action receive extra attention from the supervising deputy and additional resources in the form of materials, after school tutoring, school support specialist, transition teacher, overtime stipends and possibly additional math coaching. The Deputy Superintendent has a good grasp of the current situation at the school, voicing many of the same concerns as the Panel Review team.

The instructional leader for Triad A (a position no longer funded) was very instrumental in helping the Perkins develop their WSIP. The current deputy for Triad A has been directly involved in reviewing and providing feedback to the school on the alignment of professional development to identified student needs and on the use of formative assessment data to confirm, disconfirm or add nuance to the MCAS data. The Panel Review team reviewed the appropriateness of the feedback given to the school and felt that it gave helpful suggestions as to alignment and clarity. The current workload of deputy superintendents, each supporting approximately 44 schools, puts in question the quality and level of involvement a deputy has to devote to one particular school. The deputy has to trust the integrity of the data analysis performed by the school and trust that the goals identified will lead to improvement at the school. However, as the team concluded, there are fundamental issues with the priorities, root causes and strategies identified in the Perkins WSIP that were not mentioned in the Deputy's feedback to the school. The Perkins WSIP feedback does not focus enough on these issues to have a meaningful impact on student achievement.

CONCLUSION

The Panel Review team found that the Perkins has a plan for improving student performance that goes part of the way toward a 'sound' plan but which lacks key elements. While the school identified areas of weakness, it did not articulate a clear understanding of the reasons for poor student performance or the specific skills student lack. Further, benchmarks for measuring the plan's successful implementation are vague and difficult to monitor. Finally, the Principal is not providing adequate instructional leadership and feedback, the staff is not cohesively implementing the plan, and the district offers useful but limited support to the Perkins.

**APPENDIX A
Team Members**

Emilys Peña, Panel Chairperson, SchoolWorks Consultant, Beverly, MA

Denise Delorey, PhD., Panel Coordinator, Department of Education, Malden, MA

Mary M. Fischer, Director of Reading/Language Arts, Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, MA

Jennifer Walsh, English Language Arts Curriculum Instructional Teacher for K-4, Connery Elementary School, Lynn, MA

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

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

Day 1

- 10:30—12:00* Panel chairperson and panel coordinator meet to discuss and clarify roles, prepare for the first team meeting, and review general logistics/schedule for the review. [location: hotel]
- 12:00—2:00 p.m.* **Team meeting # 1:** team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist's individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgements on key questions. [location: hotel]
- 2:00—3:00 p.m.* Panelists meet with the district Superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate). [location: hotel]
- 3:30—4:30 p.m.* Panelists meet with Principal (and one other school-based individual, if appropriate). [location: the school]
- 6:00—8:00 p.m.* **Team meeting # 2:** panelists synthesize interview information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for Day 2 of the review. [location: hotel]

Day 2

All activities take place in 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 Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized, as appropriate, to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students, classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific inquiry groups.

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group

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

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
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	Observe teacher 9 and teacher 10
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	Interview teacher 9 and teacher 10 individually

11 a.m.—12:30 p.m. **Team meeting # 3:** 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*; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
1:00-1:30	Teacher	Focus Group 1	Teacher	Focus Group 3	Prepare report
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. **Team meeting # 4:** panelists deliberate and form conclusions