

## **REPORT OF TWO YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW**

### **Office of Educational Quality and Accountability**

#### **Homer Street Elementary School**

#### **Springfield Public Schools**

Although the Homer Street Elementary School in Springfield has continued to show little improvement in student performance, the school has started to become effective in using a school improvement plan. The leadership change in the 2006-2007 school year has contributed to the school's ability to implement the plan. Past conditions that have impeded the school's ability to implement the plan included principal transitions. Some of the prohibiting conditions remain, such as classroom management and student behavior, pockets of ineffective instruction, and district-wide challenges that are not unique to school. Still, the conditions to support improvement in student achievement were in the process of development at the time of the site visit, although data show no gains in student achievement. With a new leadership team, the use of data, an increase in expectations, and accountability systems in place, the process has begun for improving conditions.

#### **Priority Findings**

1. The school has a long history of inadequate improvement, and the performance gap between the school and the district remained wide in 2006.
  - Between 1999 and 2006, the school did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) or math for the aggregate student population or for subgroups, with the exception of once in 2006.
  - Now understanding the urgent need for improvement in student achievement, the entire school community was focused on turning the school around in the 2006-2007 school year.
2. After several principal transitions and inconsistencies in implementing improvement plans, this is the first school year the school has begun to show potential for addressing weaknesses in student achievement over the next accountability cycle.
  - Since July 2006, the newly appointed principal has increased the rigor of instruction, heightened the focus on data, and identified the deficits in staffing, professional development, and support services. The principal has begun to address these areas.
  - The principal and leadership team provide expertise and accountability to staff.
3. The school improvement plan (SIP) is effective, implemented by school leaders, and supported by the district, and teachers have buy-in and are held accountable. The improvement plan guides the school to increase academic achievement.
  - The SIP process was based on the analysis of student achievement data, and the plan contains elements to inform school and classroom strategies.

- The principal and leadership team effectively monitor the SIP by monitoring staff and holding staff accountable, and by putting systems and structures in place for accountability. This has resulted in a data-driven change in instruction focused on strategies for increasing student achievement.
  - The SIP lacks assessments and accurate annual goals, but the principal has supplemented the SIP with her leadership priorities.
4. Management of student behavior continues to be a challenge for the school.
- Classroom management negatively affects student learning and teacher effectiveness.
  - However, the school is developing plans for supporting student needs, professional development, more effective classroom management, and appropriate levels of administrative responsibility for student discipline.

### **Two Year Follow-up Review Process**

The Two Year Follow-up Review is the fourth and final stage of the process used to assess school performance under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. The first stage identifies schools in the lowest MCAS performance categories that are in need of improvement. Stage two, the Panel Review, involves the visitation of a review team to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether a school identified as in need of improvement is underperforming and in need of state guidance to improve student performance. The Panel Review of the Homer Street Elementary School occurred on January 26, 2004. Schools declared to be underperforming are required to undergo the next stage of the process, the Fact-finding Review, to assist both the school and the Commissioner in determining the reasons for low student performance and in developing a factual basis from which to develop a plan to improve student performance. Following the subsequent Fact-finding Review, the Homer Street Elementary School developed such a plan, and the Commissioner and Board of Education accepted the plan on October 26, 2004. The district is required to direct the implementation of this plan, and within two years the school must demonstrate significant improvement.

The Underperforming Follow-up Review reports on progress at the end of this two-year period of implementation. The Follow-up Review was conducted on March 15, 2007. The Commissioner and Board of Education will use the Follow-up Review report to issue a judgment on the question of chronic underperformance at the Homer Street Elementary School.

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

1. Has the school shown improvement in student performance?
2. Is the school effective in using a school improvement plan that results in the continuous improvement in student performance?
3. Are there other factors (changes in conditions or circumstances, i.e., policies, practices) in the school or district that have contributed to or impeded the school's ability to implement its plan?

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

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

The panel's findings and conclusions on the four key questions will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration, together with the school's status reports and student performance data, in determining whether Homer Street Elementary School should be deemed chronically underperforming. 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.

### Homer Street Elementary School Profile

Homer Street Elementary School is one of 30 elementary schools serving students up to grade 5 in the Springfield Public Schools. In 2007, the school enrolled 326 students, down from 343 students in 2006. The majority population of the school population is Hispanic (50 percent), followed by African-American (34.4 percent). The school has a higher percentage of African-American students than the district, by 8.9 percentage points, and a lower percentage of white students (5.2 percent), by 13.1 percentage points. The school's percentage of special education students (14.4 percent) was 5.6 percentage points lower than the district. The school's percentage of multi-race students (8.9 percent) was 4.8 percentage points higher than the district. Subgroup populations comparable to the district, within approximately three percentage points, were Hispanic, Asian, first language not English (FLNE), and limited English proficient (LEP) students.

**Table 1. Demographic Composition, 2007**  
**Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Student Subgroup	Percentage of Students		
	School	District	State
African-American	34.4	25.5	8.2
Asian	1.5	2.1	4.8
Hispanic	50.0	49.9	13.3
Native American	0.0	0.1	0.3
White	5.2	18.3	71.5
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	8.9	4.1	1.7
FLNE	18.7	21.8	14.9
LEP	16.0	13.7	5.6
Low Income	89.3	77.5	28.9
Special Education	14.4	22.0	16.9

*Source: Department of Education*

The school is overwhelmingly low-income, with 89.3 percent of the students receiving free and reduced-cost lunch. The school had a population of low-income students that was higher than the district in both 2007 (89.3 compared to 77.5 percent) and in 2006 (90.0 compared to 77.5 percent). In 2006, the school also had a higher proportion of low-income students than 20 of the 30 elementary schools in the district. The school remained demographically similar between 2006 and 2007, although the percentage of minority students decreased from 99.0 to 94.8 percent. See Tables 1 and 2.

In 2006, Homer Street's attendance rate of 92.2 percent was the lower than that of 24 of the 30 elementary schools, higher than the district average, but lower than the state average. The school's suspension rates were higher than the those state-wide. Homer Street's in-school suspension rate (5.1 percent) was the second highest among the 30 elementary schools. The out-of-school suspension rate (8.2 percent) was the fifth highest among the 30 elementary schools. See Table 2.

**Table 2. Demographics, Attendance and Discipline, 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield**

School	Enrollment	Minority	LEP	Low-Income	Attendance Rate	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
Homer Street (K-5)	343	99	17	90	92.2	5.1	8.2
Washington (K-5)	256	83	23	90	94.3	0	4.7
White(K-5)	400	90	15	90	91.5	0	7.3
District (K-12)	25,206	81.7	13.7	77.5	89.6	10.2	13.7
State	972,371	28.5	5.6	28.9	94.4	3.5	6.0

*Source: Department of Education*

The rate of in-school suspension increased from 2004 to 2006 from zero to 5.1 to 4.7 percent. The rate of out-of-school suspension increased from 1.3 to 9.9 to 8.2 percent over this period. See Table 3.

**Table 3. Homer Street Elementary School Suspensions, 2004-2007**

Suspensions	2004	2005	2006
In-school Suspensions	0.0	5.1	4.7
Out-of-school Suspensions	1.3	9.9	8.2

*Source: School Report Card for 2004-2006 data. School reported 2007 data.*

### **Staffing**

Homer Street has a principal, 31 teachers, seven teacher aides, and one guidance counselor. Although in her first year at the school, the principal was an experienced administrator. The school had a stable staff. All teachers were certified, and the average teacher had 15.6 years of teaching experience and 8.1 years in the school. Three teachers, one bilingual teacher and two bilingual/regular education teachers, provided bilingual education services. The school had three special education teachers and three special education teacher aides. Four teacher aides provided support for the regular education program. See Table 4.

**Table 4. Homer Street Elementary School Staffing, 2007**

Role	Total	Total with current certification in area/HQ if paraprofessional	Average years experience in current role	Average years in school
Administrators	1	1	12.0	1.0
Teachers	31	31	15.6	8.1
Teacher aides	7	3	12.3	11.7
Guidance	1	12.5	-	12.5

*Source: Data provided by school. Only teaching and administrative experience was collected.*

In 2006, the teacher absence rate of 11.48 days per year was slightly higher than the district average for elementary schools, considering only short-term illness and personal days. Homer Street teachers took slightly more time for professional development than the district average. Without consideration of long-term illness and military and jury duty, teachers were not in the classroom for instruction on average approximately 13 days in 2006. See Table 5.

**Table 5. Teacher Attendance Data, 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield**

School	Number of Teachers	Days Absent for Short-Term Illness	Days Absent for Other Reasons	Total Days Absent Excluding PD	Average per Teacher Excluding PD	Days Absent for PD	Total days Absent Including PD	Average per Teacher Including PD
Homer Street (K-5)	40	333	126	459	11.48	52	511	12.78
Washington (K-5)	30	164	43	207	6.90	19	226	7.53
White (K-5)	38	398	91	489	12.87	76	565	14.87
K-5 Average	38.97	309.47	123.33	433.53	11.02	32.25	470.79	12.11

*Source: District. PD=professional development.*

**MCAS Results**

In 2006, Homer Street was in ‘Restructuring’ status for both ELA and math, with performance of ‘Low’ in ELA and ‘Very Low’ in math. By gaining 3.3 composite proficiency index (CPI) points in ELA from Cycle III to Cycle IV, the school improved its performance rating from ‘Very Low’ to ‘Low.’ Still, change ratings in the last two cycles were ‘No Change’ and ‘Improved Below Target.’ See Tables 6 and 7.

**Table 6. ELA Adequate Yearly Progress Cycle Data, 2004-2006  
Homer Street Elementary School**

Year / Cycle	ELA CPI	CPI change	AYP Aggregate	AYP Subgroups	School Status and Ratings
2004 Cycle III (03-04)	56.8	-1.1	No in 2003 No in 2004	No in 2003 No in 2004	Very Low No Change Identified for Restructuring
2006 Cycle IV (05-06)	60.1	+3.3	No in 2005 Yes in 2006	No in 2005 No in 2006	Low Improved Below Target Restructuring

*Source: Department of Education*

**Table 7. Math Adequate Yearly Progress Cycle Data, 2004-2006  
Homer Street Elementary School**

Year / Cycle	Math CPI	CPI change	AYP Aggregate	AYP Subgroups	School Status and Ratings
2004 Cycle III (03-04)	41.7	+4	No in 2003 No in 2004	No in 2003 No in 2004	Very Low Improved Below Target Identified for Restructuring
2006 Cycle IV (05-06)	41.4	-0.3	No in 2005 No in 2006	No in 2005 No in 2006	Very Low No Change Restructuring

*Source: Department of Education*

Homer Street did not make AYP from 1999 through 2006 (throughout the history of the accountability system), for the aggregate student population or for all subgroups, with the exception of ELA in 2006 for the aggregate population. The school made AYP in ELA with “Safe Harbor” for the aggregate population and for the African-American subgroup. All subgroups met the attendance target in 2006, unlike in 2005 when Hispanic students did not make AYP in ELA because the subgroup missed the attendance target, although this subgroup was the only one to meet an improvement target in a content area in 2005.

For all the tests that count toward AYP, the gap in aggregate proficiency between the school and district has narrowed, but there remains a large achievement gap between this school and this low-performing district. Comparisons of aggregate and subgroup performance on all tests administered in 2006 provide more information on subgroup performance, including on tests not used for accountability purposes.

**Subgroup Comparisons**

In grade 3 reading, the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all the school’s subgroups was lower than the district and the state except for Hispanic students, whose proficiency was slightly higher than the district and higher than the state. The gap in aggregate performance between the school and the district was 3.2 CPI points in 2006, slightly smaller than the 3.3 point gap in 2005. See Table 8.

**Table 8. Grade 3 Reading MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	68.4	73.4	72.0
Asian	–	79.3	84.8
Hispanic	70.0	68.3	66.6
Native American	–	–	79.5
White	–	82.4	87.5
LEP/FLEP	–	58.1	64.5
Low Income	66.4	70.6	71.3
Special Education	–	63.3	69.4
Aggregate (2006)	69.3	72.5	83.4
Aggregate (2005)	69.4	75.5	85.2

*Source: Department of Education*

In grade 4 ELA, the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all the school’s subgroups was lower than the district and the state. The largest gaps in performance between the school and district were for African-American students (11.8 CPI points), special education students (10.1 points), and low-income students (9.6 points). The gap in aggregate proficiency between the school and the district was 9.8 CPI points in 2006, smaller than the 16.3 point gap in 2005. See Table 9.

**Table 9. Grade 4 ELA MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	54.8	66.6	65.1
Asian	–	74.5	82.2
Hispanic	58.0	62.2	62.2
Native American	–	–	73.4
White	–	78.3	82.9
LEP/FLEP	–	57.1	60.1
Low Income	54.8	64.4	65.5
Special Education	42.5	52.6	59.8
Aggregate (2006)	56.9	66.7	78.8
Aggregate (2005)	49.7	66.0	78.5

*Source: Department of Education*

In grade 5 ELA, the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all subgroups was lower than the district and the state. The largest gaps between the school and district were for the African-American subgroup, with 10.0 CPI point gap, and low-income students, with a gap of 8.2 points. The school’s aggregate performance was 9.3 CPI points lower than the district; the state did not administer the test in 2005. See Table 10.

**Table 10. Grade 5 ELA MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	60.6	70.6	71.0
Asian	–	76.3	85.6
Hispanic	55.7	61.1	65.6
Native American	–	–	80.5
White	–	81.7	88.1
LEP/FLEP	45.0	51.5	62.0
Low Income	57.4	65.6	70.4
Special Education	52.5	53.5	65.6
Aggregate (2006)	58.7	68.0	

*Source: Department of Education*

In grade 3 math, the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all subgroups was lower than the district and the state except for Hispanic students, whose proficiency matched the district and slightly exceeded the state. The performance gap for African-American students was 9.5 CPI points, and for low-income students it was 7.0 points. The gap in aggregate performance

between the school and the district was 7.1 CPI points in 2006; the state did not administer the test in 2005. See Table 11.

**Table 11. Grade 3 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	53.9	63.4	63.0
Asian	–	80.6	83.7
Hispanic	61.7	61.7	60.1
Native American	–	–	75.8
White	–	77.7	82.3
LEP/FLEP	–	54.4	61.6
Low Income	56.3	63.3	64.4
Special Education	–	50.3	61.5
Aggregate	58.6	65.6	78.0

*Source: Department of Education*

Grade 4 math had the largest performance gaps, and again the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all subgroups was lower than the district and the state. The subgroup gaps were 16.4 CPI points for special education students, 15.6 points for low-income students, 15.3 points for African-American students, and 9.2 points for Hispanic students. The gap in aggregate performance between the school and the district was 15.0 CPI points in 2006, smaller than the 20.2 point gap in 2005. See Table 12.

**Table 12. Grade 4 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	38.1	53.4	57.9
Asian	–	71.8	81.8
Hispanic	46.0	55.2	57.0
Native American	–	–	69.9
White	–	71.1	77.2
LEP/FLEP	–	48.5	58.2
Low Income	40.5	56.1	60.3
Special Education	32.5	48.9	57.1
Aggregate (2006)	43.1	58.1	73.3
Aggregate (2005)	40.3	60.5	73.7

*Source: Department of Education*

In grade 5 math, the proficiency rate of the aggregate population and all subgroups was lower than the district and the state. African-American students performed 9.4 CPI points and low-income students performed 8.1 points below the district average. The LEP/FLEP subgroup also had a large gap, 9.5 points. The aggregate population scored 9.3 CPI points lower than the district in 2006; the state did not administer the test in 2005. See Table 13.

**Table 13. Grade 5 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	39.4	48.8	52.4
Asian	–	71.9	80.8
Hispanic	44.3	45.0	50.4
Native American	–	–	66.0
White	–	68.7	75.0
LEP/FLEP	30.0	39.5	52.4
Low Income	40.3	48.4	54.3
Special Education	35.0	38.8	49.5
Aggregate	41.8	51.1	70.2

*Source: Department of Education*

**MCAS Proficiency Trends**

In grade 3 reading, results were mostly flat between 2004 and 2006, with a slight increase in the percentage of Homer Street students performing at or above the ‘Proficient’ level, from 28 to 28 to 31 percent. The percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category changed from 18 to 14 to 17 percent over this period. See Table 14.

**Table 14. Grade 3 Reading MCAS Results, 2004-2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Homer Street Elem	78	NA	28	28	54	18
	District	2,085	NA	40	40	45	16
	State	73,332	NA	63	63	30	7
2005	Homer Street Elem	65	NA	28	28	58	14
	District	1,934	NA	41	41	46	13
	State	71,463	NA	62	62	31	7
2006	Homer Street Elem	35	0	31	31	51	17
	District	1,920	9	29	38	45	17
	State	70,751	18	40	58	34	8

*Source: DOE. n=number of students tested, A=Advanced, P=Proficient, A/P=Advanced/Proficient (at or above the proficiency level), NI=Needs Improvement, W=Warning/Failing.*

Grade 4 ELA proficiency improved between 2004 and 2006, with the percentage of students achieving at or above the ‘Proficient’ level moving from 9 to 8 to 19 percent, and the percentage scoring in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category decreasing from 47 to 41 to 38 percent. However, proficiency levels remained far below the district and state averages, and the percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category far exceeded the district and the state. See Table 15.

**Table 15. Grade 4 ELA MCAS Results, 2004-2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Homer Street Elem	75	0	9	9	44	47
	District	2,050	5	31	36	43	21
	State	73,111	11	45	56	35	9
2005	Homer Street Elem	73	1	7	8	51	41
	District	2,016	3	25	28	50	21
	State	72,774	10	40	50	40	10
2006	Homer Street Elem	47	0	19	19	43	38
	District	1,895	2	26	28	48	23
	State	71,277	8	42	50	39	12

*Source: DOE. n=number of students tested, A=Advanced, P=Proficient, A/P=Advanced/Proficient (at or above the proficiency level), NI=Needs Improvement, W=Warning/Failing.*

In grade 4 math, the percentage of students attaining proficiency decreased and the percentage at the ‘Warning/Failing’ level increased between 2004 and 2006. Only six percent of Homer Street’s students were proficient in math in 2006, and 55 percent scored in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category. See Table 16.

**Table 16. Grade 4 Math MCAS Results, 2004-2006  
Homer Street Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Homer Street Elem	75	0	9	9	45	45
	District	2,066	6	19	25	47	27
	State	73,323	14	28	42	44	14
2005	Homer Street Elem	73	0	4	4	44	52
	District	2,018	5	16	21	50	29
	State	72,827	14	27	41	44	15
2006	Homer Street Elem	47	0	6	6	38	55
	District	1,897	4	15	19	49	32
	State	71,417	15	25	40	45	15

*Source: DOE. n=number of students tested, A=Advanced, P=Proficient, A/P=Advanced/Proficient (at or above the proficiency level), NI=Needs Improvement, W=Warning/Failing.*

The team considered District Formative Assessment (DFA) data to examine measures of school performance compared to other district schools in the 2006-2007 school year. The proficiency level of the school was below that of the district on both the 2006 ELA DFA assessments (3rd cycle) and the 2007 ELA DFA assessments (2nd cycle). In math, the same was true; the school performed below the district on the 2006 and 2007 math DFA assessments. See Table 17.

**Table 17. Proficiency on District Formative Assessments  
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield  
2006 3rd Cycle Test – 2007 2nd Cycle Test**

School	Grade	ELA			Math		
		2005-2006	2006-2007	Change	2005-2006	2006-2007	Change
Homer	Grade 3	36	24	-12	30	7	-23
	Grade 4	25	43	18	22	12	-10
	Grade 5	43	18	-25	17	4	-13
Washington	Grade 3	56	66	10	42	27	-15
	Grade 4	38	63	25	33	33	0
	Grade 5	63	57	-6	36	8	-28
White	Grade 3	33	16	-17	27	3	-24
	Grade 4	22	29	7	16	9	-7
	Grade 5	30	29	-1	6	7	1
District	Grade 3	51	39	-12	47	20	-27
	Grade 4	39	51	12	35	31	-4
	Grade 5	48	39	-9	26	15	-11

*Source: District. Note: 2006-2007 scores represented the second of three assessment cycles. Upward trends mean improvement, but downward trends do not, since the chart compares the 3rd cycle of the 2005-2006 assessments with the 2nd cycle of the 2006-2007 assessments. The team used the information available from the district.*

## Panel Responses to the Key Questions

### Key Question 1: Has the school shown improvement in student performance?

**No. Homer Street Elementary School has continued to show little improvement in student performance.**

Between 1999 and 2006, the school did not make AYP in ELA or math for the aggregate student population or for subgroups except for once in 2006, when the school made AYP for “Safe Harbor” for the aggregate population. The improvement rating in Cycle IV in math was ‘No Change.’ In ELA, the school improved below target in Cycle IV, but the performance rating improved from ‘Very Low’ in Cycle III to ‘Low’ in Cycle IV.

In looking at trends in Cycle III (2003-2004) and Cycle IV (2005-2006), the greatest improvements in rates of proficiency were in grade 3 reading and grade 4 math between 2003 and 2004, prior to implementation of the plan approved by the Board of Education. From 2004 to 2006, performance was mostly flat or declined on these two tests. In grade 4 ELA, 2005 represented a dip, but proficiency was mostly flat.

The aggregate population and subgroups at Homer Street consistently perform below district and state levels on the MCAS tests. Since 2004, the highest performing subgroup with the most improvement in ELA and math was Hispanic students. In ELA in 2004 and 2005, Hispanic students met the improvement target with respective CPI gains of 5.0 and 3.9 CPI points. In 2006, the Hispanic subgroup did not meet the improvement target, but the CPI improved by 5.1 points in Cycle IV, more than the other subgroups. Hispanic students outperformed the other subgroups in grade 3 reading (70.0), grade 3 math (61.7), grade 4 ELA (58.0), and grade 4 math (46.0). In 2003 and 2004, Hispanic students did not outperform all other subgroups in math or ELA, but did outperform other subgroups in 2005 and 2006.

The school improvement plan (SIP) did not suggest that the school used its MCAS and other data to set reasonable and achievable goals for student improvement. The school has not met its goals in math or in ELA. The 2005 CPI data given for ELA and math are incorrect in the SIP (p.2). Rather than using the actual CPI in 2005, the given number was the same as the 2006 *goal* written in the previous (May 2005) SIP. The SIP states that the CPI in math was 51.5 points in 2005, which the school planned to increase to 59.6 in 2007. However, the actual CPI in math was 40.3 points in 2005, and in 2006 it was 41.4. In order to reach its 2007 goal of 59.6 points, the school would have to increase the CPI in math by 18.2 points in one year. From 2003 to 2006, the CPI changes in math for the aggregate population ranged from -2.5 to 4.0 points. The SIP states that the CPI in ELA was 63.9 points in 2005, which the school planned to increase to 69.9 in 2007. However, the actual CPI in ELA was 58.8 points in 2005, and in 2006 it was 60.1. In order to reach its 2007 goal of 69.9 CPI points, the school would have to increase the CPI in ELA by 9.8 points in one year. From 2003 to 2006, the CPI changes in ELA for the aggregate population ranged from -5.2 to 3.3 points.

However, the SIP set did reasonable goals for student achievement on the internal assessments.

**Key Question 2: Is the school effective in using a school improvement plan that results in the continuous improvement in student performance?**

**Yes. Although student performance has not improved, new leadership in the 2006-2007 school year has set the school on a course of using an improvement plan to improve student performance.**

The new principal began at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, after the current SIP was written. The school has had four principals in seven years. According to the new principal, she arrived to a school “wallowing in failure,” and it was “shocking.” She stated, “I had not seen these kinds of scores.” The principal found that the school was not properly implementing the Reading First program. Teachers did not understand how to provide interventions, even under the guidance of the Reading First program. “The students were not writing at all,” she noted. The principal increased the writing time for students from twice a month to weekly.

Shortly after her arrival, the principal began by making some sweeping staff changes. The district allowed the new principal to establish her leadership team in math and ELA. The school now has two ELA and one math instructional leadership specialists (ILSs). Initially trying not to make assumptions about teachers, the principal decided she had to reorganize the staff. Two teachers had 30 students, and she split the classrooms. The principal put two kindergarten classes in one classroom. She removed an ineffective teacher. The principal changed the expectations about math instruction so that all teachers were expected to teach math. Before, a math resource teacher in a “prep time teacher” position provided math instruction.

After working with teachers to help them understand school performance data, the principal’s assessment was that teachers lacked understanding of how to use data or how to provide interventions. In classrooms, she observed a disconnect between the data and instruction. She initiated providing substitutes to cover classrooms to give teachers planning time to review data.

The principal’s message to the staff was one of serious accountability: “The school has failed. The school will not fail again.” When asked about the possibility of collective bargaining unit challenges, she stated, “Teachers won’t resist.” The principal expressed knowledge of the contract gained from her former leadership in the teacher’s union. The principal holds teachers accountable for the use of data, the problem the day, and daily lesson plans, requiring them to be on the teachers’ desks at all times. The principal randomly collects student responses. The principal talks to staff about proficiency data, and was very conversant in MCAS data analysis in conversations with the site visit team. The principal told the EQA team that her message to the staff was that the school “must change the story.” She said that she understood staff members “felt beat up” but that they “must rise above it.” The principal implemented an accountability system called the self-directed improvement system (SDIS), requiring the staff to look at the data that inform instruction. Clarifying her expectations, the principal conducted regular learning walks with an identified goal (“today I am looking at lesson plans,” for example) and recorded her findings in a notebook. The principal managed implementation of the SIP through formal and informal learning walks, as did members of the math and ELA leadership teams, who regularly entered classrooms and provided support and professional development for teachers, coached

teachers in implementing the SIP in the classroom, had individual meetings with teachers, and provided technical assistance in SDIS meetings.

Although the school SIP preceded the principal's arrival, she is committed to implementing certain strategies in the SIP and strengthening the weaknesses she has identified in the school. She told the EQA team that she has made some changes to the SIP, although it has largely remained the same.

Teachers told the team that the 2006-2007 school year was the first year that the staff was held accountable for implementing the SIP and was provided with the support to implement the change initiatives. The principal, ILSs, and collaborative professional development teachers (CPDTs) work with staff members to implement the strategies and change initiatives with the greatest potential to improve instruction. All teachers are expected to have lesson plans completed on the school template and on the teacher's desk, use a daily math problem, use open response questions, post the "big picture" (daily agenda or student learning objective), use the UPSLE (understand, plan, solve, learn, explain) method in math, have rubrics posted, and have word walls. Teachers were also expected to use the math instructional guide (MIG) and the reading instructional guide (RIG) to inform pacing and coverage in these content areas. The principal conducted learning walks to look for specific SIP strategies.

To carry out the SIP, SDIS meetings occur twice a month, once for ELA and once for math, led by the ILSs/CPDTs. The ILSs and CPDTs conduct item analyses of the DFAs. At SDIS meetings, teachers look at the data and consider which strategies they should implement. The school frequently emphasizes the importance of using data to hold all teachers responsible for improving performance on an ongoing basis. K-3 teachers receive data to let them know how lower elementary instruction can improve student achievement by the time students get to grade 4. After every unit test teachers perform an item analysis and give these data to the ILSs/CPDTs. Teachers have to identify three focus areas on ways they will improve based on the data; they knew and were able to explain to the EQA team the specific weaknesses of their classes. "First it seemed overwhelming, but now we find it helpful," stated one teacher.

The principal uses substitute teachers to staff classrooms during meeting times for teachers in grades 3-5. All K-5 teachers are held responsible for the performance of the upper elementary students. CPDTs/ILSs provide coaching and modeling. Teachers in grades K-2 take ownership of the MCAS scores of students in grades 3-5.

Teachers have to follow a pacing guide so that they find time to re-teach with the problem of the day. A grade 5 teacher gave the following example. The teacher corrects tests and completes a spreadsheet. If more than 50 percent of the class failed, he would re-teach the item in the problem of the day or "Do now." Another teacher said that if more than one-third of the students answered an item incorrectly, teachers would review the item and results and decide whether to provide small group instruction, re-teach, or provide peer support. Each grade level divides students from different homerooms into five math groups based on assessed levels of performance. They described groups as high, middle-high, medium, middle-low, and low. These groups are flexible, and teachers use DFA and other data to make at least two changes in the groupings for the year.

The principal has implemented change to support at-risk students and students with special needs. She used the student teacher assistance team (STAT) to identify interventions for students. She reallocated the staff for more effective special education service delivery. The school used a parent facilitator to communicate about school and student issues. She also began to use Connect-ED to increase attendance. Teachers stated they feel the system has an impact.

The school developed the initial improvement plan through a process to support its successful implementation. Prior to the arrival of the new principal in 2005, the school had a performance improvement mapping (PIM) team for grades K-5 with representation for reading and math. The PIM process led the team through an in-depth analysis of data. The team decided not to create separate goals for English language learner (ELL) and special education students because the team identified strategies that would help all students. Staff members and teachers were involved in the process, and provided feedback from the school-centered decision-making (SCDM) team. Teachers were allowed to brainstorm ideas and conduct data analysis at grade-level meetings. All teachers said they had opportunities for feedback. They received an annotated version of the SIP. They focused on elements of teacher accountability and instructional strategies, such as problem-solving strategies for word and multi-step problems.

The SIP is a comprehensive document, with data reports, goals that change from year to year to reflect changes in student achievement data, timelines, objectives, and benchmark assessments. Attachments include triangulations, surveys, templates, and self-assessments.

Although the improvement plan set out clear improvement goals with specific objectives grounded in the school's analysis of the reasons for poor student performance, and the written improvement planning documents were clear and specific enough to guide implementation of the planned improvement initiatives, prior to the principal's arrival teachers were not held responsible for carrying the plan out. For example, the SIP specified the use of the Reading First program, but before the 2006-2007 school year teachers administered the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in grades K-3, but did not implement the tiers of students based on assessed levels. Teachers had not received the needed professional development on interventions. In 2006-2007, the school provided professional development in differentiated instruction, ILSs provided support and coaching to help teachers with this new skill, and the teachers now administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and DIBELS to grades 4-5. All teachers received professional development in reading comprehension and vocabulary strategies and are expected to use this training to change instruction in the classroom.

In math, the school is focused on guided exploration and guided practice. Teachers received professional development to implement these strategies. The goal was also for all teachers to use the MIG and the pacing guides and to use the math block of 90 minutes effectively. Students now have math journals and are expected to use them. Students are using manipulatives in math to guide from concrete to abstract. Teachers have increased the level of vocabulary in math and use a word wall. Teachers work on a higher level of questioning in math, and students need to explain their thinking. At grade-level meetings, teachers discuss how to create and select multi-step problems. There is a problem of the day and a monthly multi-step open-response question in math in which students are directed to use the UPSLE method. The school has open-response

rubrics by grade level. The teachers correct the responses and give them to the CPDTs/ILSs. These instructional leaders discuss the monthly data in meetings with staff. Even grade K-2 students are expected to receive work that is more rigorous. Previously, teachers were reading the problem to students; now, lower level elementary students have to read and understand the problem themselves. Teachers plan math lessons on a standard template.

School leadership understands the causes of improvement in student achievement, and the faculty has improved this year in making connections between curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the improvement of student performance. There was a basis for understanding this, because the SIP was strong. Implementation improved in 2006-2007 because of the increased focus on continuous data analysis and real-time modifications to instruction in response to data. The school provides enrichment and provision for advanced learners, embedded in differentiated instruction training for teachers, the MIG, and the Scott Foresman program, which provide extension activities.

However, the faculty does not yet completely understand the connections between classroom management practices and student behavior in order to create a consistent climate conducive to learning. The school has a behavior room, PEARL, which was not used to support instruction, but rather took away from it. Teachers were organized into a CRISIS team, which responded to behavior incidents in other classrooms, but the response pulls teachers away from instruction in their classrooms. The team observed that across the school there was not a consistent implementation of a whole-school plan to improve behavior. The position of school adjustment counselor was primarily used for reactive, rather than proactive, intervention.

**Key Question 3: Are there other factors (changes in conditions or circumstances, i.e., policies, practices) in the school or district that have contributed to or impeded the school's ability to implement its plan?**

**Yes. The leadership change in the 2006-2007 school year has contributed to the school's ability to implement the plan. Past conditions that have impeded the school's ability to implement the plan included principal transitions. Some of the prohibiting conditions remain, such as classroom management and student behavior, pockets of ineffective instruction, and district-wide challenges that are not unique to the school.**

Two new district policies, the boundary plan and the pupil progression plan, have affected the school, but have not negatively affected the school's ability to implement its plan. Because of the district's new boundary plan and typical student transience and mobility within the district, the school has experienced substantial student turnover. Only 13 of 52 grade 5 students were in the school when they were in grade 3. Students who move outside of the school's boundary must switch schools if the move occurs before March; after that time students can stay until June if they have transportation. However, the boundary plan changes did not result in changes to staffing with the district's new budget allocation formula. The school kept the Title I classroom reduction teacher, and kept class sizes small. The district's new pupil progression policy supports principals' expectations for student progress in order to advance to the next grade.

Some changes had impacts on certain grade levels. For example, one of the three grade 4 teachers had been pulled for jury duty three days a week, so the class had to be reorganized. A grade 3 teacher was moved to grade 4 to stabilize the grade, but this was a disruption to grade 3. The Reading First grant was in its third year. New in 2006-2007 was the Read Well program at the primary level; teachers expressed that the program was excellent.

The principal indicated that she was familiar with the contract and has not had union issues. She once was president of the teacher's union. However, with no contract in place, the district has had difficulties recruiting effective and experienced teachers. The new agreement allows the superintendent to move underperforming/resistant teachers, but the principal has been able to move teachers without using this new authority.

Discipline was a problem when the new principal arrived, because of ineffective behavioral management and classroom management practices. She spent the first few weeks of the year dealing with it intensely, and has been working with the school adjustment counselor and has continued to take administrative responsibility for improving discipline in the building, which is still in need of improvement. The PEARL (time-out) room has been ineffective, according to teachers, and has disrupted the special education classroom when used for time-outs earned in other classrooms. The school purchased the Responsive Classroom program, but the district did not provide training. The school has a new parent facilitator/liaison that the principal expects to be helpful in making home visits and contacting and advocating for parents so that they support the school's academic, behavior, and attendance goals.

For the most part, the district has provided adequate support to Homer Street. The district hired an experienced principal with a successful record of accomplishment, and allowed the new principal to bring her own leadership team. The principal in the previous year was allowed to transfer ineffective staff. The district provided the school with two ILSs, one for math and one for ELA, plus a Reading First coordinator. The assistant superintendent and the school support officer (SSO) were strong and effective advocates for the principal and school, and both knew the school and the district well because of the many years in the system. The SSO conducted learning walks with Department of Education staff. The principal used the learning walk process to provide individual feedback to teachers when appropriate, although most other principals reportedly provided only general feedback. Teachers received professional development on the new Scott Foresman texts. The school was able to implement district provisions well to improve instruction, such as the MIG, the RIG, DFAs, and the extra 30 minutes added to the school day. The school had a professional development day in August to work on the SIP. Notably, the district did not allow the boundary plan changes to make changes to staffing with the budget allocation formula, and retained the Title I classroom reduction teacher. Ironically, though, the district allowed the school to experience a budget freeze on paper and school supplies because of a school clerical error that occurred during the principal's transition to the building.

In order to attract and retain highly effective teachers, the superintendent plans to provide 900 level 3 teacher positions throughout the district. Level 3 teacher will be paid at a higher rate, but could be transferred each year into underperforming schools where the greatest needs lie.

**Key Question 4: Are the conditions in place to sustain the gains achieved and support continued improvement in student performance?**

**The conditions to support improvement in student achievement were in the process of development at the time of the site visit, although there were no data showing gains in student achievement. With a new leadership team, the use of data, an increase in expectations, and accountability systems in place, the process has begun for improving conditions.**

The leadership in the school was effective and was able to plan and direct the implementation of instructional improvement initiatives. The principal has reportedly made a big difference in her brief initial leadership period. She has made sure that all students (including students with special needs) receive grade-level material; the principal is student-centered and goal-centered.

The school leadership has united the staff behind the SIP goals and objectives. The school leadership has impressed upon teachers the importance of the use of data in planning instruction. Teachers have begun to use data for planning, supported by instructional leadership specialists and by other teams in grade-level meetings. Teachers meet frequently in formal and informal meetings to improve teaching and learning. In an instructional staff survey, 87 percent agreed that the school has a well defined plan, 86 percent said the curriculum is appropriate, and 77 percent reported that they were well informed about initiatives.

Staff members indicated that the school had a collegial effort to implement the plan successfully. Two-thirds of the staff was at the school for three or more years. While not all staff members were supportive of the leadership, most teachers voiced support of leadership in focus groups. In the instructional staff survey, 66 percent stated that the school principal provides effective leadership.

Most dissatisfaction voiced in interviews and mentioned in the survey concerned behavior management. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers cited behavior management as one of the top three choices for professional development, and 80 percent felt counseling was “available but not adequate.” While interviews indicated that teachers focused on priority improvements in teaching and learning, all teachers were not able to understand the connections between their classroom management and student behavior. Behavior management consumed too much instructional time. Teachers and the principal, in interviews and the instructional survey, noted that the building-wide behavior management plan is not effective, there is inadequate proactive work, and there are no school-wide classroom practices for behavior management that are effective.

The principal was considering creative alternatives on how to address student behavior, and discussed them with the EQA team. She is attempting to form a partnership with the Department of Mental Health. She is considering looping grades 4 and 5 in the next year. She implemented the Student Leader Program in grade 5 and the Student of the Week program. The school is planning to implement Responsive Classroom once it had professional development provided. The principal is considering staff solutions to deal with behavior issues.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the team found that the Homer Street Elementary School has a long history of inadequate improvement, and the performance gap between the school and the district remained wide in 2006. However, after several principal transitions and inconsistencies in implementing improvement plans, 2006-2007 is the first school year the school has begun to show potential for addressing weaknesses in student achievement over the next AYP cycle. The SIP is effective, implemented by school leaders, supported by the district, and teachers have buy-in and are held accountable. The improvement plan guides the school to increase academic achievement. Yet, the management of student behavior continues to be a challenge for the school. The school is developing plans for supporting student needs, professional development, more effective classroom management, and appropriate levels of administrative responsibility for student discipline.

## **Appendix A**

### **Team Members**

**Eva Mitchell, Coordinator.** Eva Mitchell has 15 years of experience in urban education. She was a founding member of a Boston public pilot school and her administrative roles have included Assistant Principal and Director of Student Support. Eva has taught in Boston and in Brockton public schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels as a school social studies teacher, lead teacher in an alternative school for students with behavioral disabilities, and as an after-school program leader for a 21st Century grant-funded enrichment initiative. Eva has also worked on public school construction compliance teams, having led city-community urban development processes for a decade. For educational and community development organizations, she has served as a program developer, grant writer, and board chair. Eva received her B.A. from Harvard University, and received her teacher certification through Harvard's UTEP program. She received her Master's in Education from Boston University under a Martin Luther King Fellowship, and her doctoral studies have focused on effective schooling in urban environments.

**Helen Apostolides, Examiner.** Ms. Apostolides has over 34 years of experience as both a teacher and administrator in public education. Ms. Apostolides worked for 11 years as an Elementary School Principal in Peabody, Massachusetts. She instituted the Skills for Life program at her school, which won national recognition. Her school was the first to collaborate with Lesley University Literacy Collaborative and then restructure the reading program to the Collaborative's standard. Additionally, she helped facilitate the development of full-day kindergarten throughout the district. She was an assistant principal for 14 years and a mathematics teacher in numerous grade levels (3, 5, 6, and 7) for over 10 years. Ms. Apostolides received the Pride of Peabody award in 2003 and was a semi-finalist in Massachusetts in NASA's Teacher in Space Program. Ms. Apostolides earned a Master of Education in Elementary Education from Boston State College and a Master of Teaching in History on the secondary level from Salem State College.

**Lisa Bryant, Examiner.** Lisa Bryant is in her second year as an examiner for EQA. She has been an educator in Massachusetts for over 40 years. Since leaving her most recent full-time position as Executive Director of the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, she has served as an educational consultant, and adjunct faculty member at Salem State College. For 14 years, she was a K-8 and middle school principal at the Bartlett School in Lowell, and a middle school principal in Watertown. In Lowell, she was a special education supervisor and a bilingual (Spanish) school psychologist. She has taught in public and private schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels. She has served as an adjunct on the faculty of Regis College. Lisa has also served as co-chair of the Principal's Center at Harvard and as a board member of the New England Coalition of Educational Leaders. She has a degree in History from Boston University and a Master's degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts.

**Joseph Nigro, Examiner.** Joseph Nigro has 37 years of experience as a teacher in public education. Most recently, Mr. Nigro has served as a program supervisor in both the Simmons College and the Education Cooperative Teacher Licensure Programs. Prior to his work as a supervisor, Mr. Nigro was a biology and general science teacher at Holliston High School where

he served as the Science Department Chairperson for many years. As the Science Department Chairperson, Mr. Nigro was responsible for teacher supervision and was very involved in the area of curriculum development. In addition to serving as an instructor, he was instrumental in the design and implementation of College Preparatory Biology, A.P. Biology Science, Greenhouse Science, and Forensic Science programs at Holliston High School. He was also a co-founder of the Greenhouse Science Project, which focused on developing school partnerships with community resources such as landscapers and farmers. Mr. Nigro also procured funding and grants for several science projects, including the Holliston High School Courtyard Projects, which focused on the landscaping of one courtyard and the establishing of a bird sanctuary in the other courtyard. Also, Mr. Nigro was instrumental in procuring grant funds for equipment that resulted in the addition of a biotechnology lab component to the science curriculum and a week's training at Massachusetts Bay Community College in Wellesley in biotechnology for selected grade eight students in Holliston. Mr. Nigro has also worked as a consultant and teacher for The Education Cooperative in Dedham where he helped organize summer institute programs for science teachers and instructed elementary students in biotechnology enrichment programs. Since 1965, Mr. Nigro has been a member of the Phi Delta Kappa International (Professional Education Organization), where he served as secretary from 2001 to 2002. Mr. Nigro earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Education from Boston College and a Master of Education with a Biological Science Concentration from Framingham State College.

## Appendix B Two Year Follow-up Review Schedule Detailed Schedule for School Site Visit

### Day 1 – March 15, 2007

- 8:00-9:00 a.m.* Team members met with the principal.
- 9:00-10:00 a.m.* Team members met with the assistant superintendent and school support specialist for the district.
- 10:00-11:00 a.m.* Team members met with the school’s curriculum and instruction leadership team and members of the school site council.
- 11:00-1:00 p.m.* Team members met to discuss findings and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Members used time to analyze findings and to gather more information; members conducted an informal walk-through with a focus on school culture and climate for learning.
- 1:00-3:00 p.m.* Team members met with teachers in focus groups.

	<b>Reviewer A and Reviewer B</b>	<b>Reviewer C and Reviewer D</b>
<i>1:00-1:30</i>	Teacher Focus Group #1 Six Teachers	Teacher Focus Group #2 Six Teachers
<i>1:40-2:10</i>	Teacher Focus Group #3 Five Teachers	Teacher Focus Group #4 Five Teachers
<i>2:20-2:50</i>	Teacher Focus Group #5 Six Teachers	Teacher Focus Group #6 Six Teachers

- 3:00-3:30 p.m.* Team members met with parents in focus groups.

	<b>Reviewer A</b>	<b>Reviewer B</b>
<i>3:00-3:30</i>	Parent Focus Group #1	Parent Focus Group #2

- 3:30-5:00 p.m.* Team members synthesized information, further defined findings, prepared questions, and developed a team strategy for second day of the on-site visit.

**Day 2 – March 16, 2007**

8:00-9:00 a.m. Team members met with the principal for follow-up questions.

9:00-12:00 p.m. Team members visited classrooms and interviewed teachers.

<i>Time</i>	<b>Reviewer A</b>	<b>Reviewer B</b>	<b>Reviewer C</b>	<b>Reviewer D</b>
9:00-9:30	Observe Teacher 1 Grade 2 ELA	Observe Teacher 2 Grade 4 ELA	Observe Teacher 3 Grade 4 ELA	Observe Teacher 4 Grade 5 Math
9:30-10:00	Interview Teacher 1	Interview Teacher 2	Interview Teacher 3	Interview Teacher 4
10:00-10:30	Observe Teacher 5 Grade 3 ELA	Observe Teacher 6 Grade 2 Math	Observe Teacher 7 Grade 2 ELA	Observe Teacher 8 Grade 5 ELA
10:30-11:00	Interview Teacher 5	Interview Teacher 6	Interview Teacher 7	Interview Teacher 8
11:00-11:30	Observe Teacher 9 Grade 4 Math	Observe Teacher 10 Grade 4 Math	Observe Teacher 11 Grade 4 Math	Observe Teacher 12 Grade 2 ELA
11:30-12:00	Interview Teacher 9	Interview Teacher 10	Interview Teacher 11	Interview Teacher 12

12:00-1:00 p.m. Team members met to discuss findings and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch). Members used time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information.

1:00-2:00 p.m. Team structured time.

2:00-2:30 p.m. Closing meeting with the principal to discuss next steps.

2:30-5:00 p.m. Team members deliberated and formed conclusions.