

REPORT OF TWO YEAR FOLLOW-UP REVIEW

Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

Washington Elementary School Springfield Public Schools

At the time of the Follow-up Review, none of the conditions existed at the Washington Elementary School in Springfield that existed at the time of the Panel Review in 2004 leading to the Board of Education's declaration of 'underperformance' and at the time of the subsequent Fact-finding Review, also in 2004. The district appointed a new principal with a proven track record of success in the district to lead the school. Ninety-eight percent of the staff left shortly after the principal expressed her high expectations for teachers, and the principal replaced all but three of the staff members by attracting personnel who wanted to work under this high-performing principal, and by actively recruiting teachers in and out of the Springfield Public Schools. Even the facility appeared different, as the principal led efforts for a massive trash removal and a number of improvements to the physical plant. The revised district boundary plan resulted in a massive student turnover as well.

The principal, her leadership team, and her staff worked collegially and held each other accountable to implement an improvement plan that led the school out of 'Restructuring' status and into the 'No Status' category in just two years. On the 2006 English language arts (ELA) MCAS tests in grades 3 and 4, and on the grade 4 math test, Washington's Hispanic, limited English proficient, and low-income students outperformed their peers in the district and across the state.

Priority Findings

1. Subgroups in Washington Elementary School outperformed the state and the district. Significant student turnover complicated precise causal analysis. The school addressed improving achievement of transient students in ways that indicated that they could add value in spite of turnover.
2. The school improvement plan drove improvement in student performance.
3. Change in leadership has transformed the school in terms of curriculum, instruction, and climate. Leadership monitored and enforced policy and district initiatives.
4. Sustainability is supported by staff capacity building, pride, inculcation of culture (fragile only because it is new), delegation, and ownership.
5. External factors threatened sustainability.

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 im-

provement. 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 Washington Elementary School occurred on March 1, 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 Fact-finding Review on June 1, 2004, the Washington 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 5-6, 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 Washington 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 Washington 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.

Washington Elementary School Profile

Washington Elementary School is one of 31 elementary schools in the Springfield Public Schools. Compared to the other schools in the district, Washington Elementary School has a higher percentage of first language not English (29.9 compared to 21.8 percent), limited English proficient (26.3 compared to 13.7 percent), and low-income (89.8 compared to 77.5 percent) students. Washington has a lower percentage of special education students (14.1 compared to 22 percent). The proportions of the other subgroups are comparable within a range of five percent. The school has a slightly higher percentage of Asian and Hispanic students, and a slightly lower percentage of African-American and multi-race students. See Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Composition, 2007
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State

Student Subgroup	Percentage of Students		
	School	District	State
African-American	23.7	25.5	8.2
Asian	4.9	2.1	4.8
Hispanic	53.9	49.9	13.3
Native American	0.0	0.1	0.3
White	14.1	18.3	71.5
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	3.3	4.1	1.7
FLNE	29.9	21.8	14.9
LEP	26.3	13.7	5.6
Low Income	89.8	77.5	28.9
Special Education	14.1	22.0	16.9

Source: Department of Education

In 2006, Washington Elementary School's attendance rate for grades K-5 was 94.3 percent, slightly lower than the state rate of 94.4 percent. However, for the tested student population (as noted in the 2006 AYP report), the attendance rate was higher at 95.4 percent, and the aggregate student population and all subgroups met the attendance target.

Washington had favorable data on attendance and discipline compared to other Springfield schools, having made substantial improvement in these areas. Department of Education (DOE) data indicate that the Washington school had the fifth highest attendance rate among the 31 Springfield elementary schools. According to AYP reports, Washington's attendance rate of tested students improved by 2.7 percentage points from the 2005 attendance rate of 92.7 percent. Additionally, the rate of suspensions declined, from 16.7 percent in 2004 to zero in 2006. In-school suspensions also declined, from 6.5 percent in 2004 to 4.7 percent in 2006.

The 2006-2007 follow-up cycle of schools declared underperforming in the 2004 school year involved four Springfield public schools: the Washington school, two other elementary schools, and a middle school. Comparisons reveal the school's status relative to other schools that shared challenges within the same district. Washington had the highest attendance rate and lowest suspension rates compared to the other schools in the two-year follow up cycle and compared to the district average. See Table 2.

**Table 2. Demographics, Attendance, and Discipline, 2006
Washington 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
Kiley(6-8)	961	83	17	81	89.3	25.7	21.2
District	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. With the exception of enrollment data, all figures are percentages.

Staffing

Since the school’s declaration of underperformance, Washington’s faculty experienced a 98 per cent turnover. Of the 48 staff members, only three teachers had worked at the school for over three years, including the librarian, one teacher, and one paraprofessional. The 2007 staff had a high level of experience and the qualifications appropriate to their roles. See Table 3.

**Table 3. Staffing, 2007
Washington Elementary School**

Role	Total	Total with current certification in area/HQ if paraprofessional	Average years experience in role	Average years in school
Administrators	1	1	12	3
Teachers	34	30 (4 on waivers)	12.4	2.9
Paraprofessionals	8	7	-	3.25
Other	5	5	-	3

Source: Data provided by school. "Other" includes the librarian, school adjustment counselor, speech therapist, education team leader, and nurse. Data on experience were collected only for teaching and administrative experience.

Teacher attendance data collected for the EQA review of Springfield Public Schools revealed that Washington had a lower teacher absenteeism rate compared to other elementary schools. The data also revealed that Washington teachers took fewer days out of the classroom for professional development compared to those in other schools. These indicators demonstrate that Washington students generally received greater continuity in instruction from their regular classroom teacher compared to the average elementary school in the district. See Table 4.

**Table 4. Teacher Attendance Data, 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield Schools**

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	12.8
Washington (K-5)	30	164	43	207	6.90	19	226	7.5
White (K-5)	38	398	91	489	12.9	76	565	14.9
K-5 Average	39	309.5	123.3	433.5	11.02	32.25	470.8	12.1
Kiley (6-8)	83	919	530	1449	17.46	80	1529	18.4
6-8 Average	79.9	738	286.7	1,024.7	12.7	133	1,157.7	14.5

Source: Data provided by district. PD=professional development.

MCAS Results

Particularly noteworthy is that Washington Elementary School changed its accountability status from ‘Restructuring’ in 2005 to ‘No Status’ in 2006. Washington made incredible improvement in ELA from 2004 to 2006, with a gain of 14.1 composite proficiency index (CPI) points. At the time of the panel review, the school had never made AYP in ELA, even since the accountability system began in 1999. See Table 5.

**Table 5. ELA Adequate Yearly Progress Cycle Data, 2004-2006
Washington Elementary School**

Year / Cycle	ELA CPI	CPI change	AYP Aggregate	AYP Subgroups	School Status
2004 Cycle III (03-04)	57.5	+3.3	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)	71.6	+14.1	Yes in 2005 Yes in 2006	Yes in 2005 Yes in 2006	Moderate Above Target No Status

Source: Department of Education

In math, the CPI remained ‘Very Low,’ as the school continued to improve, but below the target in Cycle IV. The first time Washington made AYP was in 2003, and the school made AYP in math every subsequent year except for 2005, when the CPI had dropped by two index points from the prior year. The school met the improvement target in math in Cycle IV with “Safe Harbor.” The 2005 dip in performance did not remove the school from the ‘No Status’ category in math. See Table 6.

**Table 6. Math Adequate Yearly Progress Cycle Data, 2004-2006
Washington Elementary School**

Year / Cycle	Math CPI	CPI change	AYP Aggregate	AYP Subgroups	School Status
2004 Cycle III (03-04)	42.2	+8.7	Yes in 2003 Yes in 2004	No in 2003 Yes in 2004	Very Low On Target No Status
2006 Cycle IV (05-06)	48.9	+6.7	No in 2005 Yes in 2006	No in 2005 N/A in 2006	Very Low Improved Below Target No Status

Source: Department of Education

On the grade 3 reading test, the percentage of students at or above the ‘Proficient’ level increased from only 24 percent in 2004 to 70 percent in 2006. Between 2005 and 2006 alone, the proficiency rate increased by 40 percentage points, from 30 to 70 percent. The percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category dropped from 16 to 11 to zero percent from 2004 to 2006. In 2006, compared to the district and the state, Washington had a higher proficiency rate and a lower percentage of students in the ‘Needs Improvement’ and ‘Warning/Failing’ categories on the grade 3 reading test. See Table 7.

**Table 7. Grade 3 Reading MCAS Results, 2004-2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Washington Elementary	67	NA	24	24	60	16
	District	2,085	NA	40	40	45	16
	State	73,332	NA	63	63	30	7
2005	Washington Elementary	47	NA	30	30	60	11
	District	1,934	NA	41	41	46	13
	State	71,463	NA	62	62	31	7
2006	Washington Elementary	27	7	63	70	30	0
	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.

On the grade 4 ELA test, proficiency rates improved over the period, but not steadily, from 16 to eight to 30 percent from 2004 to 2006. Washington substantially decreased the percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category, from 45 to 26 to three percent from 2004 to 2006. In 2006 on the grade 4 ELA test, proficiency rates exceeded the district, and failure rates were lower than the district and the state. See Table 8.

**Table 8. Grade 4 ELA MCAS Results, 2004-2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Washington Elementary	58	0	16	16	40	45
	District	2,050	5	31	36	43	21
	State	73,111	11	45	56	35	9
2005	Washington Elementary	53	0	8	8	66	26
	District	2,016	3	25	28	50	21
	State	72,774	10	40	50	40	10
2006	Washington Elementary	37	0	30	30	68	3
	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.

On the grade 4 math test, performance declined in 2005 and increased in 2006. Proficiency rates were three percent in 2004, two percent in 2005 and 17 percent in 2006, underperforming the district and the state. The school decreased the percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category during the period, with 45 percent in 2004, 55 percent in 2005, and 22 percent in 2006. See Table 9.

**Table 9. Grade 4 Math MCAS Results, 2004-2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Year		n	Percentage of Students				
			A	P	A/P	NI	W
2004	Washington Elementary	58	0	3	3	52	45
	District	2,066	6	19	25	47	27
	State	73,323	14	28	42	44	14
2005	Washington Elementary	53	0	2	2	43	55
	District	2,018	5	16	21	50	29
	State	72,827	14	27	41	44	15
2006	Washington Elementary	36	3	14	17	61	22
	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.

Subgroup performance

Washington Elementary School’s subgroups outperformed their district peers on the grade 3 reading and grade 4 ELA tests in 2006. The gap in performance on the 2006 MCAS tests between Washington students and their district peers decreased across grades 3, 4, and 5. For example, grade 3 Hispanic students outperformed their district peers by 20 CPI points, as well as their state peers by 21.7 points. Grade 4 Hispanic students outperformed district and state peers by 15.8 points. Grade 5 Hispanic students underperformed their district peers by 1.4 points, and the state by 5.9 points. LEP/FLEP was the only subgroup with a higher CPI on the grade 5 test. See Tables 10 through 12.

**Table 10. Grade 3 Reading MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	-	73.4	72.0
Asian	-	79.3	84.8
Hispanic	88.3	68.3	66.6
Native American	-	-	79.5
White	-	82.4	87.5
LEP/FLEP	85.4	58.1	64.5
Low Income	90.6	70.6	71.3
Special Education	-	63.3	69.4

Source: Department of Education

**Table 11. Grade 4 ELA MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	–	66.6	65.1
Asian	–	74.5	82.2
Hispanic	78.0	62.2	62.2
Native American	–	–	73.4
White	–	78.3	82.9
LEP/FLEP	–	57.1	60.1
Low Income	77.1	64.4	65.5
Special Education	–	52.6	59.8

Source: Department of Education

**Table 12. Grade 5 ELA MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	64.6	70.6	71.0
Asian	–	76.3	85.6
Hispanic	59.7	61.1	65.6
Native American	–	–	80.5
White	–	81.7	88.1
LEP/FLEP	63.6	51.5	62.0
Low Income	64.9	65.6	70.4
Special Education	50.0	53.5	65.6

Source: Department of Education

Washington subgroups all outperformed their district peers on the MCAS math tests, administered to grades 3 through 5. All Washington subgroups also outperformed their district peers in math in grades 3 and 4. In grade 5, Washington subgroups either outperformed their state peers, or were within a three CPI point range. See Tables 13 through 15.

**Table 13. Grade 3 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	–	63.4	63.0
Asian	–	80.6	83.7
Hispanic	83.3	61.7	60.1
Native American	–	–	75.8
White	–	77.7	82.3
LEP/FLEP	79.2	54.4	61.6
Low Income	84.4	63.3	64.4
Special Education	–	50.3	61.5

Source: Department of Education

**Table 14. Grade 4 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	–	53.4	57.9
Asian	–	71.8	81.8
Hispanic	61.5	55.2	57.0
Native American	–	–	69.9
White	–	71.1	77.2
LEP/FLEP	–	48.5	58.2
Low Income	61.4	56.1	60.3
Special Education	–	48.9	57.1

Source: Department of Education

**Table 15. Grade 5 Math MCAS Subgroup Performance (CPI), 2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield and the State**

Subgroup	Composite Proficiency Index (CPI)		
	School	District	State
African-American	52.1	48.8	52.4
Asian	–	71.9	80.8
Hispanic	54.2	45.0	50.4
Native American	–	–	66.0
White	–	68.7	75.0
LEP/FLEP	50.0	39.5	52.4
Low Income	59.5	48.4	54.3
Special Education	48.2	38.8	49.5

Source: Department of Education

On the 2006 ELA District Formative Assessment (DFA) tests (3rd cycle), Washington’s proficiency rates for grades 3 and 5 were higher than the district. Grade 4 proficiency was comparable, within one percentage point.

On the 2007 ELA DFA tests (2nd cycle), Washington’s proficiency rate at every grade level was higher than the district. Washington’s improvement in proficiency from 2006 to 2007 exceeded the district.

On the 2007 math DFA tests (2nd cycle), proficiency and improvement rates for grade 5 were lower than the district. However, Washington’s proficiency and improvement rates were higher than the district for grades 3 and 4. See Table 16.

**Table 16. 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
Kiley	Grade 6	20	14	-6	26	23	-3
	Grade 7	28	26	-2	9	9	0
	Grade 8	35	28	-7	30	24	-6
District	Grade 6	29	22	-7	30	27	-3
	Grade 7	35	33	-2	18	9	-9
	Grade 8	44	36	-8	25	24	-1

Source: Springfield Public Schools. 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.

Washington’s performance on the DFAs was higher for every grade level in ELA and math than the other Springfield schools scheduled for a two-year follow-up review in 2006 and 2007. Furthermore, the performance gap between Washington and the other schools widened between 2006 and 2007 in ELA and math for every grade level except for grade 5 math. See Tables 17 and 18.

**Table 17. Percentage Correct on District Formative Assessments, 2005-2006
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield**

School	ELA			Math		
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Homer	60	55	62	50	46	46
Washington	74	63	78	56	53	58
White	67	53	62	51	45	42

Source: Springfield Public Schools. Note: the district did not provide district level data.

**Table 18. Percentage Correct on District Formative Assessments, 2006-2007
Washington Elementary School Compared to Springfield**

School	ELA			Math		
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Homer	59	59	50	38	42	36
Washington	74	74	70	54	52	39
White	52	52	57	36	40	37

Source: Springfield Public Schools. Note: the district did not provide district level data.

Panel Responses to the Key Questions

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

Yes. Washington Elementary School has made a dramatic improvement in student performance, earning the ‘No Status’ label in 2006 after having been under the ‘Restructuring’ label in 2005.

In discussing the school’s improvement, the EQA first noted that since 2004, Washington has experienced almost a complete student and staff turnover. Changes to the Springfield boundary assignment plan in 2005 and 2006, accompanied by expected attrition, resulted in 72 percent of the students being new to the school. Springfield Public Schools assigned a new principal to Washington Elementary School, and the principal hired 45 of the 48 current staff members. For the most part, the only remnant of the school examined during the Panel Review in 2004 is the building itself.

The school’s performance increased in the aggregate, for every subgroup, and on every MCAS test between 2005 and 2006. On the 2006 MCAS ELA tests for grades 3 and 4, the school had a higher rate of proficiency and a lower percentage of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category. On the 2006 grade 4 MCAS math test, the school had just a slightly (within two percentage points) lower rate of proficiency and a lower percentage (by 10 percentage points) of students in the ‘Warning/Failing’ category.

Subgroup comparisons demonstrate that Washington students outperformed their peers in the district and state on the ELA and math tests in grades 3 and 4 in 2006. Comparisons between the results of the MCAS ELA and math tests administered to grades 3 through 5 demonstrate that the Washington subgroups outperformed their district and state peers by the widest gap in grade 3. The performance gap was narrower in grade 4. Some subgroups in grade 5 outperformed, and others underperformed, their district and state peers. The principal and staff interviewed by the team expressed that the cumulative impact of the school’s improvement is greater for students in the lower grades because Washington provided the foundation for these students’ formative academic experiences. District formative assessment data suggest that Washington improved grade level performance at a rate higher than the other two Springfield elementary schools in the two-year follow-up cycle, except in grade 5 math.

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

Yes. The school is highly effective in using its school improvement plan as a basis for driving school and instructional practices to improve student performance.

The conditions at the school are completely different from the time of the Panel Review and the Fact-finding Review. The teams found that the school improvement plan (SIP) had been an ineffective document, lacking specific strategies with the potential to increase student achievement, and that the faculty did not understand the relationship between instruction and student achievement. Teachers largely indicated that poor performance was due to student factors beyond their

control. The school climate was poor, and discipline problems resulted in classroom interruptions and delays during transition time. Behavior and academic expectations of students were low. Instruction lacked rigor, variety, differentiation, and planning informed by assessments. The fact-finding team found that school communication, teacher supervision, team planning time, and support for teachers were all inadequate. The fact-finding report noted, “The installation of strong instructional leadership at Washington is imperative.”

At the time of the Follow-up Review in 2007, the team found that Washington did, in fact, have strong instructional leadership in place, and that the leadership substantially developed the school’s capacity to provide effective instruction, using an effective school improvement plan as a guide for the schools’ efforts. Further, in an instructional staff survey, 100 percent of the staff members who responded agreed that the principal “provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of students.”

The school’s initial Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, resulting in the 2004 SIP, involved only three current staff members because the school was in the process of a 98 percent faculty turnover. With a newly assigned principal who articulated high staff expectations in an assertive manner, most staff members applied for transfers to other schools in the district. The school developed the SIP at a tumultuous time of staff transition for the school.

However, faculty interviewed by the team described the subsequent processes of implementing and refining the SIP as participatory, with staff buy-in and shared ownership. The staff references the SIP regularly in whole-school faculty meetings and team meetings. Administrators and teachers indicated significant SIP use by their comments, stating that they “take the SIP apart,” use it “all the time,” “keep it on desk,” and that “it all links back to SIP.” Of the 32 staff members who responded to the survey, 100 percent agreed with these statements: “Our school has a well defined plan for reaching student performance goals.” (notably, 72 percent “strongly agreed”); “The curriculum implemented in our school is effective and appropriate.”; “I am well informed about the initiatives that are undertaken by our school leadership and staff to improve student performance.”

The team found that the SIP identifies root causes related to teacher-centered changes and based on an item analysis. The SIP refers to the various assessments that teachers are expected to use to specifically target instruction based on assessed student needs during the year. Besides the MCAS tests, the SIP included reading assessments, district writing assessments, district formative assessments, writing journals, the Harcourt assessments, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), the Words Their Way inventory, and the Sight Words Inventory. The SIP identified appropriate areas of growth for the school, including the need to refine rubrics, professional development on specific strategies, and improved teaching to the standards, especially in areas of poor performance on the MCAS tests. Based on MCAS item analysis, the SIP identified student learning objectives (SLOs), such as multiple-step problems and the identification of decimals in math, and appropriate activities for teachers based on the SLOs, such as “create and select grade-level problems,” “model multiple step problems,” and “use exemplars with students.”

Most frequently, the SIP identified “person[s] responsible for monitoring” implementation as mostly the principal, CPDTs for math and ELA, and the district resource specialist for science. Besides the principal’s learning walks used as “evidence of quality implementation,” the SIP identified diverse data sources for “collecting information” about implementation, including CPDT logs, grade-level team minutes, classroom artifacts, schedules, and assessments.

The team found substantial evidence that the leadership uses the SIP to focus staff efforts on improving individual student performance. All faculty members interviewed in focus groups and individually emphasized that the SIP is the living, driving document that focuses all teachers on the school’s priorities. Interviewees indicated that the school took seriously the language in the SIP, stating, “All students will” achieve. The review team found that Washington’s faculty regularly collected and analyzed data and used the information to shape school practice. School and classroom practice support students with varying levels of background knowledge and at different performance levels to meet high expectations. Teachers stated in focus groups, and classroom observations confirmed, that teachers use data to target and modify instruction, and that instruction frequently incorporates the use of rubrics, articulation of standards, modeling for students, and the use of exemplars.

The principal and her leadership team set high expectations for teachers, provided appropriate levels of support to help them implement the expectations, and monitored the expectations, as articulated in the SIP. Teachers were expected to use grade-level planning time to identify ways to analyze data. The instructional staff survey indicated that staff members spent substantial time to improve student performance in meetings with other teachers. All but one of the 32 teachers reported that they met with other teachers one or more times per week to plan lessons (75 percent indicated this occurred more than once a week), to discuss student work (78 percent indicated this occurred more than once a week), and to discuss strategies and services for individual students (69 percent indicated this occurred more than once a week).

In the classroom, teachers were expected to use the data to deliver “targeted interventions” to promote higher performance of individual students. The principal and her leadership team identified and emphasized appropriate strategies to promote SIP goals. These included word walls to create vocabulary-rich environments in classrooms, the use of UPSL (understand, plan, solve, learn) to master math problems, an improved English language learner (ELL) delivery system, refined rubrics with vertical and horizontal alignment, expectations for bell to bell instruction during 90-minute math and ELA classes, and an improved structure for the math instructional block. Collaborative Professional Development Teachers (CPDTs) supported teachers by providing professional development, modeling effective instructional practices in individual teachers’ classrooms, and helping teams and teachers understand assessment data.

The school understands the connections between curriculum, instruction, assessment, and improvement in student performance. Although 90 percent of the teacher descriptions in the staff survey of the causes of low student performance pointed to external factors (e.g., mobility, attendance, parent involvement, and behavior), teachers in interviews and in response to the other survey question (asking teachers to explain their role in using the SIP to improve student performance) revealed understanding of the relationships between school and classroom inputs and

student performance. Teachers provided many examples, including specific SIP strategies, use of data to target instruction, teacher content knowledge, re-teaching, and planning.

The site visit team learned that administrators and teachers were aware of the SIP elements that had the greatest impact on the school. The principal expressed that ELA, ELL and grade 3 have made greater improvement because of the school-wide focus and additional resources invested in K-2 ELA and ELL instruction. To that end, the principal advocated for and received \$7,000 from the district to purchase materials for ELL and the ESL/ESOL program. Also cited by the principal and staff as reasons for ELL improvement was ELL expertise and qualifications, leadership inclusion in classrooms, and collaboration between ELL and regular education teachers. The principal expressed, and interviewed staff members agreed when questioned, that student performance was highest at the lowest grades because of academic nurturing during the formative years, even given high rates of student turnover. The principal, CPDTs, and teachers, when questioned, stated that the school's change from Success for All to the district's Harcourt ELA program improved content coverage and instructional quality. They identified consistent flexible practices for grouping for ELA students based on performance assessments, the provision of a designated writing teacher for an additional 20 minutes per day for students, and a strong Title I program as practices that supported students at multiple performance levels to improve reading and writing performance, and the team concurred.

For math, the principal and the staff indicated in interviews that they expected a substantial improvement due to a better defined structure for the 90-minute math block. They also cited greater emphasis and experience in using the UPSL method, stronger math CPDT support in the 2007 school year, provision of more instructional strategies and classroom materials, regular team meetings, greater use of data, and pull-outs for individual students.

The data provide substantial evidence that the school is successful in using its improvement plan. Washington Elementary School fell short of its 2006 math CPI goal of 53.6 points with 48.9 points achieved, and its proficiency goal of 18 percent by one percentage point. However, the school well surpassed its ELA goals of a 67.8 CPI in 2006 with 71.6 points achieved, and 26 percent proficiency with 70 percent achieved in grade 3 and 30 percent in grade 4. Data related to school climate reveal that because of marked improvement relative to the circumstances that existed during the Panel Review, the school removed classroom management and student behavior goals from the SIP in 2006. DOE data reveal that Washington's rate of out-of-school suspensions declined from 16.7 percent in 2004 to zero in 2006, and in-school suspensions declined from 6.5 percent in 2004 to 4.7 percent in 2006.

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. There have been significant changes in the school and in the district that had great impacts to the school since the 2004 Fact-finding Review.

Since 2004, Washington has a new principal and almost an entirely new staff (98 percent of the staff were hired by the new principal), and has experienced a 72 percent student turnover.

School programs have dramatically changed. The ELA program changed from Success for All (SFA) to Harcourt, the school integrated ELL students in the regular classroom, added writing teachers, and created expectations for CPDTs and teachers to incorporate the use of data and new strategies in classroom instruction. Attendance programs have improved school attendance, including daily school monitoring, tracking and enforcement of attendance rules, and school-wide attendance rewards such as bicycle prizes and ice cream parties in grades 4 and 5. The school has emphasized the importance of the code of conduct, and the district supported schools with a parent-teacher compact and video training on assertive discipline. Washington refined its practices for receiving incoming students. Now the school immediately assesses students and integrates them into classrooms (example in student). For departing students, staff members complete student summaries and send records to the receiving school. Transitions and discipline have been eased at the school, according to staff.

Springfield Public Schools also contributed to many changes at the school. Most notably, it was the district's boundary plan that resulted in the high levels of student turnover. Simultaneously, the district had attempted to improve and align school practices through more effective policies. The district created a new, uniform district pupil progression policy. Although the bargaining process has been a distraction to the district and many schools—with four years of no contract for teachers—this has not affected the Washington school. The perception of the staff as revealed in interviews was that the staff has been extremely receptive and responsive to the school leader. The recent contract allows the principal to remove teachers the principal deems ineffective. Instructional changes resulted in the district's increase in time on learning in the content areas, and the district implemented Investigations in 2006-2007 and provided training for this new math program.

Washington has benefited from the \$25,000 Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grant by the DOE used for SIP implementation, as well as resources that the principal has actively advocated for and received. The school received \$7,000 in funding from the district for the ELL program; funding for the Harcourt reading program after SFA was eliminated; new science kits (but not enough, reportedly); and new playground equipment with grants from Kiwanis (\$6,000), a school fundraiser (\$8,000), and the district (\$17,000). The school recently received a Loews library grant of \$5,000. Facility improvements were made through the equity of staff efforts in this area (the principal described how she scrubbed walls, floors and bathrooms), advocacy for facility management efforts (the principal filled many dumpsters of trash after her appointment to the building), and the restoration of the school parking lot by removing a fence.

Several district factors could have yet unknown impacts on the school. The collective bargaining discussions included the negotiation of merit pay. The evolution of the CPDT position to the ISL created a career ladder resulting in changes to district assignments for these instructional leaders, which could result in disruptions to the school's instructional leadership team. The district could decide to transfer the principal in place, who serves as a resource to turn around underperforming schools. Staff members indicated that many came because of the current principal, and would leave if the district uprooted her.

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

Yes. The conditions are in place to sustain the gains achieved and to support continued improvement in student performance, provided there are no dramatic changes in the school on the scale of the turnover in 2004.

The principal is a strong force in the school and is well supported by the staff, although district guidance has been limited for this principal who has been identified as a leader in the district. Several staff members indicated in interviews that they would leave should the principal depart, raising concerns of school stability in the possible event of the departure of the principal.

Yet, the school has internal capacity at this point to sustain progress and staff leaders capable of planning and directing the implementation. Leaders and faculty focus on the big picture, the key things that matter, with a focus on individual student progress and achievement. The staff is overwhelmingly supportive and involved in the school improvement plan and all aspects of school. The school has an exemplary culture of professional collegiality, climate, and commitment.

Conclusion

Washington Elementary School has been radically transformed. Change in leadership has transformed the school in terms of curriculum, instruction, and climate. Leadership monitored and enforced policy and district initiatives. The school improvement plan drove improvement in student performance. Subgroups in Washington Elementary School outperformed the state and the district, although significant student turnover complicated precise causal analysis. The school addressed improving achievement of transient students in ways that indicated they could add value in spite of turnover. Sustainability is supported by staff capacity building, pride, inculcation of culture (fragile only because it is new), delegation, and ownership.

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 chairman. 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.

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.

Kim Denney, Examiner. Kim Denney has over 24 years of experience in both the public and private sector. As a consultant for Arthur Andersen, she reviewed both information and management systems for large hospitals, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations. As an educator, she has served as a classroom teacher for an urban magnet school that pioneered public-private partnerships. She taught middle school math, science, and social studies in a multi-age, project-based setting. She was also selected as a Hiatt Fellow for the City of Worcester. While a teacher and administrator in Ware, Massachusetts, Ms. Denney successfully wrote and implemented many grants at the classroom, school, and district levels. As Director of Curriculum and Grants, Ms. Denney oversaw the Title I program, implemented a K-12 21st Century program and a Reading First grant. She also created a system of professional development that supported curriculum alignment with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks for the first time in the district. Ms. Denney has a B.S. and M.P.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.Ed from Lesley University.

James McAuliffe, Examiner. Dr. McAuliffe has worked in public education for 36 years. Prior to his 19 years of service as Student Services Director and Elementary School Principal in the Harvard Public Schools, he served as Administrator of Special Education in the Wachusett Re-

gional and Uxbridge school districts. He has extensive experience in curriculum and staff development, grant writing, budget preparation, and facilities design and management. In addition, he has been practicum supervisor for administrative interns, and taught graduate level courses in educational leadership.

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

Day 1 – March 5, 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 the 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.

	Reviewer A and Reviewer B	Reviewer C and Reviewer D
1:00-1:45	Teacher Focus Group #1 CPDT ELA Teacher Grade 5 Foreign Lang 3-5/ ELA K ELL 3 Teacher Grade 1 ELL Grade 2 Teacher Grade 3	Teacher Focus Group #2 ESOL K-5 Teacher Grade 1 Teacher Grade K ELL Grade K ELL Grade 4 Teacher Grade 4 SEBS/SPED Grades 4-5
1:45-2:30	Teacher Focus Group #3 CPDT/Mathematics K-5 Kindergarten Teacher Grade 2 General Ed. Teacher Title I Teacher, ELA/Reading Grades 3-5 LC/ SPED Teacher Grade 5 ELL Teacher Grade 2 General Ed. Teacher	Teacher Focus Group #4 Title I ELA/Writing Teacher K-5 Grade 4 General Ed. Teacher Grade 3 General Ed. Teacher ESOL K-5 Teacher Grade 2 ELL Teacher Grade 5 General Education Teacher Grade K-3 SEBS/SPED Teacher

- 2:30-3:00 p.m. Panelists met with parents and students in focus groups.

	Reviewer A	Reviewer B	Reviewer C	Reviewer D
2:30-3:00	Parent Focus Group #1	Parent Focus Group #2	Student Focus Group #1	Student Focus Group #2

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

Day 2 – March 6, 2007

8:30-9:00 a.m. Team members met with the principal for follow-up questions

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

	Reviewer A	Reviewer B	Reviewer C	Reviewer D
9:00-9:30	Observe teacher 1 Grade 2 ELA	Observe teacher 2 Grade1 ELA	Observe teacher 3 Grade5 Math	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 K ELA	Observe teacher 6 Grade K ELA	Observe teacher 7 Grade 4-5 SEBS	Observe teacher 8 ESOL
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 Writing	Observe teacher10 Grade 3 ELA	Observe teacher11 Grade 4 ELA	Observe teacher12 Grade 3 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. Reviewers deliberated and formed conclusions.