

Panel Report
Candidate Compass School Review
Edgar F. Hooks Elementary School
Chelsea Public Schools

INTRODUCTION

The Program

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

In this Mid-Cycle III year, sixty schools from among the top thirty most improved schools in mathematics in 2003, the thirty most improved schools below state targets in one or both (ELA and mathematics) that made AYP for all reported subgroups in 2003, and/or from among the strong semi-finalist applications from last year were invited to participate. Twenty-eight of the schools chose to apply by submitting completed applications that included written responses to three questions on the initiatives undertaken to improve student performance at the school in the past three or four years. School leaders and staff were asked to focus on those programs and practices that they think have had the most positive impact on their students' performance. Four high schools, five elementary schools, and one kindergarten through eighth grade school were selected as finalists. Ten finalist candidate schools were scheduled for closer review to learn more about their highlighted programs and to determine willingness and capacity to serve in the program. Data and information gathered from the applications review process of these schools will be published in a report this fall.

The Commissioner will designate up to ten schools to serve as 2004 Commonwealth Compass Schools. Compass Schools receive special recognition and a \$10,000 grant to support the participation of their administrators and staff in information sharing and dissemination activities over the next year.

The Report

This report summarizes the findings and analyses of a team of education professionals during a one-day visit to the Edgar F. Hooks School on June 2, 2004. The report will assist the Commissioner in determining which schools from among those visited will be designated to serve as 2004 Commonwealth Compass Schools.

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

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

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

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

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

Edgar F. Hooks School Profile

The Edgar F. Hooks Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in the Chelsea School District. All of the district's elementary schools are housed together in the Mary C. Burke Elementary School Complex. The Hooks School serves students in grades 1 through 5, currently serving 434 students. Enrollment between 2001 and 2004 averaged 454 students. During this period of time, 75% of the population was made up of Hispanic students, 15% White students, 7% Black students, and 3% Asian students. Twenty-one percent of the student population is identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Seventy-four percent of the students at the Hooks School have a primary language other than English (FLNE). With an average of 85% of their students eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, the Hooks School has a School-Wide Title I program.

Between 2001 and 2003, the attendance rate at Hooks School averaged 95%, with an average number of days absent being 7.

The retention rate averaged 5% during this time period. Out-of-school suspensions averaged 5% while in-school suspensions averaged less than 1%.

Staffing

Hooks School students are taught by an instructional staff that includes thirty-seven full time teachers. Additionally, there is a full time principal and assistant principal that comprise the school's administrative staff. Also on staff are a school-wide social worker/guidance counselor,

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an occupational therapist, and a school psychologist. The Hooks School also shares two nurse practitioners that work in the Burke complex. Many teachers are certified in multiple areas. Only thirteen teachers have five or fewer years of teaching experience.

MCAS Results

Students at Hooks School are tested in the MCAS in grade 3 in Reading. In grade 4, students are tested in English Language Arts (ELA) and in Mathematics. In both Cycle II (2001-2002), and Mid-Cycle III (2003), the school was found to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both ELA and mathematics.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

In Cycle II, Hooks School received a performance rating of *Low* for its Proficiency Index (PI) of 65.9 in ELA. Its 13-point improvement over Cycle I (1999-2000) was rated *Above Target*. Participation rates in the ELA test in Cycle II were 96 percent in 2001 and 99 percent in 2002. Hooks School's Mid-Cycle III report shows a participation rate of 98% in the aggregate, a Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) of 77.8, reflecting achievement of AYP and a CPI change of 9.9. In Cycle II, Hooks School saw its students make significant gains in the proportions scoring at the Proficient levels of performance as well as a significant decline in the proportions scoring at the Warning level. In 2000, zero percent of students scored at the Advanced level, 3% at Proficient, 70% at Needs Improvement and 27% scored at the Warning level. In 2001, 2% of students were Advanced, 18% Proficient, 57% in Needs Improvement, and 23% scored at the Warning level. In 2002, 0% of regular education students performed at the Advanced level, 38% were at Proficient, while 52% were at Needs Improvement and 10% were at Warning. In 2003, the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category was four, the percentage of Proficient students rose to 53, 37% were in Needs Improvement, and 6% failed the ELA portion of the test.

Student Performance in Mathematics

In Cycle II, Hooks School received a performance rating of *Low* for its Performance Index (PI) of 69.0 for its 10.5-point increase over Cycle I, the school received an improvement rating of *Above Target*. The school's participation rates in the mathematics portion of the MCAS test in Cycle II were 96% in 2001 and 99% in 2002. Hooks School's Mid-Cycle III report indicates a participation rate of 99% in the mathematics portion of the MCAS test. Their Composite Performance Index (CPI) rose to 81.7 in the aggregate, indicating a CPI change of 13.1. In 2000, 4% of students performed at the Advanced level, with 12% at Proficient, 61% were at Needs Improvement, and 23% at Warning. In 2001, 3% of students were Advanced, 14% Proficient, 69% in Needs Improvement, and 15% Warning. In 2002, 9% of students were Advanced and the proportion of Proficient regular education students rose to 32%, while 49% were at the Needs

Improvement level and 10% scored at the Warning level. In 2003, the percentage of students scoring at the Advanced level remained at 9%, the percentage of students scoring at the Proficient level rose to 43%, 43% in Needs Improvement and 5% scored at the Warning level in the mathematics portion of the test.

In both ELA and Math, Hooks students continue to surpass both the district and the state, with significantly lower numbers of students at Hooks scoring at the Warning level. The number of students scoring at the Advanced and Proficient levels continues to rise.

Panel Responses To The Key Questions

KEY QUESTION 1: Is this school using effective improvement initiatives that could be replicated in other similarly profiled schools?

Hooks School has established and prioritized three effective improvement initiatives that could be replicated in other schools with a similar profile. First, Hooks School has established a schoolwide Writing Workshop initiative that all teachers have committed to and are participating in, in various capacities. Second, Hooks School teachers are engaged in focused common planning time (CPT), during which they are looking at student work (LASW). Third, Hooks School has developed a system of individualizing instruction, particularly with regard to mathematics, in which school, district, and state assessment data is used to inform, refine, and individualize instruction, tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the particular students they are servicing.

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

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

According to leadership and staff at the Hooks School, the improvement initiatives that have had the greatest impact on student performance include the philosophical and pragmatic adoption of Writing Workshop at all grade levels; focused, dedicated CPT for all teachers at all grade levels, incorporating the Math lead teacher and Literacy lead teacher for LASW; and individualizing instruction using multiple sources of student assessment data to tailor curriculum delivery and to shape intervention groups that meet before and after school, as well as certain groups that meet during the school day. Teachers and the Principal point to improved student performance on the open response MCAS scores in ELA and mathematics as further evidence of the effectiveness of the programs.

It is this consistency across grade levels, teachers maintain, that is largely responsible for the gains in student achievement across all student groups at the school. A lead teacher model also helps ensure stability and consistency in the instructional program. When asked whether achievement gains could be substantiated with assessment data, teachers referred Panelists to the results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA; for grades K-2), Iowa testing in grade 3, DIBLES test of oral reading for all grades (1 – 5), MCAS results, as well as school- and district-wide assessment results that are tied to end-of-year exit criteria and benchmarking for all grade levels in all curriculum areas.

Teachers were observed during the Panel visit conducting Writing Workshop in their classrooms. Each was conducted in a quiet and orderly fashion free of distraction and in which student focus on the task at hand was clearly evident. Teachers were observed conducting student-centered lessons, in which whole group mini-lessons were conducted as a means of introduction to the writing process. Students were observed to be involved and attentive in a variety of settings, and readily participatory in all observations. Students were also observed to be self-motivated, as they were observed to be working by themselves and also in small groups where individual students were at differing stages of completion in the writing process

Other initiatives that the school is engaged in that they attribute their student performance improvements to include the following:

- Summer Committee work, during which time staff evaluates teacher surveys and analyzes student assessment data to shape instruction and teamwork for the following school year
- Using and analyzing a variety of student assessment tools, including MCAS, Iowa testing, DRA, DIBLES, and school- and district-wide assessments that are related to specified exit criteria for all grades in all curriculum areas
- Project Read reading instruction that has been implemented for special education students for the past 5 school years
- Implementation of Mimosa Math for the past 8 school years
- Math Lead Teacher and Literacy Lead teacher meets with grade level teams to plan and refine curriculum and to monitor the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives
- Incorporating mathematics into all curriculum areas, i.e. math vocabulary words, math embedded in science lessons
- Use of faculty meetings almost exclusively for professional development to improve instruction in the areas of weakness identified by data analysis
- Establishment of a uniform code of discipline, the Respect Corps, and the related Character Education Program in every classroom
- Mentoring program for students in need of social/emotional support – students who are recommended for this program by their classroom teacher meet with a teacher “mentor” once a week to provide an extra layer of social support during the school day

- First year teacher mentoring program to ensure collaboration and consistency of implementation of school-wide programs and initiatives for new teachers
- Parental involvement committee that has sponsored initiatives such as a Family Literacy Festival, a poetry coffeehouse, and math make-and-take event

Supporting the programmatic improvement initiatives cited above are collaborative efforts that have become part of the culture and daily schedule of the school. These efforts include the formation of grade level teams, School Goal Improvement Committees, and the regular analysis of data across the school community. The focus of the grade level teams is on issues of curriculum and instruction, and these teams meet anywhere from once to four times a week, depending on scheduling, to discuss instructional strategies, review student work, share best practices and coordinate instruction across content areas. Each teacher at the Hooks School is a member of one of three School Goal Improvement Committees. The goals and objectives of these committees are set forth in action plans outlined in the school's SIP. Data analysis is an ongoing initiative at Hooks; teachers unanimously spoke in focus groups and in interviews about using formal and informal student testing results to refine and focus their classroom instruction in an ongoing manner.

The collaborative efforts, as well as the program initiatives/enhancements cited above, are broadly supported by multiple assessments and the school's integration of data analysis into all phases of the decision-making process. Because of the continuous availability of on-site support in the form of grade level teams, as well as the availability of the Literacy Lead Teacher and the Math Lead Teacher, teachers are able to collaborate on problem solving techniques and strategies that proactively maintain an effective environment for learning. Teachers in interviews and focus groups made frequent references to MCAS, Iowa and district-wide assessments as evidence of their students' academic improvement. Furthermore, the grade level teams are adept not only at looking at student work but also in looking at assessment data to identify weak areas in the curriculum, to improve instruction, to identify students who need additional regular school day instruction and to identify students who would benefit from before, during, and after school support resources, referred to as Intervention groups. Students are identified and grouped by ability for supplemental before and after-school day instruction or academic support. In grade four, students are reassigned to higher level groups in mathematics through a dynamic monitoring process (based on multiple forms of assessment) that insures program rigor and challenging instructional content.

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

In terms of Writing Workshop, which the school indicates as their most important improvement initiative, the school recognized a need to strengthen their students' writing ability based on early analysis of student MCAS scores. During the 1999 – 2000 school year, one of the fourth grade teachers proposed adopting the philosophy of Writing Workshop to her class. Writing Workshop was introduced in her classroom, with a one-hour block set aside each day for the exclusive

purpose of teaching writing. The program was successful and then piloted in all fourth grade classrooms. The teachers involved became increasingly involved in this initiative and commented, "It is a way to individualize instruction at its best." Prior to implementing Writing Workshop, both the school, as well as other elementary schools in Chelsea, were lacking in a formal writing curriculum for their students. During the 2000 – 2001 school year, all fourth grade teachers at Hooks began to implement Writing Workshop with their students. During the 2001 – 2002 school year, five teachers from Hooks attended a conference offered by the New England Comprehensive Assistance Center (NECAC) that focused on improving student achievement as well as Looking At Student Work (LASW). It was here that teachers met Martha Gillis, a former K – 5 Reading Director in the Boston Public Schools. She was hired as a consultant for the Hooks School through NECAC to introduce a formalized way of Looking at Student Work at after school workshops and to help get the entire staff focused on student writing. The Writing School Goal Improvement committee provided further training for all staff and facilitated further discussion among all staff during faculty meetings and during grade level common planning time (CPT).

The following school year, the Hooks School brought on board an expert trainer in the implementation of Writing Workshop, Joanne Portalupi, who worked very closely with a team of teachers who would then work with all staff at grade level common planning meetings, directly with students in the classroom, and at scheduled professional development faculty meetings. Writing Workshop has now been in full implementation at Hooks at all grade levels for two school years. As a result of Hooks' writing initiative, during the 2001 – 2002 school year, the district adopted the concept of establishing a "Writing Team" in each elementary school. Each team was trained by Joanne Portalupi to work with other teachers in their respective buildings. This initiative has been so successful that the district has now planned to extend teacher training in Writing Workshop to selected teachers from the district's Early Learning Center.

As the pragmatic and philosophical adoption of Writing Workshop grew and as teachers became more invested schoolwide in changing their instructional practices, the concept of individualizing instruction that is tailored to meet students' needs became increasingly embedded in instructional practice for Hooks School staff. For the past four school years, the principal has structured the school schedule so that teaching teams are able to meet together for CPT with the Lead Literacy and Lead Math teachers to map curriculum, plan instruction, and perhaps more importantly, to engage in LASW. It is through this collaborative initiative that teachers became increasingly aware of the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. This process has led to teachers observing their peers, providing feedback, and has begun this year to welcome teachers from the district's other elementary schools into their classrooms to host observations, particularly with regard to the district-wide implementation of Writing Workshop.

Also, teachers have been engaged for the past several years in ongoing data analysis of formal and informal assessments, including MCAS, Iowa testing, DIBELS, district-wide assessments, and classroom assessment tools to individualize instruction. Additionally, each September,

teachers administer an intensive math assessment to organize small groups of students in need of extra support and remediation, as well as those students who were ready for extended learning.

It is through the constant, ongoing use of the staff meeting as professional development model that teachers are continually engaging in talking about data, root cause analysis, and identifying weaknesses in curriculum to make adjustment to their classroom practices. Out of this increasing familiarity and sophistication with data analysis, teachers are becoming more and more skilled in also identifying students who are in need of remediation and support to help them achieve grade level benchmarks and goals. This is manifested not only in differentiation of classroom instruction, but also in ongoing student intervention groups that meet before, during, and after school to help students who are having difficulty in various curricular areas.

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

Yes. The Hooks School staff and leadership stated in interviews and focus groups that the implementation of Writing Workshop, grade level teaming that engages in Looking at Student Work, School Improvement Goal Committees, and the use of data to guide instruction and shape intervention groups could easily be replicated in other schools. In fact, the district has already replicated the Hooks' model of the Writing Workshop initiative into the districts' other elementary schools. Hooks staff indicated that the initiatives have been achieved with the bulk of effort coming from a school schedule enhanced for instructional and common planning time, an organizational structure in which leadership and accountability are shared, and clearly communicated goals and expectations. Key to the success of these efforts appeared to the Panel to rest in the staff's positive attitude toward leadership, colleagues, students and a faculty empowered by evidence of the effectiveness of their efforts. It was made clear to the panel through teacher interviews and focus groups that the initiatives are replicable because they are grounded in beliefs and processes that are indicative of a positive school culture. All parties interviewed by the Panel agreed that the success of improvement initiatives is not inherent in the programs themselves but rather in their implementation.

KEY QUESTION 2: Are the conditions in place for this school to serve as a model of effective practices and successful improvement initiatives?

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

teaching and correspondingly high expectations for student learning. The Principal is a fluent and effective communicator, and teachers are comfortable with having their practices scrutinized.

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

Yes. Leadership and staff demonstrated a shared understanding and a common language for the initiatives they have implemented and for the improvement that Hooks students have shown. When asked by the Panel, in individual interviews and focus groups, what teachers believe are the causes of high student achievement at the school, teachers consistently responded with a list of efforts in their areas of expertise that included the school-wide, consistent implementation of Writing Workshop, high levels of collaboration that are marked by 100% teacher participation in School Goal Improvement Committees, grade level CPT, ongoing communication, collaboration, and support from the two Lead Teachers, and using assessment data to guide and continually refine instruction. The visiting Panel also found, throughout the day and across the visited community, a notable consistency in language and ideas among staff surrounding the principles and methods supporting the improvement efforts. According to the Literacy Lead Teacher, “Student writing has become more substantial, richer...the overall quality has greatly advanced.” The Principal and staff also emphasize sustaining the improvements they have made by continuing to identify specific student weaknesses or gaps in learning through ongoing assessment, and then targeting instructional strategies and materials to fill those gaps as the key in the process of continuous improvement

B. How effectively do leadership and staff articulate the connections between specific changes and improvement initiatives they have implemented, and the improvements made in teaching and learning?

Leadership and staff are skilled at articulating the connections between the initiatives they have chosen to improve student performance. They consistently refer to the adoption of Writing Workshop at all grade levels as the catalyst for improvement in MCAS scores in the areas of ELA and Math open response questions. Teachers unanimously attributed their students’ successes to the initiatives that have been outlined, including the school-wide implementation and ongoing professional development in Writing Workshop, focused common planning time, and the use of data analysis to guide instruction. According to one teacher, “each student gets individualized attention as a result of these initiatives and that has led to improved student performance.”

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

Yes. The Hooks School has developed school-wide improvement initiatives, improvement planning processes and monitoring procedures that indicate to the Panel substantial investment in the continued improvement of student performance. The entire school community participates in the interpretation of data and the diagnosis of weaknesses in curriculum, instruction and student learning. The broadly cooperative organizational structure that is in place indicated to the Panelists that the school is well positioned to continuously monitor the effectiveness of current efforts and to identify any new areas of weakness that appear.

Hooks school staff has met, and will continue to meet each summer for an intensive workshop over the course of several days, in which teachers review and analyze teacher survey data that provides feedback about the past school year, as well as ideas for improvement for the following school year. Leadership and staff at Hooks articulate an investment in ongoing evaluation of programs and practices, and are constantly refining their own professional practice so that they can continue to best meet the needs of their students. They have contracted for the 2004 –2005 school year to extend and continue their professional development in the area of writing instruction.

In a focus group, parents spoke very highly of and articulated pride in the school, the Principal and the staff. Parents said that they understood what was expected of the students, and were able to use and reinforce the same language that the teachers were using in the classroom at home, especially with regard to the uniform code of conduct/discipline that has been established at Hooks. Parents reported “the whole school works together as a team.” Parents indicated a level of comfort and a welcoming environment, and encouragement to get involved in the various parent initiatives offered at Hooks, and that they “never felt intimidated.” They also reported seeing dramatic improvement in their children’s writing over the past few school years, especially among parents who had had older students who had gone through the Hooks School in years past. Parents articulated a level of sophistication in their children’s writing that they had not seen before, and with which they were especially pleased.

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

Yes. The Hooks School is a clean, well-maintained school that is one of four elementary schools housed in a large, recently built complex. There are multiple rooms and areas that can be utilized as space for meetings and presentations. The Hooks School staff demonstrated professionalism and enthusiasm for what they do and have accomplished. All interviewed staff displayed a willingness to share what they have learned with others, including best practices, organizational changes, implementation of programs and initiatives, uses of data and the professional development of which the staff have taken advantage.

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The Hooks School staff regularly engages in peer observations and are experienced in hosting visiting teachers from the district's other elementary schools for classroom observations. They indicate a willingness to share programs and practices, and are experienced in engaging in post-observation discussions with their peers to ask and answer questions related to instructional practice.

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

Yes. The panel cannot identify any reasons why the Hooks School should not become a Commonwealth Compass School. There are many elements in their instructional program that could be adapted in other schools; and the leadership and the staff have demonstrated the ability to provide articulate and substantive information on what they are doing to improve student learning and are able to clearly articulate how they are doing it.

CONCLUSION

The Hooks School has implemented several programs and initiatives over the past several years that have led to improvement in student achievement. The improvement results in mathematics at Hooks School have been both significant and impressive. The Panel extracted three key initiatives that have led to student improvement in the fourth grade MCAS test in both ELA and Math. First, Hooks School has established a school wide Writing Workshop initiative that all teachers have committed to and are participating in, in various capacities. Second, Hooks School teachers are engaged in focused common planning time (CPT), during which time they are involved in looking at student work (LASW). Third, Hooks School has developed a system of individualizing instruction, particularly with regard to mathematics, in which school, district, and state assessment data is used to inform, refine, and individualize instruction, tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the particular students they are servicing.

These initiatives, coupled with a strong instructional leader and a collegial atmosphere in which shared decision making is paramount, have persuaded the panel to recommend the Edgar F. Hooks school be considered for designation to serve as a Commonwealth Compass School.

Appendix A Panel Members

Erin Furey – Chair, Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden, MA
Rose Marie DiResta – Principal, Riverside School, Danvers, MA
Dave Thomson - Assistant Principal, Duxbury Middle School, Duxbury, MA
Jeffrey Wolff – Compass Principal, Clyde Brown Elementary School, Millis, MA

Appendix B Candidate Compass School Panel Review Schedule

All activities take place at the school

7:30—8:00 a.m. Panelists meet to prepare for day

8:00—8:30 a.m. Panelists meet with the Principal

8:30—9:00 a.m. Panelists meet with focus groups

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D
Focus Group A	School Site Council Group	Student Focus Group #1	Student Focus Group #2

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

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

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

12:30—1:00 p.m. Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings and to gather more information and prepare for teacher focus groups

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

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D

1:00-1:30	Teacher	Focus Group 1	Teacher	Focus Group 3
1:30-2:00	Teacher	Focus Group 2	Teacher	Focus Group 4

2:15—2:30 p.m. *Chair* meets briefly with the principal to discuss next steps in the process
Panelists collate notes from focus teacher groups

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

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

1. Classroom Observations. Panelists will observe two classes each, followed by individual interviews with the teachers observed. The purpose of the classroom observations in candidate Compass Schools is to learn the extent to which the improvement initiatives the school has described as having the most positive impact on student achievement are in evidence in the classroom and throughout the school. Observers will also gather additional detail/information on those specific programs and practices.
2. Individual Teacher Interviews The purpose of the teacher interview that follows the panelist’s observation of that teacher’s classroom is to:
 - Clarify the evaluator’s impressions of the classroom dynamic and learning environment
 - Determine each teacher’s understanding of the initiatives cited in the application as having had the most positive impact on student achievement, and the extent to which the improvement initiatives are guiding their classroom practice (for instance, curriculum, instruction and assessment).
 - Determine what has changed at the school over the past three years.
 - Determine each teacher’s role in implementing the improvements made to student performance at the school.
3. Teacher Focus Groups The purpose of the teacher focus groups is to:
 - Determine each teacher’s understanding of the initiatives cited in the application as having had the most positive impact on student achievement, and the extent to which the improvement initiatives are guiding their classroom practice (for instance, curriculum, instruction and assessment).
 - Determine what has changed at the school over the past three years.
 - Determine each teacher’s role in implementing the improvements made to student performance at the school.

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