

School Panel Review Report Clarence R. Edwards Middle School Boston Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of the School Panel Review Process is to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether State intervention is needed to guide improvement efforts in schools where students' MCAS performance is not at a level that reaches the school's Adequate Yearly Progress targets in English language arts or mathematics or both. The Clarence R. Edwards Middle School met this criterion and was one of 15 schools selected for panel review in Fall/Winter of 2004-05. The panel review was conducted on December 14-15, 2004.

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

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

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

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

Clarence R. Edwards Middle School Profile

Enrollment

The Clarence R. Edwards Middle School is one of 18 middle schools in Boston. The school serves students in grades 6-8. Enrollment at the Edwards Middle School has fluctuated over the last four years, ranging from a high of 543 in 2003 to a low of 477 in 2004. There have also been noticeable changes in student demographics.

Between 2001 and 2004, the proportion of Asian students attending Edwards Middle School has decreased from 21 percent in 2001 to 14 percent in 2004. The percentages of Black and Hispanic students have increased over the same time period, with the Black population increasing from 33 to 36 percent and the Hispanic population increasing from 24 to 30 percent. The percentage of White students has decreased slightly from 21 percent in 2001 to 19 percent in 2004. In 2004, 87 percent of Edwards Middle School's students were from low income families. This proportion is similar to previous years. Thirty-nine percent of students are reported as having a first language other than English, which is a slight decrease from the 44 percent reported in 2003. Twelve percent of students were reported in the Limited English Proficient category in 2004, a substantial decrease from the 29.6 percent reported in 2001 and 16 percent reported in 2002 and 2003. In the 2004 school year, 26 percent of students are receiving special education services, which is a slight increase from the 24 percent reported in 2003.

In 2004, Edwards Middle School registered an attendance rate of 90.0 percent, with students absent 14.6 days on average. The school's retention rate was 3.0 percent in 2003, the last year for which this data is available. Out-of-school suspensions were reported at 18.6 percent, more than three times the State's 6.1 percent average. No in-school suspensions were reported in 2003 or prior years. The exclusion rate in 2003 was 10.1, five times the State's 2.0 average.

Staffing

The 2004-2005 Clarence R. Edwards Middle School's staffing report indicates that the school is composed of 3 administrators, 37 teachers and 1 guidance counselor. Approximately 43 percent of educators at the school have been there for three or fewer years. More than 84 percent of the Edwards Middle School's teachers are licensed in their current teaching area.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School are assessed in grade 7 in English language arts (ELA) and in grades 6 and 8 in mathematics. The school has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA since 2002. The school has not made AYP in mathematics since 2000. In the school's Cycle III End-of-Cycle Report (2003-2004), the school did not make AYP in ELA in the aggregate or for three of its four reported subgroups: Free/Reduced Price Lunch, Special Education, and White.¹ In mathematics, the school failed to make AYP in the aggregate and for five of its seven reported subgroups: Special Education, Free/Reduced Price Lunch, African-American/Black, Hispanic and White. The school is currently identified for Improvement in ELA and Corrective Action in mathematics.

¹ In accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, student performance is disaggregated by the following subgroups: Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Free/Reduced Price Lunch, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White. A minimum of 40 students (or 5% of the total number of students assessed, whichever is greater) per subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at Clarence R. Edwards Middle School in 2004 were Limited English Proficient, Free/Reduced Price Lunch, African-American/Black, and Hispanic in ELA, and Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Free/Reduced Price Lunch, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and White in mathematics.

Student Performance in English Language Arts

GRADE 7

Regular Education

Results for regular education students in grade 7 English language arts (ELA) are variable. In 2001, 17 percent of students scored in the Proficient range, 67 percent in the Needs Improvement range and 17 percent in Warning. In 2002, 30 percent were Proficient and 14 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 51 percent were Proficient, 46 percent were in Needs Improvement and 3 percent were in Warning. Scores in 2004 more closely resembled those of 2002: 34 percent were Proficient, the percentage of students in Needs Improvement was 54 and 12 percent were in Warning.

Special Education

Results for Special Education students in grade 7 ELA show improvement from 2001 to 2003; 2004 results show a return to 2002 levels. In 2001, 44 percent of students were in Needs Improvement and 56 percent were in the Warning range. In 2002, 4 percent of students were Proficient, 54 percent were in Needs Improvement and 42 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 8 percent were Proficient, 63 percent were in Needs Improvement and 29 percent were in the Warning range. The year 2004 saw 6 percent scoring in the Proficient range, 52 percent in Needs Improvement and 42 percent in Warning.

Limited English Proficient

Results for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in grade 7 ELA are available for 2001 and 2003 only. In other years, no aggregated results were reported due the small populations tested. In 2001, 8 percent of students were Proficient, 62 percent were in Needs Improvement and 31 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 3 percent were Advanced, 20 percent were Proficient, 46 percent were in Needs Improvement and 31 percent were in Warning.

Student Performance in Mathematics

GRADE 6

Regular Education

Scores for regular education students in grade 6 mathematics have been variable between 2001 and 2004. In 2001, 11 percent of students were Proficient, 34 percent were in Needs Improvement and 55 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 4 percent were Advanced, 19 percent were Proficient, 43 percent were in Needs Improvement and 35 percent were in Warning. Performance in 2004 declined, with 2 percent Advanced, 8 percent Proficient, 36 percent in Needs Improvement and 54 percent in Warning.

Special Education

The performance of Special Education students in grade 6 mathematics shows a decrease in the percentage of students scoring in the Warning range between 2001 and 2004. In 2001, 89 percent of students were in Warning. In 2002, this figure decreased to 70 percent. In 2004, 3 percent of students tested were Proficient, 33 percent scored in Needs Improvement and the remaining 65 percent were in the Warning range.

Limited English Proficient

The performance of LEP students in the grade 6 mathematics test is variable; this variation is linked to the small populations tested. In 2001, 29 percent of the 21 students tested were Advanced, 7 percent were Proficient, 14 percent were in Needs Improvement and 50 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 9 percent of the 32 students tested were Advanced, 13 percent were Proficient, 22 percent were in Needs Improvement and 56 percent were in Warning. In 2004, 100 percent of the 13 students tested scored in the Warning range.

GRADE 8

Regular Education

Scores for regular education students in grade 8 mathematics have shown improvement between 2002 and 2004. In 2002, 1 percent of students scored in the Proficient range, 10 percent were in Needs Improvement and 89 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 5 percent were Proficient, 34 percent were in Needs Improvement and 60 percent were in Warning. In 2004, 4 percent were Advanced, 14 percent were Proficient, 32 percent were in Needs Improvement and 48 percent were in Warning.

Special Education

The 2000-2004 results for Special Education students in grade 8 mathematics show slight improvement, but remain consistently low. In 2001, 3 percent of students scored in the Needs Improvement range and the remaining 97 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 2 percent were Proficient, 18 percent were in Needs Improvement and 80 percent were in Warning. In 2004, the percentage Proficient remained at 2 percent, while the percentage in Warning increased to 85.

Limited English Proficient

Results for LEP students in the grade 8 mathematics tests are variable. In 2002, 13 percent of the students assessed were Advanced, 7 percent were Proficient, 53 percent were in Needs Improvement and 27 percent were in Warning. In 2003, 4 percent were Advanced, 15 percent were Proficient, 41 percent were in Needs Improvement and 41 percent were in Warning. In 2004, 43 percent of the 14 students assessed were Advanced, 21 percent were Proficient, 7 percent were in Needs Improvement and 29 percent were in Warning.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

Yes. The Clarence R. Edwards Middle School has developed a Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP) that is focused on several key instructional priorities in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. In developing its WSIP, the school analyzed data from various sources to examine student achievement and indicated instructional strategies to advance student learning with clear timelines. The WSIP also designates specific persons responsible for implementation. Guided by the principal, who is the school's instructional leader, the process involved collaboration of the entire professional staff in determination of root causes and development of strategies for teaching and learning to address identified deficits.

School climate (particularly student attendance) and family involvement priorities were specified in the WSIP, but action planning to address these needs has not yet been undertaken.

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

Yes. The Team focused on the latest WSIP during the Panel Review. In keeping with the new process in the district, the plan is dated 2004-2005 but is designed to be a framework for a three-year process of school improvement in mathematics – the cause of the school's placement in corrective action – as well as English language arts (ELA), for which the school is in need of improvement. The plan will be updated annually and incorporates the most recent assessment data available to the school, primarily the 2004 MCAS results. The plan reflects changes already underway in school programs and schedules, such as the initiation of 80 minutes of instructional time daily in ELA and mathematics, changes in the service delivery model for special education (SPED) students, new team and department leadership structure and professional development using the collaborative coaching and learning (CCL) model.

As confirmed in interviews with staff and the school principal and reflected in the school's team meeting notes, the process of focused data analysis began shortly after school opened in the fall of 2004. The principal spends every Tuesday meeting with each of the school's instructional teams, including grade level teams (grades 6, 7 and 8) and specialist teams. SPED teachers are part of the grade level teams for the grade they teach. It was in these teams, with accompanying work by the school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), that the work of whole school data analysis and planning took place. Each teacher participated in a summative assessment analysis that examined MCAS assessment from several perspectives. In addition to determining numbers of students in each MCAS performance category (advanced, proficient, needs improvement and warning) in ELA and mathematics, teachers compared student scores on previous MCAS administrations in grades 4 and 6 and noted numbers of students who remained in the same achievement band or improved or dropped from one category to another. In addition, they examined student scores on Boston Public Schools (BPS) 2003-2004 final exams and compared mean scores for the class, the school and the district. Teachers also conducted an item analysis to

determine student strengths and weaknesses and speculate on reasons for student scores in each area.

Guided by the principal, all teaching teams examined data sources in mathematics that consisted of school-state comparisons of the results of the grade 8 MCAS for 2002, 2003 and 2004 and the grade 6 MCAS administered in 2004 with respect to students' ability to answer open-response, short-answer and multiple-choice type questions. They also examined the district grade 6 math pre-test administered in September 2004, the Edwards Middle School's grade 6 final exam given in June 2004, and conducted an item analysis of the grades 6 and 8 math MCAS to determine student strengths and weaknesses with problem solving involving use of varying math skills. Teachers also disaggregated math results of special education and regular education students to note patterns of difference.

In literacy, the staff studied data that included the ELA grade 7 MCAS (2004) and the May 2004 and fall 2004 student test scores (disaggregated for regular education and SPED students) on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), which is given by the district three times annually as a formative assessment. Writing assessments that were analyzed included the comment codes of the grade 7 MCAS long composition, monthly open-response exams in all subjects in all grades at the school during the 03-04 school year, and the Edwards Middle School's school-wide writing prompt, containing seven rubric categories, administered in October 2004.

According to the principal, and confirmed by the ILT, the teams examined test data from students who are English language learners (ELL) and concluded that their patterns of achievement paralleled those of the larger school population. Thus, there are no learning objectives specifically targeting ELL students. There was no desegregation of data for students in mainstream classes whose first language is not English (FLNE). The principal indicated that he hopes this would be accomplished in the future as he expects that this population (now approximately 30 percent) will be increasing.

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

Yes. In general, the plan delineates collaboratively determined improvement objectives (which the school calls "priorities") in mathematics (four priorities), in reading (three priorities), and writing (two priorities). For each of these priorities, there is an action plan with the following components:

- the root causes of the gap in student accomplishment;
- instructional strategies to address the root causes;
- a timeline that includes the names of specific staff responsible for coordinating implementation;
- evidence of implementation, such as student work, classroom evidence, teacher observation, agendas and minutes from each of the school's instructional team meetings, and school wide evidence such as ILT meeting notes and professional development, including CCL; and

- both summative and formative assessment goals that in most (but not all) instances set out specific achievement gains.

The appendix of the plan contains the data analysis that forms the basis for the development of each of the school's instructional priorities.

The Edwards School WSIP also articulates two school climate priorities. One calls for improvement of the daily attendance rate from 90.4 percent to more than 92.5 percent. The other concerns reinforcement of adult expectations for student conduct, effort and citizenship. There are also two family and community involvement priorities supporting outreach and communication to families. As indicated above, action planning for these priorities is still in process, although some activities to meet these needs have already begun, such as the implementation of an attendance telephone line to notify parents of absent students, as well as work with chronically absent students by the school's counseling interns.

The Panel Review Team noted that some of the reasons (root causes) mentioned by the staff for poor student performance focused on the symptoms (that is, student deficits), rather than on instruction or the curriculum. For example, in several places students' lack of prior knowledge or weak skills in ELA and mathematics was mentioned as a root cause. Others were a bit vague. For instance, a root cause stated for one of the reading priorities was: "No clear school-wide understanding of key reading strategies for successful reading." It was not stated whether it was students or teachers who lacked the understanding of the key reading strategies. Some root causes did specify teachers' needs for professional development in certain areas and also the lack of an ELA curriculum plan to guide or organize the teaching of grammar and sentence structure. The Team found no evidence – either in written documents or in interviews with the principal and staff – of a guiding curriculum or scope and sequence in English language arts. Teachers noted that the district's Readers & Writers Workshop provided structure and activities but did not adequately guide instructional content. While the district's Connected Math Program (CMP) curriculum is very clearly articulated and paced, it covers variables and patterns in grade 7, where the MCAS tests this topic in grade 6. The school is planning to address this in pacing the grade 6 mathematics program.

In mathematics, analysis of formative assessments to measure attainment of the mathematics priorities include examining grade 6 midyear and final exams; a steady score increase on the Edwards School math vocabulary quiz (which has yet to be developed); monitoring class work, math notebooks and classroom assessments; and attaining an increase to 75 percent of SPED students scoring 2 or above on each math task. Further refinement and benchmarking of these formative assessments to create a more effective way to monitor ongoing student progress in mathematics is lacking. Summative assessments in math referred to very specific increases in MCAS pass rates and student attainment of advanced and proficient status for grades 6 and 8 for both regular education and SPED students; improvement in MCAS achievement in comparison with the district and state on questions relating to fractions, decimals and percents; number sense; variables and patterns; and increases in numbers of SPED students meeting MCAS AYP goals. The Team noted that there were no summative assessments specified for students in grade 7 in the current plan.

Formative ELA reading and writing assessments show steady (although not specifically quantified) improvement on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT); decline in numbers of students at the “basic level” on the SDRT; an increase in school-wide scores of three and four on monthly open-response questions and Edwards Writing Prompt assessments; specified increases in percentages of students scoring above grade level on the SRI test; and observable improvement on inferencing skills demonstrated in Reader’s Notebooks (part of the Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop ELA program). Summative assessments in ELA refer to specific improvements on the grade 7 MCAS in ELA, including the writing prompt. There were no ELA summative assessments specified for students in grades 6 and 8, which was seen as a lack by the Panel Review Team.

Although the Panel Review Team felt that some of the summative assessment goals for both ELA and math might be overly ambitious and exceeded AYP requirements, the principal explained that they were determined by past experience and the gains made by students in the past two years.

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

Yes. The WSIP for the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School specifies a number of strategies tied to each instructional priority that are likely to lead to improved student results if they are diligently and consistently implemented. For the most part, each of the priorities lists at least four different strategies. Each strategy has an associated timeline for accomplishment with specific persons named to initiate or monitor implementation. The strategies are varied, ranging from acquisition of materials (i.e., improve classroom library collections) to professional development (in the areas of reading and mathematics instruction) to instructional methods (such as including math vocabulary in math warm-ups in classrooms). Some strategies are clearly stated with very specific timelines: “Implement a diagnostic reading assessment for all students in September and January (to begin in January 2005).” Others are more general and non-specific: “Improve the inclusion program to support increased numbers of special education students in regular education classrooms (ongoing).”

In interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, the Team learned that some math and literacy strategies are now in place to implement the plan. These include use of non-fiction texts for read-alouds in all classes twice per week and the new sports math enrichment class. Professional development to help teachers make improvements in instruction in ELA and math is underway via the collaborative coaching and learning (CCL) model. Groups of teachers work with the literacy and math coaches in eight-week CCL cycles to become more effective in the classroom. As teachers take turns observing each other and providing feedback, they (with the guidance of the coaches who are also members of the school’s ILT) are able to reflect on the strategies in the WSIP. These district-provided coaches are each on-site in the school two days per week. While the district has promoted this model for three years, this is the first year it is being consistently implemented at the Edwards Middle School. Teachers and coaches report the model appears to be taking hold.

Other strategies requiring immediate implementation (i.e., beginning in December 2004) include: post-key vocabulary in every classroom and inclusion of active vocabulary instruction in every subject area; school wide emphasis on fractions, decimals and percents; and review of patterns, relation, and algebra standards during one weekly warm-up in grade 6.

The school's professional development schedule, which was included with the WSIP, focuses some of the district-mandated 18 hours of training on research and best practices in teaching reading to adolescents for the entire staff. Other training will be departmentalized by content areas. Some team meetings (conducted during common planning time during the school day) will address the school's writing initiative, while others will target the analysis of the school's formative assessments. Training in instructional strategies has already taken place through a contract with Research for Better Teaching (RBT). Some teachers reported that this was useful in helping them develop new strategies for classroom management and to formulate learning objectives and agendas, which are required to be universally posted in classrooms. A course in behavior management is scheduled for January and February and will be taught by the school's assistant principal responsible for student discipline.

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

Yes. On balance, the Panel Review Team determined that the Edwards School WSIP, though not a perfect document, is clear and specific enough to guide the implementation of the selected improvement strategies. Teachers interviewed individually and in focus groups demonstrated specific knowledge of the plan, had participated in its development and are able to articulate the school's priorities for instruction.

Members of the Panel Review Team conducted ten scheduled half-hour classroom observations and dropped in on nine other classes. Most of the lessons observed were deemed to be adequate, with several instances of outstanding instruction observed. Objectives were posted in 17 of the 19 classrooms and homework was posted in all of them. The observations conducted by the Panel Review Team showed that staff is engaged in addressing student needs and has begun to implement the strategies of the plan in the classroom.

Team members observed the following implementation of planned improvement activities:

- Connections between social studies and ELA where a writing lesson was being taught in a social studies classroom.
- A quick math practice with fractions in a science classroom.
- Math and other vocabulary lists posted on word walls.
- Lesson objectives, agendas and homework assignments were consistently posted.
- Warm-ups and summarizing activities.
- Non-fiction read-alouds.
- The sports math class for MCAS remediation.
- Extra support for students who needed it.
- Integrated pedagogy with a balance of reading, writing, listening and speaking tasks.

- Time management, i.e., letting students know how much time they had to complete a task.
- Identification of genre.
- Use of graphic organizers, such as a story map and a Venn diagram.
- Use of rubrics.

In the Department of Education staff survey, teachers were asked what they are expected to do, according to the school's improvement plan, to improve student performance. Most teachers mentioned the need to improve student skills in math and ELA, along with analyzing past performance and/or data to help them determine how to assist students. This is consistent with the school's planning efforts.

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

Yes. The process organized by the school's principal, accompanied by his ongoing supervision of instruction, ensures that the plan will be successfully implemented. The team meeting structure established by the principal, in which he actively participates, has institutionalized a process whereby staff analyzes data and will continue to refine and evaluate the ongoing implementation of the plan. The team leaders each receive a stipend and one of their duties is also to serve on the ILT, thus keeping open channels of communication between the ILT and the school's instructional teams. It is clear from interviews, focus groups, and the plan itself that an active role was taken by all staff in the development of this plan. Development of the plan flowed from the data analysis, identification of root causes and development of strategies within the instructional teams, to the ILT where the information was collected, causes prioritized, and final strategies and timelines formulated. The WSIP was also reviewed, with feedback provided, by the Deputy Superintendent for Triad A of the Boston Public Schools, as well with district support specialists. Members of the ILT who were involved in the development of the previous WSIP indicated that this plan was formulated via a more inclusive process.

In addition to the principal and one assistant principal, the 18-member ILT is composed of the grades 6, 7 and 8 team leaders, the ELA, math, social studies and science, SPED and ELL team leaders, the math and literacy coaches, the student support coordinator, the director of Citizen Schools (an after-school program), the evaluation team facilitator and the after-school coordinator. At least 40 staff members responsible for various improvement strategies are listed in the plan, including the 18 members of the ILT. In addition to the major content area teachers, the school's specialty teachers also played a part in plan's development.

The one constituency not involved in the development of the plan is the School Site Council (SSC), although the teacher members of the SSC worked on the plan in their instructional teams. The principal explained that the SSC was defunct when he arrived at the school in the fall of 2002 and he is attempting to revitalize it. One of the difficulties in securing parental participation results from the fact that few Edwards School students live in the local neighborhood and most are bussed in from outlying communities in Boston. Many parents lack transportation to enable them to come to meetings at the school on a regular basis.

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

Yes. The school's principal provides effective leadership via excellent communication with all staff and clear definition of roles. The assistant principals have administrative duties in the school that are congruent with their strengths (one focuses on climate and discipline and the other on operations and assessment) and the team leader/ILT structure that has been established is effective. From focus groups and individual interviews with teachers, the explicit theme emerged that since the current principal assumed his position in 2002, the improvement in school climate and development of a positive school culture now makes it possible for teaching and learning to take place, and for the implementation of the plan to be successful.

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

The principal's leadership style is inclusive as he reaches out to all constituencies in a thorough and ongoing way. This includes students, families and community, as well as faculty. One member of the staff called the principal's leadership "transformational" through his style of modeling, communicating and creating effective change. By including everyone in the process of creating the WSIP and in ongoing work on school improvement, he has empowered staff and built their capacity for carrying out the strategies to increase student achievement. Students reported that the school provides a safe environment where they "do a lot of reading and writing." Many participate in after-school activities that provide both enrichment and remediation and told the panel that they are expected to do at least one hour a day of homework.

In the staff survey, teachers generally agreed or strongly agreed that the principal provides effective leadership. This was confirmed in all focus groups and in individual interviews. Further demonstrating the comprehensive nature of the principal's leadership is a list of "Expectations for School Year 2004-2005," which provides teachers with a set of common procedures for curriculum and instruction, assessment, behavior management, classroom appearance, teacher attendance, student attendance, communication with parents, special education, duties, hallway procedures, team meetings, professional development and communication. Several that connect directly with the WSIP process include the posting of learning objectives and homework, participation in the monthly open-response initiatives, and the focus of one team meeting per week on data analysis and the open-response initiative. Each daily lesson plan should contain objectives, activities, assessment and homework. Teachers have been provided with a five-step approach to managing an 80-minute class period.

A number of other processes are present that demonstrate the school's effective leadership and sound management. The principal conducts individual interviews with each staff member once or twice each year to provide feedback and receive input. He follows the Boston Public Schools system of school-based management and thus is responsible for the school's budget. He also meets with the three on-site building representatives of the Boston Teachers Union twice each month to ensure that the boundaries of the teachers' contract are respected. With staff, the principal developed the ten non-negotiables that are posted in every classroom and which are

focused on discipline and the safety of students. There is a schedule of after-school activities that include math and English tutoring, homework help and a number of sports activities and clubs.

Through the school's teaming system, teachers meet in their instructional teams to work on improvement of student instruction, look at student work (LASW), and engage in common planning, for four 40-minute periods each week. The principal attends Tuesday meetings in which the focus is on the data analysis for the WSIP and determination of resultant needs and strategies. Teachers also reflect on how WSIP strategies can be incorporated in weekly plans and how to ensure full implementation. One issue that the teams will tackle as the school year proceeds is how to provide additional supports for SPED students in inclusion classes. These team meetings have agendas and minutes are kept.

Through articles in the local paper, a public relations campaign is underway to improve the image of the school in the community. For example, an article in *Charlestown Bridge* on December 13th described the school's recent Awards Ceremony on December 10 to honor students in a variety of categories, including Citizens of the Month who are chosen as role models in schoolwork, attitude and behavior; Honorable Mention students who are receiving all A's and B's; and First Honors students who received straight A's in conduct, effort and academic achievement. More than 100 students (approximately 20 percent of the school) received recognition for their hard work and success.

For the current year, the principal has organized a system of Learning Walks to be conducted on a regular basis by the school's three administrators (principal and two assistant principals). Each is expected to make two short visits to classrooms every day with a specific focus of observation. For example, during the week of November 8, the focus was reading and classroom libraries; during the week of December 6, the focus was on student thinking, including classroom environment and reading response journals and writing notebooks. The principal is hoping that there will be one to two cycles of visits each month, with six visits per day, 30 visits per week, which would enable each teacher to be visited within a two-week cycle. A feedback sheet is provided for teachers on the observation that contains indicators related to the focus area. For example, for the reading and classroom libraries learning walks, one indicator was "Are there posted learning strategies that emphasize the key areas of the writing and reading process?" Another indicator was "Are there a variety of genres available in the library? What other sorts of print are available?" Each indicator was rated on a three-point scale. A written summary of the reading/library walk-through describing general strengths and needs was made available by the principal to all the ELA teachers.

The principal has also worked to develop a number of partnerships. Citizens Schools provides a comprehensive after-school program that provides homework help, math reinforcement and a mentoring program wherein attorneys, architects, and other professionals introduce students to their professions. Interns from Harvard and Boston University Schools of Education are working in the school in classrooms, administration and leading student support groups (supervised by the guidance counselor). By hosting these student interns, teachers at the school subsequently have opportunities to enroll in graduate courses at these universities.

The principal is promoting the school's performing arts focus with both school day and after-school activities. There are performance classes in instrumental and vocal music, band, dance, theater and visual arts. Field trips to local performances include the Berklee Jazz Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra, as well as theater performances. The school holds several productions annually that include concerts and plays.

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

The Team found consistent and strong evidence that the staff has embraced the planned improvement efforts. All teachers participated in the development of the plan from analysis of data to designation of root causes and development of strategies to address them. In staff interviews and focus groups, the Panel Review Team heard strong agreement with the school's assessment of identified needs. Teachers have been actively participating in professional development, ongoing assessment and regular communication to further the goals of the plan. From the plan itself, the panel noted that 40 different teachers, including each member of the ILT, were designated as "persons responsible" for implementation of the plan's strategies. As indicated in the previous section, the panel observed initial implementation of a number of the plan's enumerated strategies on the day of its visit to the school.

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

According to the School Leadership Report, the school has received guidance and support from the district in the areas of school improvement planning, human resources coordination, budget planning and general operational support. The Deputy Superintendent responsible for supervision of the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School has reportedly been helpful and supportive in providing targeted feedback on the School Leadership Report and the WSIP as the plan has been developing. He, along with the newly appointed Assistant Superintendent for the cluster, visits the school regularly to meet with the principal and recently, along with district support specialists, conducted a daylong walk-through of classes. Teachers were interviewed during this visit and demonstrated their familiarity with the plan and their commitment to its implementation.

Based on the school's increasing enrollment, the district added two new teachers and provides the math and ELA coaches who are each on-site two days a week. Substitutes are provided on days that teachers are involved in CCL sessions. The district has also provided a half-time attendance officer to help improve student attendance. The district's policy of school-based management has also made it possible for the school to set up block schedules in ELA and math and alternating semesters of social studies and science for students wherein students have a daily double block in each of these subjects for half the year instead of a single period for the full year.

The district also provides a schedule of professional development available to teachers to enable them to meet their recertification requirements, as well as data analysis and curriculum resources on the MyBPS website. Although district financial resources are scarce, resulting in the elimination of a guidance counselor position at the school, the principal was able to develop

partnerships with the Harvard and Boston University Schools of Education; several graduate interns in counseling have placements at the Edwards School under the supervision of the school support coordinator. These interns are primarily targeting youngsters who have attendance issues and are considered chronically absent.

In focus groups and interviews, teachers at the school indicated that they would welcome a clearer articulation of the English language arts curriculum from the district as well as clearer guidance for more effective implementation of the Reader's and Writer's Workshop. They also indicated that the district appears unaware of the above noted discrepancy in the Connected Math Program wherein the unit on patterns and variables is taught in grade 7 but tested on MCAS in grade 6.

CONCLUSION

The Panel Review Team concluded that the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School has a sound and viable school improvement plan that shows promise for increasing student achievement. The school has analyzed relevant data, identified student instructional needs and has begun to implement strategies designed to assist students in moving forward through improving the quality of instruction and developing higher order thinking skills. The staff, operating under the leadership of a strong, respected principal who is valued by district administrators, appears cohesive, committed and determined to succeed, as demonstrated by common understanding of the plan and its strategies, timelines and areas of responsibility.

Needs still exist for additional training for teachers in implementation of the school's curricula; further planning and support for implementation of SPED inclusion; completing the action planning for the school climate (including student attendance) and family involvement priorities; identifying the instructional needs of students whose first language is not English; and developing an effective and functional School Site Council.

**APPENDIX A
Team Members**

Zita M. Samuels, Panel Chair, Consultant, SchoolWorks, Beverly, MA

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

Diane Connolly, Panel Member, English MCAS Tutor, Haverhill Public Schools, Haverhill, MA

Carolyn Richards, Panel Member, Guidance Director, 6-12 / MCAS Coordinator 9-12, Haverhill Public Schools, Haverhill, MA

Janet Sebel, Panel Member, Art Specialist, Brookline Public Schools, Brookline, MA

Joseph P. Silvia, Panel Member, School Plan Facilitator, Fall River Public Schools, Fall River, MA

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

Day 1

- 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Panel chairperson and panel coordinator meet to discuss and clarify roles, prepare for the first team meeting, and review general logistics/schedule for the review. (Location: hotel.)
- 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. **Team meeting # 1:** Team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist's individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgments on key questions. (Location: hotel.)
- 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with Principal. (Location: school.)
- 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Panelists meet with School Instructional Leadership Team. (Location: school.)
- 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. **Team meeting # 2:** Panelists synthesize interview information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for Day 2 of the review. (Location: hotel.)

Day 2

All activities take place in the school

7:35 - 8:00 a.m. **Panelists meet with the Principal.**

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
8:00	Focus Group: Non SSC Parents	Focus Group: AP's, Student Support Staff	Observation: Grade 7 Social Studies	Observation: Grade 7 Math Ms. McCormack	Focus Group: Specialty Team
8:30	Focus Group: School Site Council	Focus Group: Coaches, ETF	Focus Group: Students	Observation: Grade 7 Math Ms. Phillips	Observation: Grade 6 LD English
9:00	Observation: Grade 6 ELA	Observation: Grade 8 SEI ESL	Interview: Grade 7 Social Studies teacher	Interview: Grade 7 Math teacher	Interview: Grade 6 LD English teacher
9:40		Interview: Grade 8 SEI ESL teacher	Observation: Grade 6 LD Math	Interview: Grade 7 Math teacher	Observation: Grade 6 Science
10:30	Interview: Grade 6 ELA teacher	Focus Group: Grade 6 Team	Interview: Grade 6 LD Math teacher	Focus Group: Special Education	Interview: Grade 6 Science teacher

11:00			Observation: Grade 8 Math	Observation: Grade 8 ELA	
11:30 - 1:00	Team Meeting # 3: working lunch				
1:00	Focus Group: Grade 8 Team		Interview: Grade 8 Math teacher	Interview: Grade 8 ELA teacher	
1:45 - 2:30	Interview: Deputy Superintendent				
2:30	Closing Meeting: Panel Review Chair with Principal				
2:30 - 5:00	Team meeting # 4: Panelists deliberate and form conclusions.				