

## **School Panel Review Report E. N. White Elementary School Holyoke 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 E. N. White Elementary School met these criteria and was one of 15 schools selected for panel review in Fall/Winter of 2004-05. The panel review was conducted on November 9-10, 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 the E. N. White Elementary School is deemed under-performing. The panel was not asked to formulate a sound plan for school improvement where such a plan does not presently exist or to recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions at present do not appear to exist. Diagnostic and/or prescriptive intervention, where needed to assist an under-performing school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

## **E.N. White Elementary School Profile**

### **Enrollment**

The E.N. White Elementary School is one of eight elementary schools in Holyoke. In 2004, students in grades K - 7 are attending the school. The school is currently expanding: in 2003 it began serving students in grade 6, in 2004 it began serving students in grade 7, and in 2005 it will begin serving students in grade 8. Over the last four years, and in conjunction with the school's expansion, enrollment at E.N. White Elementary has increased from 440 in 2001 to 534 as of October 1 of this school year. There have also been small yet noticeable changes in student demographics.

Between 2001 and 2004, the proportion of Black students attending E.N. White Elementary decreased from 7 percent in 2001 to 4 percent in 2004, while the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 65 percent in 2001 to 71 percent in 2004. This year, 23 percent of students are reported in the White subgroup, a comparable percentage to that of the last three years. Asian students, who accounted for 3 percent in 2001, this year account for 1 percent. Between 2001 and 2004, 73 - 79 percent of the E.N. White Elementary School's students were from low-income families. Nearly 40 percent of the students have a primary language other than English. Limited English Proficient students represented 27 percent of the school's student population in 2001; in 2004 this figure is 23 percent. This school year, 21 percent of students are reported to be receiving special education services, which is 3 percent higher than last year.

In 2004, the E.N. White Elementary School registered an attendance rate of 93.1 percent, with students absent 11.2 days on average. The school's retention rate was 3.2 percent in 2003, the last year for which data are available. Out-of-school suspensions averaged 16.2 percent, more than 10 percentage points above the State's 6.1 percent average. No in-school suspensions were recorded.

### **Staffing**

The 2004-2005 E.N. White Elementary School's staffing report indicates that the school is composed of 2 administrators, 47 teachers and 2 guidance personnel. Approximately 50 percent of educators at the school have been there for three or fewer years. Nearly 98 percent of teachers are licensed in their current teaching area.

### **MCAS Overview**

Students at the E.N. White Elementary School are assessed in grades 3 and 4 in English language arts (ELA) and in grades 4 and 6 in mathematics. The school has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA since 2003, nor has it made AYP in mathematics since 2001. In the school's Cycle III End-of-Cycle (2003-2004) and Mid-Cycle (2003) AYP Reports, the school failed to make AYP in ELA in the aggregate and for two of the reported subgroups: Free/Reduced Price Lunch and Hispanic.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> 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

mathematics, the school failed to make AYP in ELA in the aggregate and one of the two reported subgroups: Free/Reduced Price Lunch. The school is currently identified for Improvement in ELA and for Corrective Action in mathematics.

## **Student Performance in English Language Arts**

### **GRADE 3**

#### **Regular Education**

At the grade 3 level in Reading, the performance of regular education students has improved since the test was first introduced in 2001. In 2001, 25 percent of students were found proficient, 55 percent performed at the Needs Improvement level and 19 percent at the Warning level. In 2002, the percentage of proficient students increased to 28 percent, Needs Improvement increased to 62 percent, and Warning decreased to 10 percent. In the most recent administration of the MCAS test, the percentage of students who scored at the Proficient level increased to 52 percent, while the percentage of students at the Warning level remained at 11 percent. The 2004 cohort was substantially smaller than in previous years, however (27 students in 2004; 51 students in 2003; 50 students in 2002).

#### **Special Education**

Results for Special Education students tested in grade 3 Reading have varied from year to year. In 2001, 7 percent scored in the Proficient range, 40 percent in Needs Improvement and 53 percent in Warning. Results in 2003 were similar to 2001. In 2004, however, results more closely mirrored those of 2002: 0 percent Proficient, 76 percent Needs Improvement and 24 percent Warning. This variation is likely linked to the small populations (15 to 25 students) tested.

#### **Limited English Proficient**

As in the Special Education subgroup, results for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students vary over the years. In 2004, 4 percent of students scored in Proficient, 48 percent in Needs Improvement and 48 percent in Warning. In 2003, 0 percent scored in Proficient, 35 percent scored in Needs Improvement and 65 percent scored in Warning. In 2002, 38 percent scored in Proficient and 63 percent scored in Needs Improvement. These varying results are likely linked to the small populations (10 to 25 students).

### **GRADE 4**

#### **Regular Education**

Results for regular education students in grade 4 English language arts reflect a slight performance decline from 2001 to 2004. In 2001 and 2002, the results were similar, 2 percent of students scored in the Advanced range, 32 - 35 percent in Proficient, 53 percent in Needs Improvement and 10 - 13 percent in Warning. In 2004, no students

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subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at E.N. White Elementary in 2004 were Limited English Proficient, Free/Reduced Price Lunch, and Hispanic for ELA, and Free/Reduced Price Lunch and Hispanic for mathematics.

scored in the Advanced range, 28 percent were Proficient, 60 percent were in Needs Improvement and 13 percent were in Warning.

### **Special Education**

No substantial trend is evident in the Special Education scores for grade 4 ELA. In 2004, 5 percent of Special Education students scored in the Advanced range, 5 percent in Proficient, 35 percent in Needs Improvement and 55 percent in Warning. In 2003, 35 percent of Special Education students scored in Needs Improvement and 65 percent in Warning. In 2002, 10 percent were Proficient, 10 percent in Needs Improvement and 80 percent in Warning. Populations tested ranged from 10 to 26 students in these years.

### **Limited English Proficient**

No LEP students scored in the Advanced or Proficient ranges in any administrations of the grade 4 ELA test. Percentages in Warning range from 90 in 2000 to 62 in 2004. In 2003, 22 percent scored in the Needs Improvement range; in 2004, 38 percent of LEP students scored in this category. The variation reflected in scores correlates with the small populations tested (13 to 23 students).

## **Student Performance in Mathematics**

### **GRADE 4**

#### **Regular Education**

The performance of regular education students at this school has worsened between 2001 and 2004. In 2001, 6 percent of students scored in the Advanced range, 14 percent in Proficient, 47 percent in Needs Improvement and 33 percent in Warning. In 2003, no students were Advanced, 9 percent scored in the Proficient range, 54 percent were in Needs Improvement and 37 percent were in Warning. In 2004, the percentage of Proficient students decreased to 7 and the percentage of students in the Warning category increased to 41.

#### **Special Education**

Scores for Special Education students in grade 4 mathematics evidence a slight increase in the Proficient category and matched increase in the Warning category. The number of students scoring in the Needs Improvement range has varied along with these changes. In 2004, 5 percent of students scored in Proficient, 15 percent in Needs Improvement and 80 percent in Warning. In 2002, 30 percent scored in the Needs Improvement range, while 70 percent scored in Warning.

#### **Limited English Proficient**

Data for LEP students is available only for 2003, due to the small number of students tested. In that year, 83 percent scored in the Warning category and 17 percent scored in the Needs Improvement category.

## **GRADE 6**

### **Regular Education**

Only one year of grade 6 data are available. In 2004, 5 percent of students scored in the Advanced range, 16 percent in Proficient, 43 percent in Needs Improvement and 36 percent in Warning.

### **Special Education**

Fewer than 10 Special Education students were assessed in 2004, the only year grade 6 data are available; as such, data for this subgroup is not reported.

### **Limited English Proficient**

In 2004, the only year of grade 6 data available, 17 percent of LEP students scored in the Needs Improvement range and 83 percent scored in the Warning range.

## **PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS**

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

Yes. The administration and faculty of E. N. White Elementary School, with the assistance of district personnel, have produced a school improvement planning document that adequately describes causes for low student performance and the related improvement steps that the school is taking. This work was accomplished with an inclusive process that will support its successful implementation. More work needs to be done, however, on refining language to make the goals and objectives clearer and easier to implement and evaluate. The expansion of the school to a K-8 program will be complete in 2005.

#### **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. School leaders, district staff and leadership team members analyzed available data and program information to identify student academic weaknesses and possible reasons for those weaknesses.

The E.N. White School Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) team analyzed mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS performance data for grades 3 and 4 for the 2002 and 2003 school years. They also studied MCAS data for 2004 for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Although some improvement was made between the 2003 and 2004 ELA scores, it was a different cohort. The actual cohort from 2003 showed no significant improvement in the 2004 testing. The test results also showed little progress

in math scores over the three years reviewed. No other standardized or summative test results were available or referenced. The Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) test, although used as an English-language assessment tool in the district, was not analyzed by the team. Test results also showed that English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education (SPED) students performed at much lower levels than the general population, with most of these students falling into the needs improvement or warning/failing performance categories.

Identified areas of student weakness in mathematics included measurement and patterning, affecting students' ability to respond to open response and multi-step questions. ELA weaknesses included vocabulary development and comprehension. As part of the self-reflection part of the PIM process, the faculty also recognized, in a "defining moment" as characterized by a member of the School Leadership Team, that their instructional practices needed to be examined closely as a cause of low student performance.

The principal, upon taking her position in 2002, began to examine teaching practices in the math classrooms, along with a mathematics coach and the District Mathematics Coordinator. Their conclusion, shared with and accepted by the faculty, was that the programs were fine but there was uneven implementation and assessment across the grades. As the principal explained, during an interview with the Panel Review Team, "quality of implementation needed to be refined and teachers did not have a clear understanding of mathematical thinking."

The decision was made, therefore, to remain with the mathematics program, *Investigations* (K-5) and the *Connected Mathematics* programs for grades 6-8, but supplemented in grade 4 by a Scott Foresman program. A math coach was hired to work with the teachers and a math team was formed. The topics in the mathematics curriculum are now aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and there are scope and sequence guides. There are "Problem of the Day" (POD) workbooks for all classes, mathematics vocabulary 'word walls' and notebooks for grades 3-7. The mathematics instructional period has been increased from 75 to 90 minutes each day, depending on the grade level.

The School Improvement Planning Team determined that the Reading Collaborative – the Reading program for the district and school for several years – was no longer meeting the needs of the students. The school successfully earned a Reading First grant and the faculty adopted a Scott Foresman reading program for K-3. District funding allowed the program to be extended to grades 4 and 5, and work is said to be ongoing to assimilate the middle school grades into the reading initiative. There is now a 90-minute literacy block each day. A literacy coordinator was hired and funding was provided to hire additional consultants to provide training for the staff in assessment strategies.

In 2003, the White School implemented a Sheltered English Immersion Program for their ELL students. The ELL students are included in the classes with native English speakers and receive native language support as needed from an ELL Support teacher. Together

the classroom teacher and the ELL support teacher provide language acquisition and Sheltered English Immersion strategies to support the ELL students.

In 2004, the school began to organize and implement an Inclusion Model for their Special Education students. Under this model, the SPED teachers are scheduled to work in classrooms with regular education teachers to co-teach and meet the needs of the SPED students and Regular Education students. The SPED students may also receive direct instruction from a SPED teacher in a Resource Room at times for more specialized instruction, such as *ERI* or *Linda Mood Bell* strategies.

The White School Improvement Planning team is part of the School Leadership Team. It received district funding and directed training in the steps of writing a sound plan, including data analysis and root cause analysis. In the future, their work will be able to draw upon the following additional assessments provided either by the school or district:

- Mathematics: Unit tests from Investigations and CMP programs;
- Options Pre- and Post-test, grades 1-5;
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, grades 4 and 6;
- Larson's Mathematics Computer Program, grades 3-7, provides pre- and post-testing, while providing practice on various mathematics strands;
- ELA: Reading First DIBELS and GRADE from grades K-3;
- Grade level assessments to begin in November;
- Monthly writing prompt assessments, all grades by January;
- District writing prompt assessments, grades 3-7, three times a year.

During classroom visits, Panel Review members reported a variety of instructional practices being utilized in rooms with engaged students and with teachers who have a command of their subject matter and good classroom control. They saw peer partnering, cooperative learning and differentiated teaching. The rooms had examples of student work displayed, as well as word walls, writing prompts and word and problem of the day. Lessons were referenced to the MA standards and the SIP. There was accountable talk (conversations between the teacher and student and among students about the task at hand) and the dialogue between teacher and student was friendly and positive.

The Panel Review Team met with a small group of parents (five) who were representatives of the brand new School Council and the existing PTO. They expressed satisfaction with the school and the improvement efforts being undertaken and felt that it was a safe environment for their children. They pointed out that it was difficult to maintain high degrees of parent involvement because it was not a neighborhood school and that 90 percent of the students were bused on a daily basis. This limited parents' ability to visit the school, even for conferences, and the accessibility of afternoon athletic and tutorial opportunities for their children. The Panel was told that there has been some conversation about the desire of the district to make White a neighborhood school for financial reasons and to alleviate the aforementioned transportation problems.

School morale is an important factor in achieving school improvement goals. The E.N. White School is a bright, clean, cheerful building situated in a residential neighborhood –

“an urban school in a suburban setting”, one teacher commented during a focus group interview. The faculty and staff were welcoming and accommodating and in interviews and focus groups spoke of high expectations they had for student and school improvement. Students were engaged in meaningful work in the classes visited. Space in the classrooms and public areas of the school displayed reading, writing and mathematics initiatives and student work. The administration spoke confidently of their vision and planning for school improvement. Copies of the school mission were posted throughout the school.

**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. The plan’s improvement goals are written with objectives related to the school’s analysis of root causes for poor student performance. However, they are too globally written – not specific enough and, in some instances, missing.

Although a review of the MCAS results shows that White School students were tested in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics, the goals for ELA and mathematics as written in the plan speak in general terms only about projected student improvement in the various categories and do not refer specifically to the individually tested grade levels. This conflation of performance goals prevented the Panel Review team from judging the reasonableness and achievability of the goals.

A reading of the plan and the leadership report and interviews with the Principal and Superintendent show a focus on teaching and learning in the areas of mathematics and ELA surrounding the implementation of the mathematics and literacy programs. However, the plan would be a more useable document if the objectives were more clearly written. For example, the Panel Review team noted the ELA improvement objectives use words such as “sufficient” skills and “consistent” instruction. In the mathematics improvement objectives words such as “high quality,” “well trained,” and “wide variety” are used. Clear definitions of these terms in the objectives are absent.

Student Learning Objectives are not included in the current version of the written plan. Apparently this was an oversight, however, since the principal was able to provide copies of SLO worksheets completed by the faculty work groups that included student learning objectives and corresponding references to the learning strands and standards in the Massachusetts frameworks.

Under a section of the plan referring to “All Content Areas,” there are objectives relating to the use of inclusion strategies, diversification of instruction and behavioral issues but there are no goal statements. Future iterations of the SIP should include objectives that are more specific and more closely identified with the respective goals.

Classroom observations conducted by the Panel Review team evidenced examples of quality teaching following appropriate curricula and instructional strategies. The Review

Team feels that the problem is in the attention to the completeness of a PIM and SIP plan and to the use of precise language to describe activities, goals and objectives rather than a lack of a sense of instructional direction in the school. Necessarily, this will need to be corrected in the next iteration of the SIP.

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

Yes. The program and instructional strategies written into the plan appear likely to lead to the desired improved student results. However, the Panel Review Team finds that some of the instructional strategies are vague as written and may not provide the clear guidance needed to support effective implementation of the strategies.

The standards-based mathematics curriculum includes TERC *Investigations* for grades 1-5 and *Connected Mathematics* (CMP) for grades 6-8. Teachers will receive ongoing professional development in both programs, as reported by the Math Coach. The district has provided a co-plan on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, the Scott Foresman *Mathematics* program as a supplement to *Investigations*. Scope and sequence and pacing guides exist for each grade level. Except for the Scott Foresman program, the mathematics programs are not new; however implementation has been reportedly been a problem. In response, the school hired a math coach to assist faculty in implementing the programs, and two other faculty members are being prepared for the same role. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests are being implemented as mathematics assessments to provide baseline data.

Under the school's Reading First grant, a Scott Foresman reading program is being implemented in grades K-5 and teachers receive ongoing professional development to this end from the publishers, district personnel and a school based literacy coach, as reported by the principal in the Leadership Report and also during an interview. DIBELS training at grade level meetings is provided by a consultant. A DOE-provided implementation facilitator meets with the staff on a monthly basis. In an interview, the literacy coach indicated that the district reading coordinator and the LINKS trainer meet with the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to make connections to the Reading First Program.

Strategies cited by the Panel Review Team as illustrations of vague language that needs to be refined are as follows: "Teachers will have additional grade level meetings through new scheduling process," (pg. 12) and "Students will increase their understanding and use of mathematics vocabulary," (pg 14). It is understood that the White School SIP is relatively new and continues to be a work in progress, but clarity and specificity assists teachers in faithfully implementing the plan.

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

Yes. The White School SIP is a comprehensive document that provides a sense of direction for the implementation of improvement initiatives. The plan outlines a reasonable course of action, identifies implementation and outcome benchmarks and action steps, as well as the person(s) responsible and resources required for carrying them out. There are clear linkages between identified improvement objectives and planned solutions.

The White School SIP has several objectives but is clearly focused on improving mathematics and literacy skills of their students. The plan has specific evaluation methods and benchmarks to check students' periodic progress. Pre- and post-mathematics tests, as well as the Measures of Academic Performance (MAP), monitor students' progress. DIBELS and GRADE assessments are being used to assess students' reading skills and summaries are used to regroup students according to their needs. There are monthly writing prompts and teachers are being trained in the use of rubrics to score them.

In focus group interviews, teachers say they use the SIP as a guide for benchmarking, strategies and timelines.

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

Yes. The SIP was developed through a process that involved the entire faculty, provides for a regular review of progress and has a process for evaluation and revision.

The principal indicated that the White School leadership team and administration assumed the responsibility for producing a viable and relevant school improvement plan in October 2003. Because of the consistently low MCAS scores, the district provided training in the PIM process to the school team under the direction of the School Support Specialist. The team represents all grade levels and special groups in the school. In focus groups, teachers said that they began the task by looking at student achievement data as well as conducting a school self-assessment. They looked at individual classroom results, searching for patterns or specific questions that the students got consistently wrong. They learned to analyze data and to search for causes of student underperformance. The entire faculty eventually learned to be comfortable with the use of data. As progress was made in writing the plan, grade level meetings provided feedback through their representatives on the team to inform their continued work.

In an interview with the School Leadership Team (SLT), members of the team stated that the team's work made them realize the inadequacy of previous SIPs and instructional programs connected to them. Sub-group analysis showed even greater needs in the ELL

and SPED populations. New programs were adopted and professional development was tied into the objectives and goals of the SIP. Teachers expressed a commitment to and confidence in improved student performance through a faithful implementation of the plan over time.

All school personnel had copies of the plan and were familiar with its elements. Interviews with parents on the School Council and the P.T.O. were limited to a few parents who were not as familiar as the faculty with the plan but who knew of its existence and purpose.

Plan implementation is monitored by the administration through the usual means of observations and evaluations, as well as monitoring of each teacher's "black box" (a collection of records). The Principal also relies on the weekly grade level meetings with their openness and collegial atmosphere to produce the necessary critical feedback on the level of plan implementation.

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

Yes. The conditions for successfully implementing the goals and objectives of the improvement plan appear to be in place. The stakeholders at the school express confidence in the leadership style and focus of the administration. The district office provides resources and guidance to support improvement initiatives.

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

Yes. In a relatively short period of time, the school leadership has gained the confidence and support of the faculty and staff.

In focus groups, teachers described the principal as "positive, energized, encouraging, inspiring." In several private interviews, teachers used the following descriptors about the principal: "goal-oriented," "has a positive attitude," "good listener," "finds a way to get it done."

Now in her third year as the leader of White School, the school leader spent the first two years evaluating the performance of students and teachers and setting into motion steps to lead school improvement efforts by:

- Organizing a team to evaluate implementation of the school's mathematics program;
- Lobbying the Superintendent of Schools and the Commissioner of Education to award the E.N. White School a Reading First grant, following the application's initial rejection;
- Requesting and receiving a different Assistant Principal so as to better reflect skills needed for expanded grade levels (6, 7, 8,) and implementation of new initiatives;

- Developing a collaborative leadership model by creating grade level meetings to provide opportunities for teachers to participate in the decision-making process and to better inform the school improvement initiatives. The leadership committee was expanded and revitalized and given responsibility for the School Improvement Plan and the PIM plan; new mathematics, ELL and Literacy committees were formed;
- Seeking ways to involve more parents in school activities in light of the fact that White School was not a neighborhood school and, therefore, not easily accessible to them.

The new assistant principal expressed his understanding of the challenges that lie ahead for him as the person charged with overseeing the school's expansion to a full 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and the integration of academic programs from the lower grades.

Materials related to curriculum, parent involvement, professional development and other relevant school and district issues were made available to the Panel Review Team by the school's administration and the district office, and provided background for panel deliberations.

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

Yes. There is much evidence that the faculty supports and is engaged in the planned improvement efforts.

As reported in the Leadership Report, the White School PIM process began in October 2003 with the support of the Superintendent and the School Support Specialist. The impetus for the work was the dissatisfaction on the part of the faculty with the continued poor performance of the students on the MCAS. This process created an action plan and also a dialogue among the teachers concerning the connection between instructional practices and student performance.

Because the entire faculty was involved in every step of creating the SIP and was given many opportunities for input at various stages of its development, teachers agreed (in focus group interviews) with the assessment of identified needs and the improvement strategies being implemented. One teacher remarked, "We can only change the root causes that we can address and then focus on instruction."

Every teacher had a copy of the SIP and, when queried, individual teachers could refer to the section relevant to their teaching assignment. As part of the instructional staff survey, 83 percent responded that they felt the school has a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals. Classroom visits by the Panel Review Team evidenced many visual references to elements of the plan's objectives and strategies, such as word walls and 'problem of the day' references. Teachers remarked that they use the SIP as a "roadmap, as a guide in their teaching."

The administration monitors instructional practice through regular classroom observations, informal classroom visits and walk-throughs. Weekly grade level meetings provide feedback to the leadership team and the administration on pluses and minuses of instructional strategies. There is also a “black box” in each room into which teachers place minutes of meetings, lesson plans and other material relative to plan implementation for reference by themselves and administration. Finally, with the new SIP, there are an increased number of student assessments tied to the mathematics and literacy programs available to the teachers and administration.

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

Yes. The district provides human and financial resources as well as guidance in support of district initiatives and the E.N. White School’s SIP.

The Holyoke Public School District has been identified as an Under-performing district by the Massachusetts Board of Education. In the interview with the Panel Review team, the Superintendent explained that since his hiring in 2002, his efforts have been focused on both systemic reform and on the needs of individual schools such as the White School. He spoke confidently and optimistically about some of the programs and services provided by the district in support of the White School’s improvement initiatives. These include:

- Replacement of the Literacy Collaborative Model with the Reading First grant and district funding to extend it to grades 4 and 5;
- Funding for an on-site mathematics coach and alignment of the mathematics curriculum with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks;
- Funding to provide PIM training to the school leadership team and for other meetings so all faculty could participate in the process of analyzing data and writing a coherent plan;
- Funding to provide for a mediators position to facilitate the transition of White School to a full K-8 from K-5.

The district leader has reviewed the SIP and monitors the plan’s implementation through walk-throughs, teacher observations conducted with the principal, reviews of the “black box” contents, as well as through monthly district meetings.

Through collaboration with the Regional Education Business Alliance (REBA), an Aligned Improvement Management System (AIM) has been implemented. Among other benefits, this system provides coordination between the District Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plan and, on a monthly basis, allows school leaders to report at the district meetings on their progress against goals, as reported in the District Improvement Plan.

## CONCLUSION

In response to Key Question 1, the Panel Review team finds that the E. N. White Elementary School has an adequate plan for improving student performance. The district-sponsored Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process, under the direction of the district's School Support Specialist, informed and guided the inclusion of the necessary elements of a sound improvement plan. This support will be essential as the plan is refined to achieve greater clarity and specificity in defining objectives and goals. The monitoring of plan implementation is comprehensive and establishes accountability for all stakeholders.

The Panel Review team finds that, in response to Key Question 2, the conditions are in place for the successful implementation of the improvement plan. The appropriate school district personnel are knowledgeable of the school's needs and supportive of the school's leadership and plan implementation. The school's leadership exhibits a flexible but firm command of the improvement agenda and the enthusiasm required to lead the process. The school's stakeholders express confidence in the school's leadership and district support, continue to work on plan revisions and are actively implementing the plan.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Team Members**

**Joseph Trunk, Panel Chairperson**, Consultant, School Works, Beverly, MA.

**Erin Furey Patterson, Panel Coordinator**, Department of Education, Office of Accountability and Targeted Assistance, Malden, MA.

**Matthew Pakos, Panel Member**, Department of Education, Office of Accountability and Targeted Assistance, Malden, MA.

**Tim Babcock, Panel Member**, Consultant, LEAD Program, Springfield S. D., Springfield, MA.

**Chad Mazza, Panel Member**, Assistant Principal, Morningside Community School, Pittsfield, MA.

**Andy Paciulli, Panel Member**, Principal, Glenbrook Middle School, Longmeadow, MA.

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

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

**Day 1**

- 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]
- 12:00—2:00 p.m.    Panelists meet with Principal (and one other school-based individual, if appropriate). [location: the school]
- 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.    Panelists meet with School Leadership Team
- 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.    Panelists meet with the district Superintendent (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate). [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**

- 7:30—8:00 a.m.      Panelists meet with the Principal
- 8:00—8:30 a.m.      Panelists meet with the School Council
- 8:30—9:00 a.m.      Panelists meet with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized, as appropriate, to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students, classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific inquiry groups.

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

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

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

11 a.m.—12:30 p.m. **Team meeting # 3:** panelists meet to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch)

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

1:00—2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teachers in groups\*; consultant co-chair is free to work on report

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
1:00-1:30	Teacher	Focus Group 1	Teacher	Focus Group 3	Prepare report
1:30-2:00	Teacher	Focus Group 2	Teacher	Focus Group 4	

2:00—2:30 p.m. Closing meeting with the principal to discuss next steps (all panelists are present)

2:30—5:00 p.m. **Team meeting # 4:** panelists deliberate and form conclusions