

**Panel Report
Candidate Compass School Review
H. H. Galligan Elementary School
Taunton Public Schools**

INTRODUCTION

The Program

The Commonwealth Compass Schools Program is one part of the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System. The purpose of the Compass Schools Program is to recognize and celebrate improvement in Massachusetts' schools, and to disseminate information and 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 2005, 197 schools that made AYP during the last two years and exceeded their improvement targets for both ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and/or for all reported subgroups were invited to apply to the program. Eighty of those schools chose to apply by submitting completed applications. The applications provided written responses to three questions on the initiatives undertaken to improve student performance that school leaders and staff think have had the most positive impact on their students' performance. Six high schools, six elementary schools, one middle school, one kindergarten through grade 8, one grade 7 through 12 regional school, and one charter school were selected as finalists. Those 16 schools were scheduled for a panel review to learn more about their highlighted programs and to determine their willingness and capacity to serve in the program. Data and information gathered from the applications and reviews of these schools will be published in a report this fall.

The Commissioner will designate up to 16 schools to serve as 2005 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 small team of education professionals during a one-day visit to the H.H. Galligan School in Taunton on June 2, 2005. The report will assist the Commissioner in determining which schools from among those visited will be designated to serve as 2005 Commonwealth Compass Schools.

The panel evaluated data and written information on the school's performance and improvement efforts, including the school's Compass School application. Panelists then visited the school to

meet with school leaders, staff, parents, and students, and to 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 its 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.

School Profile

The H.H. Galligan Elementary School (Galligan) is one of 9 public K-4 or 1-4 schools in Taunton. Galligan has a total enrollment of 289 students in Grades K through 4 and serves a student population that is 73% White, 3% Asian, 18% Hispanic, 6% Black, and 0% Native American. Of the total population of students, 18% receive Special Education services, 22% are First Language Not English learners, 62% are Low Income, and 14% are Limited English Proficient. The school has a school-wide Title I program.

The school's 2004 student attendance rate was 96%, which is higher than the state average and is a slight improvement over attendance rates from the past two years. In 2003, 0.3% of the student population was retained, 0% received in-school suspensions, and 1.2% received out-of-school suspensions. These retention and suspension rates are significantly lower than state averages for the same year.

Staffing

The Galligan School is led by a principal who has been in this position for one year but has been an educator for seven years and in the education field for 22 years. She shares leadership with a "Teaching Assistant Principal" who is a full-time third grade teacher and also has the title of Assistant Principal. The assistant principal has been in the school for 33 years.

Of the 22 teachers at Galligan, 100% are both licensed in their teaching assignment and identified as highly qualified. Fifteen of these teachers have been teaching for 11 – 35 years, six have been teaching for 4 – 10 years, and five have been teaching for 1 – 3 years.

MCAS Results

The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress for the past four years and attained Cycle III Performance Ratings of High in English language arts and moderate in Mathematics, scoring 12.6 points above the State Target in ELA and 16.6 points above the State Target in math. This performance is also 7.6 points above the district average in ELA and 13.4 points above the district average in math.

At 88.2, Galligan's Composite Performance Index (CPI) for ELA is the highest elementary ELA (grade 4 MCAS) CPI in the Taunton district. At 77.4, Galligan's CPI is the third highest in the district for the Grade 4 Math MCAS.

The school achieved Performance Index gains of 9.2 points in ELA and 13.7 points in math for students in the aggregate in 2004. With double-digit gains for subgroups, including a notable 22.8-point Cycle III CPI gain for Special Education students in math, the school appears to be serving all students well. Again, these gains are significantly higher than the district gains during the same time period: 3.6 points for ELA and 6.3 points for math on the district level.

The school had 100% participation on the 2004 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. On the fourth grade ELA test, 2% of all students scored in the Advanced category; 51% scored Proficient; 42%, Needs Improvement; and 5%, Warning. In math, 18% scored Advanced; 29% scored Proficient; 42%, Needs Improvement; and 11%, Warning. On the ELA test, these scores are slightly lower than the district's scores. However, on the math test, they are higher.

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?

The H. H. Galligan Elementary School (Galligan) has two initiatives that successfully support student improvement and can be replicated. These initiatives include a process for early and frequent assessment of student skills and data-driven curriculum and instruction. Galligan is using a wide range of programs to support student success, many of which are used across the Taunton district. Galligan has established an effective process for using data to determine how these varied programs can be targeted to identified student needs. This process begins with a coordinated and well-planned effort during the first four weeks of the school year. The school's use of data in support of both individual students and school-wide programs is a good model for how data can be used in schools. The two initiatives are well supported by a culture of communication and collegiality among the Galligan staff.

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

While Galligan employs many programs to support student performance, the panel focused on the school's processes of using data to make the best instructional choices for students. These processes allow Galligan staff to employ the many programs used at the school to best support students and to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs. Added to this, an emphasis on communication at all levels makes the faculty and administration of the Galligan School a strongly cooperative team.

The panel spent the day at Galligan to observe, evaluate, and collect evidence of the two improvement initiatives used in the school. The panel interviewed the principal, six students from grades 3 and 4, six parents, Title I teachers, the School Council, and classroom teachers in focus groups and after observations of classroom instruction. The panel also reviewed a number of documents provided by the school, including the School Improvement Plan, Action Plans, Data Collection forms, sample student work (shared by teachers), samples of Individual Student Success Plans, and assessment schedules.

Early and Frequent Student Assessment

The process of assessing students begins in the first four weeks of school. This is a data-oriented initiative that contributes to student achievement throughout the school year. The early assessment of students and the attention that is paid to the results of these assessments allows staff to determine what programs will best serve each student and how teachers can best tailor instruction. Early assessment acts as a baseline for future student support and is frequently mentioned by teachers and other school members as a significant contributor to student success. When students first arrive at the school, they are assessed on basic skills using a range of assessment tools, listed below and on the next page. Any issues identified by the assessments lead to a Child Study meeting. This meeting allows staff to further analyze and discuss the needs of the student, and then construct an action plan that will best support that student. This meeting includes staff from across the building, including teachers, the principal, the school psychologist, and any others that might have insight or suggestions to contribute. This focused and personal attention early in the school year sets up a process that effectively supports students throughout the rest of the year.

In step with Galligan's approach to school-wide data analysis, the school's success with early and frequent assessment is due to a combination of district and school actions and assessment tools. Data about student performance in ELA and math is generated through assessment tools such as the following:

- Taunton Reading Assessment
- Stanford 9
- MELA-O
- MCAS item response
- Waterford

- Developmental Reading Assessment
- Developmental Spelling

Information collected by the teachers and other staff, such as the school psychologist, are collected and documented for each student. The staff of Galligan make a concerted effort at the beginning of the school year to identify students for whom they have a concern. The teacher and principal set up a Child Study meeting where all available data is reviewed and forms the basis of the action plan for that student.

The Child Study meetings are a frequently mentioned contributor to Galligan's success. At these meetings, the student's teachers, guidance counselor, school psychologist and the principal come together to look at the student's work and progress in order to make decisions about the best way to serve the student. At Galligan, the Child Study meetings happen whenever they are needed, possibly as often as every 2 weeks. Teachers mentioned that several years ago, teachers would come to the Child Study meeting with no information about the student, and only after the meeting would they start looking for evidence of problems for the student. Data is now a central component of the meeting and means that a) teachers come to the meetings much more informed and able to make decisions and b) student problems are diagnosed much more quickly. Having these meetings early in the school year allows for effective modifications for students early in the school year.

Data Analysis to Inform Curriculum and Instruction

Information from Child Study meetings and the district-level math and reading benchmarks examined throughout the year provide a structure for formative assessments so teachers remain aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses. The district assessments (four times a year for Kindergarten, and more for higher levels) insure that teachers can monitor what students know and are able to do. Whenever a student seems to be falling behind, any of his or her teachers can call a Child Study meeting during the school year to discuss if the child might be at risk and might benefit from targeted instruction.

As with the faculty of every other school in the district, the faculty of the Galligan School participate in "MCAS Day," a full day of analyzing student data. Using item analysis graphs from TestWiz, the teachers look for patterns in student strengths and weaknesses. They then brainstorm strategies for improving student achievement that are incorporated into an action plan and used by all teachers when planning instruction. Galligan effectively integrates the findings from this day into the everyday work of the school. Most of the teachers interviewed discussed using the findings and action plan in their weekly plan books, and many of them mentioned that the principal looks for evidence of this when reading their plan books and observing their lessons. One teacher held up a battered copy of the action plan and said earnestly, "This is our bible!"

Data is also used to select and implement third-party programs, both on the school and district level. For example, in what one teacher described as an "Einstein moment," while looking at student data, a group of faculty realized that they could utilize their personnel resources more

effectively if Title I teachers were integrated into classrooms rather than deployed in a pull-out model. On the district level, the five-year curriculum renewal cycle requires that curriculum and materials be evaluated before being renewed. Teachers are given the opportunity both to give their feedback on the positives and negatives of the curriculum they are using and to pilot new curriculum materials. The school has the flexibility to use programs or curricular materials that are not what the district uses. For instance, the district is discontinuing the use of the Bradley Reading System because it is not filling all schools' needs. However, Galligan was able to show through data how the Bradley Reading System was helping its students learn, so Galligan will continue to use it. Other third-party programs that the district has supported and Galligan staff find, through analysis of data, have contributed to their success include:

- Harcourt Brace Trophy Series
- Everyday Math
- John Collins Writing Program
- Waterford Early Reading Program

Many teachers mentioned these programs as important to their success, although one said that even if the programs were taken away, the school would still be successful. What makes the school successful is that it has a process in place to use data to match students to appropriate programs and modify instruction to best support them. These programs *per se* are not the root cause of Galligan's success; it is the way they are used, as informed by data.

Other initiatives that teachers mentioned as valuable included the Sheltered English Immersion Protocol, the Research for Better Teaching initiative, departmentalizing teaching (math and ELA), and after-school and summer MCAS tutoring programs. In addition, the way that Galligan uses its Title I teachers collaboratively has a great impact on student achievement. These programs have come about through analysis of needs based on investigation of data, and student referral to some of these programs is a result of data analysis.

Communication and collegiality

A third factor in Galligan's success is a little harder to quantify, but is nonetheless important. An overwhelming number of interviewees discussed different kinds of meetings and informal communications that lead to student success. In particular, both teachers and administration discussed how the school utilizes its Title I teachers in a collaborative way rather than in a pull-out program. Most of the work of the Title I teachers at Galligan involves co-teaching with other classroom teachers in math and English. This system leads to terrific amounts of collaboration among teachers, and requires a degree of collegiality to make it successful. As such, Galligan supports and encourages teachers to plan together, meet to explore instructional practices, and discuss student work and data. In the Instructional Staff Survey that Galligan teachers completed before the Compass visit, 95% of participants said they meet with other teachers more than once a week for both planning lessons and discussing student work; 91% said they meet with other teachers once a week or more to discuss strategies and services for individual students. This level of communication and collegiality leads to a consistency of approach across all grade levels such that students have a cohesive learning experience during their time at the Galligan.

In addition to co-teaching meetings between Title I and other teachers, all grade-level teachers meet once a week during a shared combined lunch or planning period. This meeting is formal, but all of Galligan's emphasis on collaboration and communication has led to a cooperative school culture that encourages teachers to continue to meet on their own time. Many teachers also meet together before and after school. Each first-year teacher has a mentor, setting a standard of collegiality.

Interviews with parents and students underlined the school's emphasis on communication. The parents of Galligan students are the focus of an ongoing campaign by the school to keep them involved in their children's education. In addition to receiving weekly and monthly newsletters and folders sent home in the children's backpacks, parents are invited to events like "Math Brunch," designed to introduce parents to the Everyday Math curriculum. The most important method of communication that the parents mentioned is the school's "MCAS night," where parents are invited to learn about the MCAS and what they should know in order to support their children's success. The students are given a practice MCAS packet to take home and complete with their parents, and their parents sign it before the students return it to school. Due to communication efforts such as these, there is a high level of parental involvement at the Galligan School.

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

The current culture of high achievement and strong communication and collaboration is a result of strong leadership over the past seven years. As discussed earlier, a number of the structures that help Galligan to be such a data-driven and collaborative school originated from the district. Under the leadership of the prior principal, Galligan served as a pilot school to a number of the district initiatives. Galligan currently participates in all district assessment and data analysis initiatives, and many of the district curricular initiatives. The district-level factors that staff noted as most attributable to Galligan's success include:

- Frequent district-wide benchmark assessments in Reading and Math classes;
- District-wide MCAS day for faculty and staff to use data to plan for improving student performance;
- Program selection based on extensive piloting by teachers before adoption — (Galligan has been a pilot school for many new programs);
- District-wide Child Study program.

These district protocols play a large role in Galligan's success. However, because Galligan has the highest score in the district on the fourth grade ELA MCAS and the third highest score on the fourth grade Math MCAS, it is important to recognize what Galligan has done in addition to these initiatives.

Galligan's scores started their dramatic improvement four years ago. The principal at that time, looking at Galligan's poor record on both attendance and achievement, instituted the structures and protocols for communication, data analysis, and assessment that continue to lead to student success. Attendance was addressed through a new policy the principal implemented of calling

parents every time a student missed school. In addition to sending a clear message about expectations for students, this policy also set a high standard for communication.

To address low scores, the principal took advantage of the district's growing interest in using data to make decisions. With teacher teams, she closely examined the school's programs, especially in Math and English. She instituted longer periods for both programs. Math classes meet for at least 80 minutes a day; English and Reading, for 120-180 minutes a day. This scheduling change led to some programmatic changes: teachers describe their programs as "like a middle school" in that students have different teachers for different subjects.

By being so attuned to data, Galligan and its teachers and principal are able to stay flexible and proactive in their planning. The emphasis on filling each student's needs by looking closely at data has led to flexible groupings of students, a factor that many teachers mentioned as important to Galligan's success. This data has also given them evidence when they ask for resources from the district. Three years ago, the school did not have a dedicated Title I Math teacher in the school. Through a School Improvement grant, Galligan then had a Title I Math teacher for one-and-a-half years. Galligan used this person cooperatively with other teachers, making the most of this important resource. When the grant funding ended, the school was able to show data to the district to illustrate why it needed a full-time Title I Math teacher/Math Mentor. The district funded the position, and it is now key to the school's success.

Both the school and the district monitor the success of Galligan's initiatives. The district pacing and testing guide requires that all schools turn in their scores to be analyzed by the district. The scores on the benchmark tests as well as other formative assessments are strong indicators of the success of Galligan's programs. When and if scores dip, either for individuals or groups of students, both school and district leadership know it immediately and are able to make adjustments quickly. The principal said, "We are not afraid to fail here. We look at it, analyze it, then say, 'it failed, let's change it.'" At the school level, the principal monitors the School Improvement Plan every day through lesson plan review and classroom observation.

Overall, the Galligan has consistently implemented programs that have raised student achievement. Its next step will not necessarily be to continue using the same programs: rather, it will be to continue using data to assess students and the school itself in order to make appropriate decisions.

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

Yes. When asked this question, teachers and the principal answered that the following initiatives could easily be replicated in other schools:

- Math and Reading benchmarks
- Use of Title I personnel
- Use of data to make decisions about individual students and programs
- Child Study meetings
- Co-teaching: high level of communication and sharing
- Flexible student groupings based on student academic needs

According to the principal, “these are tangible. There is enough structure, and they are visible enough to be seen in action.” The panel found this to be the case during the visit. Furthermore, none of these initiatives are onerously expensive: the emphasis at the Galligan is on using data to best deploy available resources.

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

Yes. There is a shared understanding among leadership and faculty of what has helped the school make steady improvements. The school is very welcoming, and leadership, staff and students readily share information about what has been a benefit to them and to the school as a whole. The Galligan School, although small, can accommodate site visits and meetings.

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 of Galligan talk about many of the same initiatives using a common language. Among all teachers, and especially among Title I teachers, there is a very high degree of collegiality. Because teachers spend so much time working together, they are really “on the same page.”

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?

A number of the leadership and faculty interviewed had not been at the school more than seven years, but long enough to have seen the largest shift in practice and therefore student achievement. They all seem aware, however, of how decisions have been made historically and how they continue to be made. They know that they are reaping the benefit of several years of good decisions based on data, and they therefore feel empowered to use data to continue to make decisions. Their adoption of the initiatives is total, yet they can articulate how the initiatives connect to specific improvements. Through classroom observations, the panel saw that teachers are basing their practice on the information they learn from their diagnostic and in-class assessments. In interviews, teachers showed examples of student work that exhibited how improvement initiatives have led to increased student performance and how data has led to changes in instructional practice.

In one example that a panelist witnessed, a teacher conferenced with two students of different skill levels about a fourth grade Science writing assignment. The teacher had different approaches to the conference for each student. She individualized the Focus Correction Areas (FCAs: a John Collins Writing feature) based on her knowledge of each student’s skills. In interviewing the teacher after the observation, she explained how the diagnostic process that the

school employs allows her to identify and target student needs. This example is reflective of the way that teachers customize instruction based on frequent assessment of students.

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

Using data to continue improvement of student performance is at the very heart of the school culture at Galligan. There is yearly review of both the School Improvement Plan and the MCAS Action Plan, and these are based on the most recent data. Data analysis is a daily fact of life, from Child Study meetings to lesson planning based on the Action Plan. One teacher recalled how six years ago, Title I Writing was taught as a pull-out course. She remembers how a group of teachers met and decided it was not working: writing scores were not improving. Through workshops and other professional development, the principal instituted the new co-teaching program, and the scores tell the rest of the story. Like this teacher, most teachers see their curriculum and instruction as results of looking at data: they recognize the need to continue that investment in student achievement.

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. Teachers are warm, welcoming and eager to share their work with others. They are comfortable with observers in their classroom: several of them mentioned that they are observed frequently by both the principal and by various district-level people. Both students and faculty are welcoming to visitors to their rooms and school, and they are eager to answer questions. Teachers arrived at interviews with boxes of “artifacts:” examples of lesson plans, action plans, and student work. The school itself is clean and bright: very inviting to both students and visitors, although space is somewhat limited by the small size of the school.

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

Yes, the panel recommends that the H.H. Galligan Elementary School be designated to serve as a 2005 Commonwealth Compass School. The panel believes the school has instituted replicable initiatives — early and frequent student assessment and data analysis to inform curriculum and instruction — that have led to improved student performance. The strong emphasis on communication within the school and between the school and the community has led to a staff that is ready and eager to talk articulately about how their initiatives have contributed to improvements in scores. The leadership, faculty, and students of Galligan are welcoming and articulate. Based on the findings of the panel and on the evidence described in this report, the panel recommends that the H.H. Galligan Elementary School be designated a Commonwealth Compass School.

Appendix A Team Members

Jake Foster, Ed.D., Chair, MA Department of Education

Erica Levy-Ringel, Writer, MA Department of Education

Traci Walker-Griffith, Panel Member, Assistant Principal, Boston Public Schools

Jim Watson, Panel Member, Principal, Boston Public Schools

Appendix B Candidate Compass School Panel Review Schedule

All activities take place at the school.

7:15—8:00 *a.m.* Panelists meet to prepare for the 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	Focus Group B	Focus Group C	Focus Group D

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

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D
9-10 <i>a.m.</i>	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 <i>a.m.</i>	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, to gather more information, and to 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 teacher focus groups.

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