

**Panel Report**  
**Candidate Compass School Review**  
**Turkey Hill Middle School**  
**Lunenburg 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 about 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 team of education professionals during a one-day visit to Turkey Hill Middle School on May 12, 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.

### **Turkey Hill Middle School Profile**

Turkey Hill Middle School is the sole middle school in the Lunenburg School District. Turkey Hill currently serves 564 students in grades 5 through 8. Beginning with the 2005-2006 school year, once the district has renovated one of its larger elementary schools to accommodate grade 5, Turkey Hill will serve students in grades 6 through 8.

Enrollment between 2002 and 2005 averaged 590 students. During this period of time, an average 2% of the population was made up of Hispanic students, 96% of students were White, 1% of the population was Black, and 1%, Asian. Zero percent of the student population has been identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Zero percent of the students at the Turkey Hill Middle School have a primary language other than English (FLNE). With an average of only 8% of students eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, Turkey Hill Middle School does not have a school-wide Title I program.

Between 2001 and 2004, the attendance rate at Turkey Hill Middle School averaged 96%, with an average number of days absent being 7. Between 2000 and 2004, the retention rate at Turkey Hill Middle School averaged less than one percent during this time period. Out-of-school suspensions averaged 3%, while in-school suspensions averaged less than 1%.

### **Staffing**

Turkey Hill Middle School students are taught by an instructional staff that includes 37 full time teachers. A full time principal and assistant principal comprise the school's administrative staff. Also on staff are two guidance counselors, an adjustment counselor, a library/media specialist, and a school nurse. Many teachers are certified in multiple areas. Only four teachers have five or fewer years of teaching experience.

## MCAS Results

Students at Turkey Hill Middle School are tested with the MCAS in grade 5 in Science/Technology & Engineering. In grade 6, students are tested in mathematics. In grade 7, students are tested in English language arts (ELA). In grade 8, students are tested in mathematics. In both Cycle II (2001-2002) and Cycle III (2003-2004), the school was found to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both ELA and mathematics.

### *Student Performance in English Language Arts*

In Cycle II, Turkey Hill Middle School received a performance rating of *High* for its Proficiency Index (PI) of 88.7 in ELA. In Cycle III, Turkey Hill Middle School received a performance rating of *Very High* for its Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) of 92.3 in ELA. Its 3.6-point improvement over Cycle II (2001-2002) was rated *On Target*. In Cycle III, Turkey Hill Middle School saw its students make gains in the proportions scoring at the Proficient levels of performance; it also saw a decline in the proportions scoring at the Needs Improvement and Warning levels. In 2001, 8% of students scored at the Advanced level, 66% at Proficient, 24% at Needs Improvement, and 2% at the Warning level. In 2002, 7% of students were Advanced, 56% were Proficient, 32% were in Needs Improvement, and 5% scored at the Warning level. In 2003, 2% of students performed at the Advanced level, 70% were at Proficient, 25% were at Needs Improvement, and 3% were at Warning. In 2004, the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category was 13, and the percentage of Proficient students rose to 73, while 14% were in Needs Improvement, and 1% failed the ELA portion of the test.

### *Student Performance in Mathematics*

In Cycle II, Turkey Hill Middle School received a performance rating of *Moderate* for its Proficiency Index (PI) of 71.4 in mathematics. In Cycle III, Turkey Hill received a performance rating of *High* for its Composite Proficiency Index (CPI) of 80.8 in mathematics. Its 9.4-point improvement over Cycle II (2001-2002) was rated *Above Target*. In Cycle III, Turkey Hill Middle School saw its regular education students make significant gains in the proportions scoring at the Proficient levels of performance; it saw a decline in the proportions scoring at the Needs Improvement and Warning levels.

### *Grade 6*

In 2001, 17% of students scored at the Advanced level, 33% at Proficient, 30% at Needs Improvement, and 20% scored at the Warning level. In 2002, 13% of students were Advanced, 30% were Proficient, 36% were in Needs Improvement, and 21% scored at the Warning level. In 2003, 31% of students in the aggregate performed at the Advanced level, 35% were at Proficient, 22% were at Needs Improvement, and 12% were at Warning. In 2004, the percentage

of students scoring in the Advanced category was 29, and the percentage of Proficient students was 33, while 34% were in Needs Improvement, and 4% failed the mathematics portion of the test.

### *Grade 8*

In 2001, 12% of students scored at the Advanced level, 34% at Proficient, 39% at Needs Improvement, and 14% scored at the Warning level. In 2002, 9% of students were Advanced, 25% were Proficient, 39% were in Needs Improvement, and 28% scored at the Warning level. In 2003, 11% of students in the aggregate performed at the Advanced level and 36% were at Proficient, while 37% were at Needs Improvement and 16% were at Warning. In 2004, the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced category was 18 and the percentage of Proficient students was 36, while 35% were in Needs Improvement, and 12% failed the mathematics portion of the test.

In both ELA and math, Turkey Hill Middle School students continue to surpass state levels of proficiency, with significantly lower numbers of students at Turkey Hill Middle School scoring at the Warning level. The number of regular education students scoring at the Advanced and Proficient levels continues to rise.

## **Panel Responses To The Key Questions**

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

Yes. Turkey Hill Middle School has established and prioritized an interconnected system of looking at data from both an academic and affective point of view. This system allows for full incorporation of the middle school philosophy, in which student needs are considered and addressed with the whole child in mind. The implementation of these related improvement initiatives could be replicated in other schools with a similar profile. Turkey Hill Middle School has established a school-wide system of looking at student data and developing instructional strategies to address gaps in student learning through Michael Schmoker's Results Model of Instruction. It has also implemented the Understanding by Design philosophy of developing units of instruction that focus on essential questions, authentic assessments, consistent rubrics, and consistent performance standards. Overarching these two instructional models, the school has implemented an adaptation of Dufour's Pyramid of Success model to suit the needs of the middle school student. Turkey Hill refers to this adapted model as the "Circle of Success," in which affective data is collected for each student, and strategies are developed to address student needs.

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

A careful review of school documents, data provided by the Department of Education, classroom observations, individual teacher interviews, and focus groups with teachers and parents have corroborated the information found in the principal's Compass School application, which described evidence of school improvement initiatives that appear to have had the greatest impact on student performance.

According to leadership and staff at Turkey Hill, the improvement initiatives that have had the greatest impact on student performance fall under the three broad yet intertwined practices, which include the philosophical and pragmatic adoption of the Results approach to instruction, the affectively natured Circle of Success philosophy, and the incorporation of Understanding by Design to create interdisciplinary units. It is important to note that while each of these initiatives on its own may have contributed to student performance, it is the implementation of these initiatives in concert that has led to school-wide changes, leading in particular to a collaborative and cohesive school culture in which there is "no blame, just a focus on results."

### *Results Model of Instruction*

Turkey Hill Middle School has adopted and embraced Michael Schmoker's Results Model of Instruction and continuous school improvement. Several years ago, a small team of district and school personnel attended a conference where they were introduced to the Results model. Following this conference, the model has become an integrated part of the instructional practice at Turkey Hill, and has been implemented with varying degrees of success elsewhere in the district. Essentially, the Results model encourages teachers and administrators to improve student performance and learning by setting goals, working collaboratively, and keeping track of and analyzing student achievement data from many sources. Turkey Hill is in its fourth year of implementation of the Results model, and devotes one faculty meeting per month to Results. Early in the year, teachers in the same content area form vertical teams across grade levels to discuss student work, MCAS results, new teaching strategies to improve instruction, and how to use data to inform instruction. These cross-grade level vertical teams analyze MCAS data and identify gaps in student performance. The lens is immediately turned upon instruction; teachers make sure that their curriculum is aligned and ensure that the gaps in student performance are addressed in the existing curriculum. If that is not the case, the curriculum is supplemented. Once curricular issues are addressed, teachers then look to instructional strategy. Teachers identify at a very basic level where students went wrong, and try to identify why. They then will brainstorm specific instructional strategies to address these gaps in student performance. Teachers will reconfigure their Results team and will then meet as single-grade level teams by discipline. For example, all sixth grade math teachers will meet to discuss instructional strategies that are specific to the subject and grade.

Each Results team has a team log and team goals. Examples of instructional strategies that have been developed through Results teamwork include a strategy called the “4-sentence chunk” developed by seventh and eighth grade English language arts teachers. This strategy teaches students how to answer open response questions using textual references. The 4-sentence chunk concept has been adopted across other disciplines. Teachers noted that students use this approach while writing research papers in science and social studies. Teachers also reported that they now need to provide more space for students to write on tests, in addition to providing more time for students to complete tests, because student writing is becoming more sophisticated and complex.

Another example of an instructional strategy driven by examination of student data is the development of a series of cumulative math tests that assess previously taught as well as current skills, that are based upon all of the released open response MCAS questions, and that date back to 1999. The sixth grade math teachers first developed these tests, and seventh and eighth grade math teachers have recently adopted this concept. As a result, all students in grades 6, 7, and 8 at Turkey Hill take a cumulative math test five times over the course of the school year. Results teams are able to use the student performance data from these cumulative tests to inform instruction and continuously refine instructional strategies to ensure that students are reaching benchmarks throughout the school year.

### *Circle of Success*

The guidance staff of Turkey Hill Middle School attended a conference presented by Rick Dufour on the Professional Learning Community model. Leadership and staff at Turkey Hill have adapted Dufour’s philosophy and incorporated the concept of a “pyramid of interventions” into their own “Circle of Success” philosophy. Essentially, Dufour outlines a systematic approach to interventions for students to meet the specific, individualized needs of all students, especially those who are struggling to learn. The Circle of Success was adapted to signify the middle school philosophical approach to treating the whole student, and emphasizes the concept that everyone “owns” all of the students in the school. The Circle of Success philosophy aims to create interventions and strategies to address the academic, behavioral, health, and social-emotional needs of all students. This approach to addressing the multi-faceted needs of all students uses affective data to evaluate students in an individualized way. Similar to the way faculty members use student assessment data, the Circle of Success team analyzes affective data on individual students and devises and implements strategies so that students do not fall through the cracks. This team has created a “blue sheet” upon which the needs of each and every student are identified. Using these blue sheets, the team and other faculty members plan solutions for individual students. As a result, the school has developed a systematic approach to student interventions, and appears well poised to implement various forms of intervention when needed. The team points to a decrease in the number of absentees, suspensions, and central detentions as evidence that Circle of Success and the resulting blue sheet are effective. Faculty members also report seeing less graffiti and needing to retain fewer students since the implementation of Circle of Success. Moreover, student visits to the nurse’s office have decreased by 500 a year. The

team also points to the increase in student MCAS scores over the past several years as an additional byproduct of this systematic approach to intervention.

### *Understanding by Design*

All staff members at Turkey Hill Middle School have been trained in the Understanding by Design philosophy. With this training, each teacher has worked to create units of instruction that call for identifying the essential questions and developing authentic assessments, rubrics, and common performance standards. All of this is achieved by “beginning with the end in mind,” as teachers employ the principles of backwards design as they develop units of instruction. These units are then shared by staff in similar grades and subject areas. According to several teachers on the Understanding by Design team, it has made staff more focused on the essential questions, and this has resulted in lessons having definite purposes and goals. Teachers are more focused on the enduring understandings and on figuring out what they want students to learn from a particular lesson or area of focus. They report that UBD allows them to step back from a prescribed curriculum and to truly align their teaching to the standards.

### *Other Initiatives*

Other initiatives that the school believes have contributed to student performance improvements include the following:

- Student-led conferences
- Emphasis on academic improvement and the affective well-being of all students
- Weekly grade-level team meetings to discuss curriculum, policy, and procedures
- Job-embedded professional development
- Vertical teaming to ensure solid alignment of curriculum at all grade levels
- First-year teacher mentoring program to ensure collaboration and consistency of implementation of school-wide programs and initiatives
- School Improvement Committee that has facilitated parental involvement in the development of the School Improvement Plan (SIP)

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

The current instructional program at Turkey Hill is the result of overarching organizational changes at the school-wide level and the steady and incremental implementation of the three broad improvement initiatives over the past several years. The current principal arrived at the school in 1999 to find two very different organizational structures operating in the building. Grades 5 and 6 operated on a team basis, whereas grades 7 and 8 operated much like a traditional “junior high,” where all students had different teachers for each discipline. In 2000, the principal reorganized the structure of the building, and all teachers were organized into multi-disciplinary teaching teams. In short, teaming has been in place at all grade levels for six years. This change

in approach, as well as the adoption of the middle school model, helped to facilitate the implementation of the three improvement initiatives highlighted in this report.

Once these structural and organizational changes had been made, the school began to engage in other improvement efforts. In 2001, the district's director of instructional services invited teams from each of the district's schools, as well as an administrative team, to attend a conference presented by Michael Schmoker. It was at this conference that the district was first exposed to the Results Model of Instruction. The district, and Turkey Hill in particular, had been struggling with the question of what it could do to improve student performance by using data. The Results model helped to answer this question and, hence, it was brought back to the district by these teams of teachers and administrative staff members with the intention to implement the Results model at each of the district's schools. Subsequently, professional development sessions were held so that all staff could become acquainted with this model of instruction. In 2002, every staff member at Turkey Hill became part of a Results team. Teachers reported unanimously that they believed that the Results model has helped them to understand and analyze student assessment data and has helped them to become increasingly skilled in collaborating to develop strategies to address deficiencies in student performance. The school has found that the Results model lends itself well to the middle school model, where teaming has become an integral part of the school's organizational structure. At Turkey Hill, the Results teams meet during faculty meetings, and the teams have become increasingly sophisticated and flexible in terms of practice. The teams have expanded the Results model into all curricular areas, including science, social studies, and foreign language instruction. Teachers report that they have used strategies from the Results teams across disciplines with success. For example, math teachers are using the "4-sentence" chunk strategy devised by ELA teachers in their instruction with open-response questions in math, and this has helped students make their math writing more focused and concise.

Understanding by Design training began during the 2002-2003 school year. This too was a district initiative, and it was driven by a particular need. The district had facilitated teams to bring their curriculum into alignment. It felt the need for a program to train all instructional staff in this alignment, and to facilitate all staff in using a common teaching language. The district sent teams of administrators and staff to an Understanding by Design conference, where they learned about this approach. Once again, conference attendees brought information back to the district, where they were able to hold staff trainings and professional development. All staff members at Turkey Hill are trained in Understanding by Design. Once the curriculum was aligned, the UBD model helped staff develop shared lessons and common assessments, by focusing on essential questions and what teachers ultimately wanted students to know and be able to do as a result of the unit being taught.

In 2003, Turkey Hill created the Circle of Success approach to help address its students holistically. Guidance staff realized that teachers were becoming increasingly frustrated with student disruptiveness. Teachers needed to cover the curriculum, but guidance staff saw suspension, detention, and attendance data that indicated that teaching was being interrupted by student behavior issues. In response, as a part of School Improvement Plan development,

students were given a “stress survey” in which they were asked to identify areas of stress. The principal then talked with groups of students about how to deal with stress. Dufour’s philosophy is a solution-based model with a systematic approach. The Circle of Success philosophy and accompanying “blue sheet” allows specific interventions for individual students and ensures that no one “slips through the cracks” by identifying and developing interventions and strategies for students who are struggling, no matter what the cause. It addresses the needs of each and every student, affectively and academically.

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

Yes. The Turkey Hill Middle School staff and leadership stated in interviews and focus groups that the implementation of the Results Model of Instruction, the Circle of Success, Understanding by Design, and the overarching use of academic and affective data to guide instructional strategies and to shape interventions could easily be replicated in other schools. In fact, the district has already begun to use Turkey Hill as a model of successful implementation of the Results initiative for the districts’ other schools. Turkey Hill staff indicated that the successful implementation of the improvement initiatives has been achieved in part by a school schedule that enhances instructional and common planning time, an organizational structure in which classrooms are strategically located to easily facilitate formal and informal peer observation and sharing, an atmosphere where leadership and accountability are shared, and a culture conducive to continuous improvement. The success of these efforts appeared to the panel to rest in the staff’s positive attitude toward leadership, colleagues, and students, and in the fact that the staff is empowered by evidence of the effectiveness of their efforts. It was made clear to the panel through teacher interviews and focus groups that the school’s improvement initiatives are replicable because they are grounded in beliefs and processes that are indicative of a positive, collaborative, and collegial school culture. All parties interviewed by the panel agreed that the success of improvement initiatives is not inherent in the programs themselves, but rather, it can be attributed to the initiatives’ interconnectedness and to the quality of their implementation.

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

Yes. The panel believes that the school is both capable and well positioned to showcase the successful practices they have highlighted and to articulate to visitors the effects their efforts have had on improving student performance. Throughout the panel’s visit with leadership, teaching faculty, and building as well as district staff, the panel encountered a highly collegial school community that is eager to share the successful strategies they have employed. Furthermore, the Turkey Hill staff appeared able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their efforts in terms of student performance gains, and able to convey professionalism, high standards, and accountability for teaching, along with correspondingly high expectations for student learning. The principal is a fluent and effective communicator, and teachers appear to be comfortable with having their practices scrutinized.

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

Yes. Leadership and staff demonstrated a shared understanding and a common language for the initiatives they have implemented and for the improvement that Turkey Hill students have shown. When asked by the panel during individual interviews and focus groups what teachers believe are the causes of high student achievement at the school, teachers consistently responded with a list of efforts in their areas of expertise that included the school-wide, consistent implementation of the Results model, Circle of Success interventions, and Understanding by Design units. They also pointed to high levels of collaboration that are marked by teacher participation in committees related to the improvement initiatives (Results Team, Understanding by Design Team), grade level common planning time (CPT), ongoing communication, collaboration, and the use of assessment data to guide and continually refine instruction. The visiting panel also found, throughout the day and across the visited community, a notable consistency in language and ideas among staff surrounding the principles and methods supporting the improvement efforts. The principal and staff emphasize sustaining the improvements they have made by continuing to identify specific student weaknesses or gaps in learning through ongoing assessment and then targeting instructional strategies and materials to fill those gaps as being key in the process of continuous improvement.

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

Turkey Hill leadership and staff are skilled at articulating the connections between the initiatives they have chosen and improved student performance. They consistently refer to the adoption of the Results Model of Instruction across all grade levels as the catalyst for improvement in MCAS scores in the areas of ELA and math. By carefully analyzing student performance data, aligning their curriculum to the Frameworks, and subsequently developing and implementing new instructional strategies to address deficiencies in student performance, teachers have enabled their students to make considerable performance gains on MCAS assessments. Teachers attribute their students' successes to the initiatives that have been outlined, including the school-wide implementation of and the ongoing professional development in the Results model, the adoption of Understanding by Design, and the Circle of Success. There is a coherent and consistent focus on improvement, and all teachers are fully supported and encouraged to take risks and to try out new instructional strategies. According to the principal, "In order to make beautiful music, we have to make beautiful mistakes."

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

Yes. Turkey Hill has developed school-wide improvement initiatives, improvement planning processes, and monitoring procedures that indicate to the panel substantial investment in the continued improvement of student performance. The entire school community participates in the interpretation of data through the Results model, works together to diagnose weaknesses in curriculum, instruction, and student learning, and develops new and improved teaching strategies to address those weaknesses. The organizational structure that is in place indicated to the panelists that the school is well positioned to continuously monitor the effectiveness of current efforts and to identify any new areas of weakness that may appear. Teachers and administrators report a vested interest in reaching students at both ends of the performance spectrum. They have developed and will continue to develop interventions for struggling students who score in the Warning and Needs Improvement categories on MCAS. One of these interventions targets students scoring at 224 or below for tutoring with high school students during four afternoons per week. Another focus is on moving students from Proficient to Advanced by differentiating instruction to challenge high-achieving students.

The principal and teachers consistently stressed strong communication and collaboration. The commitment teachers make to meeting and talking about student work by all accounts goes well beyond the 45-minute grade level team meetings to permeate teacher talk throughout the school day. The principal and assistant principal are available to be present for grade level team meetings, which happen once every six-day cycle. They review information gained during those meetings and offer feedback in the way of recommending available supports and preventing duplication of effort by the teams.

Going forward, the district is also very committed to continuing improvement in student performance. There are plans for using the Turkey Hill model of implementation of Results to enhance the use of the Results model at elementary schools and high schools in the district. The district is committed to “cross-pollination” between buildings and to creating consistency. District staff, including the superintendent of schools, are involved in walkthroughs at Turkey Hill, as well as the other schools in Lunenburg. The results of these walkthroughs are discussed at administrative meetings.

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

Yes. The Turkey Hill Middle School is a clean, well-maintained school located in a residential neighborhood in Lunenburg. There are multiple rooms and areas that can be utilized as space for meetings and presentations. Turkey Hill will be serving grade levels 6 through 8 next year, and this will create additional space for hosting purposes. The Turkey Hill staff demonstrated professionalism and enthusiasm for what they do and have accomplished. All interviewed staff displayed a willingness to share what they have learned with others, including best practices,

organizational changes, implementation of programs and initiatives, uses of data, and the professional development in which the staff has participated.

Turkey Hill staff members regularly engage in peer observations and are experienced in sharing aspects of their practice with other teachers from the district, as the district moves to broaden the adoption of Results and Understanding by Design in all district schools. They indicate a willingness to share programs and practices, and are experienced in engaging in discussions with their peers to ask and answer questions related to instructional practice.

The principal is a gifted communicator who writes with ease and discusses initiatives with enthusiasm. He and his staff have the ability to share information effectively.

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

Yes. The panel cannot identify any reasons why the Turkey Hill Middle School should not become a Commonwealth Compass School. Turkey Hill appears deeply committed to focusing on several key initiatives that have borne fruit and have demonstrated student performance success. The collaborative professional culture and “assumed” leadership the panel found among teachers has been encouraged and supported by a school-wide focus on data analysis, refinement of instructional practice, a holistic student focus, and the placement of same-grade classrooms in close proximity to one another in order to facilitate easy informal communication and visits between classrooms. The school’s organizational structure offers a concrete model for building and/or sustaining an effective learning community. Turkey Hill does not rely upon department heads or curriculum coaches; rather, these roles are “de facto” and everyone takes responsibility for leadership in varying capacities. There are many elements of Turkey Hill’s instructional program that could be adapted in other schools. The leadership and staff have demonstrated the ability to provide articulate and substantive information on what they are doing to improve student learning, and they are able to clearly articulate how they are doing it.

**CONCLUSION**

Turkey Hill Middle School has implemented several programs and initiatives over the past several years that have led to improvement in student achievement. The improvement results in ELA and math at Turkey Hill Middle School have been significant. The panel extracted initiatives that have been key in leading to student improvement. First, Turkey Hill has identified the Results Model of Instruction, Understanding by Design, and the Circle of Success. It is the interconnectedness of these initiatives, where teachers are able to incorporate Results-developed instructional strategies into Understanding by Design units to impact student performance, that really assists in effecting change. Turkey Hill has also fully embraced the middle school model by organizing all grade levels by team. This not only supports a collaborative and collegial school culture, but it also lends itself well to looking at the middle

school student in a holistic way, as evidenced by the various Circle of Success strategies that support the student both academically and affectively.

These initiatives, coupled with a charismatic, strong instructional leader and a collegial atmosphere in which shared decision-making is paramount, have persuaded the panel to recommend that the Turkey Hill Middle School be considered for service as a Commonwealth Compass School.

## **Appendix A Panel Members**

**Eve Laubner, Ed.D.**, Chair, School Performance Evaluation, MA Department of Education

**Erin Furey Patterson**, Writer, School Performance Evaluation, MA Department of Education

**Jacquelyn Robinson**, Consultant, Salem, MA

**Janice Doppler, Ed.D.**, Grant Manager/Health Coordinator, Easthampton 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	School Site Council Group	Student Focus Group #1	Student Focus Group #2

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

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

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

12:30—1:00 p.m. Panelists use time as needed to analyze findings, 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.