School Panel Review Report
Holbrook Junior-Senior High School
Holbrook 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 schools' Adequate Yearly Progress targets in English language arts or mathematics or both. Holbrook Jr.–Sr. High School met this criterion and was one of 21 schools selected for panel review in fall 2005. The panel review was conducted on November 21 and 22, 2005.

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. Is the school implementing a sound plan for improvement and what gains have been achieved to date as a result of this implementation?
2. Do the conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's improvement plan?

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, together with school performance data, will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education for consideration in determining whether Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High 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.

Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School Profile

Enrollment

The Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School serves students in Grades 7 through 12. Enrollment at Holbrook has stayed fairly steady between 2002 and 2005. Enrollment in 2004-2005 was 568 students. Between 2002 and 2005, student demographics have remained relatively stable with a slight increase in African American students (six percent in 2002 to 11 percent in 2005) as well as low-income students (13 percent in 2002 to 20 percent in 2005). Proportions of Holbrook student subgroups in 2005, as compared to state averages, are presented on the next page.

Subgroup	2005 Enrollment (%)	
	School	State
Asian	4	5
Black	11	9
Hispanic	4	12
Native American	0	0.3
White	81	74
Low-Income	20	28
First Language Not English	7	14
Limited English Proficient	2	5
Special Education	9	16

In 2005, the attendance rate at Holbrook was 93.0 percent, with students absent 11.6 days on average. While the attendance rate at Holbrook is slightly lower than the district attendance averages, Holbrook has made gains in their attendance rate since 2003. Hispanic students are absent more often than other subgroups and have the highest percentage of chronically absent students (32.0 percent as compared with 12.8 percent for African American students). Also of note, eleventh graders have the highest rate of average number of days absent as well as the highest percentage of chronically absent students. The school's retention rate was 1.8 percent in 2004, the last year for which this data is available. The dropout rate is similar to the state average and all 13 of the students who dropped out in 2004 were White. Holbrook's in-school suspension rate in 2005 was 15.9 percent, while out-of-school suspensions averaged 15.1 percent. Averages in 2005 for the state were 4.5 percent for in-school suspensions and 6.1 percent for out-of-school suspensions. Hispanic students at Holbrook had a 38.1 percent rate of in-school suspension, which is twice as high as the other subgroups. In 2005, the ninth grade had an out-of-school suspension rate of 36.3 percent, compared with 8.3 percent in grade twelve.

Staffing

The 2005-2006 Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School staffing report indicates that the school is comprised of two administrators, 43 teachers, two guidance counselors, one school psychologist, and one adjustment counselor. This is the principal's first year at the school and he has a total of seven years of administrative experience. Of the teachers, approximately 72 percent have been at the school for five years or less. Nearly 49 percent of teachers are reported as highly qualified. Approximately 47 percent of teachers hold graduate degrees.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School are assessed in Grades 7 and 10 in English language arts (ELA) and in Grades 8 and 10 in mathematics. Holbrook's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for 2005 Mid-Cycle IV shows an accountability status of Corrective Action for mathematics and No Status for English language arts. The school failed to make AYP in mathematics for the aggregate population or the White subgroup.[1] Holbrook made AYP in

[1] In accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001, student performance is disaggregated by the following subgroups: Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Low-Income, African-American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, and White. A minimum of 40 students (or 5% of the total number of students assessed, whichever is greater) per subgroup is required to issue a statistically sound rating or

mathematics for both the aggregate and subgroup populations in 2004 but did not make AYP in mathematics in the aggregate in 2003, 2002 or 2001. The school has made AYP in ELA for the aggregate population since 1999 but subgroups did not make AYP in 2003.

In 2005, the aggregate Composite Performance Indices (CPIs) for Holbrook are 82.9 in ELA and 61.8 in mathematics. Year-by-year aggregate CPIs are shown below:

Year-by-Year Aggregate CPI Data Summary		
Year	**ELA**	**Math**
2001	80.7	58.4
2002	84.6	57.1
2003	79.5	58.5
2004	85.9	63.9
2005	82.9	61.8
State Target 2005	80.5	68.7

GRADE 7

ELA MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 7 ELA MCAS for students at Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School are presented below:

2005	**Percent**			
ELA, Gr. 7	**A**	**P**	**NI**	**W/F**
Aggregate	3	57	37	4
Regular Education	3	65	29	3
Special Education	0	15	77	8

While there are not enough students in the Limited English Proficient (LEP) category to report as a separate subgroup, these students are reflected in the aggregate MCAS results. There is a significant difference in performance between the Regular Education population and the Special Education population. Sixty-eight percent of the Regular Education students scored in the Proficient and Advanced categories, while 15 percent of the Special Education population scored Proficient and no students scored Advanced.

There has been a gradual increase in student performance since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 7 ELA MCAS performance presented on the next page.

---

determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School in 2005 were White for ELA, and Low-Income and White for mathematics.

Aggregate ELA, Gr. 7	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	3	57	37	4
2004	3	65	29	3
2003	4	48	42	6
2002	5	60	35	1
2001	1	43	46	10

While the Advanced and Warning/Failing categories remained constant between 2003 and 2005, there was an increase in the percentage of students scoring Proficient and a decrease in the Needs Improvement category. In 2003, 48 percent scored Proficient compared with 57 percent in 2005. Also, 42 percent scored in the Needs Improvement category in 2003, which decreased to 37 percent in 2005.

GRADE 8

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 8 mathematics MCAS for students at Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School are presented below:

2005 Mathematics, Gr. 8	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	6	17	36	42
Regular Education	7	19	40	34
Special Education	0	4	17	78

Similar to the Grade 7 results, there is a significant difference in performance between the Regular Education and Special Education populations. While 34 percent of the Regular Education students scored in the Warning/Failing category, 78 percent of the Special Education population scored in this category. Also, 26 percent of the Regular Education population scored Proficient and Advanced, while only four percent of the Special Education population scored Proficient with no students scoring Advanced.

The Grade 8 mathematics scores have remained level since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 8 mathematics MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate Mathematics, Gr. 8	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	6	17	36	42
2004	4	25	36	34
2003	5	21	34	40
2002	4	17	35	45
2001	6	16	34	43

From 2001 to 2005, the percentages of students scoring in each of the performance categories have not changed significantly. The percentage of students scoring Proficient did increase

from 16 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2004 but decreased to 17 percent in 2005. Also, the percentage of students scoring in the Warning/Failing category improved from 43 percent in 2001 to 34 percent in 2004 but declined to 42 percent in 2005.

GRADE 10

ELA MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 10 ELA MCAS for students at Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School are presented below:

2005 ELA, Gr. 10	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	9	44	34	13
Regular Education	10	51	31	7
Special Education	0	9	45	45

Nearly half of the Grade 10 Special Education students failed the ELA portion of the MCAS while only nine percent scored Proficient. This contrasts with the 61 percent of Regular Education students who scored Proficient or Advanced.

The Grade 10 ELA scores have improved slightly since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 10 ELA MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate ELA, Gr. 10	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	9	44	34	13
2004	7	48	36	9
2003	10	35	44	11
2002	13	19	34	34
2001	5	37	38	19

Students scoring in the Warning/Failing category decreased from 19 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2005, with only nine percent scoring in this category in 2004. Students scoring Proficient increased from 37 percent in 2001 to 44 percent in 2005, with a high of 48 percent in 2004.

GRADE 10

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 10 mathematics MCAS for students at Holbrook Jr.-Sr. High School are presented below:

2005 Math, Gr. 10	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	21	27	34	18
Regular Education	25	29	34	12
Special Education	0	0	45	55

More than half of the Grade 10 Special Education students failed the ELA portion of the MCAS test and no Special Education student scored Proficient or Advanced.

The grade 10 mathematics MCAS scores have improved slightly since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 10 mathematics MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate Math, Gr. 10	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	21	27	34	18
2004	26	19	34	21
2003	13	16	43	29
2002	8	50	27	14
2001	13	22	30	35

The percentage of students failing the Grade 10 mathematics portion of the MCAS decreased from 35 percent in 2001 to 18 percent in 2005. The percentage of students scoring Advanced and Proficient increased from 35 percent in 2001 to 48 percent in 2005.

PANEL RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

KEY QUESTION 1: IS THE SCHOOL IMPLEMENTING A SOUND PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT AND WHAT GAINS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED TO DATE AS A RESULT OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION?

It is the conclusion of the Panel Review (PR) team that the School Improvement Plan (SIP) submitted by Holbrook Junior-Senior High School (HJSHS) is not a sound plan for improvement. At the time of the visit, no well-planned and coordinated efforts to implement a plan had been undertaken, and no documented gains in improvement in mathematics had been identified or recorded. The panel found the written plan to be an inadequate guide for implementing and gauging the success of school improvement initiatives. The plan lacks specificity in its goals, objectives and indicators; it lacks measurable and time-bounded performance expectations; and it is not based upon careful consideration of available data and a causal analysis of the data. The stakeholders in the school communicated little confidence and understanding in the plan as a tool to drive school improvement, and they were not engaged in the planning and development phases in any meaningful way. Leaders at both the district and school levels have rejected the plan, and at the time of the panel visit, had not made significant steps toward the creation of a new one.

A. Are the school's written improvement planning documents (including action plans) clear and specific enough to guide the implementation of planned improvement initiatives?

School Improvement Plans were submitted in preparation for School Panel Reviews scheduled in November and December 2005. Teams of three Department of Education (DOE) staff members reviewed the written plans and completed summary assessments of their soundness, based on a Department rubric with specific indicators for five central components: overall clarity and coherence of the plan, identifying and prioritizing problems based on multiple sources of data, analyzing the causes of weakness in student performance, establishing improvement objectives and selecting strategies, and establishing benchmarks for implementation and outcomes. The judgment on the soundness of these written documents provided in the summary rubric was based solely on a close reading of the written documents submitted. It was not a final determination. The panelists used the summary rubric to inform their discussion of the written plan each panelist had read individually prior to the review, and to help focus their time in the school on the implementation of the planned strategies. Final judgment on the soundness of the school's plan—and the panel's overall response to Key Question 1 in the Panel Review Protocol—depended upon further information about the development of the plan and evidence of the plan's implementation that was gathered by the panel during on-site interviews, focus groups and observations.

The judgment of both the PR team and the summary rubric completed by the DOE is that the HJSHS's SIP is not clear and specific enough to guide future improvement efforts in mathematics. Though the plan contains many important goals and objectives that HJSHS should aspire to achieve, its structure does not provide a clear and specific road map to guide strategic intervention. The plan's goals, objectives and performance indicators are too numerous, too broad and not written in results-oriented or measurable terms. In addition, due to the breadth of the plan's scope, it does not identify specific areas of student performance weakness nor does it identify the strategies needed to address those needs. As an example, no attention is given to

weaknesses in student performance in mathematics, the very reason the school is in corrective action. Finally, none of the school's stakeholders communicate confidence in the plan as a clear and effective tool to guide their work to improve student performance.

Holbrook's SIP identifies nine areas of focus: curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher quality and training, professional development, leadership and governance, student support services, technology and finance and facilities. Five overarching goals included in the plan encompass all nine areas of focus. Each broad goal is then followed by Objectives and each objective is connected to Indicators. Finally, at the end of each goal are lists of Evidence and Responsibility. A page taken from the school's SIP is included below as an illustration of the plan's broad and non-strategic format.

Goal 1 All students will demonstrate proficiency in core subjects prior to graduating.

1.3 Student Assessment

District administrators and teachers regularly assess the performance of their students relative to state and local student performance standards and use student assessment data to review and improve curricula, courses, programs, and instructional practices.

Indicators

1. Aggregate and individual test data is analyzed to strengthen curricula and instructional practices.
2. School curricula and teachers' instructional practices are adjusted to address gaps identified through the district assessment plan.
3. Assessment is used to develop academic support and remedial programs for at risk learners.
4. Administrators and teachers are well informed about the content and purposes of the assessment programs.
5. The school provides staff with professional development on assessment techniques and how to use performance data.
6. Classroom assessment standards and practices are linked fully with the learning standards as delineated in the State Frameworks.
7. Classroom teacher assessments are used to improve the quality of instruction and learning.
8. Student performance reports to parents are frequent and informative.

Evidence	**Responsibility**
MCAS analysis	Directors of Curriculum
Team and Departmental	Principal/Directors
Samples of tests across grade levels	Principal
Assessment Team Meeting Minutes	Assessment Team Chairperson

As evidenced by the example above, Holbrook's 2005-2006 School Improvement Plan does not clearly identify specific challenges to be addressed and tasks and strategies that will be employed to successfully drive improved performance. Its structure and content provide a broad framework only from which to work. As an example, *Indicator 3—Assessment is used to develop academic support and remedial programs for at-risk learners*—does not specify the kinds of assessments to be used, when the assessments should administered, who administers them or the standards of performance against which student progress will be measured.

The fact that the SIP does not address the school's weaknesses in mathematics performance or any other specific problem in student achievement, is a clear indicator that the SIP is not a document with enough specificity to guide school improvement efforts. Supporting the PR team's concern about the lack of specificity is the fact that, throughout the plan, there is no mention of mathematics, English, language arts or writing (or the key skill areas incorporated in each of them), but only terms such as core subjects and curriculum.

During interviews with teachers, the PR team frequently heard the phrases, "the plan is too vague" and "encompasses too much." When asked, most teachers were unable to clearly articulate their role in implementing the plan and how the plan could serve as a guide to improve student performance. The results of the *DOE Instructional Staff Survey* (n=42) support this evidence of confusion about the plan. Seventy-one percent of the staff were either unsure about the SIP, disagreed with it or did not respond to the statement: *"Our school has a well-defined plan for reaching its student performance goals."* Finally, neither the superintendent nor the principal considers the 2005-2006 School Improvement Plan to be the real or viable plan but, rather, they assert that it contains "too much" and needs to be "discarded" and "totally revised" before it can serve as an effective tool to address the specific learning needs of students at HJSHS.

In summary, the Holbrook's written planning document does not contain essential elements of a strategic plan; its goals and objectives are not specific and measurable; the plan does not clearly identify problems and causes for low performance in mathematics; and it does not contain expected standards of mathematics performance, instructional strategies, assessment methods, timelines or benchmarks. These reasons, coupled with the lack of awareness and lack of confidence expressed by administrators and teachers about the plan, serve as convincing support for the panel's judgment that the plan, in its present state, is not a document that will be useful in guiding the school's improvement efforts.

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

The panel review process did not uncover evidence that Holbrook's 2005-2006 SIP was developed through a process that would support its successful implementation. Two key findings led the panel to this judgment. First, through all phases of the plan's development, key stakeholders were not involved in meaningful ways. Second, a systematic analysis of available data was not undertaken in order to discover the specific nature and underlying causes of the most pressing areas of student performance weakness.

The 2005-2006 SIP was developed and authored primarily by the former school principal. One of the district's two former curriculum directors indicated that he had received Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) training from the DOE and served as a resource to the principal during the planning and writing phases of the document and further related that he was not closely involved with the process. The superintendent expressed a similar lack of active involvement. Members of the school council—the group with the official charge to develop a plan—indicated that though they were kept apprised of the progress being made by the principal and had been asked for feedback a few times along the way, the principal had "assimilated the information and written the plan." It was clear to the PR Team that members of the school council had not been involved in the process in a meaningful way.

Interviews with teachers revealed that their only input into the creation of the plan came from information they provided on a written survey conducted by the former principal during the spring of 2005. They indicated that, after the survey was administered, they were not involved in any school-wide discussions or follow-up activities related to the content of the survey, nor were they given information about how the content would be used to create the SIP. Though the plan was submitted to the school committee and adopted at their June 2005 meeting, Holbrook's staff did not receive copies of the plan until late October 2005—only a few weeks before the Panel

Review visit. The PR team learned that a few copies of the plan were left in the teacher's room for inspection, and that electronic copies were sent to staff by the principal via e-mail. However, no school-wide dialog or explanation of the plan was ever conducted. In fact, at the time of its dissemination, the principal suggested that teachers familiarize themselves with the plan prior to the panel review, but asked that they not get too involved with it since it was in the process of being revised.

Problem identification and causal analysis efforts were not conducted in any systematic way, nor had careful analysis of available data been used as a basis for establishing and prioritizing the SIP's goals and actions. The principal and superintendent indicated that the first time teachers at Holbrook had ever been asked to analyze individual and disaggregated MCAS data as a group was during a one-hour workshop session on October 7, 2005. Also, this was the first time that most of the teachers had ever looked at MCAS data as a means to discover student performance weaknesses and to inform instruction. As a result of this workshop, HJSHS collected, for the first time, important data that could be used to inform the goals and objectives of their revised plan.

The confusion about the SIP and the lack of clarity and specificity referenced in Question 1A above can be attributed to the lack of an effective planning and development process. The school's stakeholders (teachers, the school counsel, district personnel, parents, students) were not engaged in the process in any meaningful way and, consequently, there was little to no buy-in to the plan and a resulting lack of understanding of its content and purpose. Additionally, careful study of available data was not used as part of the process to identify the specific problem areas in mathematics instruction and performance at the school, nor was careful analysis used to better understand causes and possible remedies for these problems. The lack of attention to these critical factors in the planning and development phases of the SIP's creation resulted in a plan that the PR team views as not implementable.

C. To what extent is the school staff implementing the plan?

Responses to Questions 1A and 1B of this report have established that HJSHS does not have a sound plan to implement. The plan submitted to the PR Team contains insufficient structure to serve as a strategic guide for improvement; the staff received the SIP only a few weeks prior to the panel visit and never formally discussed it with their colleagues; and both the principal and superintendent openly expressed dissatisfaction and lack of support for the plan. It is impossible to assess the extent of implementation as the plan does not serve as a living document at the school and it does not contain strategies to be implemented at the classroom level. The SIP is not currently considered in the implementation of initiatives at the school.

D. What improvement gains relative to School Improvement Plan goals or benchmarks have been achieved through implementation of the plan?

As previously reported, the HJSHS School Improvement Plan is an insufficient planning document that is not in use at the school. The SIP does not contain improvement goals or benchmarks and, therefore, no gains have been tracked or reported.

The summary rubric completed by the DOE for the Holbrook's Plan for Improvement, with which the PR Team agrees, states:

"The document submitted as a School Improvement Plan is not data-driven or attentive to student performance in mathematics, for which the school is in corrective action. While there are standards and indicators that could serve as objectives or goals, without any evaluation of where the current curriculum, instruction and assessment are now; without action plans to help teachers reach them; and without interim measures of effectiveness along the way; the plan is not a sound one for improving student performance."

"Although the plan is dated 2005-2006, there is no timeframe provided for achieving any of the standards in the plan or for gauging the school's current achievement of, or progress toward, any of the indicators listed under each of the nine standards."

In summary, the Holbrook SIP is not a guiding document and does not contain benchmarks that can be used to measure implementation of improvement initiatives. Though there is some evidence that the school and the district have begun initial phases of improvement planning (though unrelated to the SIP), evidence does not currently exist to assess the effectiveness of these efforts, once implemented.

KEY QUESTION 2: DO THE CONDITIONS APPEAR TO BE IN PLACE FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

It is the judgment of the PR team that the conditions necessary to successfully implement a school improvement plan are not in place at Holbrook Junior-Senior High School. Evidence gathered from a variety of sources revealed that a number of conditions and circumstances serve to limit the leadership's ability to effectively move the improvement agenda to completion. Though the majority of the school staff appears eager and willing to support improvement plans as they arise, they currently do not have a clear plan to follow. Given the reported lack of budget resources and the lack of support and guidance from the district office, the panel determined that HJSHS is not receiving what it needs from the district office to ensure a future of improved student achievement at the school.

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

Although some aspects of leadership and management critical to successful implementation of an improvement plan are in place, the PR team concluded—based on an assessment of the conditions observed at the time of the visit—that the leadership and management of Holbrook JSHS does not have the full capacity to successfully accomplish improvement planning efforts. The current school leadership structure is not likely to ensure improvements in instruction and student performance. There is a pervasive lack of understanding and confusion about the school's plan for improvement that is likely a byproduct of the school's history of staffing and leadership instability and also an indication of the current leadership's difficulty in effectively communicating a vision for improvement and rallying the school around strategic actions to bring that vision alive.

School stakeholders seem satisfied and confident with the current principal's ability to lead and manage the school. Referring to the principal and superintendent, the members of the school council expressed confidence that the school "finally had the right combination of leadership in place." Parents interviewed related a similar sentiment. The Instructional Staff Survey revealed that 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement: *"Our school principal provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of our students."* The superintendent stated, "I have confidence in the principal; he has tremendous potential." When teachers were asked about the principal's ability to lead, responses included: "We're taking a wait-and-see attitude." "The jury is still out." "It depends on how long he stays." Often these sentiments followed concern about the lack of stability and continuity in the principal's office in recent years. There have been three principals in the past five years. When asked about reasons for low school performance and about significant school problems, virtually all stakeholders interviewed placed the high rate of turnover, both in leadership and in teaching staff, as one of the top problems.

Despite the general positive regard for the first-year principal, the PR Team concluded that the current leadership structure and personnel would be highly challenged to provide the kind of leadership and support necessary to bring about substantive changes in instruction and student performance. When asked about the new principal's capacity as a school leader, the superintendent suggested that his ability would be tested due to his inexperience as an instructional leader. She stated: "He has tremendous potential…. He will need lots of help with instructional leadership."

Panel members examined the leadership structure in the school to see if other individuals besides the principal could provide guidance in the area of curriculum and instruction for the staff. The assistant principal is primarily responsible for discipline and other important school management tasks that make it difficult for her to focus on teaching and learning. Two district staff members who had served as part-time curriculum directors in mathematics and ELA at Holbrook had to be let go because of budget cuts in the previous year, leaving a significant void in these areas. In response to this void, the principal and superintendent created a Curriculum Team Leader concept. Seven full-time teachers were asked to serve as stipended leaders of their respective curriculum areas. They were charged with leading their content area and grade level colleagues in a curriculum writing and revision process. The concept of curriculum team leaders was so new that, at the time of the Panel visit, many teachers were unaware that the new structure even existed and did not know who was serving in the new leadership roles. When the superintendent and principal were asked about the strength of the qualifications of the newly appointed curriculum leaders, they both agreed that those selected were energetic, eager and demonstrated leadership potential. They noted, however, that these individuals do not have the training or experience to effectively mentor, supervise and evaluate curriculum and assessment. Finally, the school council – a group made up of students, community members, parents and a few teachers – play an important advisory role in the leadership of the school but, as a group, do not have the professional expertise to take a key role in the realm of instructional leadership.

Frequent turnover of school leadership and the resulting lack of continuity were viewed by all members of the HJSHS community as the most significant factors interfering with the school's ability to create and successfully implement an effective school improvement plan. The panel acknowledged that this problem has created real and significant challenges. At the same time, the PR team recognized another significant challenge: the new principal was hired at a time of very intense demand and was asked to "touch down running." School resources were scarce, which limited his ability to hire the necessary staff; provide the necessary resources for books and supplies; teacher training; building maintenance and upkeep. Compounding this was the fact that the new administrator inherited all the requirements associated with the school's recent failure to achieve full NEASC accreditation; the demands placed on his office by the EQA district review this fall; and by this Panel Review process. During the last year, HJSHS has been viewed under an accountability lens with an intensity that would create a challenge for even the most seasoned school leader.

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

This report has established three key findings: 1) There is not a sound plan for school improvement or a process for developing a plan at HJSHS; 2) The faculty had been largely uninvolved and uninformed throughout the improvement planning process; 3) No consistent and expert school instructional leadership was in place to guide improvement and accountability efforts. As a result, it is difficult to assess evidence of faculty implementation of improvement efforts. However, the PR team did hear reports from the faculty that suggested their willingness to support and participate in activities directed at improving their teaching skills and the performance of their students. Classroom observations, interviews and staff survey responses indicated that there were pockets of excellent instruction happening at the school and that many teachers were using language that suggested their understanding of the need for improved student performance, not only in mathematics but also in all other subjects. The recent

curriculum revision efforts may be the best example of the faculty's eagerness to support improvement efforts.

Though a few expressions of division among the faculty relating to the school's leadership and direction were heard during interviews, the PR team found evidence, overall, to suggest that a positive sense of professional camaraderie existed among the faculty. A clear willingness and desire to help each other out, engage in meaningful professional development and to meet regularly with colleagues seemed to be a prevailing sentiment. Many expressed affection for the school, a belief that it had "great kids and great people" and a sincere desire to improve the school for students. Teachers expressed strong sentiments about their desire for help. As one teacher stated, "I feel starved for growth [as a professional]." In reference to learning how to use more effective methods of instruction, another teacher stated, "I just need someone to show me how." Finally, when asked about the faculty's willingness to support the improvement plan, one teacher said, "We wouldn't have a problem following the plan if we knew what it was."

Of the 10 lessons observed, seven either met or exceeded what the PR team considered to be acceptable instructional practice. In those lessons, there was evidence of good classroom management, high levels of student engagement, good teacher questioning techniques, informal and formal assessments, high expectations and evidence of effective planning. Most of the classes observed were teacher-directed with little evidence of differentiated instruction, student-centered learning, or standards-based planning and instruction. In follow-up interviews, teachers expressed the need for curriculum alignment, texts and printed resources, more professional development and a strong desire for more common planning time. When asked what they needed to do to improve student performance, they commonly spoke of using standards to guide their curriculum and instruction, using rubrics to assess school-wide—as well as classroom—performance, adapting their instructional and assessment methods as a means of improving MCAS performance in mathematics and ELA, and also differentiating their instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. This evidence indicated to the panel that faculty members had some level of understanding of needed focus on planning efforts and that they stood ready to support and engage in those efforts once a sound plan is established.

The current commitment to develop a solid standards-based curriculum in mathematics (and all other subjects) seems to have been met by the majority of staff with relief, as well as with the desire and willingness to contribute. At the time of the visit, the Curriculum Team Leaders were in the initial stages of organizing their grade-level and content-area groups around a joint effort to develop curriculum. The PR team heard strong sentiment from a number of teachers that this effort "is a positive move in the right direction." The *DOE Instructional Staff Survey* results revealed that more than three quarters of the faculty did not believe that the school's curriculum was effective and appropriate. During interviews, faculty members revealed widespread agreement that decisions about what to teach and when to teach were often guided by individual teachers' own preferences and the textbooks they were using. The panel believed that teacher's feelings of dissatisfaction with the state of the school curriculum, coupled with their desire to improve it, were a significant indicator of their readiness to support school improvement work.

Although the school does not have an adequate plan in place to guide its improvement efforts, and there has been minimal planning and coordination to create a new SIP, the PR Team gathered some evidence to suggest that some efforts at school improvements were underway. For example: 1) The recent roll out of a district improvement plan created by the superintendent to guide the development of individual school improvement plans; 2) A workshop held in October

of this year that brought groups of teachers together to review the NEASC accreditation report and MCAS data as a first step in the process of root cause analysis and establishing specific performance goals objectives; 3) A recent school-wide commitment to write solid mathematics curriculum and pacing guides for each grade level; 4) Reports of the success of a voluntary MCAS class that had been instituted in 2004-05 at the same time that the middle school lengthened instructional periods and incorporated mathematics and ELA tutorials into their exploratory offerings; 6) Information the panel received that all students who met the Holbrook graduation requirements also passed the MCAS; 7) Evidence from teacher interviews supporting the notion that skills developed in a professional development program on differentiation of instruction held in the previous year were being carried over into some classrooms.

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

It is the judgment of the PR team that the current superintendent has the confidence of the school community behind her and a good understanding of what needs to be done in order to improve student achievement as measured by the MCAS. However, because Holbrook's school improvement agenda is insufficient, it is the panel's judgment that the quality and quantity of support being provided by the district is not adequate. Nor are appropriate accountability measures in place at the district level to ensure that a sound plan is written and followed. The panel has concerns that the lack of school funding reported by virtually all stakeholders interviewed might limit Holbrook's ability to bring about the kinds of school-wide changes necessary to raise student achievement.

During the Panel Review process, the superintendent received strong votes of confidence from the principal and assistant principal, the faculty, the school council and parents. As mentioned earlier in this report, many in the school community felt that the superintendent and principal made a great team. One teacher described the superintendent as "dynamite," and another stated, "…she is the first real superintendent I've had since I've been here." Others described her as "always willing to help," "approachable" and "on the right track." During her 16-month tenure, the superintendent had effectively gained the support from the school's stakeholders.

The importance of the confidence afforded the superintendent, however, is overshadowed by the fact that Holbrook did not have a viable plan for improvement in place at the time of the panel review visit, nor did it find evidence that significant progress had been made toward that end. The PR team determined that lack of sufficient support, guidance and accountability measures from the district office contributed to this problem. The panel could find only limited evidence to show how the district office helped move the school improvement agenda forward since the departure of the last principal at the end of the school year. At an October 7th workshop with members of the administration and staff, the superintendent reviewed the draft of the District Improvement Plan that she intends to use as a template for individual school plans. At the time of the panel review visit, little if nothing had been done with this idea. During the same workshop, faculty met in groups to review the NEASC report and also looked analytically at MCAS data in an attempt to gather evidence for the new SIP. Nearly two months after the workshop, the only progress made on this work was a list of seven areas of focus assimilated by the principal. A few weeks prior to the team's visit, the superintendent—along with the principal—established the Curriculum Team Leader concept and the curriculum writing focus—a project so new, that few members of the faculty were even aware of its adoption.

Finally, the PR team has concern about the reports of lack of funding for personnel and resources to support school improvement efforts. Two part-time curriculum directors were eliminated in June, leaving the school and the superintendent's office with no staff to support and guide curriculum, instruction and school improvement efforts. The school, with grades 7-12 and nearly 600 students, has only two full-time administrators—the principal and the assistant principal—to lead and manage all aspects of the school. The six Curriculum Team Leaders assume full teaching loads, while at the same time assuming responsibilities for leading efforts to revise and rewrite curriculum. Teachers, parents, members of the school council and the administration all lament about the physical condition of the school, lack of text books, outdated materials, lack of resources to support and supplement the curriculum and instruction, lack of appropriate literature in the classrooms, inadequacies of the library and resource center, insufficient and outdated technology and the frequent turnover of teachers and administrators.

CONCLUSION:

Holbrook Junior-Senior High School does not have a viable plan to improve student performance in mathematics. The school's plan was developed through a process that did not involve stakeholders in a meaningful way and did not include the careful analysis of student performance or an assessment of the existing mathematics program to isolate specific problems, identify root causes of those problems and establish clear and measurable goals and actions to address the problems.

Under the current conditions, the leadership and management structures at Holbrook Junior-Senior High School do not have the capacity to successfully move the school improvement planning agenda to successful ends. The staff appears ready and willing to support and participate in school improvement initiatives but they need a plan to follow, a leadership structure to guide them and the resources to support them. Finally, the district office does not have the capacity to provide the quality and quantity of resources and support needed to bring about standards-based school reform.

Appendix A

Holbrook Junior-Senior High School Panel Review Visiting Team

Dr. Linda Moriarty, Panel Review Chair, SchoolWorks LLC, Beverly, MA

Dr. Thomas Harvey, Panel Review Co-Chair, SchoolWorks LLC, Beverly, MA

Karen Vigue, Panel Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden, MA

Ann Deveney, Panelist, Curriculum Coordinator, Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA

Don Robello, Panelist, Principal, B M C Durfee High, Fall River, MA

Patricia Shanahan, Panelist, Teacher, Swampscott, MA

APPENDIX B
Holbrook Jr.–Sr. High School
Holbrook Public Schools
POTENTIALLY UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE
November 21 and 22, 2005

Day 1

9:00—9:30 a.m.	**Panel chairperson and panel coordinator meet at hotel** to discuss and clarify roles, prepare for the first team meeting, and review general logistics/schedule for the review.
9:30a.m. –11:30a.m.	**Team meeting # 1**: team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist's individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgments on key questions.
11:30a.m.—1p.m.	**Lunch and travel to the school** (*NOTE: In districts undergoing multiple school reviews, superintendent interviews may be scheduled between 11am and 1 pm at the hotel.*)
1:00 – 2:00p.m.	Panel meets with the school's **Instructional Leadership Team**.
2:00—3:00 p.m.	Panelists meet with the district **Superintendent** (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).
3:15—4:30p.m.	Panel meets with the **Principal** (and one other school-based individual, if appropriate).
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.

Day 2

All activities take place at the school.

7:30—8:00 a.m.	Panel meets with the Principal
8:00—8:30 a.m.	Panel meets with the School Council
8:30—9:00 a.m.	Panelists meet individually with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students (middle and high schools), 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**: panel meets to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch).

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

1:00—2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teacher focus 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	

2:15—2:30 p.m. Chair meets with the Principal to discuss next steps in the process.

2:30—5:00 p.m. **Team meeting # 4**: panel deliberates, organizes evidence, and formulates responses to key questions.