

School Panel Review Report Samuel Bowles Elementary School Springfield 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. Samuel Bowles Elementary School met this criterion and was one of 21 schools selected for panel review in fall 2005. The panel review was conducted on November 8 and 9, 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 Samuel Bowles Elementary School is deemed under-performing. The panel was not asked to formulate a sound plan for school improvement where such a plan does not presently exist or to recommend a course of action to create the conditions for successful implementation of sound improvement strategies where such conditions at present do not appear to exist. Diagnostic and/or prescriptive intervention, where needed to assist an under-performing school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

Samuel Bowles Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

The Samuel Bowles School serves students in Grades K-5. Enrollment at Samuel Bowles has gradually declined from 407 students in 2003, to 387 students in 2004, then to 369 students in 2005.¹ Student demographics have remained steady over the last four years with the exception of

¹ Citywide redistricting was undertaken for the 2005-2006 school year. Enrollment at the Bowles School was reported in the School Leadership Report (prepared for the Panel Review) as 330 for October 2005. Panelists concluded this may not represent a stable number. As the principal explained, an extraordinarily high truancy rate for September-October (783) is a clear indication that many students were not yet settled in the school to which they had been assigned. Verbal reports indicated at least a 30% change in student assignment. Subgroup information reported in the School Leadership Report did not reveal significant changes in demographics for the Bowles School.

African American students, who fluctuated from 16 percent of the student body in 2002, to one percent in 2003 and returned to 16 percent in 2004.

Proportions of Samuel Bowles student subgroups in 2005, as compared to state averages, are presented below:

Subgroup	2005 Enrollment (%)	
	School	State
Asian	2	5
Black	17	9
Hispanic	58	12
Native American	0	0.3
White	24	74
Low-Income	79	28
First Language Not English	33	14
Limited English Proficient	24	5
Special Education	15	16

In 2005, the attendance rate at Samuel Bowles was 93.1 percent, with students absent 11.3 days on average. Across the state in 2005, the average attendance rate was 94.2 percent and students were absent 10.0 days on average. Although the overall absence rate is 1.3 days higher than the state average, it is 5.5 days lower than the district average. Male students are absent an average of 1.9 more days than are female students and are chronically absent 4.3 percent more often than their female counterparts. While the average number of days absent at each grade level is fairly consistent, there are significant differences in attendance rates among races. Hispanic students have the lowest attendance rate (92.0 percent) and highest average number of days absent (13.0 days). In addition, Hispanic students have the highest rate of chronic absenteeism (31.9 percent). Asian students have the highest attendance rate (98.1 percent) and the lowest average number of days absent (3.3 days). Samuel Bowles' retention rate was 3.7 percent in 2004, the last year for which this data is available. The school's in-school suspension rate in 2005 was 3.0 percent, while out-of-school suspensions averaged 10.6 percent. The 2005 rate of out-of-school suspensions is below the district average of 13.7 percent but higher than the state average of 6.1 percent.

Staffing

The 2005-2006 Samuel Bowles staffing report indicates that the school is comprised of one administrator, 31 teachers, two curriculum facilitators, one librarian, one school adjustment counselor, one nurse, and six para-professionals. The principal has been at the school for less than one year, has three years of administrative experience, and 24 years of teaching experience. The school was under the leadership of the former principal for 19 years. Of the teachers, approximately 55 percent have been at the school for fewer than five years, 23 percent have been at the school between five and ten years, and 23 percent have been at the school more than ten years. Teachers' years of experience in the profession, however, are significantly higher than their time at the school. Approximately 81 percent have more than 10 years experience, 10 percent have between five and ten years experience, and 10 percent of the teachers have fewer than five years teaching experience. Ninety-six percent of teachers are reported as being highly qualified, and 35 percent hold advanced degrees.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Samuel Bowles School are assessed in Grade 3 Reading and in Grade 4 English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Samuel Bowles' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for 2005 Mid-Cycle IV shows an accountability status of Restructuring for ELA and Identified for Improvement in math.² In ELA, the school failed to make AYP for five consecutive years in the aggregate and three consecutive years for subgroups. The school made AYP in mathematics from 1999-2003 in the aggregate; however they were unable to do so for the past two years. In addition, Samuel Bowles has not made AYP in subgroups for math for three consecutive years.

In 2005, the aggregate Composite Performance Indices (CPIs) for the Samuel Bowles School were 68.0 in ELA and 53.2 in mathematics. Year-by-year aggregate CPIs are shown below:

Year-by-Year Aggregate CPI Data Summary		
Year	ELA	Math
2001	68.8	57.1
2002	66.2	52.8
2003	67.6	57.9
2004	66.2	58.8
2005	68.0	53.2
State Target 2005	80.5	68.7

GRADE 3

Reading MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 3 Reading MCAS for students at Samuel Bowles are presented below:

2005 Reading, Gr. 3	Percent		
	P	NI	W
Aggregate	36	46	18
Regular Education	42	48	9
Special Education	45	36	18
Limited English Proficient	8	50	42

Regular Education and Special Education students at Samuel Bowles have significantly outperformed Limited English Proficient students in reading. There has been little progress in student performance since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 3 MCAS performance presented on the next page:

² 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 determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at Samuel Bowles Elementary School in 2005 were Low-Income and Hispanic.

Aggregate Reading, Gr. 3	Percent		
	P	NI	W
2005	36	46	18
2004	34	44	22
2003	46	28	25
2002	51	37	12
2001	43	39	18

Since 2001, Samuel Bowles has failed to produce any students scoring in the Advanced category. In addition, the percentage of students scoring in the Proficient category has decreased 15 percent from 2002. In 2001, eighteen percent of students scored in the Warning/Failing category and this remains at 18 percent in 2005. Changes in student scoring Needs Improvement have increased from 39 percent in 2001 to 46 percent in 2005.

GRADE 4

ELA MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 ELA MCAS for students at Samuel Bowles are presented below:

2005 ELA, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	0	26	49	25
Regular Education	0	37	53	11
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Student performance in ELA reflects a downward trend since 2001, as seen in the aggregate Grade 4 ELA MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate ELA, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	0	26	49	25
2004	2	24	48	27
2003	2	29	44	25
2002	1	32	46	21
2001	2	40	44	14

Students scoring in the Proficient and Advanced category have decreased from 42 percent in 2001 to 26 percent in 2005. Conversely, students scoring in the Warning/Failing category have increased from 14 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2005. The percentage of students scoring in the Needs Improvement categories has remained relatively stable at approximately 47 percent.

GRADE 4

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 Mathematics MCAS for students at Samuel Bowles are presented on the next page:

2005 Math, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	2	11	56	32
Regular Education	3	16	66	16
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Student performance in math appears to be heading in a downward trend since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 4 Mathematics MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate Math, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	2	11	56	32
2004	2	14	61	23
2003	2	20	43	36
2002	3	16	45	36
2001	1	15	56	27

Students scoring in the Proficient and Advanced category have decreased from 16 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2005 (after reaching a high of 22 percent in 2003). Students scoring in the Warning/Failing category have increased from 27 percent in 2001 to 32 percent in 2005 (a slight reduction from a high of 36 percent in 2002 and 2003). The percentage of students scoring in Needs Improvement for 2005 has returned to the 56 percent level of 2001.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

The School Improvement Plan (SIP), developed March-June 2005 under prior leadership is not sufficient to guide longterm improvement. The new principal, appointed in July, has communicated effectively with staff about the contents of the plan and about the staff's role in implementing the plan. The majority of staff is implementing key strategies in the plan. In the first two and a half months under new leadership, there have been many changes made to curriculum and instruction. Energy has been focused on implementing the district's ELA and math curricula, learning to differentiate instruction in center-based classrooms and increasing time for literacy and math blocks. Individual teachers are beginning to use various assessments to guide their instruction, although a system for analyzing gains in student achievement school wide has yet to be developed.

The Panel Review (PR) team is not as confident, however, that the plan will produce enough achievement over time. There are three reasons for this concern. First, there is only one student learning objective for each subject area. This provides focus, but potentially ignores other standards that need attention. Second, the plan is focused on the aggregate population, although the school has large Hispanic and Low Income populations that may have additional needs. Third, causal analysis is not clearly articulated or explained, which suggests school staff has not yet done as thorough an analysis of specific practices as might be needed. It is difficult to determine from the plan whether focusing on a single learning objective for the population in the aggregate was a strategic decision to prioritize needs or an oversight. In addition, redistricting undertaken since the plan was written has resulted in an approximate 30 percent change in student population. Though all student demographics (e.g. subgroups) percentages have not changed significantly, a concern remains about whether the data used to develop the plan are still relevant to this 'new' student population.

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 PR team determined the SIP provides an adequate initial guide for staff to focus on improvements implementing differentiated instruction and the district’s ELA and math curricula that should benefit all students. Key strategies identified in the plan for ELA include implementation of the district’s Reading Plan—including increased time for the literacy block and instructional materials to support the Harcourt program, consistent vocabulary instruction, center-based classrooms with differentiated instruction and discussion of student work at grade level meetings. Key strategies for math include implementation of the district’s Math Instructional Guide, increased time for the math block, increased time with multi-step problems, and use of manipulatives.

Longer term, the written SIP will be inadequate as a guide to move all students toward high achievement. Goals and strategies in the SIP are limited in two ways: 1) the plan makes use of only one set of data—item analysis of MCAS scores—through which the SIP team “determined that all students at Bowles share areas of common weakness” (*SIP, p. 3*) and, 2) the team adhered to unexplained directions that “no one subgroup was large enough to meet the criterion for developing separate Student Learning Objectives” (*SIP, p. 1*). Thus, the plan is based on one set of data and is focused on the aggregate population. 2005 Composite Performance Index (CPI) subgroup data for ELA show a more complex picture of the needs of Bowles students. For example, scores for the subgroup of White students are nearly equal to the state average, but the gaps between the White subgroup and each of the other subgroups reported here are larger than for the district or state.

	<u>Bowles School</u>	<u>Springfield</u>	<u>State</u>
Limited English Proficient	57.5	54.5	60.9
Hispanic	58.0	63.0	66.1
Low Income	62.6	66.8	70.6
White	<u>87.0</u>	<u>81.0</u>	<u>87.9</u>
Aggregate	68.0	69.1	83.7

District and school leaders spoke about the limitations of the existing plan and their intention of addressing these in moving forward. Although a causal analysis is not clearly articulated in the plan, in interviews district and school leaders highlighted these three causes for students’ low performance at the Bowles School: 1) inadequate adherence to the district’s ELA and math instructional time allocations, 2) inadequate instructional materials to support differentiated instruction, and 3) unaddressed needs of ELL students. Strategies in the plan address the first two issues. The third, a key concern for all leaders, has begun to be addressed by the principal who has integrated ESL/ESOL and Title I instruction into regular education classrooms.

Panelists identified an additional concern: the SIP is silent on the needs of special education students. Data were not analyzed and there are no goals or strategies for the special education subgroup, including the bilingual special education program—the Bowles School provides the zone’s only program for bilingual special education students. Classroom observation and the written observation schedule indicated that the bilingual special education program, Grades 1-5, is located in one classroom, which is beyond the mandated 48-month age requirement.

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

The plan was developed without representation of regular education classroom teachers because, according to staff interviews, no one wanted to volunteer. However, the new principal has successfully compensated for this flaw in the process through early, continued and effective communication with staff about the contents of the SIP and their role in implementing the plan. Successful implementation is supported by an intensive, focused schedule of professional development. The new principal is in the process of setting up a new planning team that will be made up of representative staff members.

Teachers attended four professional development days prior to the start of school. A major part of this time was spent in presenting the SIP, which many teachers reported they previously had little or no knowledge of. Expectations for implementing the plan and anticipated benefits for students were explained; specific help with implementation was offered by the ELA and math Collaborative Professional Development Teachers (CPDTs), staff to support classroom teachers as they implement new programs and initiatives. Interviews and observations of classroom practice indicate that the instructional staff is responding to the expectation that they will focus on implementing the strategies in the SIP.

In order to revise the SIP going forward, a new team will be convened. The principal is planning to post these stipend positions in January. She recognizes the need to have regular education teachers actively participate and is taking steps to include a wider representation of school staff. In interviews with teachers, several expressed enthusiasm for participating in this process.

District personnel supported the SIP process by preparing analyses of assessment data; for example, a data team prepared analyses of MCAS data and wrote reports for the Bowles School in preparation for their drafting of the SIP. The district School Improvement Officer (SIO)—available to support school planning efforts—generated common areas of student needs for the SIP based on analyses of assessment data. The district also supports the SIP process by setting standards for the plan's content and providing training about the planning process. The district uses the same rubric that has been developed by the DOE for evaluating the plan and returns it for revision if it is not up to standard. Staff noted that the Bowles plan had been returned more than once for revisions.

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

A majority of staff is implementing the key strategies of the plan. The staff understands their role in and responsibility for implementing the plan. Teachers in every classroom observed were focused on one or more of the strategies. Professional development is intensive and focused. Teachers and the CPDTs described changes in classroom practice, particularly the recent implementation of center-based teaching.

Observations indicated that the strategies identified in the plan are the major focus of instruction. The school schedule has been changed to accommodate the district's expectations for time spent in literacy and math blocks. The principal and CPDTs monitor delivery of curriculum to determine whether content is being covered at the specified rate. Center-based instruction was observed in all classrooms that were visited, with students working in three small groups, an occasional student working independently, and some evidence of differentiated instruction. Work

on vocabulary development to promote comprehension was seen in almost all classrooms observed. Manipulatives were seen in use in approximately half of the classes observed and opportunities to practice multi-step problems were seen in both math classes observed.

Extended Day meeting times are used to review the SIP. Interviews with teachers and the SIP team indicated the staff knows what strategies they are expected to implement. Teachers are using templates to prepare lesson plans that are directly linked to the improvement strategies in the SIP. Lesson plans, Classroom Visit protocols and Learning Walk reports all indicated some alignment of classroom practice with the SIP. In order to monitor and support implementation of improvement strategies, the principal uses frequent classroom observations. A Classroom Visit protocol serves as a basis for giving feedback to teachers and as a record of the visit.

Professional development that supports implementation of the plan has continued in Monday afternoon Extended Day meetings. In support of the current plan, a calendar of professional development activities directly linked to the student learning objectives and strategies outlined in the SIP is being implemented. The current calendar outlines 15 dates with topics scheduled monthly, September through May. Other Extended Day meetings are planned particularly for the CPDTs (and some district curriculum personnel) to work with small groups of teachers. The principal assesses professional development needs by gathering information from the CPDTs, as well as directly from teachers, about what is required to support the plan's implementation. After needs are identified, the CPDTs usually present a session designed specifically for a small group of teachers and then provide demonstration teaching and coaching in the classroom. Later, they follow-up to be certain new practices are being consistently implemented. Panelists reviewed agendas, logs and exit evaluations of the CPDTs' professional development sessions. The school's professional development plan was reported to be consistent with the district professional development plan.

Students appeared familiar and comfortable with the routines and expectations of the classroom—both as to teaching strategies and classroom management. They transitioned between centers independently and quietly and were observed, for example, to raise hands to answer questions and use materials properly and respectfully. Generally, teachers and paraprofessionals appeared to be organized and purposeful in their classroom practice. Lesson plans of some of the teachers used a template that included student learning objectives for the major ELA and math time segments of the day. As panelists visited classrooms, various assessments were observed in practice: use of Harcourt tests, student folders with scoring rubrics, rubrics posted on classroom walls, and formative assessments such as students being given feedback and in-class assessment of the problem of the day.

The PR team, however, expressed concern about the practice of ability-based assignment of students *to* classes. The plan indicates that students will be grouped by ability *within* classrooms for purposes of differentiating instruction in small groups (*SIP, p. 12*). That is, within classrooms, students are grouped into low, middle and high achievers. However, the plan does not suggest ability grouping *by* classroom. In interviews, teachers reported that, except for kindergarten, students at Bowles are assigned to classrooms on the basis of DRA scores for Grades 1-2 and MCAS scores for Grades 3-5. The class at each grade level with the lowest achievers has fewer students and more staff. Two reasons for this approach were communicated in interviews. Ability grouping by class provides smaller classes and more staff to lower performing students. It also narrows the range of instructional levels for teachers who are new to differentiating instruction. While these reasons have validity, ability grouping by classroom

prevents low achievers from benefiting from the modeling of their higher achieving peers, which is contrary to the panelists' understanding of best practice.

D. What gains, if any, have been achieved relative to SIP goals or benchmarks through implementation of the plan?

Due to the transition in leadership, the school has not yet developed systems to analyze gains made as a result of implementing improvement strategies. However, Extended Day time has been used to analyze MCAS results and individual teachers are using a variety of instruments to assess students' learning. While data have not been systematically analyzed for purposes of measuring progress toward student learning goals in the SIP, assessments have been used to form ability groupings for class and small group placement. The school leadership recognizes the need to institute a system for regular analysis of data, and teachers and administrators know what data are available and what tools they can (and will) use. On an individual basis, some teachers are beginning to evaluate the success of their instruction by looking at test scores. A few teachers reported gains as measured by the DRA. Some are noting gains by using the Harcourt weekly assessments and the theme assessments.

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

District administrators, school leaders and the staff are committed to change initiatives to improve student achievement. The new principal fosters an environment of collaborative leadership and guides improvement efforts with purpose, skill and energy. Teachers are enthusiastic about working with her. The staff has embraced the improvement initiatives. Key strategies in the plan are being implemented in classrooms. District administrators have analyzed and addressed major issues at the school and are now providing intensive district personnel resources to support the school's transition to a new principal and implementation of the school's improvement initiatives. Everyone the PR team interviewed reported significant changes across the school this year.

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

The current principal fosters an environment of collaborative leadership and guides improvement efforts with purpose, skill and energy. She is effectively involving a broad range of stakeholders in decision-making. The school staff expressed confidence in her leadership. She and the CPDTs are providing strong instructional leadership. The principal has created a revitalized school environment that is clean, safe and welcoming.

The principal is beginning to establish a collaborative environment in which teachers feel empowered to work with her to implement the SIP and to make their own decisions about matters that pertain to best practice in their own classrooms, such as increasing communication with students' homes. She has met with the School Center Decision Making team (SCDM) twice already this fall and, following election of new members, helping them to define their role as a vote-taking, site-based school council. She was instrumental in changing the format of the meeting structure so that the SCDM is a more fully functional team. The principal has also presented the SIP to the team for their review.

Staff described a school leader who nurtures and supports a positive school climate and fosters strong morale. Approximately seven staff members who considered a transfer over the summer have opted to remain at the Bowles School after learning about the new principal. Teachers spoke in interviews of the many ways they receive support and encouragement from the principal and the CPDTs as they learn new practices and receive and use new equipment and materials.

The principal and CPDTs are providing strong instructional leadership. According to the *DOE Instructional Staff Survey*, in response to a question about confidence in the school's leadership, 78 percent of staff "strongly agree" or "agree" that their principal provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of students. The principal has posted positions for an Instructional Leadership Team that will be composed of "master teachers" charged with the responsibility of assisting their peers with implementation strategies in the SIP. The principal uses frequent classroom visits, employing her own protocol to monitor classroom practice and to provide feedback and coaching to teachers. High expectations and focus on achieving the SIP goals are established in a variety of ways. As one CPDT expressed in an interview, "I would like to see nice and beautiful results on the MCAS. I expect that." And in a comment that articulated high expectations with reference to moving students into the advanced category on the MCAS a CPDT said, "I am looking for the top of the top."

The principal has taken steps to clean and maintain the building and to make the school an environment that supports full engagement in teaching and learning. Both district and school personnel report that quantities of old books and equipment previously stored in hallways and classrooms have been removed to make a safer and more welcoming school. The ELA CPDT is still in the process of sorting through old books to determine which need to be discarded because they are no longer of any use. As reported by staff, spaces such as the gym that had been poorly maintained are now in condition for full use.

Students' behavioral needs are being addressed through collaborative efforts by the principal and classroom staff. The principal and school adjustment counselor have implemented new strategies. In-school suspension has been abolished because it was determined to be ineffective. The principal has set high expectations and promptly addresses many behavioral issues by helping teachers formulate effective responses in their classrooms and by calling parents. Rapport with parents is facilitated by the principal's ability to speak with them in their primary language.

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

The staff is actively engaged in implementing the school's improvement initiatives. As one teacher said, "Everyone understands this is a paradigm shift." Interviews with all personnel confirmed this sense that many improvements are underway.

Panelists observed and teachers reported broad-based implementation of the strategies identified in the plan. Teachers are beginning to volunteer to serve on a new SIP team. School leaders believe that teachers see the SIP as a tool to assist them with classroom practices. Math teachers who are becoming familiar with the district's Math Instructional Guide talked with panelists about how helpful it is. Teachers reported being energized by having appropriate materials, texts and curricular guides and as a result, being revitalized in their desire to effectively engage students.

Staff expressed confidence that the school improvement planning process will guide them in making improvements. The *DOE Instructional Staff Survey* indicates that 84 percent of respondents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that their school has a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals and 89 percent “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are well informed about the initiatives that are undertaken by their school leadership and staff to improve student performance.

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

District administrators, having recognized that staff issues at the Bowles School needed to be addressed, made a decision for this school year to change the leadership. Having done so, they are now providing intensive district personnel resources to support the school’s transition to a new principal and implementation of the school’s improvement initiatives. In addition, the two CPDT positions were filled—the ELA CPDT continuing from last year and a new math CPDT was hired at the beginning of the school year. District leaders also took charge of personnel decisions at the school level in preparation for the in-coming principal’s leadership. A district leader helped to determine teacher classroom assignments and later assisted the principal in revising the school schedule to increase time spent in ELA and math blocks.

District leaders continually visit the school to monitor, assist and mentor the principal. In addition to regular visits by the assistant superintendent, School Improvement Officer (SIO) and full-time school-based ELA and math CPDTs, a mentor principal is actively engaged in supporting the principal. In addition, district content directors and coaches are available to staff. District coaches have been assigned for an extended period this past fall to ensure that the Bowles School gets off to a good beginning under the direction of the new principal.

District leaders are well informed about the needs of the school. Learning walks are a frequently employed strategy to support the school’s leadership to monitor implementation of the plan. For the Bowles School, learning walks typically occur every week by the SIO, every week or two by the assistant superintendent and often by a team of generalists. The district teams of generalists have specific objectives to focus their learning walk observations. A standard district-generated protocol is used for monitoring. The principal accompanies district leaders on these learning walks and typically meets with them afterward to discuss their observations about school-wide progress. A report is then prepared by the principal and given to teachers. The superintendent meets weekly with his senior team to review the protocols and progress toward the SIP goals. By contract, goals in the SIP are tied to the principal’s own performance goals.

Adequate funding for instructional materials continues to be a challenge for the district and the Bowles School. By all reports, the school remains inadequately equipped with instructional materials to support full implementation of the district’s ELA and math curricula, particularly with regard to materials for differentiated instruction. District leaders have recognized that more funding for resources is needed and have committed \$1.1 million for textbooks this year across the city, with hopes of continued extra funding for resources in the future. The \$1.1 million is in addition to the regular \$750 per student allocation for materials. However, the new Bowles School principal has inherited a school that is inadequately supplied. Despite an allocation of additional funds for instructional materials across the district, school leaders and teachers indicated the Bowles School has not caught up with replenishing and updating materials. As

funds are available, the principal has prioritized purchases based on the requirements of the SIP and the input she receives from the CPDTs. She also is trying to be responsive to teachers' requests.

Many new instructional materials have been ordered this year and are now available, such as texts, manipulatives that come with the Harcourt program, Intervention Kits and K-2 updated math instructional materials. Nevertheless, teachers and CPDTs reported more resources are needed, including updated math curricula for Grades 3-5 and math teacher manuals for the K-2 updated instructional materials; supplemental materials are particularly inadequate. Some teachers reported either not having enough materials required for delivery of the district curriculum or spending their own funds to purchase them. Students reported they need more computers. Parents noted that historically the PTA has been called upon to raise funds for basic school supplies.

CONCLUSION

The written school improvement plan was developed under prior leadership, is focused on improvements in implementation of the district's ELA and math curricula and differentiated instruction. In the longer term, panelists believe the plan will be inadequate to move all students toward high levels of achievement because the plan made use of only one set of data and student learning objectives were developed only for the aggregate population. Additionally, redistricting for the current school year has brought changes in the population of approximately 30 percent. Needs of the subgroups now present at the school will need to be analyzed as improvement initiatives move forward. Teachers have begun to implement strategies in the plan and the large majority supports the SIP initiatives. Plans are being made for evaluating the SIP and making revisions, including formation of a SIP team that is broadly representative of the staff.

Meanwhile, district administrators, school leaders and staff are demonstrating their commitment to change initiatives designed to improve student achievement. Personnel resources from the district are intensive and all reports indicate they are being well received. Teachers indicated their confidence in the school leadership and in the planning process that is bringing them new tools and direction in knowing how best to make changes in their practice. The collaborative leadership that the new principal brings to the job appears to be building morale and inspiring focused work on the part of the staff. Professional development is linked to implementing strategies in the SIP and, from all appearances, is designed for follow-through in the classroom; coaching by the principal, CPDTs and district content coaches is a frequently employed model. New instructional materials, while still inadequate, are a significant improvement in the school's previous supply of materials and are providing support for differentiated instruction.

High levels of commitment and energy, intensive support from and monitoring by district leaders, the apparent skill of the school's new leader at driving improvements, and a faculty that is largely committed to improvement present a strong picture for renewal at the Bowles School.

APPENDIX A
Team Members

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Kristin Burke, Panelist, Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden, MA

Sandra Moriarty, Panelist, Principal, Eastford Road School, Southbridge, MA

Maria Silvestri, Panelist, Interim Principal, Ware High School, Ware, MA

APPENDIX B
Samuel Bowles Elementary School
Springfield Public Schools
POTENTIALLY UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE
November 8 and 9, 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.