

School Panel Review Report Lincoln 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. Springfield's Lincoln 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 Lincoln Elementary School is deemed underperforming. 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 underperforming school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

Lincoln Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

The Lincoln Elementary School serves students in grades K-5. Enrollment at Lincoln Elementary decreased slightly each year between 2002 and 2004. Between 2004 and 2005, enrollment decreased by 40 students, which was almost double the number of students who had left in each previous year. This resulted in the school's 2005 enrollment figure of 380 students.

Between 2002 and 2005, student demographics remained fairly consistent. Proportions of Lincoln Elementary School student subgroups in 2005, as compared to state averages, are presented next:

Subgroup	2005 Enrollment (%)	
	School	State
Asian	1	5
Black	31	9
Hispanic	63	12
Native American	1	0.3
White	6	74
Low-Income	86	28
First Language Not English	7	14
Limited English Proficient	2	5
Special Education	9	16

As is evident in the table, the percentage of Low-Income students enrolled at Lincoln Elementary (86 percent) in 2005 was significantly higher than the state average enrollment (28 percent) for the same subgroup.

In 2005, the attendance rate at Lincoln Elementary was 90.4 percent, with students absent 16.2 days on average. This attendance rate was nearly 4 percent below the state average of 94.2 percent. The school's retention rate was 4.1 percent in 2004, the last year for which this data is available. Lincoln Elementary School's in-school suspension rate in 2005 was 2.9 percent, while out-of-school suspensions averaged 8.9 percent. Averages in 2005 for the state were 4.5 percent for in-school suspensions and 6.1 percent for out-of-school suspensions.

Staffing

The 2005-2006 Lincoln Elementary School staffing report indicates that the school staff is comprised of one administrator, 39 teachers, a librarian, a school social worker/adjustment counselor, one school nurse, and seven paraprofessionals. Working in a leadership role for 12 years as a principal and assistant principal, the school's leader has 14 years of experience in the district. Of the teachers at Lincoln Elementary, approximately 62 percent have been at the school for five or fewer years, and 38 percent for more than five. Although most of Lincoln Elementary School's teachers have worked at the school for only a short period of time, their total teaching experience, both at Lincoln Elementary and in other settings, is ten years or more for the majority. Approximately 46 percent have taught for 15 years or more, with several teaching for more than 20 years. More than 80 percent of the teaching staff is reported as being highly qualified, with roughly half of all teachers at the school holding a master's degree.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Lincoln Elementary School are assessed in reading in Grade 3. In Grade 4, they are assessed in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Lincoln's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for 2005 Mid-Cycle IV shows that the school is identified for Improvement in ELA and is in Corrective Action for mathematics. In ELA, the school failed to

make AYP in the aggregate and for its Low-Income and Hispanic subgroups.¹ In mathematics, the school did not make AYP in the aggregate or for its Low-Income subgroup, the only subgroup of a size sufficient enough to be reported. Although the school had made AYP for both content areas in the aggregate in 2003, it did not achieve the same results in 2004. For the past three cycles, the school has not made AYP for all subgroups.

In 2005, the aggregate Composite Performance Indices (CPIs) for the Lincoln School are 60.9 in ELA and 51.8 in mathematics. Year-by-year aggregate CPIs are shown below:

Year-by-Year Aggregate CPI Data Summary		
Year	ELA	Math
2001	67.3	47.6
2002	67.1	50.3
2003	72.4	50.7
2004	58.2	49.6
2005	60.9	51.8
State Target 2005	80.5	68.7

GRADE 3

Reading MCAS Results

On the 2005 Grade 3 Reading MCAS, almost 80 percent of the aggregate student population scored in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories. Only 22 percent of students demonstrated proficiency in ELA. Between 2004 and 2005, the school achieved a 14 percent decrease in students in the aggregate who scored in Warning/Failing by helping many to shift into the Needs Improvement category. However, there was little change in the percentage of Proficient students between those two years. Percentage Proficient dropped from 46 to 20 between 2003 and 2004 and improved by only two percentage points in 2005. Aggregate data for the past five years is presented next:

Aggregate Reading	Percent		
	P	NI	W/F
2005	22	60	18
2004	20	48	32
2003	46	43	11
2002	42	46	13
2001	43	40	17

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 five percent 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 Lincoln Elementary School in 2005 were Low-Income (ELA and mathematics) and Hispanic (ELA).

GRADE 4

ELA MCAS Results

Results for Lincoln Elementary School students on the 2005 Grade 4 ELA MCAS indicate that 90 percent of students taking the test scored in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories, while only ten percent of students demonstrated Proficiency in ELA. Although the school showed gradual improvement in student performance between 2001 and 2003, there was a decline in performance during the two years that followed. A five-year summary of aggregate ELA MCAS data is presented below:

Aggregate ELA	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	0	10	55	35
2004	2	17	55	27
2003	5	29	51	15
2002	1	20	52	27
2001	0	18	62	20

Between 2004 and 2005, the Warning/Failing category grew by eight percent for students taking the Grade 4 ELA MCAS at Lincoln Elementary School. The Proficient category decreased by seven percentage points, and the Advanced category, by two. In 2005, none of Lincoln Elementary School’s students scored Advanced on the Grade 4 ELA MCAS.

GRADE 4

Mathematics MCAS Results

On the 2005 Grade 4 Mathematics MCAS, aggregate results for Lincoln Elementary School are as follows: zero percent Advanced, 14 percent Proficient, 43 percent Needs Improvement, and 42 percent Warning/Failing. Despite the fact that the 2005 aggregate results are slightly better than those for 2004, the percentage of students scoring in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories in 2005 (85 percent) far exceeded the percentage scoring Advanced and Proficient (14 percent). This is reflected in the aggregate Grade 4 Math MCAS performance data presented on the next page.

Aggregate Math	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	0	14	43	42
2004	2	11	44	44
2003	1	12	51	36
2002	4	12	43	41
2001	0	7	52	41

During the past five testing cycles, a predominance of Lincoln Elementary School’s students scored in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories on the Mathematics MCAS.

High percentages persisted in these categories, while only modest growth in the Proficient category was achieved.

PANEL RESPONSES TO THE 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?

The Lincoln Elementary School developed a fairly sound written School Improvement Plan last year, and teachers are implementing many of the strategies outlined in the plan. However, the plan was predicated on the 2004-2005 student population that has significantly changed as a result of a new district student assignment plan (called the Boundary Plan). The Panel found no evidence of any efforts to modify the school improvement plan to meet the needs of the substantial increase in limited English proficient and second language learners in the 2005-2006 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 (SIPs) were submitted in preparation for School Panel Reviews scheduled in November and December 2005. Teams of three Department of Education 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.

To illustrate the demographic changes that have taken place since the creation of Lincoln School's plan: As of the date of the review, there were 405 students in grades K-5 as compared to 380 last year. The principal reported that 250 students in the building are new to the school this year. Last year, just two percent of the students were designated as English language learners (ELL); this year, the number exceeds 19 percent. Last year, nine percent of the students were on individual education plans (IEPs); this year, the number approaches 13 percent. The 75-80 English language learners are dispersed in regular education classrooms as well as in a sheltered English immersion program (SEIP). Two social-emotional behavior support (SEBS) classes were also added to the school. There are 12 new faculty members. There are three classrooms at each grade level. One contains all of the high/medium-level performers, whom the school hopes to move from Needs Improvement into Proficient and Advanced on MCAS; one class contains

medium/low performers, including the ELL student population; the third classroom also consists of medium/low performers and students with special education needs. The classrooms with the ELL students, some of whom speak no English, have an ESL teacher, a regular education teacher, and ESOL support services.

With respect to the written plan, the DOE readers determined that the executive summary is clear and presents a comprehensive overview of the plan's components. They concluded that links from causes to strategies to objectives were, for the most part, drawn. They also determined that the plan provides a general guide for changes that needs to take place at the school; however, the plan lacks sufficient specificity to guide implementation at the classroom level. As a result of the analysis of test data from several sources (MCAS; district reading, math, and long composition assessments; and textbook assessments), the school concluded that all students, both in the aggregate and subgroups, had the same needs. The school identified such gaps in instruction as insufficient modeling for writing and problem solving, isolated vocabulary instruction, insufficient professional development in differentiated instruction, and lack of individual assistance for students as causative factors affecting student performance. The DOE readers wrote that the plan does not articulate the reasons why these deficiencies exist. They also noted that the instructional objectives for mathematics are very broad and vague, (e.g., *All students will solve grade appropriate multi-step math problems using UPSL [Understand, Plan, Solve, Look Back] guide every day in math class in all strands with less and less teacher support*). The DOE summary of the plan stated:

Overall, the plan contains many of the elements outlined in the rubric to indicate soundness, and if all of the action plans are realized, improvements in student performance are likely to result. Readers were concerned by the absence of content standards from the student learning objectives, especially in math, for which the school is in corrective action.

Structurally, the SIP articulates broad student learning objectives (SLOs) for reading, writing, mathematics, and science that are tied to specific standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Specific improvement objectives flow from the SLOs with accompanying student performance goals, identification of root causes, strategies, activities, persons responsible, resources needed, and timelines.

The panel noted the following strengths of the SIP: It is based on well-analyzed data from multiple sources, has some benchmarks and strands, and has identified persons responsible for implementation. The panel took note of the lack of strategies to improve the school's poor attendance rate, which is impacting Adequate Yearly Progress. Nearly 42 percent of the school's students were chronically absent last year, and the aggregate attendance rate was 91.4 percent. Significant improvement in attendance has not been apparent this year, although attendance did rise from 91.3 percent in September to 92.3 percent in October. Based on the panel's analysis of current absentee data (from the start of school through the date of the review), 87 students had four or more unexcused absences; of these, 21 had eight or more unexcused absences. The plan also did not address disciplinary factors that appear to be impeding learning at the school. Schools are required to use district-formatted templates as they create their individual SIPs, and that template is focused on academic improvement in ELA, mathematics, and science.

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

Overall, the plan was developed through a process that will support its successful implementation. While this does not outweigh the fact that the plan is based on a student population that no longer attends the school, it shows capacity on the part of the school and district to provide the necessary supports and avenues for input to develop a good plan.

The school improvement plan for the Lincoln Elementary School was developed by the School Improvement Planning Team, which consists of five teachers who have been on the team for varying lengths of time since the team's inception (three years ago). Two team members are new to the improvement planning process. The team is composed of the school's mathematics and ELA collaborative professional development teachers (CPDTs) who function as teacher-trainers and instructional coaches, a science teacher, and two classroom teachers. There were no special education or ELL teachers in the group. The principal said that he visited with the team during the planning process. The four members of the SIP team who were interviewed by the panel reported that they spent six to eight hours after school last spring in weekly meetings working on the plan at the district professional development center. The district provided the SIP team with a number of supports as it carried out the school improvement planning process. The team received training and direction from the district's school improvement officers and from district academic directors in mathematics and ELA. The team was instructed to obtain data from multiple sources and concentrate on improvements in ELA, mathematics, and science. Information flowed to and from the school's faculty at large, which was surveyed concerning perceptions of the school's needs and ways to address them.

At least ten members of the Springfield SIP Review Team, consisting of central office administrators, principals, academic directors, and resource teachers, reviewed the plan on a local rubric modeled after the Massachusetts Department of Education's Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process. This rubric measured both process and content. The Lincoln SIP received a composite rating of 2.55 out of a possible 3 on district indicators, which include identifying and prioritizing problems, analyzing causes of weaknesses in student performance, establishing improvement objectives and selecting strategies, establishing benchmarks, and documenting the plan. The district ratings are as follows:

- 3: Excellent – Criteria met fully and consistently
- 2: Adequate – Criteria met, but with some inconsistency and with room for improvement
- 1: Inadequate – Criteria not met adequately

The school principal told the panel that a plan must be rated 2 or above to be considered acceptable. Overall, the district determined that the school had followed the process correctly, had analyzed and triangulated data, had articulated causal factors for low achievement in relation to student learning objectives, and had set appropriate improvement objectives accompanied by strategies to attain them. Areas in which the district articulated weakness in the school's plan were related to the improvement objectives in mathematics, which were cited as "not clear and doable," and the need for implementation benchmarks in ELA and mathematics to "be more comprehensive to show growth over time." This is congruent with the DOE assessment and panel agreement that the mathematics instructional objectives are broad and vague.

The staff had two days of school-based professional development in August 2005 to review and digest the plan. Teachers were very positive about this event and believed that these two days led to clarity across the school about what the plan says and what role each person plays. As one

teacher put it, the CPDTs “dissected” the plan for the general faculty during those two days. Teachers reported consistently in interviews and focus groups that this process put them “all on the same page” about what needed to be done during the academic year. After this training, twelve new teachers who were unfamiliar with the plan were assigned to the school, primarily because of the student population changes imposed by the district’s Boundary Plan. Eleven out of the 12 new teachers assigned to the school received some or all of the August professional development. One teacher recently assigned to the school has not yet received training. The new teachers have been receiving guidance from the school’s CDPTs in the content of the plan and in its implementation. In addition, the plan is at the forefront of discussions at monthly grade-level team meetings. The plan guides the work that the CPDTs carry out with classroom teachers. Both school and district professional development offerings are emphasizing mathematics during the present year.

As stated above, a strong concern of the panel is the lack of a process for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plan’s implementation and for making adjustments when needed as a result of this monitoring. No attempt was made by either the school or the district to initiate a process for review of the plan in light of the program and population changes at the school. In essence, the plan is serving a population that has drastically changed. It might not be reflecting the needs of the large number of ELL students now enrolled or the needs of students in the two behavioral classes (SEB) currently in place at the Lincoln Elementary School.

The plan was communicated to all stakeholders. Parents interviewed told the panel that they were apprised of the plan by means of a packet that was presented to them at a PTO meeting. The School Centered Decision-Making Team (SCDMT), which functions as the school council and consists of five teachers, one parent, two community members, and the school principal, also reviewed copies of the SIP and receives monthly updates on how it is being carried out.

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

The panel found evidence of implementation of several key strategies outlined in the school improvement plan in twelve classrooms visited. In interviews, all constituents could articulate the same elements of the plan that would be observable in classrooms; these elements were seen almost universally by the panel. The school’s staff consistently reports following district guidelines for providing 2.5 hours of ELA instruction and 90 minutes of mathematics daily. Responses to the staff survey conducted by the DOE in preparation for the panel review showed that two-thirds of respondents were familiar with the plan’s mandate to develop ELA and mathematics skills by using multi-step real-world problems, increasing writing skills, focusing on main idea and vocabulary development, using flexible grouping, and modeling and posting word walls, among other strategies. The English language arts CPDT reported 75-80 percent implementation, but did not provide documentation for that estimate. It is noteworthy that teachers are actively engaged in implementing the plan in view of the fact that Springfield teachers are now in a “work-to-rule” job action. Teachers reported that they feel “more together as a staff” now and that this plan is clear about where there are weaknesses, what needs to be done, and who needs to do it. Some also pointed out that half of the students are new and that no modifications were made to the plan to accommodate the needs of the new student population.

The panel observed eleven classrooms in which teachers were engaged in mathematics and ELA instruction; one observed class was a science class. Three of the classrooms visited had two teachers. In all of the ELA classes observed, panelists found evidence of many of the ELA

strategies outlined in the SIP: differentiated phonics instruction, vocabulary lessons, teachers modeling main idea and comprehension, guided reading, and use of *Words Their Way*. Writing centers, writing folders, and John Collins materials were also noted. In the mathematics lessons, the panel saw math centers, emphasis on math vocabulary, math journals, and solving of multi-step real-world problems. Student work was displayed, homework was posted, and word walls were in evidence. There were instances of small-group as well as whole-group instruction.

Professional development is provided on extended days and in grade-level team meetings. The school-based professional development goals are as follows:

- Implement the 2005-2006 School Improvement Plan;
- Review the use of the mathematics instructional guide and district reading plan;
- Improve teachers' abilities to analyze assessment data to inform instruction;
- Implement use of new instructional strategies for the acquisition of new vocabulary in ELA and mathematics;
- Further develop teachers' ability to plan and implement standards-based lessons and differentiate instruction; and
- Model instructional strategies on main idea/details and multi-step problem solving.

The school's professional development calendar indicates that, to date, in addition to the two days in August devoted to discussion about the SIP, professional development has consisted of the following sessions that relate to the plan's goals and objectives:

- ELL Instructional Strategies
- Mathematics Instructional Guide; pretest item analysis
- ELA – District Reading Plan; Four Block Planning
- MCAS Analysis and Action Plan
- Review District Science Plan

Other planned professional development activities that relate to the SIP include:

- Multi-Step Problem Solving Exemplars
- Main Idea/Details
- Rubric for Multi-Step Problem Solving
- Looking at Student Work (LASW) in Mathematics Journals, Science Journals, and Monthly Writing Samples
- LASW in mathematics through district tests and chapter tests
- Algebraic Thinking
- Collins Writing

In summary, the panel found evidence that strategies in the plan developed last year were being implemented. However, the needs of the large number of second language learners now enrolled at the school are not currently being met.

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

The school was not able to provide any formal data to show gains thus far, but many interviewees view the fact that everybody “is on the same page” as a major success. Although the CPDTs are on target in terms of collecting data from monthly writing samples and chapter tests, the information collected is assumed by the panel to be baseline at this point. The principal told the panel that information about the previous achievement of the new students has, in many cases, not been available, due to the fact that the students’ records were incomplete or did not accompany them; as yet, they have not had a formal assessment. Springfield Formal Testing occurs three times a year, and the first tests had not ended prior to the panel review.

Anecdotal descriptions by teachers and the ELA CDPT indicated the school’s general approval of the changes and widespread implementation of the new teaching strategies with the sense that students are showing learning growth. Teachers in one focus group told the panel that students are improving in problem solving skills and that Title I small-group instruction has been successful. Teachers also reported that they have classroom data to show that students are improving, but these data have not yet been organized to allow analysis at the school-wide level or to allow evaluation of the school improvement plan. It is not clear how teachers are using the assessment results that are available. The CDPTs reportedly provided teachers with a pretest analysis of the September mathematics assessment and a 2005 MCAS analysis in October.

In several instances, the plan requires that evidence of quality implementation be gathered by the principal through documented learning walks:

- *Principal, in documented learning walk, observes in 100 percent of the classrooms multi-step problem solving using UPSL bookmark strategies, open response format, and math rubrics.*
- *Principal, in documented learning walk, observes implementation of PD learned strategies, Word Sort, and “Making Words” activities in 100 percent of classrooms.*
- *Principal, in documented learning walk, observes:*
 - differentiated instruction in 100 percent of classrooms;*
 - activity based centers in 100 percent of classrooms; and*
 - modeling in 100 percent of classrooms.*
- *Principal, in documented learning walk, observes 100 percent of classrooms where students are involved in science investigations.*

As of the date of the review, the principal provided evidence of only one documented learning walk, conducted on November 3, 2005, in which he visited classrooms with the district school improvement officer. In the learning walk, the pair looked for evidence of mathematics journals and for posted UPSL (Understand, Plan, Solve, Look Back) strategies for solving mathematics problems. The principal and school improvement officer visited four classrooms and reportedly found near-universal implementation of the mathematics journal process including teacher feedback, evidence of UPSL, and evidence that the four classrooms were following the SIP recommendations. Some teachers reported that the principal had stopped into their classes this year to check for word walls, but this was not documented, and teachers received no feedback.

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

The staff of the Lincoln Elementary School appears willing to engage in a change process. This is evidenced by the staff's efforts to implement the current school improvement plan. However, the panel did not find effective instructional leadership and management in evidence at the school. In addition, in the panel's estimation, the Springfield school district did not provide sufficient guidance and support for the school to address in the SIP the significant demographic changes imposed by the district Boundary Plan for the 2005-2006 school year. As of the panel's visit on November 8 and 9, there was no evidence of a supplementary or interim plan to address the needs of the current school population.

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

The principal is regarded by the Lincoln Elementary School staff and parents as kind, approachable, and well-meaning. Evidence collected by the review team, however – including an instructional staff survey, data compiled from individual and focus group interviews, and document reviews – indicates that the principal does not present effective leadership skills. Evidence shows limited monitoring of the implementation of the district's curricula and classroom instruction, limited initiatives to improve student attendance and discipline, and failure to modify or supplement the current school improvement plan to address the needs of the new students at the school.

Of the 21 out of 39 instructional staff members who responded to an anonymous staff survey conducted by the DOE in preparation for the review, 38 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, *Our school principal provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of our students*. Fourteen percent of the respondents were unsure about the effectiveness of the principal's leadership. In the open-response questions on the survey, eight teachers mentioned either poor student attendance or lack of an effective discipline policy as barriers to learning. In interviews, teachers told the panel that there is no consistent or effective method for dealing with discipline. Students with behavior issues are often sent to the school's adjustment counselor, and this prevents the counselor from seeing students who have IEPs in place and need regularly scheduled counseling appointments. It was also reported that in several instances, misbehaving students were inappropriately sent to the SEBS class, and this upset the required student-teacher ratios and therapeutic balance in that room. To show the seriousness of the school's discipline issues: Last year, out of 32 elementary schools in Springfield, Lincoln Elementary was eighth in out-of-school suspensions and sixth in in-school suspensions.

A behavior management chart with color-coded cards is instituted in each classroom. Students change their card colors if there are infractions. Students begin every day with green cards and move through the colors yellow, orange, red, and blue, depending on infractions. When a student gets a blue card, that student must see the principal, and a telephone call is to be made to the home. Teachers, however, reported that students do not take this system seriously, as its enforcement is inconsistent, and there are insufficient consequences.

Some teachers reported that the principal, who has been in his position for four years, is not sufficiently addressing the attendance issue. There has been some brainstorming by teachers on the SIP team regarding possible strategies to improve attendance, such as a pizza party for the class with the best attendance. The principal mentioned pairing the school's counselor with the counselor at a similar school where attendance is better to see what is making the difference. The principal reported that one brainstorming session has taken place during this school year. This

year, the school instituted the Connect-ed automated telephone system to notify parents nightly at 7:00 PM that children had an unexcused absence during the day. The district has also been providing more time from an attendance officer. Despite these efforts, chronic absenteeism at the Lincoln Elementary School persists. Of three students who were absent 12 or more days at the time of the panel review, only two months into the school year, the principal could explain reasons for the absence of only two students, despite the involvement of the school attendance officer.

In individual interviews and focus groups, teachers reported receiving little feedback about their teaching. Two teachers stated that in the last evaluation cycle, the principal did perform the required two observations but provided no verbal feedback and did not provide them with written results of the first observation until several months after it had occurred. The principal does not monitor daily planning. According to one focus group, the principal collects plan books twice a year, but there is no feedback. Although the principal reported that he tries to visit classes daily, teachers indicated that he is not in classrooms often. As noted earlier, at the time of the panel review, the principal had documented only one learning walk on November 3 for the current year.

From his own statements, the principal told the panel review team that he “visited” the SIP team during the planning process. From the description the panel heard of the development of the SIP, it appeared that district personnel were more in the lead in the process than the school principal.

There was general agreement that instructional leadership has been delegated to the CPDTs in the building and that they are the school’s *de facto* instructional leaders. They have been called “awesome” and “right there” in providing resources and support to teachers as they carry out the plan. The ELA CPDT reported that, this year, the CPDTs work extensively with the new teachers, analyze assessment data, and conduct monthly team meetings. They also provide resources and support to classroom teachers on a daily basis. It should be noted that the panel did not meet with the mathematics CPDT, who was away on business that could not be re-scheduled during the review. The DOE Coordinator was made aware of this situation during the scheduling of panel review activities.

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

For the most part, the faculty of the Lincoln Elementary School agrees with the school’s assessment of identified needs. The root causes in the SIP focused on curriculum and instruction and assessment. Specific areas of concern include insufficient modeling, vocabulary taught as an isolated skill, insufficient professional development on differentiated instruction, and insufficient opportunities for students to receive individual assistance in class. In addition, some teachers (in both interviews and in the staff survey) indicated that poor student attendance, discipline issues, and lack of student support at home were also factors contributing to the school’s low achievement levels. Some of these issues could be best addressed by the principal. In interviews and focus groups, some teachers expressed concerns about their lack of training to address the needs of English language learners in their classrooms.

As was indicated previously, the staff has bought into the SIP, is in agreement with the strategies in the plan, and is actively engaged in implementing them (see section 1C). Staff members are hopeful that the instructional methods they are using will eventually result in student performance gains. They are appreciative of the training they are getting and the positive feedback from the CPDTs who are mentoring new teachers to help them implement the plan. Many of the new teachers had not yet been assigned to the school when the training on the plan took place in August, though 11 out of 12 of these teachers received some part or all of the August professional development. One teacher recently assigned to the school has not received training. Teachers generally believed that, while everything in the plan would be helpful, the plan was not written to address the needs of the school's new ELL population. As yet, there has been no real assessment of the effectiveness of the initiatives the school is implementing. Despite the issues with the school's leadership and management, concerns about attendance and discipline, and a number of external factors (including union issues and lack of a teachers' contract), teachers expressed a sense of concern and caring for their students and are working to implement the SIP that currently exists.

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

The district provides a good deal of guidance and support to the school. The most important supports come from the school's CPDTs, who are funded by the district. The CPDTs meet twice each month with the district program directors who provide them with training and information to take back to the school. The district also provided the SIP team with guidance and direction during the SIP planning process, as explained above. New teachers are required to participate in a district mentoring program, including attendance at regular meetings with group mentors at the district professional development center. The school improvement officer (SIO), a former principal, told the panel that she is in the building one to two hours per week to provide technical assistance and support to the principal. The role of the SIO is to work with schools in need of improvement by providing technical assistance to their principals and by providing informal feedback on their SIPs. Teachers in the building reported that an ELL resource teacher from the central office has also been in the building for the first time to provide support for teachers working with large numbers of ELL students. The assistant superintendent for Zone 1, in which the school is located, guided the principal in scheduling to accommodate the district-mandated 2.5 hours of ELA instruction and 90 minutes of mathematics daily. There is district-based professional development in addition to school-based training. The school is getting more time from the attendance officer in an attempt to address the school's historically high rate of chronic absenteeism. Despite this assistance, the district did not sufficiently consider the impact of the Boundary Plan on Lincoln Elementary School and did not provide the school with the opportunity and support to modify its improvement plan to accommodate the new population. The SIP team told the panel that the district's process to re-evaluate the plan would begin in December.

Teachers in two of the focus groups reported issues with the implementation of special education requirements. They said that the assessment of students is a slow process and that the development of plans and the convening of meetings are not timely, which may be affecting the conditions for the successful implementation of the plan. Moreover, they had concerns that students' IEP requirements were not being met adequately. Teachers had concerns that the space for the SEBS classes is not appropriate. One regular education teacher who has a special

education inclusion class reported that there is a special education teacher in her class for only part of the day, which may not be consistent with what is in her students' IEPs. Moreover, the school's counselor does not speak Spanish and cannot address the needs of ELL students.

CONCLUSION

The panel review team found that the Lincoln Elementary School developed a fairly sound School Improvement Plan that addressed the needs of the population for which it was written last spring. Teachers observed during the onsite visit appeared to be working to implement the strategies outlined in that plan, despite minimal monitoring and support from the principal. However, the plan approved by the district in June 2005 did not consider the impact of the impending Boundary Plan begun in September 2005. No evidence of interim or supplementary plans to address the needs of the current population was found during the panel review. Due to the dramatic changes in the school's demographics that resulted at this particular school from the new student assignment plan, it is not evident that, even if fully implemented, the current plan addresses the learning needs of the current population.

APPENDIX A Team Members

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Malden, MA.

Shirley Alvira, Panelist, Assistant Superintendent, Chicopee Public Schools, Chicopee, MA

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Daniel Costello, Panelist, Principal, Shrewsbury Public Schools, Shrewsbury, MA.

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APPENDIX B

Lincoln 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.
- 9:30—11:30 a.m. **Team meeting # 1:** Team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist's individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgments on key questions.
- 11:30 a.m.—1 p.m. **Lunch and travel to the school** (*NOTE: In districts undergoing multiple school reviews, superintendent interviews may be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the hotel.*)
- 1:00—2:00 p.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—4:30 p.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 Chair is free to work on report.

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