

School Panel Review Report Burncoat Street Preparatory School Worcester 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. The Burncoat Street Preparatory School (Burncoat Prep) met this criterion and was one of 21 schools selected for panel review in fall 2005. The panel review was conducted on December 6 and 7, 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 the Burncoat Street Preparatory 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 under-performing school, occurs at the next stage of the school review process.

Burncoat Street Preparatory School Profile

Enrollment

The Burncoat Street Preparatory School (Burncoat Prep) serves students in grades K-6. Enrollment at Burncoat Prep has decreased from 268 students in 2003 to 230 students in 2005. Between 2002 and 2005, the Hispanic population at the school has increased from 43 percent to 53 percent; the White population has decreased from 43 to 31 percent. The school's Low Income population has increased from 61 percent in 2002 to 80 percent in 2005, and its Limited English Proficient population has also increased by 10 percent. Proportions of Burncoat Prep student subgroups in 2005, as compared to state averages, are presented next:

Subgroup	2005 Enrollment (%)	
	School	State
Asian	5	5
Black	10	9
Hispanic	53	12
Native American	0	0.3
White	31	74
Low-Income	80	28
First Language Not English	42	14
Limited English Proficient	23	5
Special Education	17	16

In 2005, the attendance rate at Burncoat Prep was 93.6 percent, with students absent 11.0 days on average. This rate is similar to the Worcester District rate, and slightly below the state average of 94.4 percent. Attendance data for the school indicate higher rates of attendance for students in grades 4 through 6 than for those in the early grades. The school's retention rate was 1.9 percent in 2004, the last year for which these data are available. Burncoat Prep's in-school suspension rate in 2005 was 0.4 percent, while out-of-school suspensions averaged 7.0 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 Burncoat Prep staffing report indicates that the school is comprised of two administrators, 18 teachers, one part-time adjustment counselor, and six paraprofessionals. The principal has been at the school for three years and has a total of five years of administrative experience. Of the teachers, approximately 39 percent have been at the school for three or fewer years, and 33 percent have been at the school for ten or more years. Nearly 95 percent of teachers are reported as being highly qualified. More than half of the teaching staff holds an advanced degree.

MCAS Overview

Students at the Burncoat Prep are assessed in grades 3 and 4 in English language arts (ELA) and in grades 4 and 6 in mathematics. Burncoat Prep's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for 2005 Mid-Cycle IV shows no Accountability Status for English language arts and Corrective Action for mathematics. The school failed to make AYP in ELA and mathematics in 2005 for students in the aggregate and for the school's one reported subgroup, Low Income.¹ In 2004, the school made AYP for students in both the aggregate and in the Low Income subgroup in ELA. In mathematics, students in the aggregate failed to make AYP. In 2003, the school made AYP for all reported groups.

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 determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The only subgroup meeting the minimum sample size at Burncoat Street Preparatory School in 2005 was Low Income, in both ELA and mathematics.

In 2005, the aggregate Composite Performance Indices (CPIs) for Burncoat Prep were 69.7 in ELA and 55.6 in mathematics. Year-by-year aggregate CPIs are shown below:

Year-by-Year Aggregate CPI Data Summary		
Year	ELA	Math
2001	64.9	44.7
2002	84.0	64.1
2003	79.1	66.3
2004	73.7	50.0
2005	69.7	55.6
State Target 2005	80.5	68.7

GRADE 3

READING MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 3 Reading MCAS for students at Burncoat Prep are presented below:

2005 Reading, Gr. 3	Percent		
	P	NI	W
Aggregate	46	46	7
Regular Education	67	33	0
Special Education	13	75	13

Student performance in Grade 3 reading has been variable since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate MCAS data shown here:

Aggregate Reading, Gr. 3	Percent		
	P	NI	W
2005	46	46	7
2004	33	58	8
2003	63	33	4
2002	75	25	0
2001	45	45	11

The percentage of students scoring at the Proficient performance level ranges from a low of 33 percent (2004) to a high of 75 percent (2002). The school serves small grade-level cohorts of students; annual fluctuations in scores may be associated with the small populations (24 to 38 students) assessed.

Fewer than ten Special Education and Limited English Proficient students were assessed annually with the Grade 3 Reading MCAS. As such, no aggregated results are reported for these student groups.

GRADE 4

ELA MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS for students at Burncoat Prep are presented below:

2005 ELA, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
Aggregate	3	14	63	20
Regular Education	4	22	65	9
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Student performance in Grade 4 ELA has generally decreased since 2003, with fluctuations in the percentages of students scoring in the Warning performance level:

Aggregate ELA, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
2005	3	14	63	20
2004	9	26	57	9
2003	5	44	33	18
2002	0	34	57	9
2001	0	13	54	33

The percentage of students scoring at the Advanced and Proficient performance levels ranges from a low of 17 (2005) to a high of 49 (2003). In 2004, nine percent of the 23 students assessed scored in the Warning performance level. In 2003 and 2005, with cohorts of 39 and 35 students respectively, the percentage scoring in Warning was higher. Annual fluctuations in scores may be associated with the small populations (23 to 40 students) assessed.

Fewer than ten Special Education and Limited English Proficient students were assessed annually using the Grade 4 ELA MCAS. As such, no aggregated results are reported for these student groups.

GRADE 4

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 Mathematics MCAS for students at Burncoat Prep are outlined here:

2005 Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
Aggregate	0	9	57	34
Regular Education	0	13	70	17
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Student performance in Grade 4 mathematics was generally stable between 2002 and 2004, with several students scoring at the Advanced performance level in 2003. Results in 2005 show a decline in student scores from those years:

Aggregate Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
2005	0	9	57	34
2004	0	26	48	26
2003	5	23	51	21
2002	0	23	51	26
2001	0	8	26	67

In 2003, 28 percent of the Grade 4 students at Burncoat Prep scored in the Advanced and Proficient performance levels. This percentage declined to 9 percent in 2005 (35 students assessed). The percentage scoring at the Warning performance level increased to 34 in 2005, from 21 in 2003 and 26 in 2004. Annual fluctuations in scores may be associated with the small populations (23 to 40 students) assessed.

Fewer than 10 Special Education and Limited English Proficient students were assessed annually with the Grade 4 mathematics MCAS. As such, no aggregated results are reported for these student groups.

GRADE 6

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 6 Mathematics MCAS for students at Burncoat Prep are presented below:

2005 Mathematics, Gr. 6	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
Aggregate	3	25	41	31
Regular Education	4	29	42	25
Special Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Student performance in Grade 6 mathematics has been variable since 2001, with fluctuations in the percentages of students scoring at the Proficient and Warning performance levels:

Aggregate Mathematics, Gr. 6	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W
2005	3	25	41	31
2004	5	2	39	54
2003	6	32	39	23
2002	0	38	44	18
2001	4	19	44	33

The percentage of students scoring at the Advanced and Proficient performance levels ranges from a low of seven (2004) to a high of 38 (2002 and 2003). In 2005, 28 percent of the 32 students assessed scored in Advanced or Proficient. In 2004, 54 percent of the students assessed scored at the Warning performance level; in 2005, this decreased to 31 percent. Annual fluctuations in scores may be associated with the small populations (27 to 41 students) assessed.

Fewer than ten Special Education and Limited English Proficient students were assessed annually using the Grade 6 Mathematics MCAS. As such, no aggregated results are reported for these student groups.

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 School Improvement Plan (SIP) at the Burncoat Street Preparatory School was developed through a process that is likely to support implementation. Staff members are committed to the school's improvement efforts and are implementing certain strategies identified in the SIP. Written SIP documents, however, lack the instructional link to provide teachers guidance as to *how* to implement action plans. In addition, SIP documents lack specific benchmarks and timelines to monitor the effectiveness of improvement initiatives. The school does not have a systematic process in place to evaluate the impact of various initiatives, to determine the overall effectiveness of the SIP, or to adjust the Plan accordingly. As a result, the Panel Review (PR) team determined that planning documents at Burncoat Prep are not specific enough to guide the implementation of improvement initiatives.

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

In spring 2004, Worcester Public Schools instituted a two-year school improvement planning process (see Appendix C). Using data from the 2003 MCAS tests, schools developed improvement plans for 2004-2006 (Plan 1). In late spring of 2005, schools updated the 2004-2006 School Improvement Plans, based on analysis of their 2004 MCAS test results (Plan 2). In October 2005, schools were directed to again update, via an addendum, their 2004-2006 plans, based on the 2005 MCAS results (Plan 3). Those updated plans are currently being reviewed and approved by district administrators on a rolling basis.

The School Improvement Plans submitted to the Department of Education (DOE) by the seven Worcester schools in October 2005 in preparation for School Panel Reviews are the spring 2005 updates of the 2004-2006 document (Plans 1 and 2). Teams of three Department 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 document(s) in the summary rubric is based solely on a close reading of the written documents submitted. It is not a final determination. The Panels used the summary rubric to inform their discussion of the written plan that each panelist had reviewed individually, 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 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 gathered by the Panel during on-site interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Plan 3, including the latest updates to the written 2004-2006 School Improvement Plans that had not yet been approved by the Worcester Public Schools at the time of the review, was considered by the Panel as part of the evidence gathered during its on-site review. Schools may or may not have had new strategies from these plans in evidence in the school by the time of the visit. This plan was reviewed primarily in relation to Key Question 2, as evidence that the conditions are in place at the school to continue to implement plans for improving student performance and for the capacity to adjust and refine plans based on results.

Three school improvement planning documents were reviewed at Burncoat Street Preparatory School: The overarching '04-'06 SIP, the '04-'05 SIP addendum, and the recently approved and instituted '05-'06 SIP addendum.

Although the Burncoat Prep School Improvement Plan contains clear performance goals and Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), SLOs are broad and contain multiple skills. In addition, SIP documents lack the instructional link to provide teachers guidance as to *how* to implement actions plans and how measures of collection are intended to identify which of the stated initiatives have been most influential in affecting student performance. Although the '04-'05 and '05-'06 addenda present clearer improvement strategies in some instances, methods of implementation and measurement remain vague across SIP documents. As a result, the Panel Review (PR) team determined that in their written form, planning documents at Burncoat Prep are not specific enough to guide the implementation of improvement initiatives.

The '04-'06 SIP, as well as the '04-'05 and '05-'06 addenda, include student performance goals that are clearly related to necessary improvement gains and that are based on an analysis of MCAS data. The '04-'06 plan documents the following goal in mathematics:

Increase the percent of students who scored in the high Needs Improvement to the Proficiency category on the 4th and 6th grade 2004 Mathematics MCAS from 21% to 26%.

The '04-'05 SIP addendum states a different performance goal in mathematics:

Increase the Composite Proficiency Index of Mathematics MCAS from 58.3% to 63.9% in 2005 to reach the Proficiency Index Target.

And the '05-'06 addendum states yet another performance goal in mathematics:

In order for Burncoat Preparatory School to make AYP in the Math MCAS, we will move 10% of the total number of students tested from the Warning High and Low and the Needs Improvement High Low into Proficient/Advanced.

Student performance goals are based on analyses of student performance on the MCAS for each prior year. The goals do appear to be linked to improvements the school must achieve to meet the standards set forth by the state and by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations.

Student Learning Objectives in mathematics are also based on an analysis of student weaknesses on the MCAS. The '04-'06 SIP states five overarching SLOs related to identified student skills to be addressed to make progress toward performance goals. For example, students:

Use and explain models related to common fractions and mixed numbers.

Use pictures, models, graphs, words, number sentences and mathematical notations to interpret mathematical relationships.

The '04-'05 and '05-'06 addenda state an additional SLO based on further analysis of student weaknesses in mathematics:

Students will be able to identify, represent and analyze numerical relationships as a means of solving word problems.

Although Student Learning Objectives in the Burncoat Prep SIP are tied to general areas targeted for improvement in mathematics, SLOs are broad and include multiple skills that make it difficult to determine which of the strategies listed under each SLO are intended to directly address areas of student weakness.

Action plans stated in the Burncoat Prep '04-'06 SIP do not provide instruction as to how these activities are to be implemented. For example, one action is that, *“Teachers will reinforce mathematical concepts and review necessary basic skills on a daily basis.”* What strategies will teachers use to complete this activity? *“Teachers will accommodate small cooperative group direct instruction with specialized support staff.”* How do teachers accommodate small groups and specialized support staff into their instructional practices?

In addition, measures of implementation for these action plans are general, and it is unclear how the effectiveness of each initiative will be assessed. Measures of implementation stated in SIP documents include “plan books,” “instructional schedules,” and *“Everyday Math assessments.”* While a review of plan books and schedules may indicate participation in action plans, this is not a measure of actual implementation of the effectiveness of stated activities. Student performance on *Everyday Math* assessments may indicate increases in achievement, but it does not assist the school in delineating which of the 24 stated action plans resulted in student learning.

Although the two addenda list some more specific strategies for improvement, they still lack descriptions of how implementation will occur and how the effectiveness of each initiative will be measured. For example, *“Teachers will use concrete, verbal, pictorial and symbolic representation to help children problem solve and critically think.”* Methods of collection include, for example: “daily lesson plans,” “E-Walks,” and the “Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)” assessments. Similar to the '04-'06 SIP, these addenda do not provide staff with information on how to implement improvement strategies, and methods of collection will not provide the school with information as to which initiatives are being implemented effectively and, therefore, have the greatest impact on student performance.

The Burncoat Prep SIP documents do not specify *how* action plans and strategies are to be implemented. Measures are vague and unlikely to identify those initiatives that are having an impact on student performance. As a result, the PR team determined that the written planning documents are not likely to effectively guide improvement efforts at the school.

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

The school improvement planning documents were developed through a process that is likely to support implementation. SIP development included a representative group and, as a result, the school staff understands and has ownership of the improvement plans.

The process of developing school improvement planning documents at Burncoat Prep has included a representative group of the school's community. The construction of the most recent SIP document—the '05-'06 addendum—included input from staff school-wide. During monthly meetings, staff members collaborated in data analyses to determine student performance strengths and weaknesses. As reported by the School Improvement Planning team², this included item analyses (including incorrect and correct student responses), trend analyses, and cross referencing of MCAS questions that targeted similar skills. In ELA, student assessment information from the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) was also considered at the primary grade levels. In interviews with the PR team, Burncoat Prep staff members corroborated their involvement in this process. One teacher stated, "The whole staff spent hours dissecting question by question." In addition, SIP documents are sent to the district and School Committee for review and feedback.

Although previous SIP documents were constructed in a similar process, the newest '05-'06 addendum differed, as the School Improvement Planning team "spearheaded" the process of collating this information into a written document. According to this team, the Burncoat staff was given the opportunity to review and make revisions to the SIP. The principal's leadership report also indicates that the school's staff was provided opportunities to make changes to the SIP. The principal believes that teachers consider the SIP addenda to be "more user-friendly" because the staff was truly involved in the process of creating them. As a result of this all-inclusive process, not only have the school's plans for improvement been well-communicated, but teachers' own improvement efforts at Burncoat Prep have also been shared. As stated by the principal, if everyone is "not a part of the process, they can't be expected to buy into it." Both the principal and the School Improvement Planning team indicate that the SIP is a "living document" at Burncoat Prep. Interviews with teachers confirmed their awareness of and participation in the development of the SIP documents.

The process used to develop the SIP at Burncoat Prep includes all staff members, and this has resulted in school-wide ownership of the improvement initiatives. As a result, the SIP has evolved into a living school document that is revised each year through additional addenda to reflect the changing needs of the school's population.

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

It is the judgment of the PR team that staff members at Burncoat Prep are implementing some strategies identified in the SIP. Teachers are able to clearly articulate the current initiatives. Use of the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* programs, which are the school's and the district's overarching initiatives to address SIP strategies, are widespread. Professional development opportunities are available and aligned with improvement efforts.

Nearly all members of the Burncoat Prep staff are able to identify elements of the current school improvement plans. In response to the question, "I am well informed about the initiatives that are undertaken by school leadership and staff to improve student performance" on the Department of Education (DOE) *Instructional Staff Survey*, 88% of respondents (n=26) indicated that they either "strongly agree" or "agree" with this statement. In response to the question, "Do you know what you are expected to do to improve student performance according to your school's

² The SIP team includes the principal, assistant principal (also the ELA Intervention Teacher [ELAIT] and Math Intervention Teacher [MIT]), the NCLB Intervention Teacher, a grade 4 teacher, and a special education teacher.

improvement plan?,” 25 out of 26 instructional staff members listed “the SIP” or at least one element related to initiatives documented in the SIP. Interviews with teachers confirmed their understanding of the planned improvement initiatives; the principal indicated that classroom lessons “stem from the school improvement plan.”

The '04-'06 SIP action plans identify a broad range of skills that teachers are expected to implement in both ELA and mathematics to address low student performance rates at the school. For example (two in ELA and two in mathematics):

Vocabulary development and understanding words and ideas will be taught daily.

Teachers will model for students by creating story webs for main ideas and supporting details.

Teachers will have students interpret tables, graphs, charts and maps.

Teachers will have students convert between metric measures.

Although the '04-'06 SIP is the overarching operating plan at Burncoat Prep, and the stated student skills in this plan are still identified as target areas for improvement, the newly revised '05-'06 addendum has evolved to reflect new initiatives in place at the school. School and district personnel believe that the implementation of the Houghton Mifflin and *Making Meaning* programs will further address student weaknesses in ELA. In addition, staff members believe that the spiraling *Everyday Math* program is likely to have greater impact now that it is in its third year of implementation.

There is ample evidence to indicate that teachers are implementing the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* programs to target specific skills identified in the '04-'06 SIP. Observations conducted by the PR team at Burncoat Prep indicated implementation of both the ELA and mathematics programs in classrooms school-wide. Texts were evident, and classroom activities were related to strategies (such as “word recognition” flashcards and “math message” boards) used in Houghton Mifflin, *Making Meaning*, and *Everyday Math* programs. In addition, word walls—another strategy identified by teachers and school leadership to target improvement in student vocabulary—were evident across Burncoat Prep classrooms. A review of some teacher lesson plans indicated direct alignment with the instructional program, especially in ELA, where planning documents appeared to be generated from the Houghton Mifflin program.

The principal's leadership report and interviews with school staff indicate that use of differentiated instruction is another improvement strategy at Burncoat Prep. The principal and the School Improvement Planning team both defined differentiated instruction as grouping students by ability to target their specific needs. The '05-'06 SIP addendum cites strategies such as:

Student in grades K through 2 will be placed in guided reading groups based on results of the DRA, DIBELS and running records.

Teachers in grades K-3 will emphasize content strands, skills and concepts for their appropriate grade level through use of differentiated instruction.

Interviews with the school SIP team and primary grade-level teachers indicated use of the DRA to place students in instructional groups. This was corroborated by a review of DRA assessment data that indicated evidence of grouping by student test scores. Methods for grouping in grades 4 and 5 (where the DRA is not being administered) were less clear. One teacher indicated that

student groups were “randomly assigned,” as called for by the *Making Meaning* program. Classroom observations indicated a range of instructional methods, including whole-group instruction, cooperative small groups, and students working in pairs. The principal and teachers reported the teaching method being utilized on the day of the PR team visit was dictated by teacher lesson plans, in accordance with their place in the instructional program.

Professional development (PD) opportunities for Burncoat Prep staff are available and aligned with SIP strategies. The '05-'06 SIP addendum references PD across improvement strategies. District PD this year has focused on the implementation of the new Houghton Mifflin program. Teachers report training in *Everyday Math* in previous years. On the DOE *Instructional Staff Survey*, 88 percent of respondents (n=26) indicated that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the district PD is both available and adequate. In addition, the district offers a wide range of free PD opportunities that teachers can participate in on a voluntary basis; these offerings are aligned with improvement initiatives.

In summary, staff members at Burncoat Prep are implementing the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* programs to address content areas in which students are in need of improvement. The PR team’s visit confirmed widespread use of these instructional programs, related strategies, and efforts to differentiate instruction.

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

Burncoat Prep staff members have successfully implemented a number of improvement initiatives that have resulted in changed classroom practice. In addition, Burncoat Prep is utilizing a variety of assessments identified in the SIP to measure student achievement and to inform instruction. SIP documents, however, do not identify clear benchmarks or timelines to measure the effectiveness of strategies. As a result, it is difficult to clearly identify what MCAS improvement gains have been made relative to SIP goals, if adjustments to SIP documents are being made based on an analysis of previous successes and areas for improvement, and how adjustments will be made in the future.

The school is utilizing a variety of assessments, cited in SIP documents, to measure student skill acquisition and to inform instructional practices. Burncoat Prep is currently using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy (DIBELS) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to measure student learning in ELA at the primary grade levels. Along with MCAS data, the School Improvement Planning team reported that these assessments were used to analyze student performance to inform SIP goals. Unit assessments from the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* programs are being used across grade levels to assess student achievement and, in some cases, determine student groupings and identify students who need additional intervention on specific lesson content.

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment—a district-wide initiative—is in its first year of implementation at the school. Because only the baseline MAP test has been administered, student results are not yet available for comparison. However, the district and school leaders believe that the MAP, in particular, will provide the “formative and value-added” information the school needs to effectively monitor student performance.

As described in Key Question 1C, Burncoat Prep has implemented a number of improvement strategies, as well as assessment practices, as identified in SIP documents. It is clear that changes

in school and classroom practices have occurred as a result of the implementation of improvement efforts. SIP documents at Burncoat Prep, however, do not contain clear timelines for implementation of strategies or sufficient benchmarks to measure progress toward implementation. The majority of timelines in the '04-'06 SIP document year-long time spans, (e.g., August 2004-June 2005). While the '04-'05 and '05-'06 SIP addenda possess timelines relevant to their respective school years, these timelines are also year-long, (e.g., June 2005 and June 2006, respectively). None of the SIP documents contain benchmarks that can be used to monitor progress implementing improvement initiatives or to assess initiatives' effectiveness in increasing levels of student achievement.

In addition, the school does not have a systematic process in place to monitor and evaluate SIP implementation. Members of the School Improvement Planning team also serve as the school's Implementation Committee; however, a clear and systematic structure for monitoring efforts related to the SIP is not evident. Although personnel are in place to monitor SIP implementation (see Question 2A), their oversight roles are not clearly defined, and the methods to be used lack specificity. As a result, improvement efforts are not being systematically monitored at Burncoat Prep to determine the impact of improvement initiatives and, where necessary, to make mid-course corrections.

Interviews and focus groups conducted with teachers, the principal, the School Improvement Planning team and district personnel also revealed that there is not a specific focus on determining which initiatives are having the greatest impact on student achievement. When asked how they would determine which improvement efforts were effective and which were not, all parties indicated, "ALL of these things [initiatives] are important." When asked about reasons for low student performance, Burncoat Prep staff identified the list of student skills identified in the SIP. One teacher stated, "It must be a multitude of things." Because improvement strategies are not delineated to target specific areas for improvement but, instead, are global efforts, (i.e., Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math*), being implemented to address overall student performance across the school, the only measure of effectiveness is assessment results. This provides the school little information as to which aspect of the instructional program may be positively and/or negatively impacting student achievement levels.

In summary, SIP documents at Burncoat Prep lack specific benchmarks and timelines to monitor the effectiveness of improvement initiatives. The school does not have a systematic process in place to evaluate the impact of various initiatives, to determine the overall effectiveness of the SIP, or to adjust the Plan.

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

Overall, the conditions at Burncoat Street Preparatory School appear to be in place for the successful implementation of a school improvement plan. The school has sound leadership that is strongly supported by school stakeholders. The principal provides the necessary vision for a staff that is focused on school improvement; this has resulted in a staff that appears to be committed to the improvement efforts at the school. Instructional oversight at the school is not clearly defined and, as a result, is not currently providing school staff with focused feedback on the implementation of classroom practices and initiatives—many of which are new to Burncoat Prep this year. The district has provided the school with a wealth of resources to support improvement

efforts. The lack of specificity, however, in written SIP documents that have been approved by the district was of some concern for the PR team.

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

Leadership at Burncoat Prep provides sound management and a vision for the school that is focused on academic achievement. The school's community strongly supports the principal, who has the trust and support of the Burncoat Prep staff necessary to facilitate school improvement efforts. Although some aspects of instructional leadership are in place, oversight and monitoring responsibilities, in order to be fully effective, require further definition.

The Burncoat Prep principal effectively manages school operations with a focus on teaching and learning. Interviews with the principal and school staff indicate that monthly meetings and school-based professional development offerings generally focus on instructional activities, as the principal quickly moves through "housekeeping tasks." Observations by the PR team indicated that the school day is efficiently run and that student behavior and disciplinary issues do not currently appear to be problematic at Burncoat Prep. In interviews with the PR team, the principal clearly articulated the school's plans for improving student performance. When asked about use of SIP documents at the school, the principal stated, "That is the game plan.... [Staff had] better be doing it." A focus group with the School Improvement Planning team and interviews with teachers during the PR team visit corroborated school-wide use of the document and a focus on improvement initiatives.

The principal is a visible leader whose vision for school improvement is strongly supported and trusted by school staff. On the DOE *Instructional Staff Survey*, 88 percent of respondents (n=26) indicated that they either "strongly agree" or "agree" that the "principal provides effective leadership to guide and support staff efforts to improve the performance" of the school's students. When asked about the school leadership during interviews, Burncoat Prep staff replied with the following:

- "This principal is very, very driven to turn this school around and get the scores up."
- "The principal is incredible. She is very accessible."
- "[The principal] will turn this school around.... She is concerned with every child's needs... a true leader."

In addition, the school site council, the district, and the parents interviewed during the PR team visit also indicated support for the leadership and vision provided by the principal.

Many aspects of instructional oversight are in their initial phases of implementation at Burncoat Prep. The district has recently implemented an E-Walk protocol to monitor the implementation of classroom practices. Hand-held Palm Pilots are used to record the principal's observations according to implementation checklists for both Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math*. Although it is a practice that holds promise for monitoring and providing school staff feedback, the E-Walk is in its pilot phase and is not yet being used to consistently provide feedback on instruction. The mathematics support specialist has developed a standards-based rubric to assess best practices that is aligned with the *Everyday Math* program. It was unclear to the PR team whether or not this rubric, which is not yet being utilized, is another oversight tool that may provide Burncoat Prep teachers and administration with useful feedback about classroom practices.

The school has a range of personnel available to monitor instruction and provide feedback to staff. Members of the School Improvement Planning team also serve as the school's Implementation Committee. However, each of these persons who is assigned instructional oversight responsibilities also fulfills other roles at the school or in the district. The functions of an ELAIT and MIT are assumed by the assistant principal. In addition to providing training and support for classroom teachers, the NCLBIT has additional school-based responsibilities and is required to attend district trainings several times per month. The two teachers on the Implementation Committee maintain full-time teaching schedules. The mathematics support specialist is available to provide support and feedback once a week; she also provides oversight and support at other schools in the district.

Although there appears to be a wealth of personnel to support and oversee classroom practices, the school has neither a specific structure in place to dictate how these personnel are used nor a uniform system for supplying feedback. Some teachers report that the NCLBIT "pops-in" several times a week, though other teachers report that the NCLBIT has rarely been in their classroom. In the role of ELAIT and MIT, the assistant principal has focused on the upper grade levels at the school, conducting informal walk-throughs and working with small groups targeted for additional intervention. When asked in interviews how intervention teachers were most helpful, the staff's predominant response was that these teachers have the ability to supply needed materials. Most staff members reported that neither of these intervention teachers had been in their classes to model instruction—a task that is part of their job descriptions—unless it was requested. There is little evidence that a clear and systematic structure for monitoring instructional practices and providing feedback is currently in place at Burncoat Prep. Although personnel are available to monitor SIP implementation, and staff members view these roles as having an impact on classroom practices, oversight roles are not clearly defined, and the methods being used lack the necessary specificity and uniformity to effectively monitor school-wide practices.

It is clear that the leadership at Burncoat Prep is strongly supported and possesses the skills to facilitate school improvement efforts. The school has begun to implement some tools for systematizing instructional oversight practices, and personnel are available to fulfill at least some of these responsibilities. To be fully effective, oversight and monitoring practices require further structure and definition.

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

There is strong evidence to indicate that the Burncoat Prep staff supports the school's improvement efforts. The school faculty has a uniform understanding of the improvement initiatives, is actively working to make the SIP a living document, and is clearly dedicated to improving student performance at the school.

In interviews and focus groups conducted during the PR team visit, staff members at Burncoat Prep consistently articulated the same improvement needs at the school. As evidenced in Key Question 1 of this report, staff members were actively involved in the development of SIP documents and, as a result, possess ownership of improvement initiatives. The school's faculty is actively implementing the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* instructional programs, as well as several other strategies cited in the SIP.

On the DOE *Instructional Staff Survey*, 96 percent of respondents (n=26) indicated that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the school has “a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals.” On the same survey, 88 percent of Burncoat Prep staff responded that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that “the curriculum implemented in our school is effective and appropriate.”

During interviews with the PR team, staff across the school consistently articulated the vision set forth by leadership. As stated by one teacher, “[W]e believe that all children will learn and that we [the school community] can help them be the best they can be...life long learners.” Another teacher added, “We want the kids to enjoy learning, welcome and appreciate diversity...for all children to reach their full potential.”

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

District leadership is providing Burncoat Prep with a large number of resources to support the school’s improvement efforts. These include human resources, a range of opportunities for professional development, instructional programs and related materials, as well as a variety of additional initiatives to assist with implementation of the SIP. Although district efforts to supply guidance to the school in developing SIP documents are recognized, the district’s approval of a non-specific written plan and the emphasis the district has placed on instructional programs as a solution for low student performance rates presented some concerns for the PR team.

Based on district-level initiatives, the school has several personnel in place to support the school’s improvement efforts. Although the school has some flexibility in how it utilizes the ELAIT and MIT, these positions are part of a district-wide initiative to provide school-based support to staff in these subject areas. The NCLBIT is a district-funded position designed to provide schools with additional support for accountability-related practices, such as trainings, support for classroom teachers, and resource development. The district provides regular professional development trainings for district-wide NCLBITs. In addition, Burncoat Prep is participating in a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grant this year, which provides the school additional support and oversight in mathematics. Although CSR is an initiative shared with several other schools in the district, Burncoat Prep staff played an integral role in defining how the CSR grant would support school efforts.

The district provides a wide range of professional development opportunities for staff. The district mandates two specific trainings each year and also approves school-based training opportunities at the request of the principal. In addition, the Worcester Public Schools Office of Curriculum and Professional Development offers free PD opportunities that teachers can participate in on a voluntary basis. A review of this catalogue indicated more than 30 pages of training opportunities related to district- and school-wide improvement initiatives. As stated by the Burncoat Prep principal, “Professional development is probably better than it has ever been. It’s more relevant.”

The Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* instructional programs are being implemented on a district-wide level. As indicated throughout this report, Burncoat Prep is actively engaged in implementing both of these programs. The district has provided the school with all necessary texts and related supplemental materials to ensure these programs are effectively implemented. In addition, *Making Meaning* is being used as a supplement to the Houghton Mifflin program to address comprehension. Burncoat Prep is one of 18 schools chosen as a blind comparative group

to pilot the effectiveness of *Making Meaning* in this capacity. In a focus group with district personnel, the superintendent reported that “fidelity of implementation with support” is driving central office efforts.

Several other district-level initiatives are intended to support school practices and improvement efforts. The newly instituted MAP assessment offers the school additional value-added information on student performance, beginning in grade 3. The district reports that the MAP is correlated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The E-Walk protocol, which is conducted by principals via hand-held Palm Pilots, offers the district the option to upload observation information to conduct trend analyses for individual schools and for schools district-wide. Aligned with the Houghton Mifflin program, the district provides a framework for intervention supports through the “Three Tier Reading Model” to assist principals and teachers in making systematic decisions about approaches to supporting struggling students. In addition, the district provides support for after-school and summer programs specific to Burncoat Prep.

Although the district has a process in place to support the development of school improvement plans, feedback and guidance on written improvement documents has not been sufficient to provide the school with a specific roadmap. District personnel have a process for reviewing all SIP documents. Based on a local rubric, schools are provided feedback and asked to revise the SIP if it does not meet the desired standard. The Burncoat Prep SIP documents were approved by the district. The documents fail, however, to: clearly identify action plans to support specific student skill deficits; provide teachers guidance as to *how* to implement these actions plans; and measure which of the stated strategies have been most influential in affecting student performance. Although a district-wide school support specialist is available to help Worcester schools in adhering to the PIM process, assistance is provided primarily through principal trainings. As evidenced by the school’s SIP documents, current guidance and district feedback have not provided the school with enough information to develop a specific written plan that is likely to guide the implementation of improvement initiatives.

The district’s current emphasis on Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* as the answer to addressing low student performance rates presented some concerns for the PR team. When asked in a focus group what was needed to address the specific needs of Burncoat Prep students, district personnel reported faithful and consistent implementation of the instructional programs. Although it is possible that Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* will have the desired impact on student achievement, it will be difficult to assess which aspects of the programs were most successful and which were not, because instructional strategies have not been delineated to target specific student-skill deficits.

In summary, the district is providing Burncoat Prep with a wealth of resources to support the school’s improvement efforts. In the future, further guidance is needed to ensure that the school has a clear written improvement document that specifically identifies areas of student performance weakness and targeted strategies to guide school efforts.

CONCLUSION

Improvement planning documents at Burncoat Prep are not specific enough to guide the implementation of improvement initiatives. Although student performance goals and learning objectives are clearly stated, SIP documents lack the instructional link to provide teachers guidance as to *how* to implement these actions plans. SIP documents do not identify specific

benchmarks or timelines to measure the effectiveness of strategies. As a result, it is difficult to identify what improvement gains, relative to SIP goals, have been made.

SIP documents at Burncoat Prep were developed through a collaborative process that has resulted in a school-wide understanding of the improvement initiatives. Staff members are implementing the Houghton Mifflin and *Everyday Math* programs, which are strategies identified in the SIP, and utilize a variety of assessments to measure student achievement and inform instruction.

Conditions at Burncoat Street Preparatory School appear to be in place for the successful implementation of a school improvement plan. The school's community strongly supports the principal, who has the trust and support necessary to facilitate school improvement efforts. Instructional leadership at Burncoat Prep, however, lacks specific structure and definition. The district is providing the school with a large number of resources to support the school's improvement efforts. The district's approval of a non-specific written plan and the emphasis the district has placed on the instructional programs as a solution for low student performance rates presented some concerns for the PR team.

APPENDIX A

Team Members

Megan Tupa, Panel Review Chair, SchoolWorks LLC, Beverly, MA

Matthew Pakos, Panel Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden, MA

Sal Cammarata, Panelist, Principal, Garfield School, Revere Public Schools, Revere, MA

Melissa Earls, Panelist, Assistant Superintendent, Midland-Upland Regional School District,
MA

Barbara McLaughlin, Panelist, Director of Reading First, Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA

APPENDIX B
Burncoat Street Preparatory School
Worcester Public Schools
POTENTIALLY UNDER-PERFORMING PANEL REVIEW SCHEDULE
December 6 and 7, 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 a.m. —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 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; 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.

APPENDIX C