

School Panel Review Report Chandler Magnet Elementary 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 Chandler Magnet Elementary School 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 Chandler Magnet 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.

Chandler Magnet Elementary School Profile

Enrollment

The Chandler Magnet Elementary School serves students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 6. Enrollment at Chandler Magnet has decreased significantly since 2002, from 629 to 434 students in 2005. Between 2002 and 2005, student demographics have changed, as well. The percentage of Hispanic students, compared to the total population, has increased from 49 percent in 2002 to 58 percent in 2005. White students have decreased from 46 percent in 2002 to 34 percent in 2005. Percentages of Low-Income and First Language Not English students have also increased over that time, by 15 percent and seven percent, respectively. Proportions of Chandler Magnet student subgroups in 2005, compared to state averages, are presented on the next page:

Subgroup	2005 Enrollment (%)	
	School	State
Asian	2	5
Black	5	9
Hispanic	58	12
Native American	0	0.3
White	34	74
Low-Income	84	28
First Language Not English	63	14
Limited English Proficient	47	5
Special Education	25	16

In 2005, the attendance rate at Chandler Magnet was 93.8 percent, with students absent 10.1 days on average. Attendance is almost identical to the district’s averages (93.7 percent attendance rate; 10.5 day absent on average) and close to the state averages (94.2 percent attendance rate; 10.0 days absent on average). Students of all races appear to be absent from school about the same amount in 2005. The school’s retention rate was 3.3 percent in 2004, the last year for which this data is available. Chandler Magnet’s in-school suspension rate in 2005 was 0.2 percent, while out-of-school suspensions averaged 6.7 percent. Suspension 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 Chandler Magnet staffing report indicates that the school is comprised of two administrators, 38 teachers, and one School Adjustment Counselor. The principal is in her second year at the school and has a total of 13 years of administrative experience. Of the teachers, approximately 53 percent have been at the school for ten or more years, 34 percent for five to ten years, and 13 percent for less than five years. Nearly 95 percent of teachers are reported as highly qualified. A number of staff hold advanced degrees, including 15 out of 19 classroom teachers (80 percent); seven out of nine special educators (78 percent); nine out of ten (90 percent) support personnel; the principal and assistant principal.

MCAS Overview

Students at Chandler Magnet are assessed in Grade 3 and 4 in English language arts (ELA) and in Grades 4 and 6 in mathematics. Chandler Magnet’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for 2005 Mid-Cycle IV shows an accountability status of Corrective Action for ELA and Identified for Improvement for mathematics. The school failed to make AYP in ELA in 2005 for the aggregate population and the following reported subgroups: Limited English Proficient (LEP), Low-Income, and Hispanic.¹ Chandler Magnet had previously not made AYP in ELA for the aggregate population in the years of 2001, 2002 and 2004, but did make AYP in 1999, 2000 and 2003. All subgroups made AYP in 2003, but not in 2004 or 2005. In mathematics, the

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 subgroups meeting the minimum sample size at Chandler Magnet Elementary School in 2005 were Limited English Proficient, Low-Income, and Hispanic.

school failed to make AYP in 2004 or 2005 for the aggregate population or any of the reported subgroups. Chandler Magnet did make AYP in mathematics for the aggregate population from 1999 to 2003 but not for all reported subgroups in 2003.

In 2005, the aggregate Composite Performance Indices (CPIs) for Chandler Magnet were 52.5 in ELA and 48.2 in mathematics. Year-by-year aggregate CPIs are shown below:

Year-by-Year Aggregate CPI Data Summary		
Year	ELA	Math
2001	63.8	46.0
2002	53.3	42.9
2003	64.7	52.7
2004	57.7	47.5
2005	52.5	48.2
State Target 2005	80.5	68.7

GRADE 3

Reading MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 3 reading MCAS for students at Chandler Magnet are presented below:

2005 Reading	Percent		
	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	17	44	38
Regular Education	29	57	14
Special Education	25	31	44
Limited English Proficient	5	45	50

Regular Education students at Chandler Magnet have outperformed both Special Education and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. While approximately the same percentage of Regular Education and Special Education students scored Proficient (29 percent and 25 percent, respectively), more Special Education students scored Warning/Failing (44 percent). Only five percent of LEP students scored Proficient, with 50 percent scoring Warning/Failing. There has been a gradual decrease in student performance since 2002, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 3 reading MCAS performance presented on the next page:

Aggregate Reading	Percent		
	P	NI	W/F
2005	17	44	38
2004	13	63	24
2003	25	51	24
2002	28	45	27
2001	24	51	25

The percentage of students scoring Proficient has decreased from a high of 28 percent in 2002 to 17 percent in 2005. The percent of students scoring Warning/Failing is at its highest in 2005, with 38 percent of students scoring in this category. This general decline in performance from 2002 to 2005 is also seen in Grade 3 reading performance for Special Education and LEP populations.

GRADE 4

ELA MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 ELA MCAS for students at Chandler Magnet are presented below:

2005 ELA	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	0	20	50	30
Regular Education	0	40	53	7
Special Education	0	5	63	32
Limited English Proficient	NA	NA	NA	NA

Regular Education students at Chandler Magnet significantly outperformed Special Education students in Grade 4 ELA. Performance of LEP students was not calculated for 2005. Student performance has been inconsistent since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 4 ELA MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate ELA	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	0	20	50	30
2004	1	25	39	35
2003	3	34	32	31
2002	3	23	40	33
2001	1	33	40	25

Student performance declined from 2001 to 2002, followed by an increase to the highest performance levels on Grade 4 ELA in 2003 (37 percent Advanced or Proficient; 31 percent Warning/Failing). The percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient then declined over the next two years, with 20 percent scoring in those categories in 2005. Fewer students, however, scored in Warning/Failing in 2005 (30 percent). These trends are reflected in the scores of

Regular Education and Special Education populations and the two years (2003 and 2004) that percentages were calculated for the LEP population.

GRADE 4

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 4 mathematics MCAS for students at Chandler Magnet are presented below:

2005 Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	2	7	39	52
Regular Education	7	20	67	7
Special Education	0	0	16	84
Limited English Proficient	NA	NA	NA	NA

Performance of Regular Education students has significantly outpaced that of Special Education students in Grade 4 mathematics. Performance over time has been mixed, although a general decline in performance is observed since 2002, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 4 mathematics MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	2	7	39	52
2004	3	18	36	43
2003	0	19	52	29
2002	2	21	36	41
2001	2	13	57	28

With some variation across each year, overall performance of students scoring Advanced or Proficient went from a high of 23 percent in 2002 to a low of nine percent in 2005. Students scoring Warning/Failing increased from 28 percent in 2001 to 52 percent in 2005. These trends in aggregate performance are the result of slightly different trends for Regular Education students and Special Education students, as shown below and on the next page:

Regular Education Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	7	20	67	7
2004	6	29	39	26
2003	0	35	59	6
2002	4	26	38	32
2001	3	16	77	3

Special Education Mathematics, Gr. 4	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	0	0	16	84
2004	0	15	33	52
2003	0	17	45	38
2002	0	27	60	13
2001	0	17	43	39

The Regular Education population has consistently had more than 27 percent (2005) of students scoring Advanced or Proficient since 2002, while Special Education students have steadily declined in performance (zero percent Advanced or Proficient in 2005). Students scoring Warning/Failing have exhibited more variation but similar trends. The percent of Special Education students scoring Warning/Failing has continually increased since 2002.

GRADE 6

Mathematics MCAS Results

Results of the 2005 Grade 6 mathematics MCAS for students at Chandler Magnet are presented below:

2005 Mathematics, Gr. 6	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
Aggregate	4	14	32	50
Regular Education	3	28	45	24
Special Education	4	4	29	63
Limited English Proficient	5	5	16	74

Regular Education students have outperformed both Special Education and LEP students in Grade 6 mathematics. While overall aggregate mathematics performance remains fairly low, gains have been made each year since 2001, as reflected in the aggregate Grade 6 mathematics MCAS performance presented below:

Aggregate Mathematics, Gr. 6	Percent			
	A	P	NI	W/F
2005	4	14	32	50
2004	6	10	27	56
2003	3	17	22	58
2002	1	5	21	73
2001	1	4	21	74

From 2001 to 2003, the percentages of students scoring Advanced or Proficient increased, while those scoring Warning/Failing decreased. In 2004 and 2005, there has been a slight decline in percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient (from 20 percent in 2003 to 18 percent in 2005), but the percent of students scoring Warning/Failing has also continued to decline (from

58 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2005). Similar gains have been made for Special Education and LEP students between 2001 and 2005.

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 Chandler Magnet School Improvement Plan (SIP) is not clear and specific enough to guide the implementation of instructional initiatives and changes to ensure an increase in student performance rates. The SIP was developed through a process that led to teacher buy-in and support for the initiatives. There is not sufficient evidence, however, of a systematic and formative process for ongoing evaluation of the plan's implementation or for making adjustments as a result of this monitoring. While several of the SIP initiatives have been implemented at some level throughout the school, there is a lack of consistent implementation (with the exception of use of the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math instructional programs) and an increased focus on vocabulary. Because the Houghton Mifflin program and some assessments are new, there is not a clear method, currently, for measuring student gains as a result of the implementation of Chandler Magnet SIP 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 updated, 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, 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; and 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 of 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 this fall 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 their 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.

Based on examination of the School Improvement Plan documents, the Panel Review (PR) team found that the Chandler Magnet SIP is not clear and specific enough to guide the implementation of instructional initiatives and improvement efforts at the school. The plan does not appear to be grounded in solid data analysis nor in an effective analysis of root causes. Additionally, the plan does not appear to effectively address the bilingual/limited English proficient (LEP) populations. All SIP documents present unclear student learning objectives and do not effectively explicate connections between different parts of the plan. The SIP documents do not include clear timelines for achieving instructional objectives or benchmarks to measure progress of the implementation.

The SIP does not appear to be grounded in solid data analysis nor in an effective root cause analysis. Specifically, the 2004-2006 framework document (Plan 1) does not effectively address the bilingual/LEP population—a significant subset of the students at Chandler Magnet. In one case, the need for focus on vocabulary was identified because of generally low LEP scores on English language arts (ELA) questions. It does not appear, however, that an item analysis was conducted specific to this student population. The addendum (Plan 2) appears to address subgroups and a more in-depth item analysis but lacks detail and explanation to understand how chosen priorities and strategies result from any analyses relative to the subgroups.

Additionally, many identified causes relate to failure to implement the curriculum. The plan, though, does not include an analysis of *why* the curriculum has not been implemented or *how* it has been implemented ineffectively. For example, one cause cites the “difficulty of aligning frameworks with instruction,” but the improvement objective is about ability grouping and the use of the Everyday Math program and does not address curriculum alignment. Furthermore, the school did not analyze the quality of instruction to determine whether changes need to be made in *how* teachers implement the curriculum.

The multiple plan documents present unclear student learning objectives and do not effectively connect various aspects of improvement planning documents. While the SIP does have student learning objectives that identify student needs and reference the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the objectives often contain too many elements or are too in-depth to be achievable. Four or more standards (even up to 15 standards in the mathematics section of the addendum) are included in one student learning objective. Since student learning objectives target a large number of skills, the suggested strategies cannot address all student needs. Furthermore, there is little indication that the school has examined its instructional, assessment or programmatic processes in light of identified needs. It is unclear what is to be done differently at Chandler Magnet to ensure additional coverage of identified topics.

In the present form, the Chandler Magnet SIP documents do not include timelines for achieving instructional objectives or benchmarks to measure implementation progress. While the original plan (Plan 1) includes some action plans, details about proposed timelines are vague (simply noted as the “school year”) and considerations of training or support needed to successfully accomplish objectives are not considered. The addendum (Plan 2) lacks action plans describing how articulated strategies will be carried out. New strategies introduced in Plan 2—such as teacher meeting time (pg. 10 of the addendum)—show progress, but also lack consideration as to *how* they are to be implemented, used, monitored and supported.

The unclear student learning objectives and the lack of explicit connections between the different parts of the plan make the multiple SIP documents difficult for users to reference. Readers are left with an unclear sense of how all the parts of the SIP documents are supposed to work together to effectively address student learning needs. The 2004-2005 addendum (Plan 2) shows improvement, although the different format makes it difficult to use this together with the original 2004-2006 document (Plan 1). As a result, the PR team concluded that the Chandler Magnet SIP documents, as written, are not clear and specific to guide improvement initiatives that will ensure increases in student achievement.

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

The Chandler Magnet SIP documents were developed through a process that included the majority of stakeholders at different levels and that has established a sense of ownership and support for the planned improvement efforts. Although the principal has established some informal means to communicate strategies regarding the implementation of SIP initiatives—particularly regarding the use of materials for Everyday Math and Houghton Mifflin Programs—there is no systematic plan for monitoring implementation of initiatives and for making adjustments to the plan as a result of this monitoring process.

It is clear that the principal used a process to develop the SIP that consciously sought input from the majority of stakeholders at the school. Through a request for volunteers, the Chandler Magnet School Improvement Planning Team, consisting of five members—the No Child Left Behind Implementation Teacher (NCLBIT), the ELA Intervention Teacher (ELAIT) and three classroom teachers (from grades 1, 4 and 5)—was formed to write the original 2004-2006 SIP. During four staff meetings, MCAS data were discussed in grade-level groups, which also included support staff for English language learners (ELL), special education students and Title I teachers. They were asked to consider, “...how to help improve instruction and identify strengths and weaknesses from MCAS data.” The planning committee collected and incorporated the data into a draft of the SIP. The draft of the plan was reviewed by the principal and teachers before it was sent to the school council, and then to the district for final approval. If something were missing, district staff gave feedback on the SIP through a check-off form (with comments).

The development and review of the 04-05 addendum went through a similar process, but due to time constraints there was less time for teachers to provide input and feedback. The current SIP (04-05) has been frequently reviewed at staff meetings and discussed at the school council and PTO meetings. The new 05-06 addendum draft is currently under review by teaching staff and will be sent to the district for approval this month. During interviews and focus group discussions, teachers said that they had sufficient input into the SIP documents. In an anonymous *DOE Instructional Staff Survey*, 93 percent of respondents agreed that “Our school has a well-

defined plan for reaching student performance goals.” The Chandler Magnet School has made a strong effort to include as many stakeholders as possible in the ongoing process of developing its school improvement plans.

Although there are some steps in place to monitor the implementation and use of materials for the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math instructional programs, there is not yet a systematic plan to monitor effective implementation. During teacher interviews and focus groups, it was reported that the school’s focus—in both the Houghton Mifflin series and Everyday Math—is on the sequence described by the teacher’s manual. However, there is no clear monitoring of these programs to ensure that they address the needs of particular students—especially ELL and special education students—as a result of implementation. Through staff meetings and daily bulletins, the principal speaks to the need for using ELL strategies when teaching students, but monitoring this—as well as implementation of the programs themselves—is not in place.

The principal has conducted informal classroom walk-throughs to monitor instructional practices. A palm pilot checklist is in place for the Houghton Mifflin program and there are future plans to use a similar checklist (“eWalks”) for Everyday Math. The only other feedback given to teachers regarding implementation of instructional programs is the principal’s bi-monthly check of plan books specific to lesson objectives. The NCLBIT, assigned full-time to the school, is available at teachers’ requests to help with implementation of any of the initiatives. Occasionally, the principal will suggest that a teacher seek assistance from the NCLBIT, who will model a strategy in the classroom. In addition, teachers receive a range of information regarding teaching strategies and approaches through the NCLBIT, as well as new ideas or district professional development content during staff meetings. However, the extent to which any of this information is incorporated into classroom practice or if any changes in classroom practices are made is up to individual teachers. The SIP has not been adjusted to include any changes or timelines for implementation as a result of this informal monitoring.

In summary, SIP documents at Chandler Magnet were developed through a process that is likely to support its success. The process for monitoring the SIP’s implementation, as well as making adjustments to the plan as needed, however, are vague.

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

The PR team determined that staff members have implemented several action plans in the SIP, with particular focus on the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math series. Staff members claim to understand their role in and responsibility for implementation of actions in the plans. SIP initiatives have been implemented at some level in different classrooms. Teachers have had training opportunities in most areas of professional development mentioned in the plan but, thus far, training has been specific to the use of materials and programs without clear and adequate training in changing instructional approaches to address diverse learning needs.

During teacher interviews and focus group discussions, staff consistently expressed confidence in their roles and responsibilities for implementing the initiatives in the SIP—particularly for the new Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math programs. PR team observations indicated that teachers have their own copies of the SIP documents available for reference. Aspects of the plan are discussed during bi-monthly staff memos and the principal’s daily bulletin. When asked what initiatives they were implementing from the plan, the majority of the teachers cited: the

continued use of the Everyday Math program; the implementation of the new Houghton Mifflin series; and, finding ways to focus more on vocabulary.

It is evident that the school's staff is implementing aspects of the SIP initiatives to varying degrees. The primary focus this year is on the implementation of the new Houghton Mifflin reading series and the continuation of the Everyday Math program. Teachers express enthusiasm for the connectedness of both programs, which has filled a need for consistency and for a range of materials to reach a more diverse population of learners. There was high praise for the leveled readers in the Houghton Mifflin program, which reflect similar themes and strategies to use with a range of learners. Materials for both programs were evident during classroom observations, either in direct use or in obvious display across lessons. Most staff talked about the importance of highlighting vocabulary strategies in all areas. The PR team observed word walls and lists of mathematics words in at least half of the classes visited. Some teachers were observed stressing vocabulary as they were teaching. For example, in a Grade 1 classroom, the teacher began the lesson with a flash card review of story vocabulary. During the reading, when a child noticed one of the new vocabulary words, the teacher commented, "Nice word detection!" In some classrooms, there were students working in pairs reading aloud together and/or in groups (some with teacher support).

Through both the district and the school, Chandler Magnet staff members have received a range of professional development (PD) offerings to support many of the initiatives cited in the SIP. The most attention has been given to training teachers in use of the Everyday Math materials and program. During this year, PD has focused on the Houghton Mifflin program. These are both district-wide initiatives to address the needs in a wide range of schools, including Chandler Magnet. In addition, some teachers at Chandler Magnet were trained this summer in the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy (DIBELS), the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In addition, teachers receive ongoing support from the NCLBIT. They also have the option of participating in Voyager 1, a computer-based tutorial in DIBELS to learn to use this information to group students. Teachers have had training in both Teaching English Language Learners (TELL) and, through the efforts of the principal, in the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O). There is training planned for ELL teachers to use Houghton Mifflin materials with ELL students, but PD opportunities beyond assistance from the NCLBIT has not yet been planned for homeroom teachers, who are responsible for the majority of the academic instruction. The new special education inclusion model (not yet in the SIP) has been introduced at the school through the principal's own initiative, so that everyone is using the same materials and exposed to the same teaching strategies.

Though the PR team recognizes that PD has been comprehensive at the Chandler Magnet School, timelines for full implementation of these initiatives and for monitoring the quality of implementation to address the needs of learners in this diverse environment are not in place.

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

Because the Houghton Mifflin program and some assessments are new, there is not currently a clear method for measuring student gains as a result of the implementation of Chandler Magnet SIP initiatives. Teachers have examined MCAS data to write the SIP and to address some student needs. The SIP does not have benchmarks, however, to measure student growth as a result of

implementation of the plan nor to make adjustments accordingly. Teachers describe changes in classroom practices as a result of both the Houghton Mifflin and the Everyday Math programs and report gains in student achievement. The evidence, though, is anecdotal, varied and specific to individual classrooms.

Teachers have examined MCAS data to write the SIP and to address student needs. MCAS scores were analyzed to ascertain that students were having the most problem in literacy relating specifically to vocabulary issues of second language learners. Teachers spent staff meeting time to review and analyze MCAS data for their particular grade level and, when applicable, MCAS results from the previous year. Other than MCAS scores, the school has not analyzed any other data, though there are future plans to use other test results in this analysis.

Although the school is using a variety of assessments, there is currently not benchmark data to measure student growth as a result of implementation of the plan and to make changes in instructional practices. Teachers are encouraged to give unit tests in both Houghton Mifflin and the Everyday Math, but there is no formalized way of looking at the data and, as a result, informing instruction. Teachers describe that they see improvement and student gains in performance but, at this time, it is anecdotal. Primary grade teachers describe using test results from DRA, DIBELS and Houghton Mifflin and the Everyday Math tests for grouping children at the beginning of the year. Also, special education teachers have used these data to write IEP goals. Since DIBELS is new this year, there is no data to support that gains have been made. DIBELS will be given again in January to see if there are changes regarding phonemic awareness and fluency. Upper grade teachers use recommendations from previous grade teachers for mathematics placement. They also use GRADE scores, Houghton Mifflin and the Everyday Math unit assessments to help with grouping in mathematics and ELA at the beginning of the year. Currently, there is no systematized way, however, to use these assessments to measure ongoing gains as SIP initiatives are implemented. Although the PR team, at the time of the visit, did not examine Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) results, staff members claimed that there were student gains for ELLs noted in the MEPA for 5th and 6th grade students, as well as some improvement in grades 3 and 4. However, reported gains are not clearly connected to SIP initiatives and are not included as a method of collection in the SIP. During a focus group with special education staff, participants said that the inclusion model has produced positive gains regarding perception and social gains (e.g., student confidence, student sense of inclusion and student satisfaction). At this point, there has been no measure to see if, as a result of this model, there is academic improvement.

To provide a consistent measurement of student gains, all Worcester Public Schools have recently given the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments to all students and have received results from the district. The district plans to train all staff to analyze MAP results to ascertain student gaps in learning and to examine strategies needed to raise achievement. Because this assessment is new this year, it is not possible to assess student gains at this time.

The PR team concludes that the Chandler Magnet School has no benchmark data to measure gains in student achievement as a result of the implementation of SIP initiatives. At present, evidence of gains in student achievement is anecdotal and related to specific classrooms. There is a district plan in development, however, to address this need.

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

The Chandler Magnet School has strong leadership that is widely supported by school staff. Teachers support the planned improvement initiatives. Though the district has provided the school with a range of physical and human resources, central office approved a SIP that has been deemed by the PR team as insufficient. In addition, there are no formal systems in place—at either the school or district level—to clearly assess the successful implementation of SIP initiatives, to monitor the implementation and to assess gains in student achievement resulting from SIP initiatives at the Chandler Magnet School.

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

The principal is highly regarded by the staff as a leader who will move the Chandler Magnet School towards its goals for higher student performance. The principal is strongly supported by the school's community. Though some instructional leadership tools appear to be in place, they are not part of a formalized, systematic plan for monitoring consistency of implementation of initiatives at the Chandler Magnet School.

Teaching staff consistently expressed confidence in the principal's ability to manage the school and to affect positive change at all levels. In focus groups and interviews, teachers praised the principal, as reflected in the following remarks:

- “We did not have strong leadership and now we do. We have all been here a long time... the principal watched, learned and then slowly implemented changes... she won us over.”
- “She makes meetings comfortable enough ... that teachers can say, ‘I’m having difficulty with...’ ”
- “She has set a culture where we are willing to ask for help.”
- “She is supportive of efforts of staff. She is not afraid to say what is not working.”
- “She has an open-door policy.”

The principal focuses bi-monthly meetings on professional development and discussions of SIP initiatives. She collects lesson plans and returns them with occasional notes. She walks through classrooms daily and shares positive observations. Teacher reported that there are already fewer student behavior issues since the arrival of the new principal last year. The principal attends parent meetings. On the *DOE Instructional Staff Survey*, 93 percent of respondents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that the principal provides effective leadership to support staff efforts to improve the academic performance of students at the Chandler Magnet School. There is strong evidence that the principal is managing the school well, that morale is high and that the staff members are willing to make changes under the principal's leadership.

Although the principal presents many aspects of strong leadership, Chandler Magnet current lacks a formalized process—with goals and timelines—to ensure consistency of implementation of SIP practices throughout the school. Up to now, the principal has completed daily walk-throughs with some verbal positive feedback (at times) to teachers. The principal has started to use a checklist for eWalks connected to Houghton Mifflin and has plans to conduct similar walk-throughs to assess Everyday Math strategies and practices. The principal confirms that the NCLBIT is trained in all the initiatives of the SIP and is available to train teachers, when necessary. Some teachers mentioned that the NCLBIT has modeled in their classrooms over the

years and the principal encourages staff members to ask, on their own, for the NCLBIT's help. There is high praise among teachers for the efforts of the NCLBIT, who also provides ongoing information and professional development training for staff. The principal is looking for ways to build common planning time into the schedule for grade-level members and support specialists.

At present, however, there is not a consistent plan in the SIP or at the school to ensure full and effective implementation of SIP initiatives, nor in monitoring ways in which teachers use materials and instructional approaches that will most enhance learning of diverse learners—particularly those students with language and special needs.

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

Evidence examined by the PR team shows that the teachers support the SIP improvement efforts and that they agree with the identified student needs. There is strong evidence that staff members are enthusiastically engaged in implementing some of the strategies and initiatives in the SIP—particularly the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math programs. Teachers express belief that these initiatives will promote gains in student performance, though there is no formal way for ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of specific changes in instructional practices and whether they are affecting positive student learning for all students.

In interviews and in focus groups, the majority of the teachers stated that they agreed with the identified needs of students as defined in the SIP and with the improvement strategies being planned and implemented. Most of the staff verbally expressed that students were held back because of language issues—particularly vocabulary development—because of the large number of second language learners in the school. When asked on the *DOE Instructional Staff Survey*, “What are the most significant reasons for lack of student achievement at the school,” more than two-thirds of the respondents cited home and economic issues and 7 of the 27 (26%) mentioned English language difficulties. Only four referenced teaching methodology to address diverse learners. The SIP itself identified learning needs as “...*instruction on vocabulary development, critical thinking skills, test-taking skills and correctly answering open-response questions*” (SIP 04-06, pg. 11). Additionally, the causal problems described in the plan related to curriculum, pacing, the need for more individualized help and differentiation of instruction. The PR team noted that, during teacher focus group discussions, teachers rarely addressed the critical-thinking need. Also, there was little mention about aspects of the curriculum and/or instructional weaknesses contributing to student lack of achievement. When asked if they support the improvement strategies in the SIP, the majority of teachers stated they did. On the *DOE Instructional Staff Survey*, 93 percent agreed that “...Our school has a well-defined plan for reaching student performance goals,” and 79 percent agreed that “...the curriculum implemented is effective and appropriate.” Fourteen percent of staff, however, disagreed that the curriculum was appropriate; seven percent disagreed with the plan.

As described previously (in Key Question 1C), there is evidence that staff is engaged in implementing some of the strategies and initiatives, particularly as they are imbedded in the materials that they are all using for the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math programs. Teachers express enthusiasm for these two programs. They express further that there is a collaborative spirit among staff connected to the implementation, in particular, of the Houghton Mifflin program. There is less evidence that specific attention is focused on instructional approaches within these programs to accommodate ELL and special education students. To begin to address this need, the principal has purchased Houghton Mifflin support materials and

has arranged to send ELL and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teachers to training given by district ELL personnel in the use of the materials.

Teachers are enthusiastic that the new programs, in particular, will promote student gains. They express willingness to implement initiatives in the plan—particularly the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math programs. Teachers clearly see the benefit of using consistent materials and practices to promote student gains and claim that they see more confidence and positive academic growth in students. The PR team sees the potential for these programs but, up to now, there has been no consistent way to review and assess the effectiveness of specific changes in instructional practices within these programs and to monitor whether they are affecting positive student learning for all students. There are no timelines for expected implementation of any particular approaches or ways for formal accountability of the implementation.

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

The PR team determined that the district is providing strong support to the school in the area of resources—both financial and human—for implementation of curricular programs. The district has been active in providing both new materials, support personnel and a range of professional development opportunities to support the initiatives in the Chandler Magnet SIP to increase student achievement. The panel finds that the district has not given sufficient guidance to the Chandler Magnet School—either in terms of developing a strong, clear SIP for addressing the needs of their diverse population or for systematically evaluating the implementation of the initiatives in the plan.

The district has been active in providing both new curricular materials and a range of professional development opportunities to support the initiatives in the Chandler Magnet SIP to improve student performance. Many of the Chandler Magnet SIP initiatives are also district initiatives, and materials for both the Houghton Mifflin and Everyday Math series have been purchased for the Chandler Magnet and other elementary schools in the district. The district has provided trainings in these programs and other SIP initiatives (DIBELS, LINKS, TELL) and has gathered test data to disseminate to individual schools. Most recently, the superintendent has purchased a comprehensive assessment system called MAP, which all elementary schools are currently using. There is a date set for training of school personnel to analyze the results and to inform their teaching. The district has been consistently supportive in these areas.

Although some personnel had to be removed from the school in the past couple of years because of budget cuts, the superintendent has assured that the NCLBIT and ELAIT positions remain in place. Additionally, through the district-wide Title I model, the principal was able to provide additional personnel and reduce class sizes in the primary grades. The superintendent has made district content specialists available at principals' requests to help all schools. The principal has already requested the assistance of the new ELL specialist to train ELL and SEI teachers to use new Houghton Mifflin materials for English language learners. Through efforts such as these, the district has given adequate human resource support to the school's implementation of SIP initiatives.

Although the district is informed of the general instructional needs of the school, it is the judgment of the PR team that district leadership has not been sufficient to assist Chandler Magnet in developing a strong, clear SIP to address the needs of the school's diverse population, or to systematically evaluate the implementation of the initiatives in the plan. The district sends

aggregated MCAS scores and other assessments to the school. As explained by district personnel, it is the school's responsibility to analyze the data and to identify root causes for lack of student achievement, since that approach has personal relevance to the school. It is unclear that school personnel have sufficient support to conduct necessary analyses. The principal and NCLBIT were trained by the district's school support specialist in the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process to develop a SIP. Additionally, two people from the district review the schools' improvement plans and give feedback, with comments indicating information that may be missing, via a checklist.

Because of the current deficiencies in the Chandler Magnet SIP, the PR team could not determine that this feedback was sufficient enough to assist the school in identifying root causes for lack of student achievement, or in writing a plan with clear action plans and timelines to effect instructional change. This process has improved over time, however, as shown by improvements in each addenda. Although the quadrant manager visits the schools to meet with principals and to walk through classrooms, any feedback, at this point, is informal. As a result, the PR team concludes that there is not adequate support in place at the district level to ensure that the school has written an effective SIP, and that a systematic process exists to evaluate its implementation.

CONCLUSION

The PR team concluded that the Chandler Magnet School SIP is not a sound plan. It is not clear how SIP documents will be used to support instructional changes to ensure that increases in student performance occur, or that gains that are made can be connected to any particular improvement initiatives. Though the SIP is based on causal analysis of student performance, it does not articulate specific student learning objectives to address these causes. A general enthusiasm for some SIP initiatives exists at Chandler Magnet and teachers are actively working to implement the district's instructional programs. Instructional change practices must be more closely monitored, however, to ensure full implementation and to determine how these changes meet (or do not meet) student learning objectives and goals for improved performance. A systematic and consistent method for measuring student progress does not currently exist at the school, though there is indication that a process is under development.

The panel has determined that there are many elements of strong leadership in place at the Chandler Magnet School. Although the principal demonstrates characteristics of a strong instructional leader, there have been no formal systems in place (at either the school or district level) that will clearly assess or monitor the successful implementation of SIP instructional initiatives in classrooms needed to impact student achievement at the Chandler Magnet School.

APPENDIX A
Team Members

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

Jake Foster, Panel Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Education, Malden, MA

Paula DelPrete, Panelist, Assistant Principal, Framingham, MA

Joyce Koss-MaGregor, Panelist, Teacher, Auburn, MA

Bridget Rodriquez, Panelist, Former Principal, Cambridge, MA

APPENDIX B
Chandler Magnet Elementary 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.
- 9:30a.m. —11:30a.m. **Team meeting # 1:** team meets for the first time to discuss each panelist’s individual analysis; team forms preliminary judgments on key questions.
- 11:30a.m.—1p.m. **Lunch and travel to the school** (*NOTE: In districts undergoing multiple school reviews, superintendent interviews may be scheduled between 11am and 1 pm at the hotel.*)
- 1:00 – 2:00p.m. Panel meets with the school’s **Instructional Leadership Team**.
- 2:00—3:00 p.m. Panelists meet with the district **Superintendent** (and Assistant Superintendent, if appropriate).
- 3:15—4:30p.m. Panel meets with the **Principal** (and one other school-based individual, if appropriate).
- 4:30—6:00 p.m. **Team meeting # 2:** panelists synthesize interview information, further define findings, prepare questions, and develop a team strategy for Day 2 of the review.

Day 2

All activities take place at the school.

- 7:30—8:00 a.m. Panel meets with the Principal
- 8:00—8:30 a.m. Panel meets with the School Council
- 8:30—9:00 a.m. Panelists meet individually with Focus Groups. The Panel Review Coordinator and the Principal will identify participants for each Focus Group. The groups will be organized to include groups of individuals who can respond to questions designed for parents, students (middle and high schools), classroom teachers, curriculum facilitators, content-area specialists, grade-level instructors, or other specific inquiry groups.

Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group	Focus Group

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

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

11 a.m.—12:30 p.m. **Team meeting # 3:** panel meets to discuss findings so far and to plan the remainder of the day (working lunch).

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

1:00—2:00 p.m. Panelists meet with teacher focus groups; consultant co-chair is free to work on report.

	Panelist A	Panelist B	Panelist C	Panelist D	Panelist E
1:00-1:30	Teacher	Focus Group 1	Teacher	Focus Group 3	Prepare report
1:30-2:00	Teacher	Focus Group 2	Teacher	Focus Group 4	

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

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