
Meeting the Turnaround Challenge
School Case Study

Springfield Public Schools
Commonwealth Pilot School
Duggan Middle School, Springfield, MA

Existing School, State Initiated Zone
District with Partner(s) Model

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INTRODUCTION

Turnaround Model Summary

Turnaround Approach employed at this school: Close and Re-open District Model

John J. Duggan Middle School in Springfield, MA, was a struggling school in a low-performing district that took a lifeline thrown out by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Duggan was one of four schools in the first cohort of the statewide Commonwealth Pilot program, which was designed to build upon the success of Boston's Pilot School program by granting site-based autonomies in the areas of budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, assessment, and the school calendar. The Commonwealth Pilot ("Co-Pilot") model aims to forge a partnership between all stakeholders in the conversion process, from the school community itself (which votes on whether or not to pursue conversion to pilot status) to, importantly, the local teachers' union. The pilot school initiative is managed by the Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is supported by the Boston-based Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), which provides coordination and support to all pilot schools.

Why this model bears special scrutiny:

Duggan's model bears special scrutiny for the following reasons:

- The Boston Pilot Schools initiative has a proven track record of success in improving student achievement and supporting school-based autonomies. Duggan is part of the first cohort of non-Boston schools attempting to replicate the model, which may hold promise for other urban districts in the state and the country.
- Duggan was given complete authority to excess and hire its own (union) teachers—a rather unusual freedom for an existing school turnaround. The challenges and opportunities that resulted may give particular insight into staff change as a key lever for school improvement. Although the advantages of a reconstituted staff are significant, there were also hidden costs, including strained relations with other schools in the district.
- The Boston-based Center for Collaborative Education has provided extremely flexible support for the change initiative, and has largely succeeded in building internal capacity despite its limited authority and decision-making power.

Were the two central Turnaround Keys present?

- *Did Duggan Middle School have sufficient flexibility in operating conditions?*

Yes. Massachusetts' Commonwealth Pilot School program grants flexibility in key areas of people, money, time, and program. In the case of Duggan, the "people" category proved to be critical: upon undertaking school turnaround, Duggan's Principal had complete authority to excess staff. All staff reapplies for their

teaching positions if they wanted to stay at Duggan. This process had a tremendous positive impact in establishing a new school culture and a committed team. However, the move also proved controversial with the rest of the district, particularly schools forced to absorb excess teachers. Changes in time and in program were also implemented after the pilot conversion.

- *Did Duggan Middle School have sufficient partner capacity and leadership?*

For the most part, yes. Duggan relies on two outside partners for support: the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) and Expeditionary Learning Schools/Outward Bound (EL). Both are strongly integrated into the classroom and the day-to-day school operations. CCE assists in all aspects of strategic planning, acts as a link to the district (and the state), and supports the leadership team. EL provides curricular support to the teachers as they design trademark, interdisciplinary “learning expeditions.” These partners have sufficient capacity (despite a lack of expertise with math and data, detailed later in this case study), but do not have decision-making authority, nor accountability for results. This is by design: like other Commonwealth Pilot schools, ultimate authority rests with the state with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Board of Education, and the newly established Governing Board. Shared authority with partners was not intended to be part of the Co-Pilot model.

Duggan Middle School's Turnaround Story

Background and Context

Since the advent of No Child Left Behind, and even prior to that, Duggan Middle School in Springfield, Massachusetts had struggled to meet the needs of its students. The school had failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in mathematics for eight consecutive years, and only met the required reading standard once during that period. Duggan had a history of cycling through principals, teacher morale was low, the student population was violent, and the school culture was extremely negative.

Past improvement efforts had not yielded the desired results, and despite becoming a magnet school in 2005, student scores had not improved. In November 2006, the Massachusetts State Board of Education met to deliberate the school's future. Discussion centered on whether to designate the school, and three others in the state, chronically underperforming (and begin discussing the possibility of closure), or to provide the schools an alternative restructuring option (see Appendix A). In consultation with local leaders, the Board decided to offer these failing schools the opportunity to become Commonwealth Pilot Schools (Co-Pilots).

The Co-Pilot program is a carve-out strategy led by the state education agency. In this model, specific guidelines for Restructuring and Redesign (Appendix B and Appendix C) provide low-performing schools with a set of criteria to design conversion proposals, which, if approved, grant a wide range of autonomies. While individual schools remain under district purview, school and district teams receive strategic and operating assistance under the new designation and operate under the same general conditions as defined by the state. A partnership with the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), a Boston-based non-profit organization, provides much of this technical assistance.

Duggan's Principal, Jonathan Swan, made the decision to apply for conversion in the spring of 2007, his second year at the school. That decision was then ratified by a staff vote requiring 80% approval. The school's proposal for Co-Pilot status (Appendix D) was accepted, and approved to start at the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year. A separate Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was then negotiated between Springfield

Public Schools and the Springfield Education Association outlining the specifics of school autonomy in the areas of staffing, budget, and curriculum, schedule, and governance (Appendix E), in accordance with the state’s definition of Commonwealth Pilot Status.

In 2006, prior to Co-Pilot conversion, the school had partnered with the New York City based Expeditionary Learning Schools/Outward Bound (EL) to support their school change efforts. The organization focuses mainly on curricula, school culture, training teachers to design and implement “learning expeditions:” in-depth investigations of themes or topics that engage students in and outside of the classroom through projects, fieldwork, and service. In addition to helping schools reorient curricula around this hands-on, project-based approach, EL also emphasizes social/emotional development by grouping students and teachers in consistent, cohesive units called “crews.”

Once Co-Pilot status was approved, Principal Swan created a new senior leadership team to help solidify the new school culture, and substantially shook up the school staffing plan. All teachers were required to reapply for their jobs; new teachers were recruited from other local schools. This resulted in a significantly reconstituted staff: more than 70 percent of the old Duggan faculty either chose to leave the school or were not re-hired. In accordance with procedures outlined in the pilot school MOA, each teacher that chose to stay signed a Work Election Agreement (Appendix F) detailing their roles, responsibilities, and evaluation criteria (*see ‘People’ in Conditions section*).

When the site visit occurred in December 2008, the midpoint of the second year of restructuring, Duggan was still developing practices and processes. It is almost certainly too early to judge whether the Co-Pilot transformation of the school has been a success overall. However, there are some promising signs of improvement in certain areas and the school appears to be on the right trajectory towards turnaround. The school has seen some steady gains in English Language Arts, particularly in grades 7 and 8 where students have outperformed the district average. Although lagging behind ELA improvement, small increases in math scores have also narrowed the gap with both district and state averages.

For more detailed performance data, see the Performance History section below.

School Profile

In accordance with one of the state’s mandatory Co-Pilot pre-conditions, the school’s enrollment was reduced from just over 750 students to fewer than 450. This size reduction provided school leaders with the opportunity to have a greater impact on school culture and to create smaller learning communities in each grade level. These smaller class sizes were considered a necessity if student and staff relationships were to improve significantly, and were also a central tenet of the Expeditionary Learning philosophy.

School demographics and basic statistics are provided in the following table. The drastic decrease in the number of students, to comply with one of the Co-Pilot conditions, resulted in a shift in demographics as well. While still extremely high, the percentage of Title I eligible students decreased by 22%, and the percentage of English Language Learners decreased by 9%. The percentage of special education students increased by 4%.

School & Student Overview Data

	2006-2007 (Pre-Turnaround)	2008-2009
Grades:	6-8	6-8
Number of students enrolled:	723	424
Age of school in its current form:	0	2
Number of general education students:	535	296
Percentage of special education students:	26%	30%
Percentage of students that are Title 1 eligible:	97%	75%
Percentage of English Language Learners:	13%	4%
Attendance percentage:	(NA)	95.33%
Racial/Ethnic makeup of the students (percentages):	AA/Black	34%
	Hispanic/Latino	35%
	White	18%
	Asian	2.5%

Performance History¹

Although there is only one year of post-turnaround performance data to examine, there appear to be early indicators of positive progress, particularly in English Language Arts. Though the sixth grade is lagging behind the overall improvement trend, seventh and eighth grade students outperformed their district peers for the first time. The math data showed a slight uptick in performance across the board, though it still lags both district and state performance averages.

Grade 6 MCAS* Score Improvement

*Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (standardized state testing)

Percent of students in each performance category on state tests			Pre-Turnaround (2006-2007)	Year 1 (2007-2008)
English Language Arts	Duggan	Below Basic	22	21
		Proficient & Advanced	27	25
	District	Below Basic	26	26
		Proficient & Advanced	29	34
	State	Below Basic	7	8
		Proficient & Advanced	67	67
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	MET
Math	Duggan	Below Basic	79	59
		Proficient & Advanced	4	7
	District	Below Basic	58	51
		Proficient & Advanced	13	18
	State	Below Basic	20	18
		Proficient & Advanced	52	56
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	NOT MET

¹ Figures in all performance tables are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Grade 7 MCAS* Score Improvement

*Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (standardized state testing)

Percent of students in each performance category on state tests			Pre-Turnaround (2006-2007)	Year 1 (2007-2008)
English Language Arts	Duggan	Below Basic	32	19
		Proficient & Advanced	25	28
	District	Below Basic	28	25
		Proficient & Advanced	35	31
	State	Below Basic	8	8
		Proficient & Advanced	69	69
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	MET
Math	Duggan	Below Basic	80	79
		Proficient & Advanced	4	4
	District	Below Basic	65	66
		Proficient & Advanced	10	12
	State	Below Basic	24	24
		Proficient & Advanced	46	47
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	NOT MET

Grade 8 MCAS* Score Improvement

*Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (standardized state testing)

Percent of students in each performance category on state tests			Pre-Turnaround (2006-2007)	Year 1 (2007-2008)
English Language Arts	Duggan	Below Basic	31	20
		Proficient & Advanced	34	44
	District	Below Basic	23	25
		Proficient & Advanced	39	41
	State	Below Basic	6	7
		Proficient & Advanced	75	75
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	MET
Math	Duggan	Below Basic	72	67
		Proficient & Advanced	4	7
	District	Below Basic	66	62
		Proficient & Advanced	10	13
	State	Below Basic	25	24
		Proficient & Advanced	45	49
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Status			NOT MET	NOT MET

The Center for Collaborative Education's analysis of progress at the end of the first year of Co-Pilot status (Appendix G), and the school's own self-evaluation (Appendix H) are consistent with the findings of our site visit. CCE concluded that the Duggan had:

- Created an improved school culture that is more personalized and effective for students and staff;
- Increased efficiency of planning and communication about the work and goals of the school;
- Identified and begun addressing instructional gaps in pedagogy, curriculum and the use of data to inform differentiated instruction;
- Created clear learning objectives;
- Achieved buy-in and commitment from all staff members in the school;
- Facilitated a growing understanding of pilot autonomies, particularly among the governing board, the leadership team members and key school leaders;
- Established a plan to create a common curriculum and interim assessments;
- Established an effective governing board and leadership team;
- Enabled some strong teaching teams to develop and to make effective use of common planning time;
- Recruited and developed an enthusiastic, invested faculty and staff (*CCE Report, 2008*).

Areas for improvement were identified as follows:

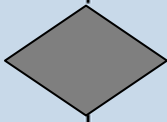
- Increasing the pace and rigor of the curriculum in all core subjects, but particularly in mathematics;
- Establishing an expectation that all teachers are math teachers, whatever their subject expertise and experience;
- Differentiating the curriculum to more effectively meet the needs of LEP students, SPED and disabled students, and higher achieving/gifted students, as well as any racial, ethnic, or gender group determined to need focused attention;
- Improving the quality of teacher preparation so that every lesson plan caters to the needs of at least three ability groups (top, middle, bottom) and ensures that students are given tasks that are appropriate for their ability level;
- Developing effective systems for assessment, goal-setting, and achievement tracking as students progress through the school;
- Targeting students on the cusp of each proficiency level for extra support;
- Ensuring the school's financial autonomy by securing all district funding to which it is entitled;
- Involving parents in the education process and helping them celebrate the small improvements that are made (*CCE Report, 2008*).

Further information on progress and future goals can also be found in CCE's Year One Evaluation of all four Commonwealth Pilot Schools (Appendix I).

STRATEGIC & OPERATING CONTEXT

Turnaround Approach

Turnaround Approach Matrix

	District Management (with supporting partners)	District & Lead Partner	Managing Partner (charter or non-charter)
Existing School			
Close and Re-open			

State Carve-Out with District and Partner Support

Though Duggan is now a member of a state-created zone of school which defines the conditions for operation, it remains within district boundaries and receives some district support. This support is augmented with additional aid from various organizational partners, particularly CCE, which provide significant strategic and technical assistance to the school.

Duggan enrolls the same students as the former district-run Duggan Middle School (or at least students with generally similar demographics), yet operates under completely altered conditions and with additional supports that are not provided to other district schools. Due to the support of its partner organizations and the strong leadership at the school, it is becoming a school with high demand for its 450 places. All former Duggan students receive priority for seats, followed by students from the traditional feeder elementary school(s), and then a lottery for any remaining openings.

Most of the conditions usually required for successful turnaround are now in place. Two capable organizational partners (CCE and EL) are highly integrated into the day-to-day practices of the school (though neither is accountable for results). The leadership team has the freedom to select its own staff, to modify the school day and to select the most effective programs. Overall, the school has considerable autonomy.

In lieu of the traditional district management structure, Duggan has assembled a school governing board composed of administrators, teachers, students, and parents, which acts in an advisory capacity. Although the Center for Collaborative Education provides input on programmatic issues, it does not have representation on the governing board, due to its position as a technical assistance provider to the schools.

Loose, Flexible Management

Duggan Middle School falls on the loose side of the tight/loose (centralized vs. distributed) management continuum. The Co-Pilot designation provides guiding principles for strategies and school operations, but the school leadership team and governance board have full autonomy over virtually all other decisions, including program. The school is free from district program mandates, but may opt to use any district recommendations or services if so desired.

Conditions

Given the loose management and continued district affiliation, it might not appear at first glance that radical changes have occurred at Duggan. However, the changes that were made, especially in regard to staffing and outside organizational partnerships have created sufficient condition changes to allow for the possibility of true school turnaround.

The 'opt-in' staffing model, in which teachers expressly elected to work at Duggan, is seen as a critical first step in changing the culture of the school, and was not without controversy within the district (*see below*). With this fundamental change in place, other changes such as modifying the school schedule were accomplished more easily.

People

Under the Election to Work Agreement agreed to between Springfield Public Schools (SPS) and the Springfield Education Authority (SEA) (Appendix F), the principal and the leadership team at Duggan have complete authority to hire and excess staff members as required. Upon conversion to a Co-Pilot school, all staff members at the existing Duggan Middle School were required to reapply for their jobs. Talented teachers were also recruited and hired from other schools within the district and from surrounding districts. Ultimately, the staff of the new Co-Pilot school consisted of about 40% prior teachers and 60% new hires. The excessing of staff caused some local controversy and still is an occasional issue between the school's administration and other local schools, that either lost strong teachers or that were required to find positions for displaced former Duggan staff.

The selection of a new staff made a significant difference in creating a new, more positive, culture within the school. The flexible Election to Work Agreement (EWA) enables the principal and administration the freedom to use time creatively, and to create various organizational structures within the school, including two distributed leadership teams, one for department chairs and one for grade level team leaders. In addition, the EWA (Appendix F) outlines specific expectations for teachers with respect to curriculum and instruction, family and community involvement, and student support, resulting in a unity of purpose and clear standards for both teachers and students. Faculty and staff used this unity to articulate a set of character and behavior expectations for adults in the school, similar to the expectations typically set for students (Appendix J).

Time

Duggan is using time creatively to support its turnaround efforts. While the school has not extended the school day or the school year, it facilitates staff collaboration and strategic planning time by altering the school schedule so that school begins on four out of five days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) at 7:45 AM. On Wednesday school begins at 10:15 AM, allowing additional opportunity for common planning time. Teaching staff are also required to stay late on Tuesday afternoons to create more time for professional

learning. The school day finishes at 2:45 PM each day, when a range of after school activities and tutoring programs are available to the students (see School Schedule, Appendix K, and Staff Calendar, Appendix L for additional information).

Money

Although the school design implies financial autonomy from the district, Duggan has had some difficulty securing all the funding it is entitled to under the State agreement regarding Commonwealth Pilot Schools. CCE, Duggan's partner in the Co-Pilot program, is interceding on the school's behalf to encourage the district to fully fund the school by releasing all the per-pupil dollars for which it is eligible directly to the school administration.

The principal has full discretion over the use of the available budget (Appendix M), and has allocated money to reflect his core priorities of building a strong leadership team and enabling the field trips and hands-on experiences that are a key part of the Expeditionary Learning Schools approach. Some additional funding support has been secured from the Mass Mutual Insurance Corporation.

In fiscal year 2009, up to \$150,000 per school was also available to the Co-Pilot schools through federal school improvement funds. The principal has discretion over these dollars, and they may be used for a variety of purposes related to implementing the transformations. Funds could be used for a number of programs and supports, and include: school design work and meetings, development of professional learning communities, additional student support services, professional development and training, applicable supplies for instruction, and stipends for staff members who work outside their contractual obligations.

Program

Although it operates within the district, Duggan has complete freedom over all program-related decisions. The school has full discretion over the content of its curriculum but is still required to complete state and district assessments. The school's partnership with Expeditionary Learning exerts a strong influence over the curriculum, as teachers are encouraged to plan units around educational expeditions outside of the standard school-building environment (*For further information, see External Capacity, below.*)

Capacity

Organizational turnaround requires both the authority over conditions to effect necessary changes and the capacity to do so. In Duggan's case, the pairing of two very strong external partner organizations (the Center for Collaborative Education and Expeditionary Learning Schools) helped school authorities articulate and execute their restructuring goals. Each partner organization has contributed experience and expertise to the turnaround plan, and has been met with similar drive and capability on the part of the school leadership team. However, having two external partners in one school, with neither one assuming a lead role, also caused a certain degree of confusion. All stakeholders are noting positive progress in this area as roles between the school leadership and the partners become more well-defined.

External Capacity

As mentioned above, the school has strong and valuable partnerships with both CCE and EL. To date, CCE has chiefly focused its efforts on the strategic and operating needs of the school (with some focus on curriculum and professional development). Expeditionary Learning has played a major role in developing the school's curriculum, and has provided the majority of the professional development.

CCE philosophy and procedures are already deeply embedded at the school, much more than the relatively ambiguous contract for services that CCE has with the Commonwealth. The organization is contracted through the state education agency to provide a designated number of days of service at the school site, according to a formula based upon student enrollment and is standard for all Co-Pilot schools (see Duggan Work Plan, Appendix N, and School Goals, Appendix O). For the 2008-2009 school year, Duggan received 80 days of CCE coaching.

While CCE does not share accountability or authority with the school or district, the organization has played a key role in guiding the school (and some district operations) through the Co-Pilot conversion process, and has taken on the role of liaison between the school, the district, and the state. This assistance allows the principal to focus on teaching and learning within the building, as opposed to day-to-day operations. While the work plans for CCE and each school are relatively extensive, include roles and responsibilities, and specify intended outcomes, the work plans remain separate from the actual contract that CCE has with DESE.

Despite the new Co-Pilot status, Duggan faculty and staff do receive some support from the Springfield district office. Numerous teachers cited attending special education and other compliance-related workshops sponsored by the district. Although other curriculum-related professional development is available, it has been utilized less as the school has opted to make its own programmatic choices in consultation with CCE and EL.

Internal Capacity – School leadership and teacher capacity

Duggan is working to establish strong distributed leadership teams. The principal, Jonathan Swan, and his administrative team function well together and have divided responsibilities based upon their complementary skills and talents: one top-level team member focuses almost exclusively on teacher quality and assessment data; another assists with all facets of school operations. The school makes good use of the support already provided by various partners and consultants and is aware of places that require additional support. As this internal capacity has increased, the school has been able to internalize some of the functions and decrease reliance on the partners. Perhaps more importantly, the school has been better able to coordinate the two partner organizations as the leadership team decides what is needed and who should provide it.

Clustering

Clustering for support was intended to be an important part of the Commonwealth Pilot Schools endeavor as originally envisioned by the state. Because Co-Pilot schools share a similar hybrid management structure, as well as similar challenges and issues, it was presumed that collaboration would be a natural outgrowth of the program. Yet to date, there has been very little communication between Duggan and the fellow Co-Pilot school within Springfield, or with the two other Co-Pilots from the first cohort of conversions.

Learning Across the Cluster

All Co-Pilot schools are partnered with the Center for Collaborative Education and CCE staff is shared among the sites. These coaches and consultants provide an important channel for communication between individual schools – currently the only way that lessons learned are being shared. When encountering a particular issue at Duggan, CCE staff is able to bring knowledge of best practices and experiences from the other sites to Duggan's leadership. This results in an informal exchange of information that could be strengthened by encouraging better communication amongst the cohort and with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The school's affiliation with Expeditionary Learning Schools provides strong opportunities for networking, though not formal clustering. Support for the EL program comes from networking and sharing of lesson plans online, as well as from EL staff. Duggan teachers view the online EL network as a highly valuable resource for connecting with other EL teachers and schools across the country and for sharing "expedition" ideas and curricula.

Expanding the Cluster

In addition to Duggan, Springfield is currently launching its first voluntary Pilot school. This school is choosing to become a Pilot to proactively improve performance, rather than because it has been targeted as chronically underperforming. In theory, a greater concentration of Co-Pilot schools in the district should result in increased support for each other, sharing of best practices, and encouraging district reform. However, due to some of the contention surrounding the Duggan's Co-Pilot conversion, subsequent Co-Pilot schools may not have as much autonomy and authority, especially with respect to staffing decisions.

TURNAROUND IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Summary

The unity of purpose between Duggan and the two partner organizations has resulted in a cohesive vision for the school. There is a strong emphasis on accountability and the importance of raising achievement in core subjects. The principal and the leadership team strive for transparency in all decisions and actions at the school, are determined to make transformational changes, and will not settle for incremental improvements in place of fundamental shifts in thought and action.

This singularity of purpose has been largely enabled through the school's ability to hire its own staff of like-minded teachers. Having state-mandated condition changes also provided the school administration the "air cover" it needs to make decisions for the best interest of students.

Turnaround Process/Change Management

The turnaround process at Duggan is remarkable based on the speed in which the leadership was able to create solid governance structures and strong internal systems (while also relying on outside assistance when necessary). Duggan and CCE were given only five months to prepare and submit the school's application to become a Co-Pilot school. Given the relatively loose management structure, much of the ultimate success depended upon internal capacity. Swan and CCE set out to tackle this issue in the very beginning. CCE held a summer institute for Co-Pilot principals to help them understand their roles and newfound freedoms and to set initial goals for each conversion (see Appendix P).

Most of the professional development support CCE provided from August 2007 through January 2008 was focused on capacity building: in August, the co-Pilot schools came together for a professional development institute focused on effective team-building and creating professional learning communities. These models of collaboration helped Duggan assemble a Governing Board and a Leadership Team, as well as assess and extend teacher capacity by creating structured teams for subject and grade level leaders. All of this work helped the school's staff work together as a coherent unit and to begin to develop a consistent culture among the school staff.

As the staff developed a new work ethic based on mutual respect and cooperation in much smaller, more intimate teaching and learning groups. The culture of the school has changed, as students adjusted to a calmer and more controlled environment. A great deal of outreach was also done to explain the changes to current Duggan students, to the feeding elementary schools, and their families.

The governance board includes two students, as well as parents and community members. The board addresses major problems with the school design, and to a certain degree holds the principal accountable to his commitment of transparency and ensuring the school continues to make progress. Successes across the school are celebrated at the end of each year. Continued emphasis on the positive steps will be important as the school begins to more deeply address some of the inconsistencies in teaching and learning and student performance.

As the school has developed into a cohesive, well-functioning organization, an increasing number of practices have become institutionalized. Initially, teachers were given a vast amount of freedom over lesson plans and standards, but inconsistent teaching and learning resulted. Once the problem was identified, the leadership team (along with the distributed leadership teams that were becoming more self-sufficient) created power standards for curricular focus, developed an interim assessment program, refined the support structures for students, and learned to better manage relationships with the variety of partners assisting the school.

As the school's capacity increases, CCE is scaling back its intensive involvement. For example, CCE staff used to run the department meetings, but as the distributed leadership teams became established, they told CCE that they wanted to run their own meetings. While this limits CCE's impact on every aspect of the school, it allows CCE to focus on the bigger issues (district funding, superintendent support, etc), and demonstrates that the school is establishing a sustainable structure.

The Co-Pilot conversion was only launched in the winter of 2007, so the school has not yet had sufficient time to fully implement all the desired changes. Despite being in the early stages of implementation, the school culture is profoundly different, and Duggan student performance is beginning to improve. The fact that the leadership team has a strong sense of mission, is willing to own their student's data, and to ask for help from outside when needed, is an encouraging sign that this school will be able to overcome the current achievement gaps and create a sustainable high-functioning environment.

Readiness to Teach

Personalization of Instruction

The goal of individualized instruction is well supported at Duggan. Expeditionary Learning philosophy stipulates that students understand the relevance and purpose of learning by experiencing lessons firsthand. While the EL philosophy is well-integrated throughout the school and teachers try to create interdisciplinary lessons, implementation of full "expeditions" is not yet consistent across the school. As students continue to grow, teachers must learn to better differentiate the needs of particular students when designing learning expeditions in the daily classrooms. Some students will require remediation, but other students will require more challenging assignments and activities. The leadership team's goal of using achievement data to inform instruction should enable this improvement to begin to occur.

Interim assessments were first used in the 2008-09 school year, and there have been some growing pains during this first year of implementation. After examining the data, many teachers recognized that they needed to “own the data” of their students. However, some teachers still resist seeing the connections between their instruction and their students’ learning. Learning how to analyze the results of the interim assessments to adapt and differentiate classroom instruction is an area that requires further attention.

Professional Teaching Culture

Teachers in the school are given several opportunities each week to work and plan collaboratively in the additional time that is created by flexing the school schedule with a late student start on Wednesdays and extended teacher time on Tuesdays. Team leaders and department chairs meet regularly to discuss best practices and to resolve any curricular or behavioral problems. The school is aware of its weakness in mathematics instruction across the entire staff, and is now trying to provide more professional development for math teachers, while also encouraging the faculty to better integrate math into all subjects. Well-articulated goals and benchmarks (see Appendix Q) support these improvement objectives.

Shared Responsibility for Achievement

The principal and other members of the administration regularly visit classrooms to ensure that teaching and learning is consistent. Staff members are given regular feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their instruction. Department leaders also assist in helping new or struggling teachers. The administration has identified weaker teachers and is now providing targeted professional development and support to those teachers. If improvement isn’t made, Duggan retains the right to dismiss teachers based on poor performance.

Readiness to Learn

The culture of the school is exceedingly positive, and the students have a strong affinity for their school and view it as a safe place to learn. This change in culture has been established through embracing small class sizes, creating advisories (small groups of students that meet with a specific teacher each day), and regularly scheduling grade level conferences where student progress is discussed. The school leadership believes in a proactive approach to discipline and does not use a merit/demerit system or other behavioral grading strategies.

Action Against Adversity

Communication and relationships with parents are satisfactory, but the school is aware that more could be done to encourage more active parent involvement. The school organizes one cycle of student-led family conferences per year, and knows that much more needs to be done to bring parents and community members fully on board.

Close Student-Adult Relationships

Daily advisory meetings focus on key aspects of relationship building, character development and academic reflection and are particularly effective. Students appreciate the opportunity for close contact with at least one teacher, and the school is able to ensure that students do not fall through the cracks. Students report that there are many adults in the building that they would be comfortable confiding in if they had any problems. The School-Wide Assistance Team (SWAT), made up of guidance counselors, deans, the nurse, and the parent coordinator, meet weekly to problem-solve around the needs of individual students referred to them by teacher teams.

Safety, Discipline, & Engagement

Students are repeatedly made aware of a code of conduct, known as the “Duggan Way,” which enumerates and illustrates the so-called “character targets” and behavior traits required to succeed at the school (Appendix R). Students who violate this code of conduct are asked to reflect upon how their behavior needs to be improved to better embody these ideals (Appendix S). Students seem generally engaged in most classes, many of which are informed and supported the EL program. However, some high achieving students expressed frustration with a lack of more challenging work. Science and social studies were particularly noted as lacking sufficient challenge and variety.

A variety of after-school programs provide additional academic and behavioral support for Duggan’s students. These partners include Citizen Schools, Gear Up, among others. While the teachers and administrators unequivocally state that these services are important and beneficial to the students, very little communication occurs between the Community Based Organizations and the school staff. Greater alignment and communication could be extremely beneficial in addressing students’ needs. Since the building used to house approximately 200 more students, there is an abundance of extra space that could be used additional Community-Based Organizations and the district to provide additional services to Duggan students or the entire community.

Readiness to Act

The leadership team established their roles early on in the transformation process and complements each other’s skills well. Now that the team has developed its own working culture, and has been able to more clearly articulate which partners are need for which supports, the school is beginning to run much more smoothly.

Resource Authority

The school has autonomy with regard to all staffing decisions. Duggan staff do not work under the standard district contract, but instead work under an Election-to-Work-Agreement, that was created with the Springfield Education Association (Appendix F).

Under the Election-to-work-Agreement the principal had the freedom to recruit his own staff, as well as rehire any staff that met the new Duggan expectations. Approximately 60% of the former Duggan staff either chose to leave the school, or were not rehired. This autonomy enabled the principal to bring in new staff members whose personal philosophies were aligned with the school’s vision and who had the capacity and desire to work with the students best interests in mind.

As stated previously, the school created two distributed leadership teams, one consisting of department chairs and one consisting of grade level team leaders. These teams meet every other week to work on raising standards and improving quality of instruction.

Resource Ingenuity

The autonomy available to the school allowed the principal to add hours of professional development to support new and existing staff and to help build a sense of community within the school. Alterations have been made to the school schedule so that school begins at 7:45 AM four days each week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday), while on Wednesday school begins at 10:15 AM. This late start for students enables the staff to meet together on a regular basis, create a sense of community through a variety of activities, and then

move on to whatever professional development activity has been planned for that day. The sessions conclude with an opportunity for staff members to identify what has gone well that week (stars) and suggestions about how things could be improved (stars). The information gained from this latter activity, combined with an analysis of student performance data is now being drawn together to develop a professional development plan for the coming school year.

Activities completed at the beginning of each morning staff meeting include motivational readings, public acknowledgements, apologies, announcements, and always end “on a good note” with singing. Professional development topics addressed during these sessions have included: planning community meeting; developing advisories; creating student portfolios; learning how assessment leads to learning; how to complete data analysis and how to integrate cooperative discipline into the school.

Under guidance and instruction from the school, CCE has been relatively effective in securing financial resources from the state education agency. Additional funding for the EL program has also been obtained from both the district and Mass Mutual Insurance. Additional funds, and the discretion over resources, has been used to create a strong leadership team and also to fund the additional materials, experiments, and field trips that are key elements of the Expeditionary Learning program.

The school has worked with “*Gear Up*” to secure grant money for professional development for teachers and for tutoring throughout the year. The school also has partnerships with both UMass-Amherst and Western New England College that provides access to student teachers and tutoring, respectively. A partnership with Citizen’s Schools provides before and after school programs for students.

CCE staff is working with the state education agency and the district to ensure that the district releases the appropriate per pupil allocations that Duggan is entitled to under the Co-Pilot program.

Agility in the Face of Turbulence

The school has complete autonomy over all programmatic decisions. The Expeditionary Learning program and the school’s magnet status within the district encourage practical and hands-on experiences for students, but otherwise the school is able to adapt the curriculum as needed.

Much of the development work in the school’s first year as a magnet school was centered on delivering instruction through “expeditions,” an approach which is intended to engage students through rigorous and interdisciplinary real life experiences. In collaboration with two capable partner organizations, the overhaul of both curricula and school culture is nearly complete. As Duggan progresses in its turnaround, new issues will undoubtedly arise—and with them new opportunities. The expansion of the Co-Pilot model raises questions of scalability, but also offers possibilities for richer and deeper collaboration with similar schools throughout the state. While the Co-Pilot schools’ five autonomies represent a tool for change rather than an end in itself, it seems clear that, so far, they have served the Duggan community well.

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Artifacts, tools and templates are available in the Resource Center at www.massinsight.org.

Appendix A. Overview of the Pilot School Process

This document outlines the timeline and necessary steps for conversion to Commonwealth Pilot Schools in lieu of school closure or other consequences of the Chronically Underperforming designation.

Appendix B. Pilot Guidelines

This document offers a primer on the Commonwealth Pilot Schools Option, including background, guiding principles, and steps for conversion.

Appendix C. Commonwealth Pilot School Application Requirements

This RFP for conversion proposals outlines the specific information schools must provide in their application to become Commonwealth Pilot Schools.

Appendix D. Duggan Middle School Conversion Proposal

This application was prepared by Principal Jonathan Swan, with support from the Center for Collaborative Education, and articulates the vision for school change at Duggan under Commonwealth Pilot School status.

Appendix E. Memorandum of Agreement between Springfield Public Schools and the Springfield Education Association on the Establishment of Pilot Schools

This document formally commits the district and local teacher union to sponsoring the establishment of Commonwealth Pilot Schools within Springfield and enumerates the autonomies they will receive.

Appendix F. Duggan Work Election Agreement

This agreement governs all union teachers that elect to work at Duggan and specifically outlines their rights and responsibilities.

Appendix G. CCE Evaluation

The Center for Collaborative Education's analysis of progress at the end of the first year of Co-Pilot status.

Appendix H. Duggan Progress Report and Self-Evaluation

The school's own assessment of progress as measured against goals outlined in its conversion proposal.

Appendix I. CCE Pilot Schools Year One Evaluation

A report on first year outcomes at all four Commonwealth Pilot Schools, prepared by the Center for Collaborative Education and the UMass Donahue Institute.

Appendix J. "Duggan Way" Targets for Adult Behavior

This document is intended to help faculty and staff members visualize how the school values translate into their own work as teachers.

Appendix K. School Schedule

A chart to show how instruction and common planning time are integrated in the course of a typical school day.

Appendix L. Staff Calendar

A month-by-month view of professional development and community meeting time.

Appendix M. Budget Autonomies for Pilot Schools

This document contains budget guidelines that govern the budget process for all Springfield Pilot Schools and highlight the financial autonomy of Pilot status.

Appendix N. Duggan Work Plan

This document, prepared by the Center for Collaborative Education, lists each of Duggan's improvement goals, the amount of support (as measured in days) to be provided by CCE coaches, and how this work aligns with what is being done at the school level.

Appendix O. Duggan School Goals

A chart view of the CCE Work Plan with coaching inputs and hours aligned to each school goal.

Appendix P. CCE Summer Institute Agenda

This document outlines the CCE training provided to Duggan (and its fellow co-Pilot schools) in the summer of 2007, with a particular focus on team-building and distributed leadership.

Appendix Q. Long-Term Professional Development Targets

This document demonstrates how CCE and Duggan are building internal capacity by articulating specific long-term goals for teacher growth.

Appendix R. Student Character Targets

A document developed by the school community to articulate how student behavior can best embody the values of the "Duggan Way."

Appendix S. Student Reflection

A tool designed to help students modify poor behavior to better reflect school values and prepare themselves for school success.