



North Central Charter Essential School

Summary of Review

January 2012

**Summary of Review – January 2012**

**North Central Charter Essential School  
1 Oak Hill Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420**

<b>I. Sources of Evidence for this Document.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Executive Summary of Charter School Performance .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>ESE Common School Performance Criteria.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<b>III. School Amendments, History, and Demographics.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV. Areas of Accountability.....</b>	<b>9</b>
A. <i>Faithfulness to Charter.....</i>	<i>9</i>
B. <i>Academic Program.....</i>	<i>11</i>
C. <i>Organizational Viability.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>V. MCAS Performance.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>VI. Adequate Yearly Progress Data .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>VII. Comparative Statistical Analysis of MCAS Results .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>VIII. Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures .....</b>	<b>35</b>

## I. Sources of Evidence for this Document

---

The charter school regulations state that “[t]he decision by the Board [of Elementary and Secondary Education] to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school’s academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter” 603 CMR 1.12(3). Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) evaluation of the school’s performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school’s absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter. Performance is evaluated against both the [Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria](#) and the school’s accountability plan. The evaluation of the school has included a review of the following sources of evidence, all of which are available from the Charter School Office:

- the application for renewal submitted by the school,
- the school’s annual reports for the term of the charter,
- site visit reports generated by the Charter School Office in the first, second, and third years of the school’s charter,
- independent financial audits,
- Coordinated Program Review reports,
- the year five Renewal Inspection Report and Federal Programs Renewal Inspection Report, and
- other documentation, including amendments to the school’s charter.

The following sections present a summary from all of these sources regarding the school’s progress and success in raising student achievement, establishing a viable organization, and fulfilling the terms of its charter.

## II. Executive Summary of Charter School Performance

---

<i>North Central Charter Essential School (NCCES)</i>			
<b>Type of Charter</b>	Commonwealth	<b>Location</b>	Fitchburg
<b>Regional/Non-Regional</b>	Regional	<b>Districts in Region</b>	Nine <sup>1</sup>
<b>Year Opened</b>	2002	<b>Year(s) Renewed</b>	2007
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	400	<b>Current Enrollment</b>	360
<b>Students on Waitlist</b>	5	<b>Chartered Grade Span</b>	7-12

### Mission Statement

“NCCES is a free public school where students are known personally, challenged intellectually, and expected to participate actively in their learning. Guided by our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, our goal is to send graduates into the world who think for themselves, care about others, and act creatively and responsibly.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Ashburnham-Westminster, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Lunenburg, Nashoba, North Middlesex, Wachusett

## Performance Summary

2009-2011 Combined Proficient and Advanced						
	ELA			Math		
	State	District	Provider	State	District	Provider
All	77.3%	57.0%	68.7%	59.1%	38.4%	47.7%
Asian			NA			NA
Black	60.3%	55.8%	55.9%	36.0%	35.9%	29.4%
Hispanic	54.0%	43.9%	51.6%	33.0%	25.6%	27.5%
Multi-race, non-Hispanic			NA			NA
Native American			NA			NA
Native Hawaiian, Pac. Is.			NA			NA
White	83.3%	69.8%	74.1%	65.6%	49.9%	53.7%
Low-Income	58.7%	48.5%	61.1%	37.3%	29.7%	39.8%
LEP			NA			NA
Special Education	37.3%	18.6%	34.7%	20.8%	10.5%	23.5%
2010-2011 Median SGP						
	ELA			Math		
	State	District	Provider	State	District	Provider
All	50	42	42.5	50	44	46
Asian			NA			NA
Black			NA			NA
Hispanic	48	42	44	48	43	49.5
Multi-race, non-Hispanic			NA			NA
Native American			NA			NA
Native Hawaiian, Pac. Is.			NA			NA
White	50	39	37	50	44	46
Low-Income	47	41	39	47	42	43
LEP			NA			NA
Special Education	44	36	45	45	32	37.5
2010-2011 Attendance						
	Attendance Rate			Average # of Days Absent		
	State	District	Provider	State	District	Provider
All	93.7%	90.1%	93.2%	10.7	15.5	11
Asian			NA			NA
Black	92.2%	91.5%	95.1%	13.1	13.9	7.8
Hispanic	90.1%	87.5%	90.3%	16.3	19.5	15.8
Multi-race, non-Hispanic			NA			NA
Native American			NA			NA
Native Hawaiian, Pac. Is.			NA			NA
White	94.5%	91.9%	93.7%	9.5	12.7	10.2
Low-Income	91.0%	88.6%	91.6%	15.2	18.5	13.5
LEP			NA			NA
Special Education	91.5%	87.3%	92.5%	14.4	19.9	12.4

### Additional Indicators 2010-11

	State	District	Provider		State	District	Provider
Classes Taught by HQT	97.7%	99.1%	88.4%	Graduation Rate (2010 cohort)	82.1%	68.7%	62.3%
Retention Rate	2.1%	3.8%	8.4%	Dropout Rate (2009-2010)	2.9%	6.4%	5.5%
In-School Suspension Rate	3.5%	15.0%	3.3%	Mobility - Stability	95.5%	86.7%	78.0%
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	5.6%	11.1%	19.6%	Mobility - Churn	9.5%	22.1%	25.5%

### Notes:

1. Green and red shading for MCAS data indicates a greater than ten percentage point difference. Yellow is within (+/-) ten percentage point difference.
2. Green and red shading for attendance rate indicates a greater than 2 percentage point difference and for days absent greater than two days.
3. MCAS and attendance data are compared to the grade range served by the home district in the charter school.
4. MCAS data are not reported for fewer than 10 students tested in school year 2010. SGP data are not reported for fewer than 20 students tested.
5. Attendance rates are not reported for enrollment fewer than 6 in school year 2010.

ESE Common School Performance Criteria	Charter School Performance
<b>1. FAITHFULNESS TO THE TERMS OF THE CHARTER</b>	
<p><b>Academic program:</b> The school establishes an academic program that includes the pedagogical approach, curriculum, assessment, and other unique elements defined in the charter application and any subsequent approved amendment(s).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the term of the charter, the school has augmented its academic program to address the needs of students in a manner that is consistent with its founding vision.</li> <li>• The school has clarified its mission and vision during the charter term.</li> <li>• True to the school’s mission, personalization is a prominent feature of the academic program. The school uses small class sizes, advisory, individual portfolios, behavior management strategies, and intervention approaches to meet individual needs of students.</li> </ul>

<b>2. ACADEMIC PROGRAM SUCCESS</b>	
<p><b>MCAS - performance:</b> Students at the school demonstrate proficiency, or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student MCAS performance has been variable, but shown overall improvement in terms of CPI scores, over the charter term.</li> <li>• While the school has shown improvement in its mathematics scores, only 50 percent of students achieved proficiency on the 2011 MCAS.</li> <li>• Throughout the term of the charter, NCCES performed at a statistically significantly higher level than the sending district in the aggregate. In terms of subgroups, NCCES and the district performed at a similar level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>AYP:</b> The school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups.  The school does not have a status for accountability purposes of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has an accountability status of “Restructuring Year 2- Subgroups” for ELA and “Restructuring Year 2” for mathematics.</li> </ul>
<p><b>External assessments of student achievement:</b> If externally-developed assessments other than the MCAS are administered, student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time on those assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student performance on other external assessments mirrors NCCES student performance on MCAS, showing moderate growth over time.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Internal assessments of student achievement:</b> Student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement on internally-developed assessments of academic achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has met the goals it has set for itself in terms of student performance on internal assessments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Curriculum:</b> The school’s curriculum is documented, articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, is aligned horizontally and vertically, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the term of the charter, the school has worked to fully document its curriculum and align it vertically and horizontally to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). This work is ongoing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Instruction:</b> School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design, instructional expectations, and curriculum. Instruction is effectively delivered and conveys clear expectations to students. The use of classroom time maximizes meaningful student learning. Students are actively engaged in learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the course of the charter, instruction has shifted to include more whole-class, teacher-directed or independent skill remediation work.</li> <li>• Site visit teams have only observed a few examples of inquiry or higher-order thinking skills and project-based learning.</li> <li>• Site visitors have noted lower levels of student engagement over the term of the charter.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Classroom and school environment:</b> The classroom and school environment is orderly, supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills, and is consistent with the school’s mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has created an orderly, respectful classroom and school climate.</li> <li>• Many systems and structures support a safe school culture that respects individual student needs.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Diverse learners:</b></p> <p>The school provides services for all students, including English language learners and those with disabilities and/or special education needs, as required by law.</p> <p>The school implements and follows a Department approved recruitment and retention plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has systems, structures, and staffing in place to identify, assess, and serve students with disabilities who require classroom accommodations, curriculum modifications, and special education services.</li> <li>• The school has established an academic program that enables all students, including those with disabilities, to fully participate in, and benefit from, the educational goals and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Procedures are in place to identify and assess students that are potentially ELL.</li> <li>• The quantity of English language development (ELD) provided to ELL students now meets the Department’s recommended minimum instructional program hours.</li> <li>• Sheltered English Immersion is not available to ELL students. The majority (82 percent) of teachers have not received the required SEI category trainings to become qualified to provide sheltered content instruction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional climate:</b></p> <p>Teachers are provided with feedback and guidance that leads to improved instructional practice and student achievement.</p> <p>The school implements a professional development plan that effectively addresses the needs of teachers.</p> <p>Teachers are provided with structures for collaboration.</p> <p>The school establishes a professional climate resulting in a purposeful learning environment and reasonable rates of retention for school administrators, teachers and staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCCES provides a number of formal and informal structures for professional collaboration and development.</li> <li>• NCCES has altered its systems for teacher evaluation over the course of the charter and is currently providing more consistent feedback to teachers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program evaluation:</b></p> <p>The school regularly and systematically reviews the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past four years, NCCES has improved its use of data to provide remedial supports for students and place them in appropriate classes.</li> <li>• Currently, NCCES employs a robust assessment system that informs the intervention supports provided to students.</li> <li>• The school continues to use data to assess and modify the academic program as needed.</li> </ul>

### 3. VIABLE ORGANIZATION

<p><b>Solvency and stability:</b>          The school develops an annual budget that can be sustained by enrollment and is in support of student academic achievement.</p> <p>The school demonstrates a history of positive net assets, adequate cash flow to sustain operations and support the academic program, and consistently operates within budget.</p> <p>The school's annual independent audit is free of material or repeated findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past two years, NCCES has received unqualified audits and recorded annual surpluses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enrollment:</b>          The school implements the student recruitment, retention, and enrollment process intended in the charter, in the school's recruitment and retention plan, and as defined by statute and regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout the charter term, the school's enrollment has been below its capacity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Board oversight:</b>          The board of trustees makes use of best practices to hire (an) effective school leader(s).</p> <p>The board of trustees regularly and systematically assesses the performance of (the) school leader(s) against clearly defined goals and makes effective and timely use of the evaluations.</p> <p>The board of trustees operates with a clear set of goals for the school and has developed a set of tools for understanding progress toward meeting those goals.</p> <p>The board of trustees manages the school in a manner that ensures academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the term of the charter, the board of trustees has developed a clear understanding of its governance role and created structures to provide adequate oversight of school performance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School leadership:</b>          School leaders administer the school in a manner that ensures academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the charter term, NCCES has created clearly defined roles for school administrators and staff.</li> <li>• The school has developed well-understood processes for decision-making.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family engagement:</b>          The school involves parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children.</p> <p>Families and students are satisfied with the school's program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families have expressed strong satisfaction with the school climate, personalization of the program to student needs, and consistent communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coordinated Program Review:</b>          The school receives minimal findings in the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) process and immediately addresses any areas of non-compliance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full Coordinated Program Review was conducted in March 2010. A corrective action plan was approved in November 2011 and the cycle was closed.</li> <li>• The school schedule barely meets the minimum requirement for structured learning time.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Safety:</b> The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. The school establishes an environment free from harassment and discrimination for students and staff, and effectively addresses the social, emotional, and health needs of its students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Throughout the charter term, parents and students have reported that the school has created a safe environment that meets students' physical, social, and emotional needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilities:</b> The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements. The school's facilities are suited to its program and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current school facility is adequate to meet the needs of the program; however, stakeholders desire a new facility.</li> <li>Although the board and executive director have engaged in pursuing a long-term facility for the past two years, the plan for purchasing and refurbishing a local venue has been abandoned due to recent circumstances. The school is actively involved in working on alternative plans.</li> <li>The school building is programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employee qualifications:</b> Employees of the school meet all applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eighty-eight percent of the teaching staff are highly qualified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dissemination:</b> The school has collaborated with its sending district(s) on the sharing of innovative practices and has provided models for replication and best practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school collaborates and shares innovative practices primarily through an open invitation to visit the school, along with making some presentations at external events.</li> </ul>

<h2>4. OTHER AREAS</h2>	
<h3>ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES</h3>	
<p><b>Faithfulness to Charter:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCCES has met a majority of measures in its accountability plan related to faithfulness to charter.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Academic Success:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCCES has met a majority of the measures in its accountability plan related to academic achievement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organizational Viability:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCCES has met half of the measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.</li> </ul>

### III. School Amendments, History, and Demographics

---

#### Major Amendments

No major amendments were requested and received during the charter term.

#### School History

In February 2007, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) renewed the charter of NCCES with four conditions regarding academic performance and leadership structure. As of February 2009, the school met all but one of the conditions. At that time, the Board voted to extend the condition related to academic performance. The school has since met this last condition. In January 2011, the Board voted to eliminate the remaining condition on NCCES's charter.

#### Demographics

The following table compares demographic data of the charter school to schools within the districts from which it draws most of its students, and to the state. The comparison includes 27 schools in the districts with grade levels that overlap with the charter school.

- Comparison Minimum refers to the school(s) among the 27 schools with the lowest percentage of students in a given category.
- Comparison Median refers to the school(s) among the 27 schools with the middle percentage of students in a given category.
- Comparison Maximum refers to the school(s) among the 27 schools with the highest percentage of students in a given category.
- The Percentage of Total represents the percentage of the total number of students in a given category in all 27 schools combined.

	<b>Race/Ethnicity (%)</b>	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native American	Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic
	North Central Charter Essential School	3.5%	1.6%	17.9%	74.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
(27 Schools)	Comparison Minimum	0.5%	0.0%	1.0%	32.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Comparison Median	3.1%	1.9%	9.0%	83.4%	0.2%	0.0%	1.4%
	Comparison Maximum	10.3%	7.5%	48.5%	96.4%	0.6%	0.5%	4.7%
	Comparison Total	3.6%	2.6%	13.6%	78.4%	0.2%	0.1%	1.5%
	State	8.2%	5.5%	15.4%	68.0%	0.2%	0.1%	2.4%

<b>Other Demographics (%)</b>		Males	Females	First Language Not English	Limited English Proficient	Special Education	Low-Income
North Central Charter Essential School		50.3%	49.7%	6.0%	0.3%	21.5%	46.2%
(27 Schools)	Comparison Minimum	40.1%	38.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	6.5%
	Comparison Median	50.5%	49.5%	5.5%	1.5%	15.3%	34.3%
	Comparison Maximum	62.0%	59.9%	42.5%	16.7%	27.3%	78.8%
	Comparison Total	50.9%	49.1%	10.7%	2.7%	14.8%	29.8%
	State	51.3%	48.7%	16.3%	7.1%	17.0%	34.2%

#### **IV. Areas of Accountability**

---

##### **A. Faithfulness to Charter**

School performance in relation to the ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

##### **Consistency of school operations with the school’s charter and approved charter amendments**

**The school operates in a manner consistent with the mission, vision, educational philosophy, academic program, and governance and leadership structure outlined in the school’s charter and approved charter amendments.**

*Finding: Over the term of the charter, the school has augmented its academic program to address the needs of students in a manner that is consistent with its founding vision. The school has clarified its mission and vision during the charter term.*

NCCES was founded as an Essential School. As such, it strives to remain true to the Ten Common Principles of Essential Schools, abbreviated by the school as:

1. Learning to use one's mind well
2. Less is more, depth over coverage
3. Goals apply to all students
4. Personalization
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
6. Demonstration of mastery
7. A tone of decency and trust
8. Commitment to the entire school
9. Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
10. Democracy and equity

In the school’s seventh year, NCCES administrators started a goal of incorporating standards-based, assessment driven instruction into the essential school model in order to provide a more personalized education for students as well as meeting their academic needs. In its eighth year, the school articulated three questions, linked to the Principles, which helped to link the essential

questions to the use of assessment data. The first question was “What is essential for all students to know, understand, and be able to do?” The school linked this question to the second and third principles. The second question, “How do we know if they know it?” was linked to principles four and six. The third question, “How do we respond when students don’t know or already know it?” was linked to principles five, eight, and nine. The school answered the first question by implementing a standards-based academic program, the second by frequent assessment of student progress, and the third by creating an instructional program and a system of intervention strategies to educate a diverse student body.

During the Renewal Inspection, students, parents, and teachers commented that the common principles are a critical part of NCCES and are evident in the everyday work of the school, with students reporting that teachers pace instruction appropriately so that they have enough time to master content. The renewal inspection team determined that the school’s curriculum demonstrates that standards-based, assessment-driven instruction has been incorporated into the essential school model. Likewise, as described further below, the renewal inspection team found evidence that the school is using data to provide students with academic interventions as needed.

During the school’s seventh year, administrators and board members led a strategic planning process which clarified the school’s mission, vision and goals for the next five years. Over the course of two school years, a strategic planning committee worked to draft vision and values statements and identify the pathways to reaching the school’s mission. From the vision statement, the committee created a strategic plan with overarching strategies and a number of five year goals with multiple measures. In addition, this plan and its associated goals have been communicated with the school community at large. Four fundamental goals serve as a guide for the board, the administration, and teachers at NCCES. The renewal inspection team viewed the following goals posted throughout the school:

- All students will be proficient READERS of grade-level or higher content.
- All students will be proficient WRITERS of grade-level or higher text.
- All students will be proficient MATHEMATICIANS, with grade-level or higher problem-solving, reasoning, and computational skills.
- All students will THINK, CARE, and ACT.

*Finding: True to the school’s mission, personalization is a prominent feature of the academic program. The school uses small class sizes, advisory, individual portfolios, behavior management strategies, and intervention approaches to meet individual needs of students.*

Throughout the charter term, NCCES has provided an individualized approach to instruction and a supportive environment. Stakeholders have highlighted a number of school elements that create a personalized education for students: a daily advisory; a low student-to-teacher ratio in academic classes; the use of portfolio assessment; capstone projects; the school’s behavior management system; and a number of academic interventions provided to students.

NCCES created a daily advisory period to ensure that each student has a personal relationship with at least one adult in the building. Parents revealed that it was often their students’ advisors with whom they first made contact if their students were having any difficulties – either academic or social. In addition to small advisory groups, NCCES also has relatively low student-to-teacher ratios in academic classes. The renewal inspection team observed classes typically no

larger than 18 students, with some as small as three students. Students and parents reported satisfaction with the small size of classes.

Teachers, leaders, parents, and students all reported that students work with their advisors at the beginning of each year to create portfolios. Portfolios contain the student's academic achievement to date and his or her goals for the year on assessments such as GRADE, MCAS, or open-response items. Throughout the year, students collect work samples to demonstrate mastery of grade level learning goals to place in their portfolios. Advisors, parents, and students review the portfolio together in the middle and at the end of the year.

Students are required to complete a junior exhibition and a senior project in order to graduate. Students reported that these projects allow students to be directly involved in their own learning. Document review revealed extensive handbooks on both the junior exhibition and senior project that provide students with comprehensive guidance on completing these projects.

NCCES utilizes a Make It Right Approach (MIRA) to behavior management. If students misbehave, they must go through a process to make amends with the school community. Often, plans are created for individual students to outline what must be done in order for situations to be rectified.

The academic program at NCCES provides students with an array of interventions and skill-building classes. In 2007, school generated data revealed that seventh and eighth grade students were not performing at the level the school desired. In order to provide students with additional time to demonstrate mastery of necessary skills, the school created a remedial reading, writing, and math academic class called high school prep (HSP). HSP provides seventh through ninth graders with individualized mathematics, reading, and/or writing classes four times a week. Students are placed in the appropriate HSP class based on achievement data. During HSP, students work with leveled readers or modified texts and receive reinforcement on fundamental skills. Additionally, the school added a strategic math class in 2009 for high school students needing extra support. Student placement into these classes is based on past MCAS scores.

### **Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the faithfulness to charter objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: NCCES has met a majority of measures in its accountability plan related to faithfulness to charter.*

A charter school creates an accountability plan to set objectives in each of the three areas of charter school accountability for the charter term and to show growth through time. NCCES has reported against an accountability plan that was approved in 2007. The accountability plan includes three objectives and twelve measures related to faithfulness to charter. The school has met seven, has not met three, and has partially met two of these measures. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VII of this report.

### **B. Academic Program**

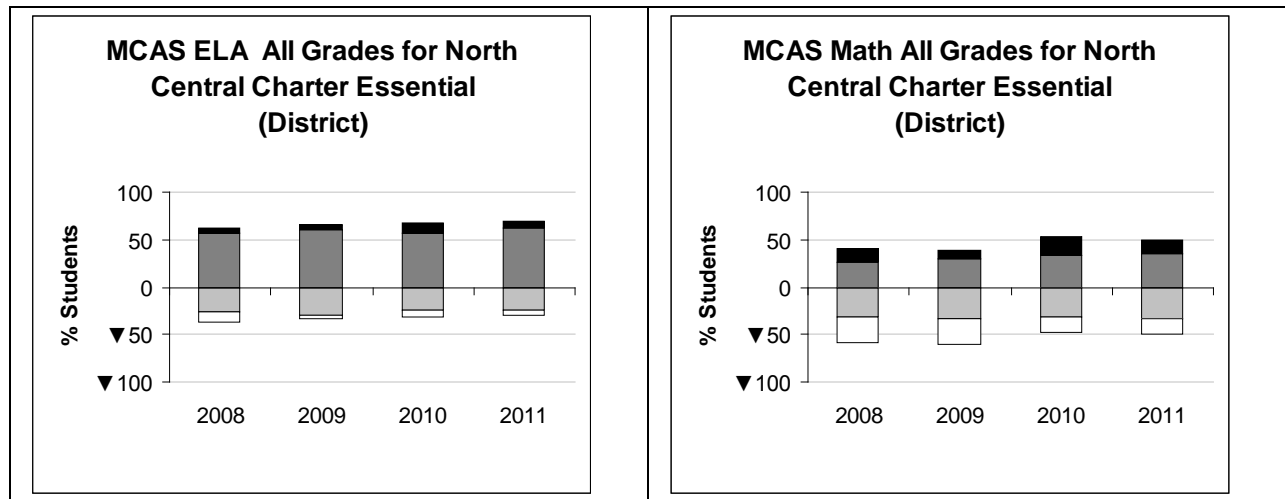
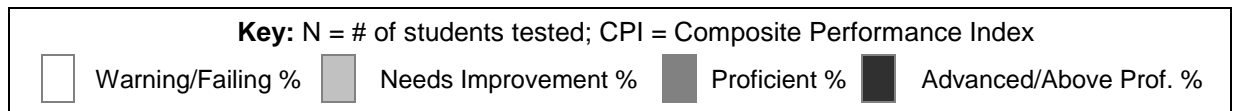
School performance in terms of ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

## MCAS performance and growth

Students at the school demonstrate Proficiency, or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Accountability System (MCAS) exams in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes.

*Finding: Student MCAS performance has been variable, but shown overall improvement in terms of CPI scores, over the charter term. While the school has shown improvement in its mathematics scores, only 50 percent of students achieved proficiency on the 2011 MCAS.*

During this charter term, NCCES students annually completed: the MCAS English language arts (ELA) assessments for grades seven, eight, and ten; the MCAS mathematics assessments for grades seven, eight, and ten; and the grades eight and ten science and technology assessments. The following analyses present MCAS performance data on the tests in ELA and mathematics utilized by the Department for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability purposes. Section V summarizes other MCAS performance by grade level and provides data for tests that do not count towards AYP determinations in 2011.



ELA All Grades	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	7	5	11	9
% Proficient	56	61	57	61
% Needs Improvement	27	30	25	24
% Warning Failing	10	3	7	6
N	182	172	198	173
CPI	82.8	88.5	86.5	87.4
SGP	44.0	44.5	46.0	42.5
N for SGP	87	128	155	140

Math All Grades	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	16	9	20	15
% Proficient	25	30	33	35
% Needs Improvement	31	34	31	33
% Warning Failing	28	27	17	17
N	185	172	199	176
CPI	66.9	66.0	74.7	73.3
SGP	33.0	37.5	50.0	46.0
N for SGP	88	128	154	143

*Finding: Throughout the term of the charter, NCCES performed at a statistically significantly higher level than the sending district in the aggregate. In terms of subgroups, NCCES and the district performed at a similar level.*

### District comparisons

The CPI of NCCES has been compared to that of the Fitchburg Public Schools (Fitchburg) because NCCES is in NCLB *Restructuring Year 2* status for subgroups in ELA and in *Restructuring Year 2* status for mathematics.

Statistical analyses, two-tailed *t* tests for the equality of means, were performed to determine if any differences in performance between NCCES and Fitchburg students were statistically significant at a 95 percent confidence level. Comparisons were made only if there were at least 40 students tested in a given grade or subgroup.

- Sixteen grade-to-grade and aggregate comparisons were conducted in ELA and sixteen grade-to-grade and aggregate comparisons were conducted in mathematics.
  - ELA: NCCES performed at a statistically significant higher level than Fitchburg in six instances. Fitchburg did not perform at a statistically significant higher level than NCCES. There were no statistically significant differences in performance in the other ten comparisons.
  - Mathematics: NCCES performed at a statistically significant higher level than Fitchburg in four instances. Fitchburg did not perform at a statistically significant higher level than NCCES. There were no statistically significant differences in performance in the other twelve comparisons.
  - Section VI of this document provides detailed information.
- Nineteen subgroup grade-to-grade and aggregate comparisons were conducted in ELA and twenty subgroup grade-to-grade and aggregate comparisons in mathematics.
  - ELA: NCCES performed at a statistically significant higher level than Fitchburg in three instances. Fitchburg performed at a statistically significant higher level than NCCES in two instances. There were no statistically significant differences in performance in the other fourteen comparisons.
  - Mathematics: NCCES did not perform at a statistically significant higher level than Fitchburg. Fitchburg performed at a statistically significant higher level than NCCES in one instance. There were no statistically significant differences in performance in the other nineteen comparisons.
  - Section VI of this document provides detailed information.

### Adequate Yearly Progress

**The school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups. The school is not identified for accountability purposes (not designated as in Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring).**

*Finding: The school has an accountability status of “Restructuring Year 2- Subgroups” for ELA and “Restructuring Year 2” for mathematics.*

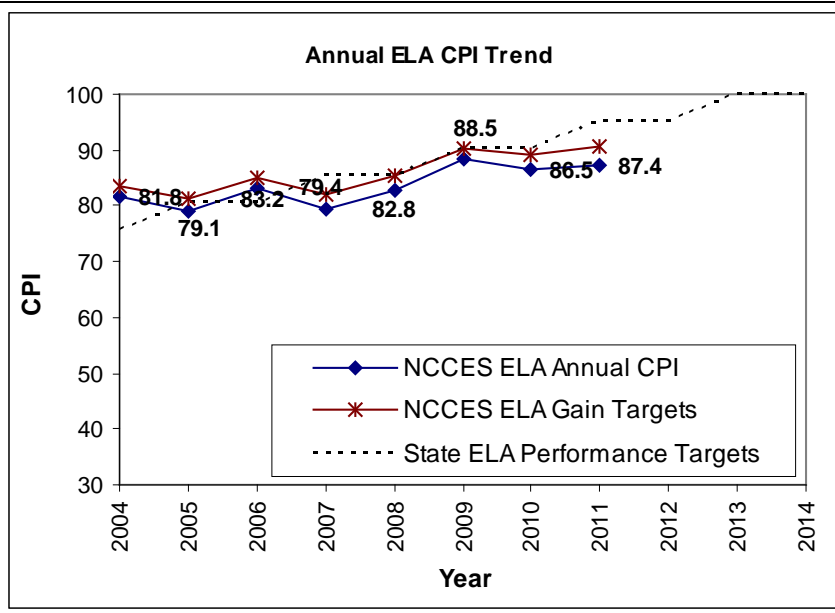
- In 2011, NCCES made AYP for ELA in the aggregate, but not for sub-groups.
- In 2011, NCCES did not make AYP for mathematics in the aggregate or for sub-groups.

- The school currently has a status of “Restructuring Year 2 – Subgroups” for ELA and “Restructuring Year 2” for mathematics.
- The AYP summary in Section VI includes full details.

		Adequate Yearly Progress History								NCLB Accountability Status
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	

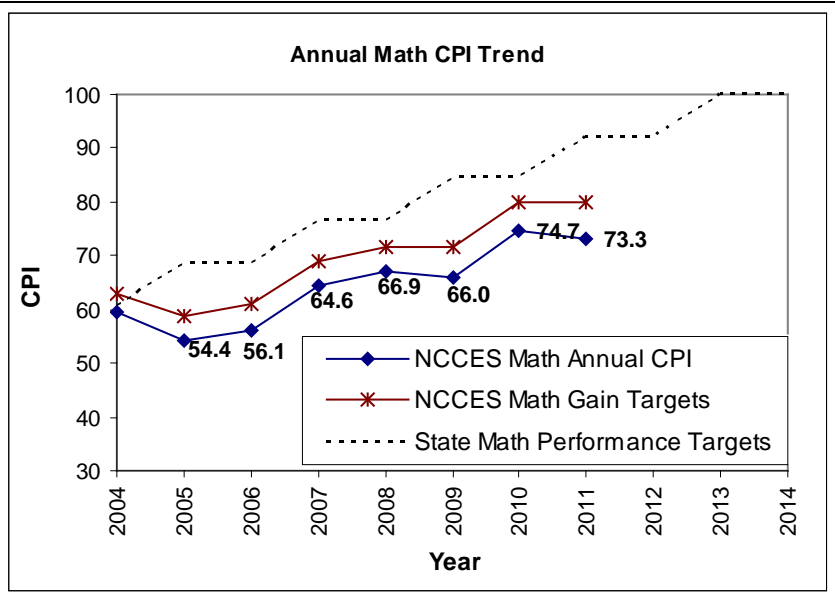
*Meeting state targets:*  
NCCES’s performance on ELA exams between 2008 and 2011 has been below state CPI performance targets each year.

*Meeting school improvement targets:*  
NCCES did not meet its own improvement targets in ELA in any year between 2008 and 2011.



*Meeting state targets:*  
NCCES’s performance on mathematics exams between 2008 and 2011 has been below state CPI performance targets each year.

*Meeting school improvement targets:*  
NCCES did not meet its own improvement targets in mathematics in any year between 2008 and 2011.





### **External measures of student achievement**

**If externally-developed assessments other than the MCAS are administered, student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time.**

*Finding: Student performance on other external assessments mirrors NCCES student performance on MCAS, showing moderate growth over time.*

According to the school's Application for Renewal, NCCES administers the following assessments in addition to the MCAS: Group Reading Assessment Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), Test of Silent Contextual Reading Fluency (TSCRF), Prentice Hall Inventory, Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TWRE), Student Aptitude Test (SAT), and Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing. Each spring, GRADE results are compared to evaluate whether students have made progress over time. Data provided by the school suggests that between the spring of 2008 and the spring of 2009 (fall 2008 to spring 2009 for students in grade seven) students at NCCES grew at a moderate rate and did slightly better than national mean scores.

For mathematics, the school provided the renewal inspection team with the results of Prentice Hall Inventory testing from the fall of 2008 and 2009. These results showed that the percentage of students who scored at least 70 percent on a Prentice Hall math program test. Results varied by grades, with performance in one grade declining, two improving, and one remaining the same from 2008 to 2009. The school did not provide more recent data in either the Application for Renewal or to the renewal inspection team.

### **Internal measures of student achievement**

**Student performance is strong and demonstrates improvement over time on internally-developed assessments of academic achievement.**

*Finding: The school has met the goals it has set for itself in terms of student performance on internal assessments.*

The school tracks the performance of students on two internally created assessments. Eighth and tenth grade students must meet "gateway" eligibility requirements in order to be promoted into the subsequent grade. The school tracks the percentage of student who meet this standard as part of its accountability plan. For the past four years of the charter between 93 and 97 percent of eighth and tenth grade students have met the gateway eligibility requirements. Additionally, the school tracks how many graduates successfully demonstrate mastery of higher order skills as a part of a senior project. As the senior project is a requirement for graduation, 100 percent of graduates all four years have demonstrated mastery.

### **Curriculum**

**The school's curriculum is documented, articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, is aligned horizontally and vertically, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.**

*Finding: Over the term of the charter, the school has worked to fully document its curriculum and align it vertically and horizontally to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). This work is ongoing.*

Over the term of the charter, teachers have been trained in and are expected to use Understanding by Design (UbD) principles to develop curriculum units. The UbD model requires teachers to

plan curriculum with outcomes and results in mind, and then work backwards to plan the lesson activities. In recent years, the school began requiring teachers to submit the unit plans for review and provided teachers with more extensive support for incorporating UbD principles as well as the MCF into the documented curriculum. In the school's seventh year, NCCES began using the web-based curriculum mapping software, Rubicon Atlas (Rubicon), to document the curriculum.

The renewal inspection team found that currently, NCCES has documented curricular units that are aligned with state standards. The school is in the process of vertically aligning the curriculum. Review of curriculum documents on Rubicon revealed that units contain the following elements: desired results, assessment evidence, learning plan, reference to the MCF, enduring understandings, essential skills, content, and skills, as well as learning activities and resources. Documentation of daily or weekly lesson plans is not required of teachers. Review of the Rubicon system by the renewal inspection team, however, revealed a range in the quality and detail of the units available in the system. While some have all the components previously reported, others are missing sections. Some teachers also reported that they do not use Rubicon; instead, since they find it easier to use, they save their curriculum documents on the school's server.

NCCES uses teacher generated and commercially created curriculum materials. The commercially created curriculum used across grades levels include: *Prentice Hall* for mathematics HSP classes, *History Alive* for social studies classes, and *Keys to Literacy* across content areas.

At the time of the visit, NCCES was in the process of vertically aligning its entire curriculum. The school has engaged in a three-year process with a consultant to assist them in "spiraling" the curriculum for vertical alignment. The school administrators reported that NCCES is constantly developing, incorporating, and re-vamping curriculum for all classes and courses. Both administrators and teachers reported that curriculum revision is ongoing and that curriculum materials are altered in response to student needs.

### **Instruction**

**School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design, instructional expectations, and the curriculum. Instruction is effectively delivered and conveys clear expectations to students. The use of classroom time maximized meaningful student learning. Students are actively engaged in learning.**

*Finding: Over the course of the charter, instruction has shifted to include more whole-class, teacher-directed or independent skill remediation work. Site visit teams have only observed a few examples of inquiry or higher-order thinking skills and project-based learning. Site visitors have noted lower levels of student engagement over the term of the charter.*

Over the term of the charter, site visitors have observed a shift in the kinds of instruction provided in NCCES's classrooms. In year seven, site visitors observed a high level of student engagement with approximately half observed classrooms engaged in project based learning. In the school's eighth and renewal inspection years, site visitor teams noted that a majority of instruction was teacher-led, whole group instruction resulting in lower levels of active student participation. During the year eight site visit teachers reported that the school community was focused on meeting the needs of students who struggled to reach grade level proficiency.

The renewal inspection found that instruction in a majority of classes consisted of direct, teacher-led instruction or independent student work. Whole group instruction was the dominant method of instruction in more than half of classes observed by the renewal inspection team. In these

classrooms, students were typically sitting at their desks listening while teachers spoke. Additionally, students had very few academically-based conversations with each other or the teacher. Instruction in most classrooms consisted of activities in which teachers dispersed information to students, such as teachers standing at the board completing mathematics problems or defining words for students to copy down in their notebooks. This was often followed by students independently completing problems on a worksheet.

Students were rarely asked to demonstrate the use of higher-order thinking skills. In a majority of classrooms visited, there was no evidence of higher-order questions requiring students to synthesize information or defend their responses to teacher questions. There was some evidence of teachers asking higher-order questions in a minority of classes visited. Even when students were asked higher-order questions, they were not typically required to provide robust answers.

The renewal inspection team also viewed low levels of active student engagement. While students were observed as being respectful, most of them did not demonstrate high levels of engagement. Renewal team members viewed a variety of classroom activities that did not engender high rates of engagement, such as: viewing a videotape, read aloud, or in multiple classrooms students completing worksheets independently. There were a few classes, however, in which students were actively engaged in their lessons.

### **Classroom and school environment**

**The classroom and school environment is orderly, supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills, and is consistent with the school's mission.**

*Finding: The school has created an orderly, respectful classroom and school climate. Many systems and structures support a safe school culture that respects individual student needs.*

Over the term of the charter, the school has improved its ability to establish a respectful and calm school and classroom environment. In year eight, teachers described the behavior of students in the school's lower grades (seven and eight) as a major challenge. As the school's approach to discipline became more ingrained in school culture, and as additional student supports have been added, student behavior was not reported as a concern.

The school's approach to student behavior is aligned with the school's mission. This approach, known as the Making it Right Approach (MIRA) uses restorative justice principles to develop pro-social student behavior. Instead of punishing misbehavior with detention or suspension, students are taught methods of conflict resolution and are required to make amends for the consequences of their actions. In year eight, teachers expressed frustration with the system and with what they perceived to be a lack of schoolwide rules. They noted that it is particularly difficult to orient the large number of students who enter the school midyear to the MIRA system. The year eight site visit team observed a range of effectiveness in classroom management with instances of restless, off-task and disrespectful behavior seen primarily in the lower grade levels.

The renewal inspection team found a majority of classroom climates demonstrated routines and respect that were conducive to learning. NCCES's six behavior standards – purpose, responsibility, safety, voice, integrity, and community – were posted in all classrooms and referred to frequently by teachers. Interactions between students and teachers were positive, with teachers complimenting students on their work and behavior and students comfortably talking with teachers. For the most part, the team observed students who were compliant and following

directions. Some off-task behavior was observed, with students talking to each other, drawing pictures, or passing notes.

In addition to the majority of respectful classroom climates, the renewal inspection team found that the school has implemented a number of structures and supports to ensure the emotional safety of students. The MIRA system is still in use. MIRA, along with the school's discipline policies, are clearly outlined in the staff, student and parent handbooks. Additionally, the school has hired a mediation organization to educate students on handling conflict. Approximately 60 NCCES students have been trained in peer mediation or conflict resolution. Many of these students provide training to their peers during advisory.

The school's philosophy of Think, Care, Act promotes a healthy school environment. All stakeholders interviewed by the renewal inspection team referenced this philosophy as helpful in reminding all community members of the school's purpose. The renewal inspection team observed evidence of Think, Care, Act in action, with respectful language being used between students and teachers.

### **Diverse learners**

**The school provides services for all students, including English language learners and those with disabilities and/or special education needs, as required by law. The school establishes and implements an accommodation plan that addresses the needs of diverse learners.**

NCCES was visited in May 2011 by a federal programs renewal inspection team from the Charter School Office. The purpose of the federal programs renewal inspection is to examine the school's implementation of curriculum accommodations and modifications, how programs of special education and English language learner (ELL) education meet the needs of students, and the process by which program effectiveness is evaluated by the school. Findings made by the team are summarized below.

*Finding: The school has systems, structures, and staffing in place to identify, assess, and serve students with disabilities who require classroom accommodations, curriculum modifications, and special education services. The school has established an academic program that enables all students, including those with disabilities, to fully participate in, and benefit from, the educational goals and mission of the school.*

During staff orientation, all staff receive training on special education requirements and the program's policies and procedures. During staff orientation, the general education teachers meet with their respective special educators to discuss and review the students with disabilities that are enrolled in their classes. The special education staff meet bi-weekly as a department and attend grade level meetings on alternate weeks. Based on its special education population, the school provides a continuum of services from full-inclusion and partial-inclusion to a Life Skills class that provides required IEP services during one period each day.

NCCES has systems in place to ensure that students with disabilities are provided with their required IEP services. The school's primary approach to special education services is to provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum through a system of supports, accommodations, and modifications in the general education classroom. The supports offered within the general education classroom are provided by core academic teachers and either a special education teacher or special education paraprofessional. The program structure includes direct special education services provided in classes with low student-teacher ratios

called “tutorials” which are taught by special education teachers. NCCES is dedicated to providing special education services in the least restrictive environment.

NCCES provides an individualized approach to instruction and a supportive environment. The special education teacher or paraprofessional supports classroom teachers by providing accommodations and/or re-teaching skills, as appropriate, while at the same time focusing on specific modifications as required by students’ IEPs. The two pull-out “tutorial” classes deliver one-to-one or two-to-one student/special education teacher ratio instruction with direct instruction based on students’ IEP goals and objectives. A number of students with disabilities are receiving two periods a day of math with one provided during a special education “tutorial” class.

*Finding: Procedures are in place to identify and assess students that are potentially ELL. The quantity of English language development (ELD) provided to ELL students now meets the Department’s recommended minimum instructional program hours.*

The school issues a home language survey (HLS) to all enrolled families and has established a system to identify and assess the English language proficiency of students whose home language is not English. The HLS is translated into Spanish. NCCES uses the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) initial assessment in speaking, listening, reading, and writing to determine whether each identified student is LEP.

When the federal programs renewal inspection team visited in May 2011, they determined that that the English language development (ELD) component of sheltered English immersion (SEI) was not provided. The federal program renewal inspection team requested that the school submit an update of the school’s Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program with regard to the provision of English language development (ELD) instruction by October 2011. The CSO received the school’s SEI program documents with samples of currently enrolled students’ daily schedules. The daily schedules verify that the minimum recommended hours of ELD instruction, provided by a licensed ESL teacher, meet Department guidelines.

*Finding: Sheltered English Immersion is not available to ELL students. The majority (82 percent) of teachers have not received the required SEI category trainings to become qualified to provide sheltered content instruction.*

At the time of the inspection visit, all general education teachers serving ELL students had not received SEI Category trainings and were not qualified to deliver sheltered content instruction to ELL students. The school reports that three teachers have completed all four SEI category trainings while two teachers completed Category 1 and 3; one teacher completed Category 1 and 2 and another completed Category 1. In the fall of 2011, the school reported that SEI Category 1 was completed in June 2011 by all staff and Category 4 training is scheduled for all staff on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and January 13, 2012.

### **Professional Climate**

**Teachers are provided with feedback, guidance, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration that lead to improved instructional practice and student achievement. The school establishes a professional climate resulting in a purposeful learning environment and reasonable rates of retention for school administrators, teachers, and staff.**

*Finding: NCCES provides a number of formal and informal structures for professional collaboration and development.*

Every Wednesday, staff members meet during the afternoon in a number of formats, including grade-level team meetings, subject area meetings, Critical Friends Groups (CFG), and professional development trainings. Grade-level team meetings observed by the renewal inspection team all followed a similar format, with team leaders guiding the team through an agenda, a team member taking notes, and team members working on grade-level and school-wide issues. Teachers participate in CFGs, in which colleagues bring real work (such as student work) to meetings in order to identify exemplars or lessons for tuning and facilitate protocols to improve practice.

Stakeholders reported that this collaborative nature is the way work is done at NCCES. In focus groups, teachers reported that collaborative meeting time is a priority. The school has created a number of teams that allow for differing collaboration: grade-level and subject area teams, the academic leadership team (ALT), and the pathways committee. School administrators reported strategically placing individuals on teams. For example, they took an exceptional teacher with leadership potential and placed her on the ALT as an intern and had her enroll in leadership courses.

Additional professional development has included training for most teachers in Key Three literacy practices, designed to provide content teachers with strategies to infuse literacy skill development in their content instruction. In addition, the entire school received a three-day training on ELL strategies. Mathematics, science and special education teams have participated in in-house training on mathematics instructional strategies. In addition, more than half of all faculty members have been trained as Critical Friends Group facilitators.

*Finding: NCCES has altered its systems for teacher evaluation over the course of the charter and is currently providing more consistent feedback to teachers.*

During the seventh and eighth year site visits, NCCES teachers and administrators described a system of teacher evaluation called the Performance Appraisal & Support System Portfolio (PASSPORT). The system included teacher goal setting, peer reviews, and multiple observations conducted by a variety of administrators. NCCES's standards for supervision and evaluation were summarized in a rubric based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. However, during the year eight site visit, teachers reported that they were not receiving the number of observations outlined by the evaluation system.

The renewal inspection team found that formal teacher observation has not been consistently conducted by school administrators for the charter term, but that new supports had been put in place to ensure more consistent feedback. When interviewed by the renewal inspection team, teachers reported inconsistent use of formal observations in the past few years, with predominantly first through third year teachers receiving the observations.

However, teachers and administrators reported that this year structures had been established to provide more feedback to teachers; specifically, subject area lead teachers were performing classroom observations. This task is no longer solely the principal's responsibility. The renewal inspection team viewed documentation that showed that each teacher had been observed approximately once a week during the current school year. School administrators noted that the frequency would be diminishing to bi-monthly. The renewal inspection team noted that the

feedback provided to teachers included observational notes, areas of teacher strength, and suggestions on how to improve practice.

### **Program evaluation and planning**

**The school uses a balanced system of assessment. Teachers and school leaders use qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform, guide, and improve instructional planning and practice. The school regularly and systematically reviews the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly.**

*Finding: In the past four years, NCCES has improved its use of data to provide remedial supports for students and place them in appropriate classes. Currently, NCCES employs a robust assessment system that informs the intervention supports provided to students.*

Toward the end of the school's first charter term, school administrators recognized that many students were entering NCCES significantly behind grade level expectations. In response to the growing needs of students, NCCES created the high school prep (HSP) program in its fourth year. Currently, HSP provides additional math or reading instruction for students in seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Based on assessment data (GRADE, ToSCRF and the Prentice Hall Math Skills Intervention Inventory Test), students are placed in the appropriate level HSP class for ELA and/or mathematics. The HSP program uses the Prentice Hall Skills Intervention Program, a self-paced, skills-based program. The school has also created additional, skill building classes in the upper grade levels for students who demonstrate the need for academic support. Over the term of the current charter, this program has expanded to include more students. Students are reassessed to determine if they need to remain in the HSP program, or if they have gained the desired skills.

Currently, approximately 95 percent of seventh and eighth grade students and approximately 30 percent of ninth grade students are enrolled in HSP. HSP classes meet during the first period of the day every day except for Wednesday and provide students with an additional 240 minutes of skill based instruction in a week. The school reported that students who do not demonstrate need for HSP are placed in elective classes, such as Spanish. Additional supports for students include: small group instruction through the school's science and math educational resource center (SMERC) held during advisory time for up to 80 minutes per week.

*Finding: The school continues to use data to assess and modify the academic program as needed.*

Throughout the charter term, NCCES has examined assessment data, evaluated its academic program, and made adjustments accordingly. After reviewing MCAS test scores for seventh and eighth grade students, the school created HSP classes. When data revealed that ninth grade students also needed additional support, the school added HSP for ninth grade students in 2009-10. During the past school year, NCCES was not seeing the desired results out of the ELA HSP program and modified the program for the current school year to provide content based instruction that is focused on literacy skills.

Additionally, NCCES has made adjustments to content area classes throughout the charter term. NCCES originally grouped students heterogeneously for all classes. In 2008-09, the school created a plan to alter the mathematics program in order to address issues of persistently low student performance. The plan included the use of homogeneously grouped classes to meet the

needs of diverse learners. All students progress through the same sequence of math courses - pre-algebra, algebra, geometry and algebra two - but not at the same pace.

### **Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the academic achievement objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: NCCES has met a majority of the measures in its accountability plan related to academic achievement.*

NCCES's accountability plan includes four objectives and ten measures related to academic achievement. The school has met six and not met four of these measures. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VII of this report.

### **C. Organizational Viability**

School performance in terms of ESE Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria

#### **Financial management, solvency, and stability**

**The school demonstrates financial solvency, stability, internal controls, and oversight.**

*Finding: In the past two years, NCCES has received unqualified audits and recorded annual surpluses.*

The school's annual budget is developed by the school's business manager and executive director and approved by the board of trustees annually. In addition to approving the annual budget the finance committee of the board of trustees meets at least quarterly to review the financial operations of the school. The board of trustees demonstrates long term oversight by researching real estate and financing options, approving multi-year expenditures and projects, reviewing and approving multi-year contracts such as leases and approving appropriation of funds between categories.

From FY10 through FY11 the school has received unqualified audit opinions. Audits have been free of findings of material weaknesses. Audit reports confirmed that the school earned net income in FY10 and FY11 after recording negative net income in the prior two years. The audit confirms NCCES earned a surplus of \$111,407 in FY11. The school had a surplus of \$152,583 in FY10, and a deficit of \$133,473 in FY09. The school reported that the 2009 deficit was due to enrollment projections that were not met.

NCCES had a net asset balance of \$868,661 on June 30, 2011 all of which is unrestricted, 20 percent of its annual operating budget. The amount of liquidity is limited but the school has a line of credit. At the time of the renewal inspection, it was reported that the school had 2.2 months of cash on hand. The FY10 audit showed that the school had 1.68 months of cash on hand. The school has a \$400,000 line of credit with Enterprise Bank and has authorized its use once for a 48-hour period at the end of FY11.

The school has a related foundation, the North Central Charter Essential School Foundation, Inc. (the Foundation). The purpose of the Foundation is to provide financial support to the school. On June 30, 2011 there was a \$490,646 balance due to the school. During FY11 the Foundation granted \$1,100,646 to the school for pre-construction costs on the purchase of a new facility.



Following public procurement regulations the school retained design and construction firms, but the school's board of trustees determined the project was unfeasible and continuing the project could put the school at risk. The NCCES board voted in September 2011 to abandon the project and the \$1,100,646 expended by the school was recorded as a loss.

The school currently rents its facility with an annually renewable lease with annual rent increases indexed to the national Consumer Price Index.

### **Board governance, accountability, and oversight**

**The members of the board understand their responsibilities and are engaged in oversight of the school's academic progress and financial condition. The board of trustees regularly and systematically assesses the performance of (the) school leader(s) against clearly defined goals and makes effective and timely use of the evaluations**

*Finding: Over the term of the charter, the board of trustees has developed a clear understanding of its governance role and created structures to provide adequate oversight of school performance.*

Pursuant to its bylaws, the school's 18 member board of trustees includes executive director and the principal, who serve in an ex-officio capacity. The board also includes three parent representatives, three student representatives, and three teacher representatives. The remaining seven seats are held by community members.

All but one member of the board of trustees has joined the board in the current charter term. In the school's seventh year, the board formed committees and worked to develop a greater understanding of their governance role as well as systems and structures to guide overall school improvement. In the school's eighth year, site visitors found that board members were well informed about the school's academic program, financial standing, overall health, and their role as the governing body. The board had developed structures through which they monitored school performance in a number of areas.

The renewal inspection team found that the board has further developed its capacity to oversee the school. The board has a clear committee structure including facilities, finance, development, governance, and academic success. Each member has a handbook to provide guidance in the areas of school information, legal obligations, and effective governing. The board also has a planning calendar that outlines the agenda items to be covered each month for the entire year. The board meets at least ten times a year, with committees meeting sometimes as frequently as weekly.

As part of its duties, the board conducts a thorough evaluation of the executive director (ED), appraising her performance in the areas of conclusions, notable performance indicators, and expectations for the 2011-2012 academic year. The most robust section, notable performance indicators, looks at performance in four areas, including locating, financing, and constructing a new school; board and committee recruitment; academic progress; and survey evaluation results. In addition to using achievement data and their collective knowledge of her performance, the board surveyed parents, students, and teachers to inform their evaluation of the ED.

Additionally, over the term of the charter the board has developed a tool, the "dashboard" to monitor school performance in a systematic manner. First presented to the board by the administration in 2008, the tool helped NCCES monitor its performance in terms of the renewal conditions imposed by the Board of [Elementary and Secondary] Education in 2007. The dashboard outlined school goals that could be tracked over a specific timeline. Each goal was

measured by two or three metrics, each with a numeric target. Performance relative to the metrics was reported by the administration to the board every six weeks. The renewal inspection team found that the board is still employing the dashboard system, even though the school was released from conditions during the 2010-11 school year. The dashboard is divided into three sections: academic success, faithfulness to charter, and organizational viability which, for every monthly meeting, are assessed.

### **Enrollment**

**The school implements the student recruitment, retention, and enrollment process intended in the charter, in the school's recruitment and retention plan, and as defined by statute and regulations.**

*Finding: Throughout the charter term, the school's enrollment has been below its capacity.* Early in the charter term, board members and school administrators reported that achieving maximum enrollment of 400 was a challenge. NCCES reached its full grade span in its fourth year, serving seventh through twelfth grades, but has not yet reached its maximum enrollment. Currently, the school enrolls approximately 360 students with five students on a waitlist for ninth and tenth grade spots. Additionally, the renewal inspection team noted that at the time of the visit, 140 NCCES students were new to the school, approximately 40 percent of the student body.

School stakeholders interviewed by the renewal inspection team reported that the school needs to increase outreach and alter the perception some community members have of the school. According to their plans for the next five years, as stated in the renewal application, there is a goal to rebrand the school in conjunction with the relocation to a new building and their 10-year anniversary. The school has a goal of reaching an enrollment of 400 and building a waitlist. The school also stated that it conducts exit interviews with students to learn how they can improve in order to increase its overall retention rate of 73 percent.

NCCES's grade configuration does not align with the middle school configuration in other local middle schools. Local middle schools begin in sixth grade, whereas NCCES begins in seventh. The school noted in its renewal application that it is exploring the option of adding a 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the school to alleviate this problem.

With its 2010-11 Annual Report, NCCES submitted the required Recruitment and Retention plan. This is the first year that the school is implementing the plan. NCCES will report on the success of the strategies outlined in the plan in its 2011-12 Annual Report.

### **School leadership and organizational planning**

**School leaders administer the school in a manner that ensures academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to charter. The school has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication. These systems result in a common sense of purpose for all school constituents. The school has realistic plans for program improvement based on evaluation and analysis of data.**

*Finding: Over the charter term, NCCES has created clearly defined roles for school administrators and staff. The school has developed well-understood processes for decision-making.*

NCCES experienced a turnover in its administrative staff prior to the start of the current charter term. After the series of transitions, NCCES worked to clearly define and articulate to staff the roles of the administrative team. Created in 2007, the school's strategic plan outlines a clear leadership structure, with the board of trustees overseeing the executive director, who then

oversees the principal. The executive director is responsible for strategic planning, reporting to and supporting the board of trustees, fundraising, community outreach, partnership development, and serving as the spokesperson for NCCES. The principal is responsible for the oversight of the academic program, including the work of the academic leadership team, composed of the subject area lead teachers and assistant principal.

The renewal inspection team found that administrative roles and responsibilities are well understood by all school stakeholders. The school's organizational chart clearly outlines the reporting structure and details the amount of time individuals should dedicate to various roles they may have. Each position has an associated job description. The renewal inspection team found that staff members were able to clearly articulate the reporting and decision-making structure.

NCCES has a protocol, called Pathways, which provides a protocol for school-wide decision making. When a school stakeholder has an issue or concern that affects the broad community, s/he is requested to create a proposal to solve that issue or concern. This proposal then goes to the pathways committee, comprised of a committee chair, one faculty member from each of the three grade-level divisions in the school, and one student from each division. The committee then decides which of the five pathways will be used to make a decision about the proposal: full staff decision, team decision, principal decision, community referendum, or board of trustees. All those interviewed by the renewal inspection team referenced this process and provided examples of its use.

The school has developed a number of protocols to guide agendas for staff meetings. Grade level teams use KidTalk, a protocol that structures discussions about student concerns and provides strategies to generate solutions. Grade level teams also follow an agenda for meetings and follow protocols for making grade level decisions. The student support team (SST) follows an agenda during meetings, TASK: Track students, Attendance, Supervision (debriefing situations), and KidTalk. The SST also reviews a data dashboard at the weekly meetings to track the relative success of suggested interventions.

### **Family satisfaction and engagement**

**The school demonstrates that families and students are satisfied with the school's program.**

*Finding: Families have expressed strong satisfaction with the school climate, personalization of the program to student needs, and consistent communication.*

When interviewed by the renewal inspection team, parents reported that the school provided a safe environment for their children in which all students are accepted for who they are. Parents reported that the school offers personalized attention to all students, particularly through small group advisory during which students are able to meet with their advisor on a daily basis.

Parents reported that there is a high degree of communication to and from the school. Tools such as the Friday Flash (a weekly newsletter), the school website, the Parent Portal (where parents can check on students' grades online), and an All Call system have created consistent communication. Parents reported receiving multiple telephone calls from teachers and advisors about students' successes and challenges. Seventy-nine percent of parents and students reported that it was easy or somewhat easy to get in touch with a teacher.

### **School safety**

**The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. The school establishes an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination, and effectively addresses the social, emotional, and health needs of its students.**

*Finding: Throughout the charter term, parents and students have reported that the school has created a safe environment that meets students' physical, social, and emotional needs.*

The school is located in a safe facility. The physical plant is secure and locked at all entrances. Students and guests must enter the building by buzzing in at the front door. Students waiting in the front lobby are monitored by adults.

A number of programs to address the physical, social, and emotional safety are provided to students. The school has a peer mediation program where students can ask trained peer mediators for assistance in conflict resolution. The school has also invested in the Training Active Bystanders program, which provides additional peer mediation training to students. As noted previously, the school employs the Make It Right Approach to classroom management. If a student misbehaves, he or she must then go through a process to make amends with the school community.

Students and parents recognize that social and emotional well-being is a high priority for the school. Students reported that teachers ensure that everyone feels comfortable enough to participate in events, whether in class or athletics, and that they make sure no one is left behind. Parents echoed these sentiments, stating that the school accepts students for exactly who they are, cares tremendously about their students, and works to build the self-esteem of all students.

### **School facilities**

**The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements, are suited to its programs, and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs.**

*Finding: The current school facility is adequate to meet the needs of the program; however, stakeholders desire a new facility.*

NCCES facilities are well-maintained. The renewal inspection team observed the building to be clean, well-kept and well lit. The classrooms are of adequate size for current classes of 16 to 18 students. The school also has an art room, a black box theatre, a small space for wellness, a small staffed library, a cafeteria, a computer lab, a nurse's station, and a student lounge. While on site, the renewal inspection team noted that the school makes use of all available spaces. For example, the school has put up wall dividers to make more room for small group tutoring around the building.

In the school's seventh and eighth years, school stakeholders noted that the school facility was not ideal and that NCCES hoped to find a new building by the time the lease expired in 2012. Stakeholders explained that the cost of leasing the current facility was too high, and that they would like to allocate more of the school's budget for educational resources and less for rent. They also expressed frustration about the lack of athletic facilities. These sentiments were echoed during the renewal inspection visit. All stakeholders described the need for facility additions, such as labs with sinks, a gymnasium, and green space for students.

*Finding: Although the board and executive director have engaged in pursuing a long-term facility for the past two years, the plan for purchasing and refurbishing a local venue has been abandoned due to recent circumstances. The school is actively involved in working on alternative plans.*

The school engaged in a two-year process to locate and procure a new facility. Over the past two years, the school has raised approximately \$2 million, counting pledges, and was beginning the design and bids phase of construction. Recent circumstances, including construction bids coming in \$1.4 million higher than anticipated and a decrease in QZABs credit rate, meant that in seven years, the school would be more than \$3 million in debt.

In September 2011, the board made the decision to end the project, recognizing that they had spent more than a million dollars of raised funds donated to the school's foundation. The board recognized that this decision needed to be made in order to allow the school to remain a financially viable organization. Because their current lease ends in 2012, the board is in the process of finding an alternative location.

### **Compliance**

**The school is in compliance with the requirements of the Coordinated Program Review (CPR). Employees of the school meet all applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.**

*Finding: A full Coordinated Program Review was conducted in March 2010. A corrective action plan was approved in November 2011 and the cycle was closed.*

The last full Coordinated Program Review (CPR) activity at NCCES was conducted in March 2010 which included reviews of the school's special education, English learner education (ELL), and civil rights programs. The final report, dated August 27, 2010, contained findings of noncompliance with professional development requirements; specifically that none of the content teachers of English language learners had received training in Categories 1 through 4. NCCES reported a plan to offer Category 2 to all teachers during SY 2010-11. In response to the findings contained in the report, the school submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) which was reviewed and approved by the Department on November 11, 2011. The final CPR Progress Report for ELL was approved on June 29, 2011. The Department's Program Quality Assurance unit notified the school that no further progress reports were required and the CPR cycle was closed.

*Finding: Eighty-eight percent of the teaching staff are highly qualified.*

During the 2010-11 school year, NCCES employed 34 teachers. Approximately 88 percent of those teachers were highly qualified.

*Finding: The school building is programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities.*

The NCCES facility consists of two floors which are accessible via an elevator. All classrooms and interior spaces are fully accessible, including bathrooms.

*Finding: The school schedule barely meets the minimum requirement for structured learning time.*

In years seven and eight, site visit teams noted that the school barely met the Department's minimum yearly student learning time of 990 hours. Likewise, the renewal inspection teams noted concerns about whether the school offers sufficient structured learning time. NCCES has a standard 180-day school year calendar. The school day is six and a half hours long on Mondays,

Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and four hours long on Wednesday (school is dismissed at 12:15 every Wednesday). The schedule meets the amount of required time, if advisory and remedial periods are included as structured learning time.

### **Dissemination**

**The school has collaborated with its sending district(s) on the sharing of innovative practices, or provided models for replication and best practices.**

*Finding: The school collaborates and shares innovative practices primarily through an open invitation to visit the school, along with making some presentations at external events.*

The school welcomes guests to observe their best practices. NCCES has participated in critical friends groups (CFGs), whereby community members come to the school to observe and provide feedback. Many individuals have also visited the school to observe its practices.

The school has participated in a handful of presentations. NCCES presented at the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy Forum in May and October 2010 on their implementation of the Make It Right Approach to behavior management. Additionally, the executive director served on a panel at the Teacher for America Boston Summit in April of 2010. The school is actively pursuing other partnerships in the community by engaging student teachers from Fitchburg State College, regularly meeting with the Superintendent and Director of Special Education for the Fitchburg Public Schools, and maintaining a Critical Friends Group with the Francis W. Parker Charter School. However, efforts to share innovative practices or provide models for replication have been minimal.

### **Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the organizational viability objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: NCCES has met half of the measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.*

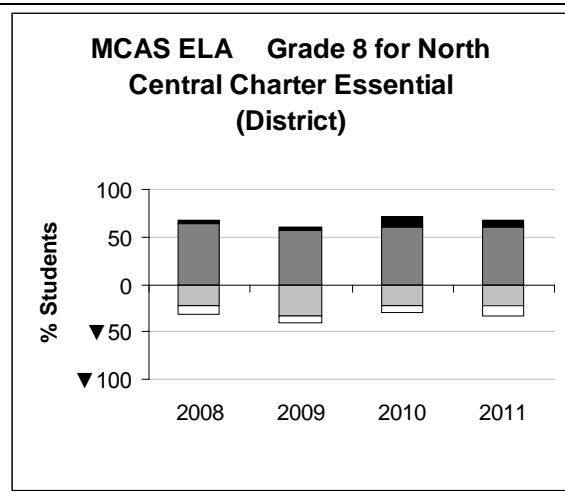
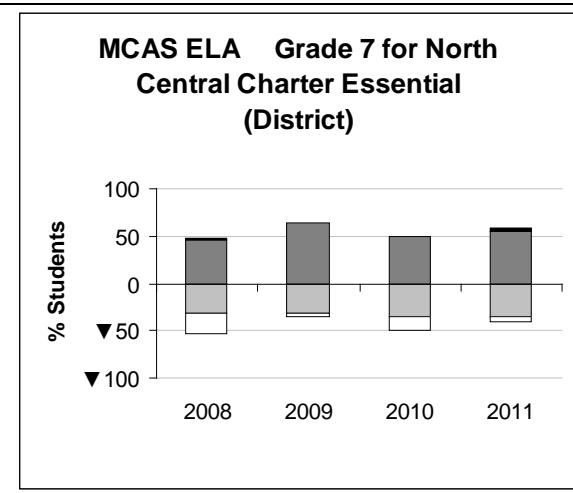
NCCES's accountability plan includes three objectives and eight measures related to organizational viability. The school met four, not met two, and partially met two of these measures. A summary of the school's success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VII of this report

## V. MCAS Performance

### English language arts

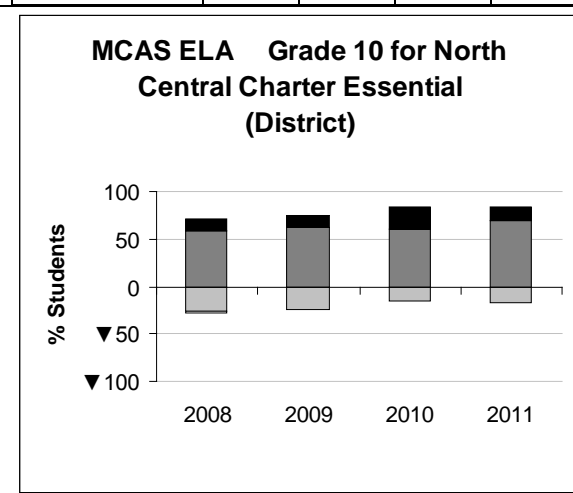
**Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index

Warning/Failing %
  Needs Improvement %
  Proficient %
  Advanced/Above Prof. %



ELA Grade 7	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	2	0	0	4
% Proficient	46	64	51	54
% Needs Improvement	32	32	35	35
% Warning Failing	21	3	14	7
N	57	59	65	46
CPI	73.2	88.1	78.5	83.7
SGP	30.0	36.0	20.0	17.0
N for SGP	35	39	49	27

ELA Grade 8	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	5	3	11	7
% Proficient	63	57	60	60
% Needs Improvement	23	33	23	22
% Warning Failing	9	7	7	11
N	65	60	75	73
CPI	85.0	84.2	86.7	84.6
SGP	44.0	38.0	46.0	36.5
N for SGP	52	53	65	66

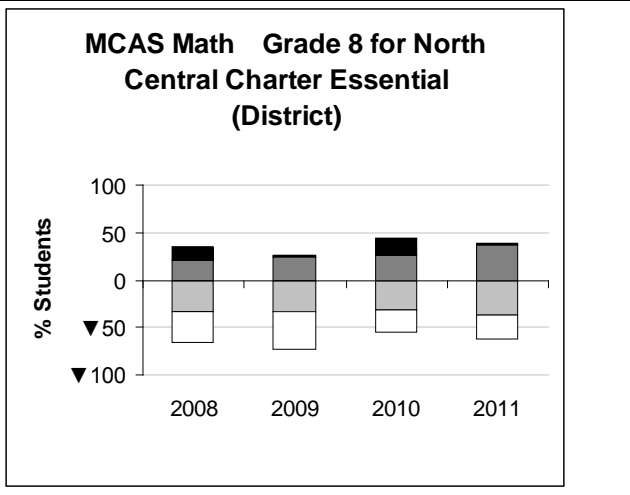
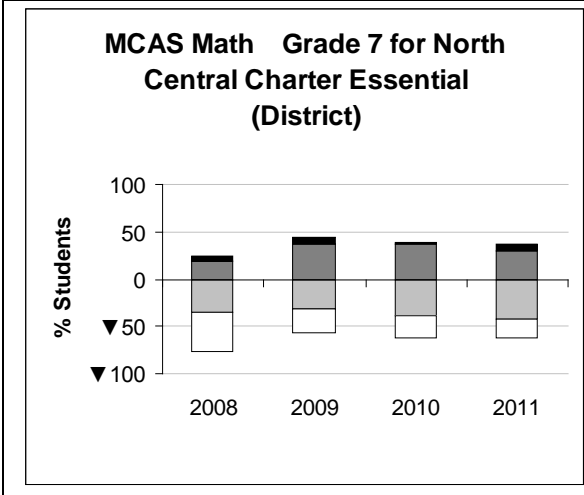


ELA Grade 10	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	13	13	24	15
% Proficient	58	62	60	69
% Needs Improvement	27	25	16	17
% Warning Failing	2	0	0	0
N	60	53	58	54
CPI	89.6	93.9	95.3	94.4
SGP	-	56.0	73.0	56.0
N for SGP	-	36	41	47

Mathematics

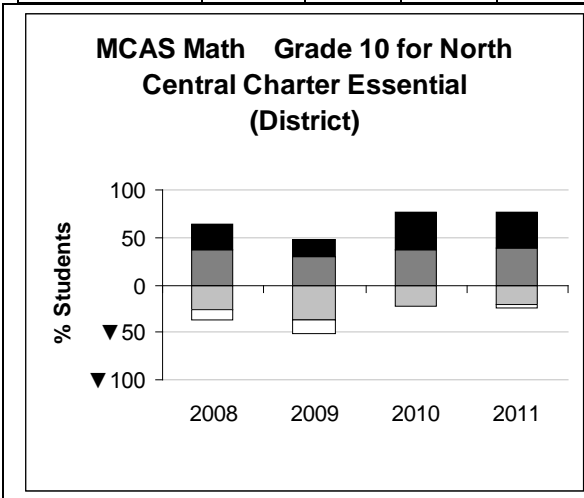
**Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index

Warning/Failing %
  Needs Improvement %
  Proficient %
  Advanced/Above Prof. %



Math Grade 7	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	5	7	2	8
% Proficient	19	37	37	29
% Needs Improvement	34	32	38	42
% Warning Failing	41	24	23	21
N	58	59	65	48
CPI	54.3	69.1	67.3	67.7
SGP	34.0	39.0	33.0	45.5
N for SGP	35	39	49	28

Math Grade 8	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	14	2	19	1
% Proficient	21	25	26	37
% Needs Improvement	33	33	31	37
% Warning Failing	32	41	24	25
N	66	61	74	73
CPI	62.9	55.7	69.3	64.0
SGP	32.0	33.0	47.5	34.0
N for SGP	53	54	64	67



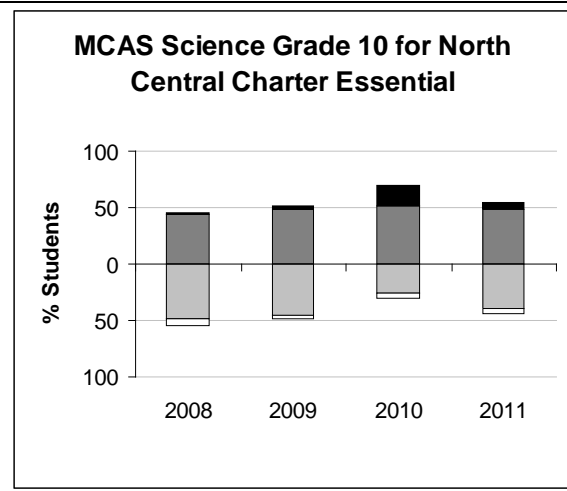
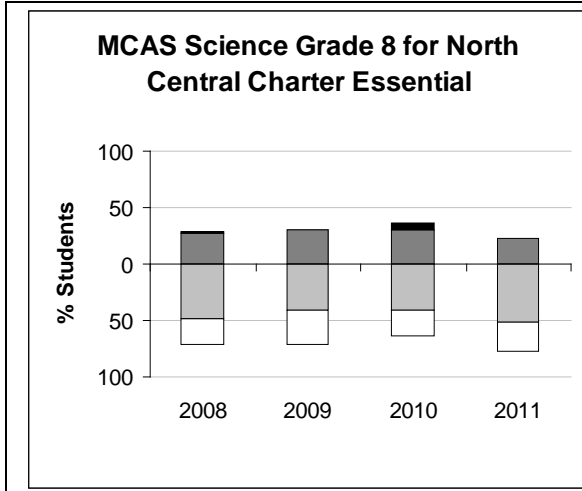
Math Grade 10	2008	2009	2010	2011
% Advanced	28	19	40	38
% Proficient	36	29	37	38
% Needs Improvement	26	37	22	20
% Warning Failing	10	15	2	4
N	61	52	60	55
CPI	83.2	74.5	89.6	90.5
SGP	-	43.0	69.0	69.0
N for SGP	-	35	41	48



Science

**Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index

Warning/Failing %  
  Needs Improvement %  
  Proficient %  
  Advanced/Above Prof. %



Science Grade	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>8</b>				
% Advanced	2	0	7	0
% Proficient	27	30	30	22
% Needs Improvement	48	41	41	51
% Warning/Failing	23	30	23	27
N	66	61	74	73
CPI	64.8	61.9	67.9	58.9

Science Grade	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>10</b>				
% Advanced	2	3	17	6
% Proficient	44	49	52	49
% Needs Improvement	48	46	26	40
% Warning/Failing	6	3	5	4
N	48	37	42	47
CPI	76.0	79.1	86.3	82.4

## VI. Adequate Yearly Progress Data

Performance and improvement ratings for Massachusetts public schools are based on aggregate student performance on MCAS tests. Performance is measured using the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a measure of the distribution of student performance relative to attaining proficiency. Ratings are used to track schools' progress toward meeting the goal of all students achieving proficiency in English language arts and mathematics by 2014. NCCES's most recent AYP Data is presented below.

	NCLB Accountability Status	Performance Rating
English Language Arts	Restructuring Year 2-Subgroups	On Target
Mathematics	Restructuring Year 2	No Change

English Language Arts																
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Grad Rate				AY P 2011
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2011 CPI	Met Target (95.1)	2010 CPI Baseline	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	2010 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2009 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	175	173	99	Yes	173	87.4	No	86.5	3.4	87.4-92.4	Yes	62.3	-6.9	80.0	Yes	Yes
Lim. English Prof.	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	38	38	-	-	38	75.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Low Income	86	84	98	Yes	84	84.2	No	79.8	5.1	80.4-89.4	Yes	50.0	-15.2	78.3	No	No
Afr. Amer./Black	14	14	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	31	30	-	-	30	83.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	127	127	100	Yes	127	88.6	No	88.4	2.9	88.8-93.8	No	65.3	0.0	75.5	No	No
Mathematics																
Student Group	(A) Participation				(B) Performance			(C) Improvement				(D) Grad Rate				AY P 2011
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target (95%)	N	2011 CPI	Met Target (84.3)	2010 CPI Baseline	Gain Target	On Target Range	Met Target	2010 (4yr)	Change (4yr)	2009 (5yr)	Met Target	
Aggregate	177	176	99	Yes	176	73.3	No	74.7	6.3	78.5-83.5	No	62.3	-6.9	80.0	Yes	No
Lim. English Prof.	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education	39	39	-	-	39	52.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Low Income	88	87	99	Yes	87	64.4	No	68.0	8.0	71.5-80.5	No	50.0	-15.2	78.3	No	No
Afr. Amer./Black	14	14	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian or Pacif. Isl.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	32	32	-	-	32	57.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	128	128	100	Yes	128	78.3	No	79.3	5.2	82.0-87.0	No	65.3	0.0	75.5	No	No

Adequate Yearly Progress History										NCLB Accountability Status
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011			

ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	

## VII. Comparative Statistical Analysis of MCAS Results

LEA: 0474	North Central Essential	NCECS
LEA: 0097	Fitchburg	FPS

Aggregate Results				Low Income		Spec. Ed.		Lim. Eng. Prof.		Afr. Amer./Black		Asian/Pac. Isl.		Hispanic		Native Amer.		White	
ELA	School/District	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *
<b>Grade 7</b>																			
2008	NCECS	57	73.3															45	73.9
2008	FPS	401	80.4															181	86.6 *
2008	State	72,799	87.3																
2009	NCECS	59	88.1 *															46	90.2
2009	FPS	372	74.5															153	85.3
2009	State	71,696	88.1																
2010	NCECS	65	78.5															44	80.1
2010	FPS	333	78.1															134	84.9
2010	State	71,350	88.6																
2011	NCECS	46	83.7																
2011	FPS	385	78.7																
2011	State	72,260	89.5																
<b>Grade 8</b>																			
2008	NCECS	65	85.0															54	86.1
2008	FPS	414	81.5															193	88.1
2008	State	73,268	89.3																
2009	NCECS	60	84.2															44	86.4
2009	FPS	378	85.4															165	91.2
2009	State	73,140	91.1																
2010	NCECS	75	86.7 *															53	89.2
2010	FPS	358	77.6															148	89.0
2010	State	72,237	90.4																
2011	NCECS	73	84.6	40	78.8													54	86.1
2011	FPS	333	82.5	228	79.1													131	88.4
2011	State	71,883	91.1																
<b>Grade 10</b>																			
2008	NCECS	60	89.6															52	88.9
2008	FPS	329	85.7															187	90.5
2008	State	71,510	90.3																
2009	NCECS	53	93.9 *															40	96.3 *
2009	FPS	304	82.9															159	88.4
2009	State	70,383	92.2																
2010	NCECS	58	95.3 *															47	95.2
2010	FPS	271	84.3															140	92.7
2010	State	70,369	91.9																
2011	NCECS	54	94.4																
2011	FPS	258	88.7																
2011	State	69,532	93.9																
<b>All Grades Combined</b>																			
2008	NCECS	182	82.8	69	77.5	40	59.4											151	83.4
2008	FPS	1,144	82.3	701	76.7	216	58.3											561	88.4 *
2008	State	501,261	85.2																
2009	NCECS	172	88.5 *	70	85.4 *													130	90.8
2009	FPS	1,054	80.8	660	76.0													477	88.4
2009	State	499,025	86.5																
2010	NCECS	198	86.5 *	93	79.8 *														
2010	FPS	962	79.7	603	73.3														
2010	State	498,668	86.9																
2011	NCECS	173	87.4 *	84	84.2													127	88.6
2011	FPS	976	82.6	671	78.7													403	87.6
2011	State	497,258	87.2																

Notes: (1) An asterisk (\*) beside a higher CPI indicates a difference that is statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level; 2-tailed. (2) State results are provided for context. Statistical significance testing was not performed in comparison to the state. (3) Results for subgroups with less than 40 students are not displayed.

LEA: 0474	North Central Essential	NCECS
LEA: 0097	Fitchburg	FPS

Aggregate Results				Low Income		Spec. Ed.		Lim. Eng. Prof.		Afr. Amer./Black		Asian/Pac. Isl.		Hispanic		Native Amer.		White	
Math	School/District	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *	Students Included	CPI *
<b>Grade 7</b>																			
2008	NCECS	58	54.3															46	57.1
2008	FPS	401	61.2															183	70.1 *
2008	State	73,169	71.8																
2009	NCECS	59	69.1 *															46	76.6
2009	FPS	371	59.8															155	72.9
2009	State	71,975	73.8																
2010	NCECS	65	67.3 *															45	71.7
2010	FPS	332	60.5															134	68.3
2010	State	71,452	76.1																
2011	NCECS	48	67.7																
2011	FPS	386	58.2																
2011	State	72,495	73.8																
<b>Grade 8</b>																			
2008	NCECS	66	62.9															55	62.7
2008	FPS	417	57.1															194	64.2
2008	State	73,365	72.0																
2009	NCECS	61	55.7															45	60.6
2009	FPS	382	59.9															166	67.6
2009	State	73,170	72.8																
2010	NCECS	74	69.3															53	75.9
2010	FPS	357	59.5															146	73.3
2010	State	72,180	74.8																
2011	NCECS	73	64.0															54	68.1
2011	FPS	333	59.2															131	67.8
2011	State	71,740	74.2																
<b>Grade 10</b>																			
2008	NCECS	61	83.2															53	82.1
2008	FPS	326	83.2															188	83.9
2008	State	71,166	86.7																
2009	NCECS	52	74.5															40	78.1
2009	FPS	306	77.5															158	81.5
2009	State	70,194	88.1																
2010	NCECS	60	89.6															49	89.8
2010	FPS	284	83.7															142	89.8
2010	State	70,401	88.8																
2011	NCECS	55	90.5															40	93.1
2011	FPS	257	83.7															110	88.9
2011	State	69,342	89.4																
<b>All Grades Combined</b>																			
2008	NCECS	185	66.9	71	57.0	40	45.6											154	67.7
2008	FPS	1,144	66.0	705	59.5	224	48.1											565	72.7
2008	State	501,986	77.7																
2009	NCECS	172	66.0	69	60.1													131	71.6
2009	FPS	1,059	64.9	663	58.4													479	73.9
2009	State	499,177	78.5																
2010	NCECS	199	74.8 *	93	68.0													147	79.3
2010	FPS	973	66.9	613	59.3													422	77.3
2010	State	499,632	79.9																
2011	NCECS	176	73.3 *	87	64.4													128	78.3
2011	FPS	976	65.2	677	60.5													400	72.6
2011	State	497,712	79.9																

- Notes: (1) An asterisk (\*) beside a higher CPI indicates a difference that is statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level; 2-tailed. This means the probability is less than 5/100 that a difference in performance of this size occurred by chance, if the two groups were randomly assigned.
- (2) State results are provided for context. Statistical significance testing was not performed in comparison to the state.
- (3) Results for subgroups with less than 40 students are not displayed.

## VIII. Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures

A. Faithfulness to Charter	Performance	Notes
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES students are known personally, challenged intellectually, and participate actively in their learning. (Common Principles #3, #4, & #5)		
<b>Measure:</b> 100% of NCCES students have personal learning plans which include goals for personal and intellectual growth that are developed and signed by students, parents/guardians and Advisors annually.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School reports that 100% of students in 2009-11 graduating class had plans. Team observed advisors discussing learning plans and reviewing the contents and purposes of portfolios with students.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 80% of NCCES students and parents agree or strongly agree that s/he (the student) is known well and can thus be academically advised well by at least one staff member in the school as measured by the Annual Climate Survey.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Due to technical difficulties only 3.1% of parents and 97% of students responded to a June 2011 survey. Almost 100% of parents and students responded to the June 2010 survey, where 82% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 80% of NCCES students and parents agree or strongly agree that they believe that their student is provided with an appropriate level of academic challenge at NCCES as measured by the Annual Climate Survey.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Due to technical difficulties only 3.1% of parents and 97% of students responded to a June 2011 survey. Almost 100% of parents and students responded to the June 2010 survey, where 71% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES demonstrates effective Essential School practices as evidenced by annual reviews by outside Critical Friends.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The debrief notes from its critical friends group discussion did not comment thoroughly enough on aspects of Essential Schools practices to make a determination.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES is a diverse and inclusive community where every member's voice and perspective is valued and respected. (Common Principles #3 & #10)		
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES policies, procedures, practices, and indicators of success reflect commitment to diversity and inclusiveness as indicated by findings of external and internal reviews.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School documented policies include, decision-making procedures and protocols that allow for inclusiveness, specifically CBA and Pathways.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> Response rate for the NCCES Annual Climate Survey of staff, students and parents increases by 2% per year resulting in returns of at least 60%.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only 3.1% of parents responded in June 2011, as compared to almost 100% in 2010. 97% of students and 100% of staff responded.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 80% of NCCES students and parents agree or strongly agree that they personally feel safe in the NCCES learning environment as	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3.1% of parents &amp; 97% of students responded to June 2011 survey. 85.1% agreed/strongly</li> </ul>

measured by the Annual Climate Survey.		agreed with this statement.
<b>Measure:</b> 80% of NCCES students and staff actively participate in a clearly defined, democratic process for school-wide decision making as measured by voter participation in decisions requiring referenda.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As reported by the application and students and staff members, the school utilizes the Pathways decision-making system, engaging multiple stakeholders in decisions that affect the school community.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> The demographic composition of the student body reflects the diversity of the sending districts as measured by comparing NCCES with U.S. Census data.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As reported in the school application and on state website, demographics generally reflect surrounding districts.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES shares with the outside community replicable models of effective practices.		
<b>Measure:</b> At least 5 NCCES staff shares some aspect of NCCES practices annually with educators and/or related professionals.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school reports and documents that at least 10 NCCES staff shared aspects of NCCES practices with other educators during the 2010-2011 school year.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES maintains on the school's website examples of replicable models of effective practices.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two examples posted on website.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES brings in at least 25 visitors annually to observe directly the work that is going on in the school.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provided a list of more than 25 visitors.</li> </ul>
<b>B. Academic Program</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES Students think for themselves, use their minds well and master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. (Common Principles #1 and #2)		
<b>Measure:</b> 100% of NCCES students pass ELA and Math MCAS by graduation.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students passed both portions of the MCAS in 2011, as reported by the school.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES makes Annual Yearly Progress each year.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school did not make AYP for the low-income and white subgroups in ELA or for math overall and math low-income and white subgroups.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 90% of students successfully meet eligibility requirements for promotion (Gateway) at the end of 8 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grades.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has documented that 93% of students met eligibility requirements for promotion (Gateway) at the end of 8th and 10th grades for the 2009-10 school year. 96% did so for the 2010-11 school year.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 100% of NCCES graduates demonstrate mastery of higher order skills through successful completion of the Senior Project.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has documented that all students have completed a portfolio in 2011.</li> </ul>

<b>Objective:</b> NCCES curriculum is aligned with standards from the MA Curriculum Frameworks and is effectively implemented in the classroom.		
<b>Measure:</b> 100% of NCCES courses are aligned with standards from the state frameworks as indicated by curriculum maps.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has aligned its curriculum through unit plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 100% of NCCES teachers from all subject areas adopt and ensure mastery of ELA and/or math standards from the state frameworks as measured by analysis of student progress on common formative assessments.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers use unit plans and benchmark assessments to gauge student progress in math, science and ELA, as reported by leaders and teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES students transition successfully from NCCES to a post-secondary program of study, employment and/or an organized service program.		
<b>Measure:</b> 90% of NCCES graduates are accepted to at least one post-secondary educational program.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school reports that 95% of the classes of 2010 and 2011 were accepted to at least one program.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 95% of NCCES graduates are enrolled in a post-secondary educational program, employed, and/or participating in an organized service program by the fall following graduation.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school does not have an adequate means of tracking its alumni.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES students are well prepared for success in post-secondary educational programs, employment, and/or participation in an organized service program as determined by data collected from biennial alumni surveys.		
<b>Measure:</b> 90% of NCCES alumni are enrolled in a post-secondary educational program, employed, and/or participating in an organized service program as determined by a biennial survey of alumni.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school does not have an adequate means of tracking its alumni.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 90% of NCCES alumni indicate that they agree or strongly agree that they are well-prepared for post-secondary educational programs, employment, and/or participation in an organized service program as determined by a biennial survey of alumni.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school does not have an adequate means of gathering feedback from its alumni.</li> </ul>
<b>C. Organizational Viability</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES attracts enrolls and retains students from its region.		
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES maintains an enrollment level equal to or exceeding 90% capacity as defined by a yearly enrollment target as set by the Board of Trustees.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school currently has an enrollment of 359, which is one student less than the board's target of 360.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES maintains a waitlist equal to or exceeding 10% of the school's population in grades 7 through 10.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has not met this measure. The current waitlist is 5 or 1%.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> NCCES fiscal management reflects sound practices that support fulfillment of its charter's essential commitments. (Common		

Principle #9)		
<b>Measure:</b> NCCES has sound financial practices as evidenced by yearly independent audits which include no significant negative findings.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There have been no significant negative findings in the 2009 or 2010 audits.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> The NCCES actual and proposed annual budget is balanced, showing income equal to or greater than expense.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to financial statements the school had net income in two of the previous three years.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> The NCCES Board of Trustees annually approves a balanced budget that supports the academic success of students.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved budget is balanced for 2011.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> The NCCES Board of Trustees will secure a permanent home for NCCES.	Not Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School is still looking for permanent facility.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> The NCCES Board of Trustees provides sound and effective governance to support and promote the school's mission.		
<b>Measure:</b> The NCCES Board of Trustees and the school leader develop annual leadership goals which reflect the school's mission and lead to further implementation of the school improvement plan and 75% of these goals are met annually.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school sets annual goals which relate to the mission but it is unclear what percentage has been completed.</li> </ul>
<b>Measure:</b> 75% of NCCES Board members agree or strongly agree that the Board is meeting its governance responsibilities as measured by the Board's annual self-assessment.	Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to survey collected On October 3, 2011 and provided after the site visit.</li> </ul>