

Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

September 2007

Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School (BBCPS) is located in Cambridge, MA and serves 325 students in grades kindergarten through six. The school's mission statement reads, "The Benjamin Banneker Charter School is an urban K-6 Science and Technology school, committed to excellence in education. We believe all students can excel as learners and citizens when provided with a rich, supportive, and stimulating educational environment. The BBCPS is the inspiration of concerned community leaders, parents, and educators, with the common vision and purpose of providing all Cambridge and local youth, regardless of race, culture, language, or socioeconomic status, with a high quality education."

BBCPS is in the second year of its third charter and its twelfth year of operation as a public charter school. The school draws the majority of its students from the towns of Cambridge (25%) and Boston (55%). As reported by the school at the time of the site visit, the student population is 82% African American, 15% Hispanic, and 3% other. Of the total student population, 8.6% are designated as limited English proficient students, 6.7% are special education students, and 77% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

In December of 2005, the Board of Education approved the school's request to amend its charter to change its grade span from Kindergarten through grade 8 to Kindergarten through grade 6.

On January 24, 2006, the Board of Education renewed BBCPS charter with the following conditions:

1. The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School will make Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and no longer be identified in English language arts and mathematics under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System when results are reported for the 2007-2008 school year.
2. The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School will meet or make substantial progress each year towards meeting the goals in its Accountability Plan for 2006-2011 in the area of student academic success.
3. For the 2006-2007 school year, enrollment at the Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School is limited to 325 students. When the school demonstrates that both academic success conditions above have been met, enrollment may increase to a maximum of 350 students.

In response to being designated a School in Restructuring for failing to make AYP in mathematics five years in a row (BBCPS made AYP in 2005 but not in 2006), BBCPS hired a Director of School Improvement Planning and Initiatives. Because Banneker was a Title I school in improvement status, it developed a School Improvement Plan.

BBCPS experienced a significant change in leadership when its director of many years retired in July 2007. Prior to this date, the board of trustees undertook a search for a replacement director

and ultimately selected a former assistant principal of a Cambridge elementary school to become its leader during the summer of 2007.

The following participants conducted the site visit on September 26, 2007:

- Amanda Gardner, Head of School, Boston Preparatory Charter Public School
- Joshua Lavine, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Emily Lichtenstein, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Judy Miller, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Mary Street, MA DOE Charter School Office
- Lisa Tyrrell, MA DOE Math, Science & Technology/Engineering

Before the visit, the team reviewed the BBCPS 2006-07 Annual Report, student assessment data, board minutes and materials, the 2005 Summary of Review, and the BBCPS 2006-08 School Improvement Plan. On site, the team reviewed curricular information, a teacher roster, and other information provided by the school. The team observed approximately 26 classes and conducted focus groups with twelve teachers, eight members of the leadership team, seven students, six members of the Board of Trustees, and approximately twelve parents.

The purpose of this visit was to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's Annual Report, to investigate the school's progress relative to its Accountability Plan goals and the conditions imposed by the Board of Education, and to collect information that will eventually help the Commissioner and Board of Education review, in 2008, the school's status regarding the conditions imposed at renewal. The focus of the visit was on three central areas of inquiry:

- Faithfulness to the terms of the school's charter;
- Academic program success;
- Organizational viability.

The team's findings in each of these areas are presented below.

1. Faithfulness to the Terms of the Charter

Are the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy clear and understood by the school community?

Finding: While certain themes in common emerged from discussions with stakeholders, only two individuals described the mission of the school as being focused on science.

Challenging students, meeting the needs of all learners, differentiating instruction, and "building well-rounded people" were themes mentioned by various members of the groups interviewed. Teachers mentioned a focus on welcoming and challenging students and meeting the needs of all learners. The trustees noted that revisiting the vision of the school—including its focus on science and technology—is one of their primary goals for this year and that this topic was slated to be discussed at the board's meeting the day after the site visit.

Has the school met the faithfulness to charter goals set out in its Accountability Plan?

Finding: The school has made significant progress towards meeting the three faithfulness to charter goals outlined in its Accountability Plan.

Three goals in the BBCPS Accountability Plan pertain to faithfulness to charter:

Goal 12, “Banneker students will demonstrate mastery of scientific knowledge and skills,” has three measures:

1. “100% of students will participate in the two-day Science/Engineering Exposition.”

All students participated in the exposition: grades K-1 created grade-level projects; students in grades 2-3 participated in classroom projects; and students in grades 4-6 participated in small group projects

2. “Increase percentage of students in the combined Proficient and Advanced levels by 8% per year on average on the fifth grade Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS”:

The percentage of students scoring Advanced and Proficient was 16% in 2005 and 2006. The percentage is 29% in 2007, an increase of 13%.

3. “Decrease percentage of students in the Warning levels by 5.5% per year on average” on the fifth grade Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS:

The percentages for students in the Warning/Failing category were 33% in 2005, 19% in 2006, and 22% in 2007.

Goal 13, “Banneker students will demonstrate competency and skill in the use of technology and integration across the curriculum,” has five measures:

1. “Completion of minimum of 2 rubric-scored, integrated curriculum and technology projects per student each year.”

Students in grades 3-6 completed one or more integrated curriculum and technology projects in school year 2006-07. Software utilized included Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint along with KidPix, iMovie, and Hyperstudio.

2. “Completion by every 6th grade student of rubric-scored culminating technology project that demonstrates proficient use of a wide range of technology tools.”

This measure was achieved when all sixth grade students completed an eight-minute documentary this past spring using iMovie, some of which were presented at Banneker’s Technology Fair.

3. “Exemplary technology work showcased in a new school-wide digital portfolio system, by June 2008.”

This measure cannot yet be assessed.

4. “Increase and maintain student use of technology within classrooms (in addition to lab time) by June 2007. (Indicators include use of mobile lab, coaching within classrooms by Technology Facilitator, use of instructional software.) Web pages for each classroom created and maintained by each teacher each year.”

This measure was met. The school purchased a mobile iMac lab used by classrooms in grades three through six. The Technology Facilitator worked with students in grades two through six once a week along with working in the computer lab. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the school also invested in new curricular software. Web pages were created for each classroom last school year and are in use by teachers this year.

5. “Participation by every classroom, year after year,” in BBCPS’s annual Technology Fair. “Pilot participation by external evaluators by June 2007.”

All classroom participated in the Technology Fair. It is not clear whether the second part of the measure was attained.

Goal 14, “Banneker will demonstrate continuous improvement in meeting the challenging non-academic needs of its students,” lists seven measures in the school’s Accountability Plan, the most significant of which were addressed in its annual report. This goal was primarily met through the following:

- The creation of the Lenora Jennings Mentoring Program, which served seventeen male students utilizing nine mentors from the Banneker staff.
- On its Parent and Guardian Survey of 2007 (18% return rate), over 90% of responding parents expressed high satisfaction with the school’s environment.
- Three staff members were trained in the Second Step violence prevention program and will train other staff during the current school year.

4. Academic Program Success

Does the school’s instructional program, as documented and implemented in the classroom:

- 1. address the skills and concepts that students must know and be able to do to meet state standards?**
- 2. articulate school developed or identified internal standards for student performance?**
- 3. establish and implement accommodation plans that address the needs of diverse learners?**

Finding: The school uses a range of both externally and internally created curricula that are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The literacy curriculum is created at Banneker using the framework of the Literacy Collaborative model, which calls for 60 minutes of language and word study daily, 30-60 minutes of reading workshop daily, and 60 minutes of writing workshop daily. This curriculum is aligned with the Mass. Frameworks. The math curriculum utilized is the ThinkMath program developed by the Education Development Center (EDC) and piloted at Banneker. The science curriculum was designed to give teachers choices from among a number of selected core science units from the National Science Foundation curricula. The science program is currently in the process of being revised and the school is transitioning to Insights, a hands-on science curriculum published by EDC. Social studies is integrated with the Literacy Collaborative curriculum. Banneker uses the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks scope and sequence, and books are chosen to align with the Literacy Collaborative for read-alouds and guided reading. Lesson plans for literacy and social studies are submitted in binders for review to the Literacy Collaborative coaches and the Deputy Director. Feedback is provided to teachers by the coaches. The binders serve as a record of lesson plans and a repository of lessons for future use.

Finding: Teachers are well supported in their implementation of the Literacy Collaborative program.

Teachers are supported by two on-site literacy coaches and an extensive amount of program development. One literacy coach is assigned to grades K-2, the other to grades 3-6. Because the fourth grade teacher is new, the grades 3-6 coach is currently spending afternoons in her classroom each day. This coach focuses on the grades 3,5, and 6 classrooms in the morning, spending a week at a time with each grade. This schedule is new and will most likely change as the year progresses. Extensive data, including the Developmental Reading Assessment, is gathered and utilized so that students may be grouped by ability and by current need (including Title I), allowing teachers to do more differentiated instruction.

Finding: The school's commitment to the science portion of its mission appears to be in transition. While the school states that the program is not as strong and pervasive as it could be, the school continues to develop science-related partnerships with external organizations.

The site visit team did not observe the extensive presence of science in the school or the classroom. Members of the board of trustees noted that setting goals for more fully “infusing science and technology into the curriculum and teaching process” was going to be one of the primary objectives at its next meeting. At the same time, the school continues to develop science-related partnerships with numerous organizations such as the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and Lesley University. The school draws elements of the science curriculum from a number of areas including the Boston Science Museum, Tufts University, and Lego Robotics. The Harvard Business School donated \$10,000 to the school last year for the development of a science lab. Teachers report it is currently a place to use for long-term projects, particularly messy ones. The lab does not yet appear to be fully equipped.

While administrators note that science and technology have received less attention recently due to the school focus on MCAS and making AYP, science lessons occur daily and students still list science as a favorite subject.

Finding: BCCPS provides instructional supports and services to students with diverse learning needs in the least restrictive environment.

The school structure provides supports for students and teachers through grade level cluster teams, consultation services, the Coordinating Student Support Team (CSST), English language learner services, special education and related services, counseling services, literacy coaches, and a math coach.

The school's special education program and services are integrated into the school's regular education program as special education teachers provide specialized instruction according to each student's IEP. The majority of students with disabilities receive IEP services within the general education classroom with supplementary aids and/or related services. A small number of eligible students receive IEP services through a pullout model or small group instruction, ensuring a continuum of services that meet the needs of students with disabilities. Classroom observations were conducted in a variety of settings. When pull-out services were observed, the special education teacher worked with one or two students on specific reading skills, i.e., decoding, fluency, and comprehension. A majority of classrooms observed were taught by a teacher, a paraprofessional, and a special education teacher, resulting in a low student-teacher ratio. The majority of student-teacher interactions observed were supportive in nature and based on mutual respect. Special education staff moved throughout the classrooms assisting all students while also focusing on students with disabilities. The inclusion setting and small group services observed were staffed to provide individual instruction for students.

Finding: The team generally saw whole group, teacher-directed lessons followed by independent practice. In the lower grades, students were observed to use manipulatives, graphic organizers, and other tools to make learning accessible.

In most subject areas, team members observed lessons opening with teacher-centered instruction followed by time for students to work on their own. In keeping with the school's commitment to the practices of the Literacy Collaborative, the Writer's Workshop model was seen in multiple classes beginning with a mini-lesson and/or teacher modeling followed by student work-time. Some small group work was also observed. Kindergarteners were seen using manipulatives to make different shapes and 1st graders used graphic organizers to practice writing words and then used magnetic letters to form those words.

Finding: Teachers have access to multiple forms of instructional technology, and the school continues to work on how to fully implement these tools within the academic program. Students were observed using instructional technology in class.

Teachers use and have access to a mobile computer lab, an interactive web board, and a SMART Board with voting system technology. Teachers also have access to educational web resource services such as BrainPOP, United Streaming, and Channel: Learning. Teachers did not discuss how they use these resources. Students were seen using computers to write or do math problems. In two lower grade classrooms, students were using computers to write poems and do simple comparing and counting exercises. If students were having difficulty with this exercise, the computer would give them prompts. In another class students were using computers to write lab reports.

Finding: Much of the work the team saw in classrooms was the building of routines as the school implements the Responsive Classroom model, which BBCPS is using to address school culture issues.

The Responsive Classroom model is an approach to structuring elementary classrooms and schools that emphasizes social and emotional growth along with intellectual development. Banneker has introduced the Responsive Classroom approach as a way to create physically and emotionally safe classrooms and a positive school environment. Because the Responsive Classroom model calls for the first four to six weeks of the school year to be focused on routines, and this visit occurred during the fourth week of school, the team observed many lessons that were focused on the teaching of appropriate behavior and routines and did not see many instances in which teachers and students were engaged in rigorous, challenging work.

Finding: Conversations with parents and observations by the site visit team indicate that behavior management is an issue in a number of classrooms.

Inconsistent behavioral expectations were observed in nearly one-third of the classrooms the site visit team visited. The team observed many instances of teachers ignoring off-task and disruptive behaviors. In some cases, even though behavioral expectations were clearly stated by the teacher, no consequences were applied when those expectations were not met.

Finding: In response to low MCAS scores in Mathematics and being designated as a school in Restructuring, BBCPS has instituted an extensive number of programs and modifications for both Mathematics and literacy.

These responses include:

- The development of a school improvement plan.
- The hiring of a Director of School Improvement Planning and Initiatives.
- The creation of a series of Critical Initiatives for school years 2006-07 and 2007-08, some of which are discussed below.
- The BBCPS MCAS Prep Program. This initiative, designed by the math and literacy coaches and taught by administrators, adds two extra MCAS preparation periods a week of math and literacy instruction.
- A program for parents on how to coach their children in preparation for the MCAS.
- After-school MCAS Clinics in both literacy and math, with 12 literacy sessions and 11 math sessions. Last year, the clinics served fifty-five students. The clinics will continue, along with the other programs, during the 2007-08 school year.
- Data-based action plans for each grade laying out strategies, materials to be covered, and goals for each student.
- Assessments in math and literacy administered throughout the year consisting of the Terra Nova and the Banneker mock MCAS.

Finding: BBCPS has instituted additional programs and strategies to meet the needs of its students, specifically in Mathematics.

After an extensive two-year review and reassessment of the school's math program, the school has selected and embraced a new school-wide math curriculum, developed by the EDC and piloted at BBCPS, known as ThinkMath. Teachers were highly involved in the process of choosing a new curriculum. They looked at several programs, tried them in the classroom, and reported back. After it was determined that the initial programs they tried were not a good fit,

the Executive Director selected ThinkMath based on the recommendation of the school's math team.

One strategy has been to increase the level of support provided to teachers and the level of attention given to students. Banneker had three part-time math support teachers last year who were the developers of the ThinkMath program. This year, BBCPS has one full-time math coach as well as one part-time math support teacher who works with grades four and five.

Banneker has also begun an extensive campaign with the goal of moving students from Needs Improvement to Proficient on the Mathematics MCAS. Using data from the 2006 MCAS results, the Terra Nova, and other internal assessments, the school has been grouping students to target specific deficiencies as well as set goals for individual students.

The school has also purchased and introduced two software-based math programs. FastMath is curricular software that allows teachers to customize short, factual tests for individual students based on how a student performs in the classroom. Destination Math is a comprehensive software program that allows teachers to assign lessons or tests to individual students to reinforce what is being taught in class and then receive real-time data on student understanding and progress. In addition, teachers have access to ThinkMath online resources which provide teacher guides and assessments. Instructional math games have also been purchased and are being used in each class.

Are students reaching Proficiency on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)?

MCAS results for English language arts and Mathematics for the last five years are presented below in Table I. This table includes the Composite Performance Index (CPI), which reflects the distribution of student scores over the four MCAS performance categories. The CPI is a 100-point index that measures the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency.

**Table I: BBCPS MCAS ELA and Mathematics Results by Performance Categories
Annual Comparisons 2003-2007**

ELA	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/Failed	CPI
Grade 3						
2003	40	0	33	53	15	71.9
2004	36	0	25	58	17	69.4
2005	33	0	42	55	3	79.5
2006	25	8	36	56	0	81.0
2007	43	5	30	58	7	77.3
Grade 4						
2003	35	0	23	40	37	57.9
2004	36	3	47	36	14	75.0
2005	38	0	21	66	13	66.4
2006	38	0	21	53	26	63.2
2007	42	0	45	36	19	81.2
Grade 5						
2006	31	3	29	58	10	49.2
2007	37	0	49	43	8	84.6
Grade 6						
2006	25	0	48	48	4	82.0
2007	26	0	58	27	15	86.4

- Third grade scores have fluctuated. The percentage of students in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failed categories has remained over 50%, from a high of 75% in 2004 down to a low of 56% in 2006 and back up to 65% in 2007. Only 5% of third graders scored in the Advanced category while none did in the other grades. Furthermore, of that same cohort of third graders, 58% scored in Needs Improvement while only 30% scored as Proficient.
- In the fourth grade, the percentage of students in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failed categories decreased from a high of 79% to a low of 55% in 2007. Concurrently, fourth grade CPI scores increased dramatically: from 57.9 in 2003 up to 81.2 in 2007.
- Fifth grade scores increased similarly between 2006 and 2007, with CPI numbers moving from 49.2 to 84.6. The percentage of students in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failed categories, however, still remained over 50%.
- Grade 6 CPI scores were stronger and more stable: 82.0 in 2006 and 86.4 in 2007.
- Even with Banneker's progress in CPI numbers, except for sixth grade there are still greater numbers of students scoring in the Needs Improvement and Warning categories than there are in Proficient, with almost none in Advanced.

Math	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improv.	% Warning/Failed	CPI
Grade 3						
2006	25	0	16	48	36	54.0
2007	44	7	18	39	36	80.3
Grade 4						
2003	36	0	11	36	53	44.4
2004	36	0	22	53	25	61.1
2005	38	8	3	50	39	51.3
2006	38	3	8	68	21	55.3
2007	41	7	20	44	29	77.0
Grade 5						
2006	31	3	6	48	42	49.2
2007	37	0	22	43	35	75.7
Grade 6						
2003	32	0	6	28	66	35.2
2004	25	4	8	64	24	57.0
2005	32	13	19	41	28	61.7
2006	25	4	16	48	32	70.5
2007	26	0	23	46	31	75.5

- Grade three CPI scores increased dramatically, from 54.0 in 2006 to 80.3 in 2007. While the percentage of students scoring in the Advanced and Proficient categories moved from 16 in 2006 to 25 in 2007, 75% percent of the 2007 cohort remained in the Needs Improvement and Warning categories.
- Grade 4 saw similar gains between 2006 and 2007: Eleven percent scored Advanced or Proficient in 2006 while 27% did so in 2007. Seventy-three percent remained in the Needs Improvement and Warning categories in 2007.
- Fifth grade also saw a jump: Nine percent of 5th graders scored in the Advanced and Proficient categories in 2006, and 22% did so in 2007, resulting in a CPI increase of over 25 points. Seventy-eight percent, however, remained in Needs Improvement or Warning/Failed.
- Sixth grade scores show steady progress since 2003: CPI scores more than doubled between 2003 (35.2) and 2007 (75.5). Like fifth grade scores, 77% of students scored Needs Improvement or Warning/Failed in 2007.

Table II: 2007 AYP determination for Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School

		Adequate Yearly Progress History									Accountability Status
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
ELA	Aggregate	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No Status
	All Subgroups	-	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	-	-	-	-	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	

BBCPS did not make AYP in Mathematics between 1999 and 2004. It did so in 2005 but was designated a school in Restructuring. BBCPS made AYP in both Mathematics and English language arts, in the aggregate and in all subgroups, in 2007. The gains in CPI scores that Banneker has made along with the fact that it made AYP for 2007 is very significant in light of the conditions imposed by the Board of Education at the time of renewal in January of 2006. One of the conditions states that BBCPS will no longer be identified as a school in improvement status based on its 2007-08 school year AYP scores. If Banneker achieves AYP next year, it will have met this condition.

Has student performance been strong or improved over time on other internal and external assessments?

Finding: Students in all but first and fifth grades made substantial improvements on the Developmental Reading Assessment during the 2006-07 school year.

The school reported that the DRA was administered at both the beginning and end of the school year and the school set an Accountability Plan goal of moving class scores (measuring the percentage of students reading at or above grade level) up by 10%. The sixth grade gained 37% points, the second grade 35%, the fourth grade 27%. The third grade had the highest number of students reading at or above grade level at the beginning of the year (67%) and ended the year with 77%. The first and fifth grades ended the year with less than 10% gains.

The school also uses other informal assessments such as running records and portfolios, but the site visit team did not review results from these assessments.

Have students met the academic performance goals set out in the school's Accountability Plan?

Finding: BBCPS has met most of its academic performance goals for school year 2006-07.

Goal 1 states that, "Banneker students will demonstrate continuous improvement in reading, with the primary focus of meeting No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress targets." The first measure--DRA targets--is discussed above. The second measure, relating to the ELA MCAS, calls for "an average annual increase in proficiency of approximately 5 percentage points" along with "an average annual increase in CPI points ranging from 0.8-5.8 points." Both indicators were met between 2006 and 2007: the average annual increase in proficiency for grades three through six was 10.5 points and the annual average increase in CPI points was just over 15. Goal 1 also references the Terra Nova, targets for which will be set by June 2008.

Goal 2 states that, “Banneker students will demonstrate continuous improvement in math, with the primary focus of meeting No Child Left Behind’s Adequate Yearly Progress targets.” The first measure, relating to the Mathematics MCAS, calls for “an average annual increase in proficiency of approximately 5 percentage points” along with “an average annual increase in CPI points ranging from 3.2-8.2 points.” Both indicators were met between 2006 and 2007: the average annual increase in proficiency for grades three through six was 13.5 points and the annual average increase in CPI points was just over 19. The second measure relates to the Terra Nova, targets for which will be set by June 2008.

Goal 3, “Banneker will demonstrate effective support services, including special education,” revolves around BBCPS’s Coordinated Program Reviews and services provided for English Language Learners and Special Education students:

- “Maintain standing of substantial compliance” on Coordinated Program Review- review not due until 2010.
- [IEP] “students will reach level of mastery on 75% of IEP academic objectives by annual IEP review date”- goal met.
- “Students will show minimum improvement of 1.5 years in Reading/Writing/Math at their 3 year re-evaluation” as measured by the Woodcock Johnson- III- goal met.
- ELL students will “Improve at least one level in 4/5 proficiency components on MELA-O between pre and post”- this goal was met by 10 out of 11 students.
- “Improve test results within and between performance levels on MEPA from one year post to the next”- this goal was not met due to more limited progress at the upper grades. Banneker is in the process of revising this goal.

5. Organizational Viability

Does the school have an effective leadership and governance structure for carrying out the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the school?

Finding: The BBCPS Board of Trustees appears engaged and well aware of what the school is doing to address testing needs and the conditions imposed during renewal along with other concerns.

The board set nine goals for itself in September of 2006 for the upcoming school year. The first was to complete an evaluation of the executive director. The next three regarded setting board goals, completing a board evaluation, and increasing board engagement. The fifth goal was “Plan to define Banneker as a Science/Technology school.” In January of 2007, the board discussed a new draft of a science vision statement for the school (not yet finalized).

The board receives reports from the executive director at monthly board meetings, and the two board co-chairs check in with him between meetings. In addition, the board is well-informed about the school's initiatives to meet the goal of making AYP along with those goals the school set for itself in its school improvement plan. Furthermore, the board chair stated that the board spends approximately fifty percent of its meetings going over test data and hearing from the Director of School Improvement

The board has also taken steps to address some issues critical to the operation of the school. One was that of teacher attrition. In response to this issue, the board raised teacher compensation to within approximately ten percent of Cambridge public school salaries. In order to address the issue of student attrition, the board has developed a marketing plan, and last year the school began offering free transportation from certain locations in Boston, a program it is continuing this year. The school is also conducting interviews in an attempt to determine why students leave the school.

BBCPS has a new executive director this year, and the board hopes that his connections in Cambridge will enable them to draw from the city for which the school is chartered. Currently, twice as many students come from Boston as come from Cambridge.

Finding: The new executive director has a three-phase entry plan.

Phase I of the plan occurred over the summer. During this time, the executive director began to meet informally with all members of the staff throughout the building (including cafeteria staff, bus monitors, etc.) both in groups and individually. Phase II began at the start of the school year and extends through December 1. In this phase, the executive director will, according to his plan document, "engage in a thorough analysis and critical observation of the school." He "will also review all programs and activities that are currently in place at BBCPS to gauge their effectiveness." During this time, the executive director will provide brief synopses of his observations to the Board. Phase III runs from December 1 to January 1, at the end of which time the executive director will present his findings "in the form of a written assessment of the current plans and programs that are in use" along with "preliminary recommendations for improvement."

Does the school have systems and structures in place to guide improvement?

Finding: Teachers, administrators, and members of the board of trustees all noted a strong focus on collecting and analyzing data in response to several years of low MCAS scores, particularly in mathematics.

The school is developing a great deal of resources (additional staff, new curriculum, regularly scheduled time for tracking and analyzing data) towards improving student performance. Data is used to develop goals for each classroom, and progress towards meeting those goals is carefully tracked. Administrators and teachers work collaboratively to plan, assess, reflect, and learn based on that data. As one teacher put it, "data meetings are our lives here."

Finding: The school has numerous systems and structures in place to guide improvements.

As discussed above, the school has implemented a broad array of programs and practices in order to meet both short and long-term goals, especially those that are most pressing such as making AYP in Mathematics. These include hiring additional faculty and a director of school improvement, purchasing educational software, providing coaching and mentoring to teachers, and collecting and utilizing data. The board monitors progress towards meeting these goals through frequent contact with the executive director and through report-outs on current data from the director of school improvement at monthly board meetings.

Finding: Teachers seem positive and well supported.

Eighty-five percent of all teachers offered contracts for this school year accepted. Of a faculty of thirty-three, five are core-subject area teachers new to the school. Two others new to the school teach reading; a third teaches art.

Teacher receive support from a variety of sources, including coaches, mentor teachers, and administrators. New teachers are paired with more experienced Banneker mentor teachers who observe them at least twice a month and meet to debrief afterwards. Weekly cluster team meetings also help new teachers become acculturated to Banneker. Coaches are an additional source of support for all teachers. They are a frequent presence in all teachers' classrooms and give informal feedback to teachers on a regular basis.

All teachers at Banneker receive an informal evaluation consisting of an observation and feedback at least once a year from an administrator. Teachers in their first year at Banneker receive periodic walk-throughs by one of three administrators who provide feedback and assist these teachers in setting goals. Teachers in their third year at Banneker also receive a formal evaluation, though one that is less structured than the first year ones. There is more give-and-take around setting goals during this part of the observation and evaluation process. As one teacher put it, "They have such high expectations for us as teachers...I'm so grateful to be here."

Peer observations are a key component of the Literacy Collaborative model, and these are facilitated through the videotaping of teachers' classes. Teachers also report that the school encourages them to attend professional development activities and conferences outside of the school.

Is the school safe and are the physical facilities adequate for the program of the school?

Finding: The school and its physical facilities are adequate and safe for the program of the school.

All stakeholders report the school's facilities as safe. With the addition of a new science lab, the school will be better able to fulfill its mission as a school of science and technology. Students and parents generally reported the school as an emotionally safe place. As discussed above, discipline and classroom management are issues.

Is the school operating in a manner consistent with legal and regulatory requirements?

The BBCPS conducted a SY 2006-07 self-study of the special education program that reviewed parental involvement, instructional supports, evaluation and service delivery, collaboration between regular educators and special educators, mastery of IEP objectives, and performance on internal and external assessments. As a result of this program analysis, BBCPS is currently reviewing the following program areas: maintaining a high level of parental involvement, providing the least restrictive environment and a continuum of services, and ensuring effective collaboration between regular and special educators.

Special education and general education teachers meet with the Director of Support Services at the beginning of each school year to discuss students' IEPs, learning profiles and service delivery expectations, as well as accommodations needed to access the general curriculum. All

general education teachers receive a Special Education Reference Book that includes a detailed description of the Coordinating Student Support Team (CSST), the special education referral process, preparation and participation at IEP meetings, guidelines for confidentiality, and forms used to request an observation and/or consultation for any student with academic or non-academic concerns. All special educators receive a handbook containing the federal and state special education requirements and the school's special education policies and procedures. The Director of Support Services provides ongoing program requirement trainings throughout the school year.

BBCPS has developed an English language learner program as outlined in the school's English Learner Education Implementation Guide. The guide includes the school's policies and procedures for identifying English language learners, assessments used to determine a student's English proficiency, translated parent notification letters, and the elements of an effective Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program. The Home Language Survey is routinely administered to all new students, and potential limited English language students are assessed with the Step-by-Step Assessment to Language Dominance. The Director of Support Services, a qualified MELA-O trainer (QMT), provides training to the school's instructional staff on how to implement a program of sheltered English immersion. Students receive English as a second language support both in class and in small pullout groups from a licensed ESL teacher who coordinates the program.

BBCPS underwent a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) conducted by the Department's Program Quality Assurance (PQA) unit in January 2005. In response to the findings contained in the CPR report, BBCPS submitted a Corrective Action Plan and follow-up Progress Reports that were approved by the Department. The school will receive a mid-cycle review (MCR) by PQA during the 2007-08 school year.

Are professional staff members qualified by training and/or experience in the areas to which they are assigned?

Finding: BBCPS reported that one hundred percent of its faculty meets the definition of highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Table III: Years of Teaching Experience for Faculty 2006-2007

	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	20+ Years
Teachers with this number of years teaching	7	7	12	5	2
Teachers with this number of years teaching at BBCPS	10	12	6	5	0

There are five new classroom teachers at BBCPS this year along with a new art teacher, a new reading teacher, and a new Reading Recovery specialist. Of the five new teachers, one has eight

years of prior teaching experience and another fifteen. Two of these teachers are now in their second year of teaching; the last is a first year teacher.

Are school community members satisfied with the performance of the school?

Finding: Parents are highly satisfied and feel welcomed.

The Parent Council is active and parents feel welcomed at the school. On BBCPS annual parent satisfaction survey, 65% of parents responding agreed that the school was a good choice for their children because of its academic program. Ninety-four percent agreed that they were well informed about their child's academic progress. Between 91% and 93% agreed or strongly agreed that their child's teacher genuinely cared about their child, was easy to contact, and was responsive to their concerns. Eighty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed that their child was academically challenged at Banneker, while 75% agreed or strongly agreed that BBCPS met their child's social and emotional needs.

Has the school met the organizational viability goals set out in its Accountability Plan?

BBCPS sets out eight goals relating to organizational viability in its Accountability Plan. According to the school's annual report, in school year 2006-07 Banneker met or exceeded each of these goals. This was accomplished, in part, through the following:

- 85% of staff members who were offered contracts for the 2006-07 school year accepted them and were retained;
- 94% of staff rated their job satisfaction as Somewhat Satisfied to Highly Satisfied on the annual staff survey with 21% responding as Very Satisfied;
- BBCPS was one of twelve charter and district public schools chosen to participate in *Making Learning Visible: A Charter-District Partnership*, a professional development and dissemination of best practices program through Project Zero at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education;
- In response to the school's annual staff survey, the school's "team-spirited approach of working together to improve our students' academic success" was listed as one of BBCPS's greatest successes for school year 2006-07;
- BBCPS participated in the first City of Cambridge Science Festival;
- BBCPS presented four seminars as part of the Banneker Science Seminar Series: two for teachers and staff, one for students, and one for the community;
- BBCPS provided a 2.54:1 student-to-computer ratio;
- A new website with a space for each teacher's classroom was introduced;
- A lease agreement with the Vineyard Church, BBCPS's landlord, was negotiated for the rest of the current charter term with an option to extend for another two years;
- For a second year, the Union Baptist Church and Curious George Goes to Wordsworth provided every third grader with a new book every week;
- Total donations by individuals increased over the 2005-06 level by 20%, exceeding the Accountability Plan's goal of 10%; and,
- The Board of Trustees managed a leadership transition, hiring Marlon Davis to replace retiring executive director Lenora Jennings.

Is the school becoming the school it promised to be in its charter?

Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School continues to become a science and technology school. While the focus of the past year was, of necessity, on mathematics and making AYP, the fact that the school began the process of drafting a science vision statement and continued to forge partnerships with outside science-based organizations suggests that this aspect of the school's mission was not forgotten. Members of the board of trustees and the administration were clear that refocusing on science is a priority. The technology aspect of the mission continues to grow: the school has invested significant resources in equipment and the faculty and technology director are working to develop ways in which technology can augment teachers' lessons.

The fact that BBCPS is becoming a school of choice is attested to by its waitlist. Last year at this time BBCPS had a waitlist of 70; this year it is already at 300. The school is not, however, a Cambridge school. More than 50% of its students come from Boston. The board of trustees is actively seeking ways to draw more students from the City of Cambridge.

The move to re-examine and then revamp the math program and take a data-driven approach to creating action plans and monitoring student progress appears to have been successful, as the school made AYP for 2007.

Has the school met or shown significant progress towards meeting the conditions imposed at the time of renewal?

In terms of meeting the goals of making AYP and no longer being identified in English Language Arts and mathematics for the 2007-08 school year, the school has taken a significant step forward by making AYP for the 2006-07 school year.

As regards meeting the academic goals outlined in its Accountability Plan, Banneker met and significantly exceeded the measures it set for itself regarding increasing MCAS scores. The school continues to work on moving students out of the Warning/Failed categories and into the Proficient and Advanced ones. It also met nearly all of the goals it set for itself around growth and progress made by students with disabilities and English language learners.

As per the final condition, BBCPS reduced its enrollment from 350 to 325 students.