

Plan to Improve North Central Charter Essential School

I. Self Analysis

In the spring of 2006, NCCES hired an educational consultant firm, *Class Measures*, to make recommendations on the administrative structure of the school and to develop job descriptions for administrative staff. Class Measures also performed an Academic Assessment of the school to ensure that the internal analyses performed during our strategic planning work did not overlook any important issues. The Findings of the Academic Assessment confirmed the issues NCCES had self-identified; no new issues were identified. Following are detailed findings of the analysis by *Class Measures*:

Findings of Academic Assessment (*Class Measures*, April 2006)

Strengths	Areas Needing Improvement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school had begun the process of developing a cohesive standards-based school curriculum. 2. Essential Questions are embedded in curriculum and instruction. 3. The school has increased Title I services for identified students. 4. The school has clarified its special education identification procedures and has become more pro-active in identifying students at risk. 5. The school has committed to adequately staffing its special education program. 6. Faith to the coalition principles. 7. Well-developed rubrics used by teachers and students to understand performance levels and examples of exemplary teacher review and student re-drafting. 8. The best classes reflect challenges to higher order thinking, rich and deep subject matter and students learning cooperatively. 9. Motivated students understand the value of rubrics in determining what they know and need to learn. 10. Some students have taken the locus of control for their own learning and are committed to learning and success. 11. Students feel safe at school and have easy access to adult and professional support. 12. The school successfully encourages tolerance and acceptance. 13. The school responded to high rates of suspension and student behavior needs by putting in place an SST team to address student needs. 14. The school has made a significant time commitment for professional development. 15. The school has supported its mission by framing professional development in the context of critical friends and supporting attendance at Essential School conferences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in ELA or Math in 2005 and was identified by the state as needing improvement. (<i>NCCES Note: Now identified for Corrective Action for Math</i>). 2. Role confusion at the administrative level leads to confusion and frustration for teachers. 3. Wide inconsistencies in student motivation, engagement and performance. 4. Overall the learning culture lacks rigor, though there is evidence of rigorous work at all grade levels. 5. Expectations are not universally high. 6. Heavy reliance on individual teachers to develop curricula; without an overarching set of criteria, current documents do not drive instruction. Inadequate opportunities to plan together in teams (common planning time). 7. Lack of professional development, support and monitoring by subject area leaders who are highly qualified and experienced has inhibited the school from ensuring the delivery of a cohesive standards-based program of instruction. 8. Professional development is not informed by student performance, teacher's content knowledge needs, or classroom observations. 9. Teachers have not been provided with sufficient professional development with respect to the characteristics and needs of children special educational needs and with emotional disabilities and difficulties. 10. The school lacks an induction program to support newly hired teachers. 11. Teachers do not receive relevant feedback, counsel, support or opportunities to increase instructional skills and content knowledge as a result of the evaluation process. Teachers and others were not consistently evaluated either formally or informally. 12. The school continues to ignore its responsibility to address the needs of its English language learners. 13. Student assessment data analysis is not communicated and used in instructional planning. 14. In classes with shortcomings and some marginal classes the needs of less motivated students, some of whom have special educational needs are not being met. 15. Provision in math has significant shortcomings – on all fronts: staffing, program, materials. 16. Internal assessment processes are underdeveloped or ad hoc. 17. There is no adequate assessment system to measure student performance over time against established state standards. 18. The determination of desirable learning levels or goals for each grade level remains a work in progress – despite critical reference in the three-year report from the DOE, one year ago. 19. Unmotivated and/or disaffected students pose a threat to the quality of learning in the school. 20. At the last annual tally in 2004/05 the level of suspensions was unacceptable. 21. Students knowingly misinterpret elements of the essential principles to meet their own ends. This results in either antisocial behavior or teachers being taken advantage of, or both.

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Findings of Academic Assessment (<i>Class Measures</i>, April 2006)
Recommendations
<p>Most Urgent</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set very clear classroom management expectations for staff and provide administrative supervision (principal and director) of hallways and classrooms throughout the day. 2. Clearly delineate roles of the executive director and principal with a major role of the principal as instructional leader. Priority needs to be given to communicating to staff with clarity and establishing lines of communication that reflect the agreement of the two school leaders. 3. Develop quarterly summative assessments to use as benchmarks of student progress in achieving state curriculum standards. 4. Develop Learning Goals aligned with state standards for each subject at each grade level to use as criteria for measuring student performance in tandem with internal assessments such as roundtables, and gateways. 5. Commit to the necessity of developing a school curriculum that teachers will be required to follow that is based on state standards, and is monitored by content experts. 6. Provide sufficient professional development in curriculum development so that all teachers are capable of developing and delivering the curriculum to all students. 7. Give strong consideration to the adoption of a standards-based mathematics program and provide sufficient professional development in its delivery so as to provide the needed continuity and support to teachers and to provide continuity in the face of personnel changes. 8. Provide appropriate coaching for teachers (especially in mathematics) who do not possess the requisite content knowledge or instructional skills.
<p>Other Recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Continue to develop the work of the Student Support Team with guidance from expert sources. 10. Counsel students from the outset about the deeper meaning of the essential principles. 11. Systematically use portfolios as described in the charter application to demonstrate progress over time, with a system to store them for easy accessibility as students move from grade to grade. 12. Provide less motivated students with more diverse instructional methods to engage them in the academic work. There is a need for multiple teaching strategies in order for the many students in this category to achieve academic success. 13. Explore ways to involve regular education teachers more deeply in the SST process. 14. Develop a program that addresses the schools English language learners as required by statute. 15. Provide professional development in co-teaching, autism, Asperger's syndrome and other emotional disorders that effect students' capacity to learn. 16. Institute a professional development program that is informed by (at least) student achievement information, surveys of teachers, observations of classroom instruction, and analysis of student population data and current research on best practices. 17. Institute an induction program to support newly hired teachers. 18. Systematically observe and supervise staff for purposes of feedback and professional growth. Evaluations should be informative and instructive and include accountability for student progress, with consideration given for a peer coaching and learning model for veteran teachers. 19. Adopt a process for formal staff evaluation that is understood by all parties, adheres to state recommendations, included requirements that instruction reflect professional development initiatives and is carried out faithfully. 20. Institute a process whereby all administrators (executive, school, special ed, etc.) and curriculum specialists perform informal classroom visits using a common protocol including written or verbal feedback to teachers. This should not take the place of, or be confused with, formal evaluation, which should be conducted by the principal. 21. Devise a system whereby results of classroom visits and formal observations are routinely analyzed to determine needs for professional development and training that is targeted to closing the achievement gap for NCCES students.

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CHARTER RENEWAL

NCCES reflected upon and referenced its extensive strategic planning work, *Class Measures'* studies, and a number of other internal assessment documents to develop the Application for Charter Renewal which was submitted in July, 2006. The school selected the eight key issues identified by *Class Measures* as priorities for the 06-07 school year. During the spring of 2006, NCCES began to seek a replacement for the school's founding principal, who retired in June, 2006. When the school's own search did not result in a suitable candidate, the school received a commitment from a donor to fund the hiring of a search firm to assist in the process. A finalist candidate, identified by the search firm, visited the school in July, 2006, and was hired to begin work in August.

The progression of charter renewal activity intensified practices of reflection and self-analysis school-wide. The renewal site visit and process turned much attention and energy toward the school's areas most in need of improvement. During this time, the tenure of the newly hired principal became short-lived due to differences in philosophy of education which inhibited the school's academic progress. The Board received letters of resignation from three board members and the principal (whose employment was formally terminated mid-year) before the second semester. The NCCES community's strong commitment to the school's mission enabled the school to withstand this turmoil in the school last fall. Although the school's commitment to the mission was actually strengthened through the trials of last fall, intense focus on moving the school forward in addressing its priorities was interrupted by the need to navigate these difficult circumstances.

In January of 2007, the school's Director of Students Services, Ms. Tricia May, was appointed Acting Principal. With intense focus on the priority of improving student achievement, most recent external and internal evaluations, surveys, and reports were synthesized to identify greatest, immediate priorities. Additionally, focus groups were held to illicit additional, timely feedback from various stakeholders.

In early Spring of 2007, NCCES administration developed the *NCCES Action Plan for Academic Improvement*, a document resulting from the synthesis of historical assessments and evaluations of NCCES, outlined priority goals (and accompanying action steps) that, when realized, would result in improved student academic achievement. These goals have guided the most recent school improvement work done in the **spring of 2007** (detailed in section two, "Planned Improvements"):

- **Standards** - Establish school-wide essential standards for learning (in ELA and math)
- **Curriculum** - Organize current school curriculum
- **Alignment** - Refine curriculum to better align with essential standards from the MA Frameworks
- **Professional Development** - Provide PD to support improved curriculum development
- **Data** – Organize a system of data collection and analysis; use data to inform decision-making
- **Formative Assessments** - Develop and administer periodic, common, benchmark assessments
- **Leadership** – Develop organizational chart and clearly define administrative roles
- **Coaching** – Refine evaluation system; assign teaching buddies; re-assign subject area coaches; facilitate *New Teachers' Critical Friends Group*
- **Math Program** – Increase instructional time and resources in math; identify additional resources for further program development
- **Rigor** – Align school-wide summative, year-end assessments (Gateway and Roundtable presentations) with the expectations for Senior Project.

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In renewing NCCES' charter at the end of February, 2007, the Board of Education set the following conditions of renewal (MA Board of Education Meeting, February 27, 2007):

1. By June 30, 2007, the school shall submit a report on actions taken in response to the recommendations of a consultant, who shall be approved by the Commissioner, hired to complete a review of the school's leadership structure and to provide assistance in the hiring process for school leadership.
2. By June 30, 2007, North Central Charter Essential School must submit to the Department's Charter School Office a school improvement plan created through the Department's process for creation of a District Plan for School Intervention.
3. By June 30, 2007, North Central Charter Essential School must have an Accountability Plan approved by the Charter School Office. The Accountability Plan must include annual benchmarks against goals and objectives that align to the school's plan for improvement as referenced in Condition 1. Benchmarks within the Accountability Plan must include the school making Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups on all applicable tests.
4. North Central Charter Essential School must demonstrate that it is an academic success by December of 2008 by providing evidence that the school has met or is making substantial progress toward meeting benchmarks in its 2007-2012 Accountability Plan and has made Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups on all applicable tests on the spring 2007 and spring 2008 MCAS test administrations.

NCCES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2007-2008

NCCES fully appreciates the urgency of our need to do whatever it takes to ensure improved student achievement through full implementation of our school improvement plan. We are deeply committed to making appropriate changes and taking necessary action steps to ensure that every one of our students is learning well. For the purpose of reporting our plan for school improvement, we have synthesized, prioritized and organized our needs in to the following main areas of focus to ensure that essential conditions for improved student achievement are in place:

STANDARDS-BASED TEACHING and LEARNING

INFORMING PRACTICE with DATA

TIME FOR TEACHERS and STUDENTS

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

GOVERNANCE

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A. Performance Targets

Table 1. North Central Charter Essential School MCAS scores by year

MCAS Results for Tests Used for AYP Accountability Purposes						
Test/Year	Number of students tested	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improvement	% Warning/Failed	CPI
ELA - Grade 7						
2003	84	7	58	24	11	83.0
2004	84	0	52	37	11	80.1
2005	74	1	54	38	7	82.1
2006	59	3	41	47	8	75.4
ELA - Grade 10						
2004	45	13	44	36	7	85.0
2005	50	6	38	34	22	74.5
2006	59	5	71	17	7	88.6
Math - Grade 8						
2003	70	3	10	40	47	45.7
2004	86	2	20	36	42	54.1
2005	80	3	15	23	60	44.9
2006	72	0	13	38	50	47.9
Math - Grade 10						
2004	45	18	27	36	20	69.4
2005	50	8	42	20	30	70.2
2006	55	31	22	31	16	77.3
Other MCAS Results Administered During the Charter Term						
Test/Year	Students Included	% Advanced	% Proficient	% Needs Improvement	% Warning/Failed	CPI
ELA - Grade 8						
2006	75	4	59	33	4	85.0
Math - Grade 7						
2006	60	2	10	43	45	46.7
Science and Technology - Grade 8						
2003	70	0	17	50	33	NA
2004	86	3	17	42	37	NA
2005	80	0	19	44	38	NA
2006	72	0	15	47	38	54.5

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NCCES made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA in the aggregate in 2003 and 2006. NCCES did not make AYP in ELA in the aggregate for 2004 due to missing the attendance target by 0.2%, although it exceeded the state CPI performance target; and did not make AYP in 2005. The school is currently Identified for Improvement in ELA. Over the course of the charter, the only subgroups large enough to trigger separate AYP determinations were White (all years) and Low Income students (in 2003 for both ELA and math, and in 2005 for ELA). The school made AYP in ELA for subgroups each year from 2003 through 2006. NCCES did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics, in the aggregate or for subgroups, in any year from 2003 through 2006 and is currently identified for Corrective Action in Mathematics.

For Cycle IV (2005 and 2006), the school’s ELA performance rating was “High.” For math, the school received a “Very Low” performance rating. NCCES met state Competency Determination (CD) targets for its first graduating class in 2006 with 93% of students passing both the ELA and Mathematics sections of the Grade 10 MCAS exams. Table 2 (below) illustrates performance and improvement ratings based on aggregate student performance on MCAS tests.

Table 2. NCCES 2006 AYP Report					
<i>Source: Cycle IV Accountability Report, MA Department of Education</i>					
English Language Arts					
Cycle IV Performance Rating:	HIGH	Performance Data:	State Target	Cycle IV CPI	
			80.5	80.5	
Cycle IV Improvement Rating:	NO CHANGE	Improvement Data:	Baseline CPI	Gain Target	On Target Range
			82.3	3.5	83.3-88.3
Accountability Status:	Identified for Improvement		Cycle IV AYP (Aggregate):	2005	2006
				No	Yes
Mathematics					
Cycle IV Performance Rating:	VERY LOW	Performance Data:	State Target	Cycle IV CPI	
			68.7	57.5	
Cycle IV Improvement Rating:	IMPROVED BELOW TARGET	Improvement Data:	Baseline CPI	Gain Target	On Target Range
			54.6	9.1	61.2-66.2
Accountability Status:	Corrective Action		Cycle IV AYP (Aggregate):	2005	2006
				No	No

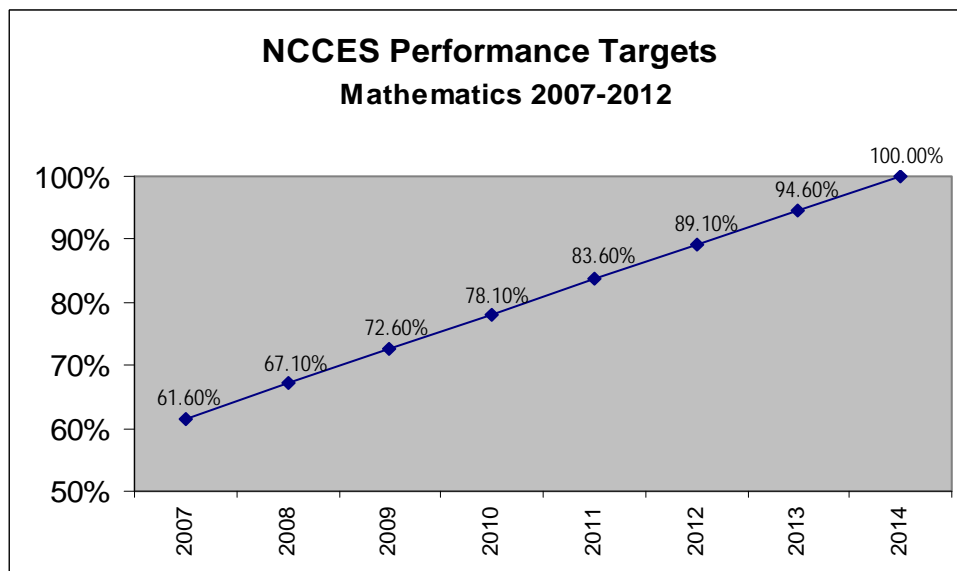
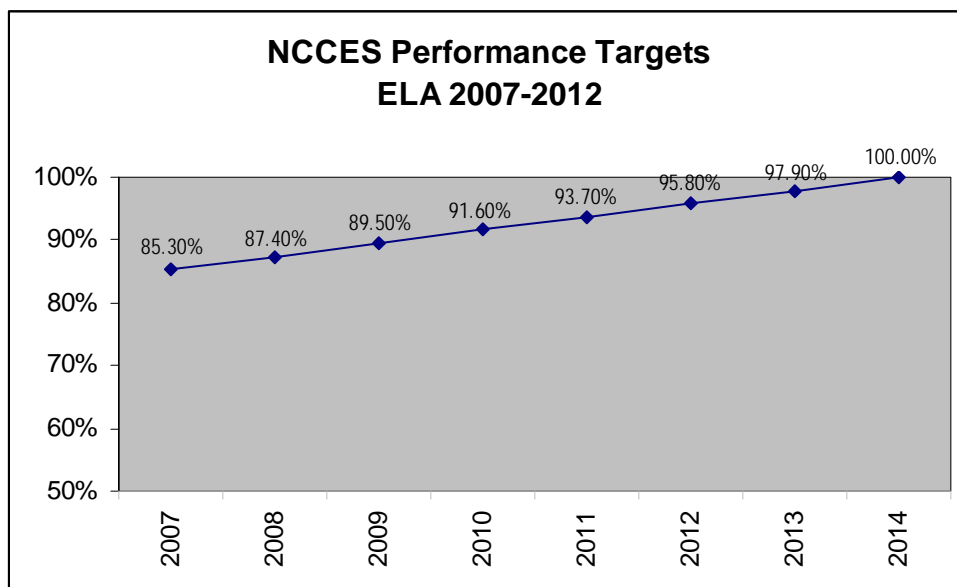
This information tracks the overall progress of NCCES toward the goal of proficiency for all students in mathematics and English Language Arts. Program planning is guided by more detailed analysis of this data (see section B, “Data Analysis”).

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Table 3 and accompanying graphs (below) illustrate NCCES 2007 targeted improvement gains.

Table 3. NCCES 2007 AYP Baseline, Gains and Targets

	English			Math		
	Baseline	Gain	Target	Baseline	Gain	Target
White	86.7	1.7	88.4	59.6	5.1	64.7
Free	74.6	3.2	77.8	45.6	6.8	52.4
All	83.2	2.1	85.3	56.1	5.5	61.6



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B. Data Analysis

PROFICIENCY INDEX POINTS

The major obstacle the school has in addressing AYP is the performance of 7th and 8th graders on the math MCAS. An analysis of our MCAS scores indicates that we are addressing the individual needs of students who remain with the school from 8th to 10th grade (2 cohorts totaling 73 students). Thirty-six (36) of these students (48%) improved 14 or more points between 8th and 10th grade. More than half of the 73 students who have taken MCAS Math tests in both 8th and 10th grades at NCCES moved up levels between the two years including:

- 2 students moved two levels up from Warning level to Proficient
- 2 students moved two levels up from Needs Improvement to Advanced
- 7 students moved from Warning to Needs Improvement
- 20 students moved from Needs Improvement to Proficient
- 7 students moved from Proficient to Advanced

Although we've seen the improvement at the 10th grade level, the school is not making AYP because of the performance on the 7th and 8th grade students on the MCAS math test (see Tables 4 & 5.)

Category	Percent of Total at each level
Low Warning	3.8%
High Warning	43.9%
Low Needs Improvement	23.5%
High Needs Improvement	16.7%
Proficient or Advanced	12.1%

Table 5. NCCES Math Composite Performance Index (CPI)
Comparisons by Grade (2006)

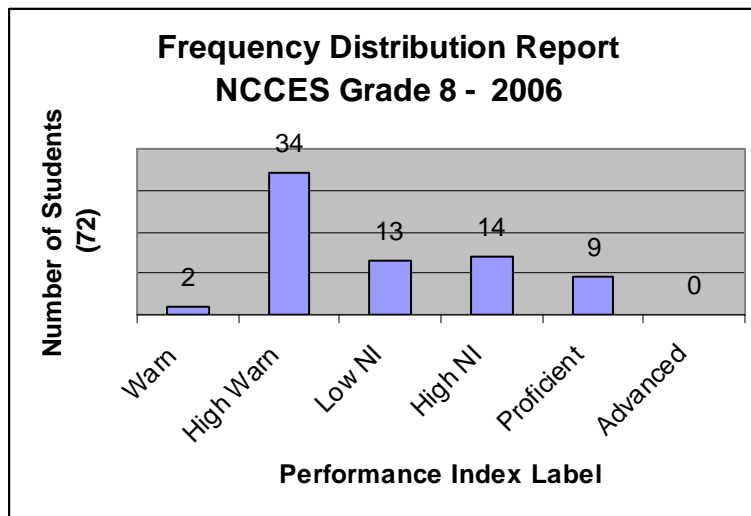
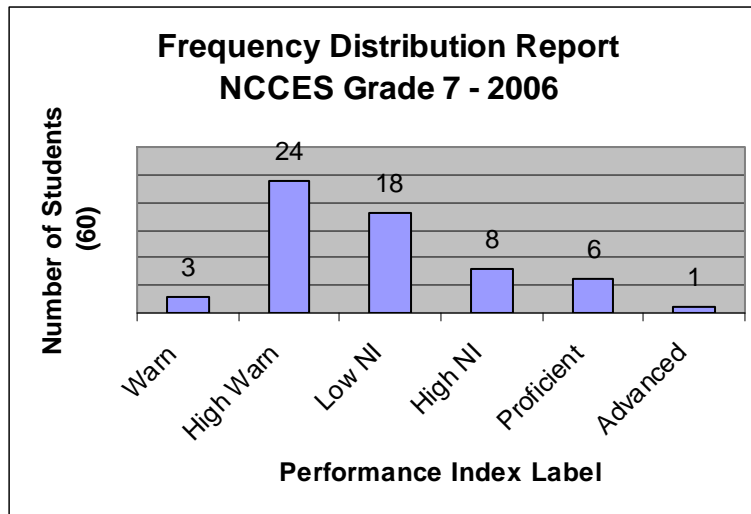
Grade 7 Math	46.7
Grade 8 Math	47.9
Grade 10 Math	77.3
<i>Source: Massachusetts DOE</i>	

Planning for improved student achievement as measured by MCAS is guided first by examining what performance categories students are in. While a number of variables, such as student transience,

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influence data projections, we are able to analyze what kind of upward movement must occur for Composite Performance Index points to rise sufficiently to meet target gains. The frequency distributions of our middle school MCAS math scores, our historically greatest obstacle to making AYP, are illustrated in Table 6, below.

Table 6. NCCES Frequency Distribution Reports
Grades 7 & 8 (2006)



The deployment of resources to support the academic programming and specific interventions necessary to raise student achievement is greatly informed by thoughtful, closer analysis of more detailed data, such as MCAS item analysis for individuals and for groups of students.

ITEM ANALYSIS

We have carefully examined item analysis for math MCAS. Below are detailed objective summaries for math MCAS for NCCES 7th and 8th graders in 2006 (Table 7). This data indicates needs for

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improved student achievement in all areas of mathematics, with more extreme deficiencies indicated in some specific areas in 7th grade (e.g. Scientific Notation, Linear Equations, and Central Tendencies). While the greatest differences between NCCES and state averages appear to be lessened by 8th grade, we do not yet have data for cohorts of students as they move from grade 7-8. We eagerly look forward to closely analyzing cohort data in the future as a means to monitor apparent instruction-specific needs. Suffice to say, the majority of NCCES middle school students are in need of, and will be provided with, additional time and instruction in mathematics.

Table 7. District Objectives Summary Report: 2006 MCAS Grade 7

Objective/Strand	Maximum Point	NCCES % Correct	State Avg % Correct	Difference
Mathematics	54	48	61	-13
Math Multiple Choice	29	51	63	-12
Math Open Response	20	42	57	-15
Math Short Answer	5	56	65	-9
Number Sense	14	49	62	-13
7.N.1 Compare/Order	5	52	68	-16
7.N.2 Ratios/Proportions	1	60	65	-5
7.N.3 Scientific Notation	1	15	41	-26
7.N.4 Absolute Value	1	32	38	-6
7.N.5 Integer Exponents	1	72	74	-2
7.N.9 Rational Nos.	5	31	62	-11
Patterns, Relations & Al	15	49	61	-12
7.P.1 Variety of Patterns	3	66	73	-7
7.P.2 Alg. Expressions	3	36	52	-16
7.P.3 Symbolic Expressns	6	49	63	-14
7.P.4 Linear Equatns	1	35	59	-24
7.P.5 Linear Relations.	1	40	47	-7
7.P.6 Proportional Relat.	1	57	60	-3
Geometry	7	54	65	-11
7.G.1 Polygons	1	47	51	-4
7.G.2 Classify Figures	1	45	58	-13
7.G.4 Cartesian Coord.	1	60	69	-9
7.G.6 Translation of Fig.	4	57	69	-12
Measurement	7	40	50	-10
7.M.1 Units of Measure	1	20	38	-18
7.M.3 Concepts of Measure	6	44	52	-8
Data Analysis	11	47	65	-18
7.D.1 Represen. of Data	5	47	64	-17
7.D.2 Central Tendencies	4	48	70	-22
7.D.3 Compute Probability	2	46	54	-8

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Table 7. District Objectives Summary Report: 2006 MCAS Grade 8

Objective/Strand	Maximum Points	NCCES %Correct	State Avg. % Correct	Difference
Mathematics	54	50	62	-12
Math Multiple Choice	29	54	65	-11
Math Open Response	20	45	60	-15
Math Short Answer	5	44	54	-10
Number Sense	14	47	60	-13
8.N.1 Compare/Order	1	53	59	-6
8.N.2 Irrational Nos.	1	29	41	-12
8.N.3 Rations/Proportions	2	40	53	-13
8.N.5 Number Theory	2	59	66	-7
8.N.6 Absolute Value	1	38	58	-20
8.N.10 Estimate/Compute	2	58	70	-12
8.N.12 Approp. Operations	5	45	61	-16
Patterns, Relatns & Al	15	51	64	-13
8.P.1 Arith/Geom Pat.	1	74	77	-3
8.P.2 Simple Alg.Equatns.	3	56	71	-15
8.P.3 $(-x)(-y)=xy$	1	17	32	-15
8.P.4 Symbolic Expressn.	2	56	61	-5
8.P.7 Linear Equations	3	49	64	-15
8.P.9 Proportional Relat.	1	44	57	-13
8.P.10 Linear Growth Pat.	4	51	68	-17
Geometry	7	42	58	-16
8.G.2 Classify Figures	2	42	56	-14
8.G.4 Pythagorean Theorem	1	67	79	-12
8.G.6 Use Tools	4	36	53	-17
Measurement	7	47	57	-10
8.M.1 Units of Measure	2	63	68	-5
8.M.3 Determine Measures	5	40	53	-13
Data Analysis	11	57	67	-10
8.D.2 Representns of Data	4	59	68	-9
8.D.3 Central Tendencies	6	58	69	-11
8.D.4 Compute Probability	1	47	53	-6

While only two NCCES sub-groups are large enough to trigger AYP determination, analysis of performance of other NCCES sub-groups is important for planning academic programming and interventions. When examining math CPI for the past three years, it is clear that significant

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discrepancies exist between performance of students in the White subgroup and students in the subgroups of Special Education, Hispanic students, and students who are Low Income (see Table 8). This information gives important feedback to NCCES regarding our need to carefully monitor and address the needs of students who are representative of these sub-groups.

Table 8. NCCES Math Composite Performance Index (CPI)
Comparisons by Subgroup 2004-2006

Subgroup	Math 2004	Math 2005	Math 2006
Aggregate	54.6	54.4	57.5
LEP	-	-	-
SPED	35.2	29.2	32.1
Low Income	46.2	48.0	50.7
African Am/Black	-	-	-
Asian/Pac. Islanders	-	-	-
Hispanic	39.8	-	43.5
Native American	-	-	-
White	58.3	56.0	59.3
<i>Source: Massachusetts Department of Education</i>			
<i>Note: DOE does not report scores for subgroups with numbers with small populations.</i>			

NCCES needs to refine the strategies it has used to improve performance in students who remain at the school from 8th to 10th grades and must develop new strategies to accelerate the math improvement at lower grade levels. During the last few months, the Acting Principal and the Math Subject Area Team leader identified and began implementation of a multi-faceted plan to boost the achievement of our youngest students. The 7th & 8th grade schedules have been restructured to provide additional time and support to students in each of their greatest areas of need. The seventh grade team of teachers has been providing highly organized and data driven instruction during the second semester and has been collecting information regarding student achievement (e.g. detailed data tracking math skills development, observations of student engagement). This information has continuously informed instructional strategies. Teachers are reporting noteworthy and promising improvements in students' recent academic progress (in both achievement and engagement).

The school must set and clearly articulate higher standards at the Foundation level of the school (7th and 8th grades) and hold teachers and students accountable for those standards. Our students need to have strong foundations in literacy and numeracy before they get to high school where they need those skills to do the inquiry-based and self-directed work expected of them. By better addressing basic skills at the middle school level, NCCES will be better preparing students for mastery of higher order skills in high school. An intense focus on foundational skills in middle school will result in improved MCAS scores, significantly helping the school meet AYP.

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C. Hypotheses

STANDARDS-BASED TEACHING & LEARNING

We hypothesize that more closely aligning curriculum with essential standards from the MA Curriculum Frameworks and widely sharing responsibility for adopting these standards will result in improved student achievement.

North Central Charter Essential School has not yet sufficiently developed and communicated clearly defined academic standards aligned to State Frameworks. In retrospect, it seems that time allocated for professional development was too often spent on development of processes and procedures related to the operations and structures of the school versus an unwavering focus on development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

NCCES faculty will identify and organize essential standards, adopt standards across curricula, and develop accompanying formative assessments of mastery of standards. In addition, 4-6 common assessments will be administered to measure student progress. Results of assessments will inform and strengthen classroom instruction.

Significant attention will be paid to the alignment of year-end comprehensive, summative assessments (Gateways and Roundtables) with the rigorous demands of Senior Project. Expectations at each grade level will align with those of NCCES' culminating Senior Project work, and these standards of mastery will be clearly defined and articulated.

INFORMING PRACTICE WITH DATA

We hypothesize that the expanded use of data to drive decision-making will result in improved student achievement.

NCCES leadership has recently been ardently focused on prioritizing the collection, analysis and use of data to improve student learning. Our professional development plan includes ongoing training to help faculty use data to better understand what students know and can do, to develop formative assessments to regularly measure progress, and to develop meaningful summative assessments.

Historically, the school has not maintained an organized system for collecting, centralizing, and analyzing student achievement data. School leaders have already begun to develop this system, recognizing that tools already available to the school (e.g., TestWhiz, PowerSchool) been previously underutilized. These tools, and others, have capabilities for supporting data collection and analysis efforts. Two school leaders attended TestWhiz training in April, and the school's Principal will be attending PowerSchool University (a week-long institute) in August, 2007. Ongoing professional development for school leaders will focus on the development of collecting and using data wisely to inform instructional practices.

We believe that making multiple sources of student data (e.g., MCAS scores [and item analysis], reading and writing assessment results, grades, PSAT scores, results of formative assessments) easily available to teachers and providing opportunities to analyze this data in various forums will improve curriculum and delivery of instruction in true response to student needs.

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Data analysis will improve school-wide efforts to allocate resources wisely according to most urgent student needs; those in need of additional time and/or support, tutoring, and/or targeted assistance will be identified and referred quickly for intervention. When multiple sources of data regarding student achievement are collected and analyzed well, individually and collectively, instruction may be better designed to engage all students and extend their learning deliberately.

TIME FOR TEACHERS and STUDENTS

We hypothesize that increased time for teachers and students to address areas of greatest needs will improve student achievement.

Review of several data sources will result in identification of student needs, and the school's response will be appropriate and swift. Students in need of more instructional time and/or support in learning ELA and math will be provided a minimum of 90 minutes per day of instruction (a significant increase from past practices). The need to provide additional time for instruction in math and ELA for students not yet proficient was addressed in the 7th grade in January, 2007 (by adding 45 minutes of daily instructional time in ELA and/or math) and will be addressed school-wide for the 2007-2008 year. In addition, NCCES intends to stagger the schedules of some faculty so that additional teachers are consistently available before and after school to offer instruction in ELA and math.

NCCES has always had weekly time scheduled for the purpose of faculty common planning time and professional development, although it appears that much of this time was devoted to the business of building a whole school. As we move forward, this common planning time will be well protected to ensure that it is used for a clearly defined program of professional development. In addition to a minimum of 2 hours per week of common planning time after school hours, common planning time for subject area teams (52 minutes) and time for department leaders to observe teachers (52 minutes) will occur within the school's daily schedule.

Increased time for students to receive quality instruction in ELA and/or math in conjunction with adequate and properly utilized common planning time for faculty will serve to create the conditions necessary for improved student achievement.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The right personnel are on hand to do the work needed to improve NCCES, and the ability and actions of the school leadership personnel to properly and consistently evaluate faculty will result in improved student achievement.

NCCES has previously sought outside assistance for improving school leadership structures and practices. Most recently, in response to a BOE condition of renewal, NCCES hired a DOE-approved consultant from *Class Measures* to continue this work. Newly hired leadership (an Executive Director, a Principal, and a Director of Curriculum & Instruction) share the primary goal of improving student achievement through improvement of curriculum and instruction in every single classroom.

A comprehensive performance appraisal system will ensure the periodical evaluation of clearly defined areas of faculty performance, including content understanding and instructional practices. In addition, growth in student learning will be evaluated to gain deeper understanding of the quality of instruction and commitment to the school's plan for improvement.

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We believe that the coaching, supervisory and organizational/management work of this new leadership team will directly impact the quality of instruction school-wide and will result in ensuring the conditions necessary for improved student achievement.

GOVERNANCE

Strengthening of the board in key areas of governance will result in improved student achievement.

Successful implementation of this School Improvement Plan requires a strong, informed and committed board of trustees who will review progress toward implementation of the plan and make governance decisions needed to move the school forward.

Over the last year, as the board's commitment to the mission and vision of the school was tested, board members took it upon themselves to become better educated in governance through board training. By continuing to review the board's needs and acquiring internal and external expertise where needed, board members will be able to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the school and its students.

By setting annual goals for implementation of school improvement and accountability plan goals, and then evaluating the school leadership on progress toward those goals, the board will ensure that the school is moving forward in addressing student needs. Making a commitment to quarterly review of progress toward meeting these annual goals will enable the board to set policy, allocate resources or make other decisions to improve school performance in a timely manner.

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D. Assessment of Necessary Conditions

Essential Enabling Conditions	Conditions Being Met? Explain	Extent and Quality of Implementation?	Significance as a Contributing Factor to Low student Performance?
Standards-based teaching and learning			
Curricula are aligned to State Frameworks in core content area.	In Process	Some core subject areas are very closely aligned and others need much work.	Very significant. Curricula in core content areas have not been consistently evaluated for alignment or efficacy in the past. A plan is currently in place to ensure ongoing assessment of alignment to State Frameworks of curricula in core content areas.
Two full-time ELA and math subject area coaches provide faculty with consistent classroom observation and feedback on the quality of instructional practice	Considerably; Director of Curriculum and Instruction; ELA and Math Subject Area Leaders/Coaches	The Director of Curriculum and Instruction is a full-time coach hired to provide faculty with consistent classroom observation and feedback. In addition, ELA and Math Subject Area Leaders have one period per day to coach teachers, provide feedback, and further develop curriculum.	Very significant. Appropriate coaching for teachers (especially in mathematics) was a major recommendation from the Academic Audit.
Informing Practice with Data			
Interim assessments aligned to state standards are conducted 4-6 times per year in ELA and math.	In Process	The school has completed interim assessments aligned to state standards twice last year and three times this year; these will be conducted 4-6 times this coming year (07-08).	Significant. The administration of interim assessments has not previously been organized in ways that ensure meaningful and sufficient elicitation of information.
Assessment results are tracked and	In Process	A system for tracking and analyzing	Very significant. Student

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analyzed and used to inform curriculum, instruction, and individual interventions.		assessment results by student groups, class, grade and school-wide has been initiated and is being further developed so that results may be used to improve curriculum, instruction and interventions.	data from a number of sources have not been previously analyzed closely to inform curriculum, instruction and interventions.
Time for Teachers and Students			
There is adequate time for student learning for ELA and math on a daily/weekly basis	Yes	There is adequate time for student learning for ELA and math on a daily/weekly basis in the 2007-2008 schedule. Since January, 2007, 7 th grade students who were not proficient in mathematics and/or ELA received 45 minutes of additional instructional time daily. This model is replicated for all students in 07-08.	Very significant; The Grade 7 schedule was re-structured in January of 2007 to ensure adequate time for learning in ELA and math. The schedule for 2007-2008 ensures that adequate time for learning in ELA and math is provided school-wide.
Students who are not yet proficient receive at least 90 minutes daily of ELA and math instruction.	Yes	See above.	Very significant (See above)
After school tutoring and homework assistance is provided for students who need supplemental instruction and focused skill development.	Yes	It is provided, but improvement efforts must now focus on ensuring that all students who need it participate consistently.	Significant. We have historically made after school tutoring and homework assistance available to all students; we must now further develop plans to increase participation.
There is adequate weekly and annual time for teachers to discuss student progress, curriculum issues, instructional practice, and improvement efforts – in general no	Yes	There is adequate time built into the school week and annual school calendar for ongoing curriculum, instructional practice and improvement efforts. (A minimum of 2-3 hours/week; 6-9 days/year; daily	Very significant. While adequate common time has always existed, it seems that issues related to building a whole school

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<p>less than 1 hour/week of leadership directed collaborative work and 5 days/year professional development and planning.</p>		<p>subject-area time in the school schedule [52 min])</p>	<p>have been prioritized. Common time will be closely guarded and carefully planned to ensure that it is wisely used for professional development and planning for the purpose of improving curriculum and instruction.</p>
<p>Instructional Leadership</p>			
<p>The school leader/principal has authority to select and assign staff without regard to seniority or other factors.</p>	<p>Yes; only constrained by budget and availability of staff</p>	<p>Yes, the principal can select and assign staff where needed without regard to seniority or other factors.</p>	<p>Not significant</p>
<p>The right personnel are on hand to do the needed work</p>	<p>Yes*</p>	<p>*We are still seeking one full-time mathematics teacher (6/07)</p>	<p>Somewhat significant. The need for teacher coaching has been prioritized and has shaped most recent allocation of resources and hiring. Other personnel have been re-organized to ensure efficiency and improvement of work.</p>
<p>School leader/principal periodically evaluates faculty, including direct evaluation of relevant content knowledge, observable practices and behaviors, and annual evaluation of performance tied in part to growth in student learning and commitment to the school's strategies.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A system of comprehensive performance appraisal is being tuned and will be consistently utilized to evaluate all faculty.</p>	<p>Very significant. Teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience were evaluated in 2006-2007. Prior, a clearly defined process for teacher evaluation has not been consistently employed.</p>

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Governance			
Board of Trustees has conducted a self-analysis to determine if appropriate expertise is present and has pro-actively moved to add expertise as needed.	In Process	Board has done self-analysis but has only recently moved to acquire expertise needed.	Significant in that a strong and committed board is essential to carry out our mission and secure the resources the school needs. Our board has gained great strength after a tumultuous first semester in 2006-2007.
Board of Trustees receives frequent information regarding progress on the school's Improvement Plan and Accountability Plan, including student achievement, and uses this information to set policy, make appropriate personnel decisions and allocate resources.	In Process	Board has received updates but has not been intentional and deliberate about what specific data to measure and then use the results of those measurements to inform its actions. Board will require monthly reporting of specific data from new leadership team.	Significant. Closer monitoring by the board will improve accountability school-wide.
School leadership is evaluated annually against established goals.	In Process	The Board is developing its own annual goals upon which the school leaders' goals will be based. The school leader's goals will be defined in September and evaluated periodically, including a formal evaluation in August, 2008.	Significant. The Board has evaluated school leadership annually, but intends to now do so using more frequent, benchmark, evaluation of progress toward goals and a clearly defined, formal summative evaluation.
Resources are allocated to serve the needs of students.	Yes	The 07-08 budget has been closely monitored for alignment with the goals of the school improvement plan to meet the needs of students and improve student achievement.	Not Very Significant. Student needs have historically driven allocation of resources. (What has needed improvement is analysis of student needs. [see above])

Plan to Improve North Central Charter Essential School

II. Planned Improvements

STANDARDS-BASED TEACHING & LEARNING

At this time in our school life, there is no more important area of focus than that of improving our curriculum, instruction and student learning by assessing student progress on mastery of standards that are aligned with the state curriculum frameworks. This work will fill holes in instruction, eliminate duplication of teaching efforts, and increase accountability for improved student achievement in every classroom and school-wide.

During the 2007-2008 school year, NCCES will employ a full-time Director of Curriculum and Instruction, whose primary responsibilities are to:

- Provide educational leadership to facilitate continuous improvement in classroom instruction and strong, informed support for teachers in developing curriculum and assessments aligned with Essential principles and Massachusetts Frameworks which result in quality teaching and student success.
- Coach teachers on inquiry-based instructional strategies, how to use assessment data to inform instruction, how to differentiate teaching strategies for all content areas and help to build effective rubrics for teaching and learning.
- Coordinate and collaborate with school staff to design and implement professional growth opportunities including formal workshops, group discussions, one-on-one mentoring and additional mentoring to new teachers.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) will oversee the identification of essential standards, adoption of standards by all teachers, and mapping of curriculum to align with State Frameworks. Together with the Principal, she will develop a professional development program that supports and develops core Subject-Area Leaders. Subject-Area Leaders' will also have time in the daily school schedule [52 minutes per day) to provide ongoing observation and feedback to fellow subject-area teachers. Teachers new to NCCES and/or to the teaching profession will receive additional support from the DCI and Instruction, from respective Subject Area Leaders, and from participation in A Critical Friends Group.

In the spring of 2007, teachers were trained to organize their curricula in folders in a centralized electronic location at NCCES. This work will transform over the course of 2007-2008 in to curriculum maps for each course. Mapping curricula will support our efforts to organize curricula across grade level (horizontally) and school-wide (vertically).in alignment with state standards. One expectation is that by the end of the 07-08 academic year, at least two of teachers' six annual units will be designed in Understanding By Design format and that all units will explicitly define the standards being addressed and the assessments being used to measure progress toward mastery of these standards.

We actively seek to hire middle school teachers who are certified to teach in two or more content areas, so that responsibility for ensuring that every student makes progress toward proficiency in ELA and math is shared widely. We will deploy more of our non-core specialists to the upper school, and the placing of specials offered in the middle school will be very strategic (e.g., a performing arts teacher who is also a certified English teacher will offer a curriculum which will address and assess mastery of specific ELA standards).

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INFORMING PRACTICE WITH DATA

In planning for academic programming, we have examined student data to help drive decisions regarding school schedule, course offerings and the hiring of personnel. We have actively sought teacher candidates who are skillful in conducting formative assessment and who use resultant data to inform instructional practices, and all NCCES faculty will be trained in the use of formative and performance assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of standards.

Students' progress toward or beyond proficiency in ELA and mathematics will be measured by common assessment tools that are aligned with state standards. Such assessments will be administered 4-6 times in the academic year, and resultant data will be analyzed for meaning in planning instruction and interventions.

We are focused intently on cascading academic "interventions" (responding here and now) versus "remediation" (responding to students failure), and our ability to do this well will depend upon efficient and sound processes of data collection, sharing and analysis.

We have begun to conduct initial screenings of all incoming students in reading, writing, and mathematics and will use this assessment data to allocate our time and resources for the fall semester in direct response to indicated student needs. Additionally, we have learned how to access historical MCAS data for incoming students, so we will have this additional assessment data for planning purposes, as well. (We often wait for months for the transfer of students' historical records, even after multiple written requests. Accessing historical MCAS data will give us guidance in the absence of cumulative records.)

The school recognizes the value of data analysis to inform academic program development and classroom instruction, and new administrative leadership has prioritized this practice for all decision-making. NCCES administration will focus intently on results of multiple sources of data in efforts to assess student performance and to monitor continual progress on meeting AYP for all targeted student groups on the MCAS.

TIME FOR TEACHERS and STUDENTS

In the Spring of 2007, the 7th grade daily school schedule was restructured in efforts to better meet the most immediate learning needs of students, especially with regard to reading, writing, and math. The development of this pilot program, "High School Prep", was guided by most recent data regarding student achievement. This endeavor proved very successful in improving student achievement as measured by internal assessments; we currently look forward to results of most recent MCAS testing. The goal of the program was to respond in action to the question, "How will we respond effectively to students who haven't learned or who already know it?" This prompt has continued to guide our development of academic programming school-wide for 2007-2008.

NCCES has identified the continued and significant need of our middle school students for intensive work in improving academic achievement which has compelled us to restructure our middle school and

Plan to Improve North Central Charter Essential School

to deploy resources accordingly. NCCES knows that an Essential School education is powerful and meaningful; students who are to become critical thinkers who use their minds well must have solid foundational skills in order to access the educational resources available to them and to fully realize their potential.

“High School Prep” and “Freshman Academy”, middle school and 9th grade courses, respectively, are designed to help those who are not yet proficient in ELA and math while providing challenge to students already meeting proficiency. Students in grade 10 who are not yet proficient in math may receive up to 130 additional minutes per week of targeted assistance in a very small group setting.

Any and all students in need of more instructional time and/or support in learning ELA and math will be provided a minimum of 90 minutes per day of instruction. Students who have not yet achieved competency in math or ELA or are otherwise identified as in need of focused skill work (e.g. through the assessments led by the Reading Leadership Team) will receive targeted assistance. In addition, NCCES intends to stagger the schedules of some faculty so that additional teachers are consistently available before and after school to offer instruction in ELA, math, and other areas to students in need of focused skill development.

NCCES faculty will have a minimum of 2 hours per week of common planning time after school hours. Common planning time across grades 7-12 for subject area teams (52 minutes daily) and time for department leaders to observe teachers (52 minutes daily) will occur within the school’s daily schedule.

Increased time for students to receive quality instruction in ELA and/or math in conjunction with adequate and properly utilized common planning time for faculty will serve to create the conditions necessary for improved student achievement.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

In January, 2007, NCCES appointed an Acting Principal, a founder of NCCES presently serving as the Director of Student Services, and a comprehensive leadership search process was initiated. The Acting Principal, familiar with the needs of the school and with prior recommendations for improvements, immediately identified semester II priority action steps for improved student achievement.

After extensive and lengthy leadership organization and search processes conducted by board appointed committees in consult with a DOE-approved educational consultant firm, *Class Measures*, In May, 2007, the board appointed a new Executive Director whose tenure is to begin on July 1st. Subsequently, the committee-recommended finalist candidate for the Principal position, the Acting Principal, was appointed to the position of Principal effective May 14th, 2007. The committee-recommended finalist candidate for the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction was then hired promptly.

NCCES leadership is positioned stronger than ever to do the work needed to improve student achievement. The principal retains the authority to select and assign staff without regard to seniority or other factors. The right personnel are on hand to do the needed work, and the plan to organize and strategically deploy personnel is established and strong.

Plan to Improve North Central Charter Essential School

The board is investing in the services of an education consultant firm to provide consultancy through this critical year of transition. The consultant will support the school leadership's ongoing work to

1. Create a plan to monitor work to improve systems of communication.
2. Develop a "shadow plan" to define how the management structure will work in practice in response to anticipated management needs one year out and three years out.
3. Create a plan for continued consultation on the following leadership-specific areas:
 - School Management
 - Executive Director: Scope of Leadership Roles and Responsibilities
 - Broader Leadership Development
 - Unification of Leadership Work

Perhaps of greatest significance with regard to NCCES instructional leadership is the plan for the implementation of a comprehensive system of teacher evaluation. A richly fed, systematic system of performance appraisal is being tuned and will be fully implemented in 2007-2008. Teachers will receive meaningful and regular feedback regarding, as well as formal evaluation of content understanding, instructional practices, and commitment to the school's goals and plan for improvement.

GOVERNANCE

During the strategic planning process during the fall of 2005, and through the outside academic and administrative reviews and the preparation of the charter renewal application in the spring of 2006, the board moved from a more re-active problem-solving operation to a pro-active planning organization. NCCES Board of Trustees has developed into a stronger, more mission- focused governing body.

The board's commitment to the mission and vision of the school was tested during the fall of 2006 when the new principal, whose tenure would be short-lived, attempted to move the organization in a direction endorsed by only two board members. The departure of the principal and these board members left room for growth, and two strong, experienced individuals were added. These difficult circumstances resulted in the board becoming better educated and trained.

The results of the board self-evaluation, conducted in the spring and summer of 2007, will guide the board's plan for continued board training and needs for recruitment for the 2007-2008 year.

The board has approved a calendar to guide its work through July, 2008. This calendar specifies quarterly review of progress on accountability and school improvement goals. These reviews will take place in October, January, April and July. At these meetings, the board will review students' progress on benchmark assessments as well as progress on meeting the deadlines and benchmarks the school has set in the school improvement and accountability plans. As part of the quarterly review, the board will receive a report from the Executive Director identifying where the school has met benchmarks or made progress and plans for improvement in the next quarter.

Plan to Improve North Central Charter Essential School

NCCES will be entering the 07-08 school year with two leaders with new positions in the school. The board recognizes that it will need to be diligent in this important transition process. The board has just hired a new Executive Director who will begin work in July. In August the board will have a retreat workshop to set its goals for the coming year. The Executive Director will use these goals to set her goals for the coming year. The board will discuss and approve goals at its September board meeting. In September the board will approve the goals for the Executive Director for the 2007-2008 year. The board will perform a mid-year performance evaluation of the Executive Director in January, and perform a formal, summative evaluation in August, 2008.

The NCCES Board of Trustees has a plan to ensure its own, continued growth and to systematically and thoroughly evaluate the school's continued progress. This strength in governance will result in increased accountability school-wide, a critical component of the school's plan for improvement.

INTRODUCTION to the SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN TABLE

Our most recent work reaffirms our commitment to the mission of the school and to the school's continued growth as an Essential School. NCCES is a safe, vibrant learning community. The school has, most recently, hired new leadership: an Executive Director, a Principal, and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Members of this leadership team believe strongly that proficiencies as measured by MCAS are minimal expectations of what students should know and be able to do. Our commitment to improved student achievement will be evidenced in the plans we make, the actions we take, and in the measurable results these actions yield.

Following please find specific goals, persons responsible, and timelines for our most immediate school improvement action with priorities in **bold**.

Standards-Based Teaching and Learning

- **Curricula are aligned to State Frameworks in core content areas.**
- **Two full-time ELA and math subject area coaches provide faculty with consistent classroom observation and feedback on the quality of instructional practice**

Plans for Implementation	Responsibility	Timeframe
All teachers, in all grade levels and all content areas, identify “NCCES essential standards” from Massachusetts English Language Arts and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teacher	June-August ongoing
All teachers identify and adopt (take ownership of, and responsibility for ensuring every student’s mastery of) specific essential standards that align with their curricula and with State Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	August ongoing
<p>Form and facilitate a task force to study and make decisions about the use of various technological tools to assist in the development of curriculum alignment, maps, assessments, and standards-based reports of student progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that task force includes at least one member of the ELA, mathematics and special education faculty. • Develop a task list and schedule for task force to complete identified goals. • Develop a matrix tool that identifies NCCES needs with regard to curriculum alignment, mapping, assessment and reporting; use to compare value of various technological tools • Identify (technological) tool(s) to support teachers’ work in aligning curricula with State Frameworks, mapping curricula scope and sequence, developing and administering assessments, and reporting student progress. 	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Summer 2007
Further train all staff in the understanding and utilization of current Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in core areas.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August, ongoing
Initiate use of (technological) tool(s) to support teachers work in mapping curricula across grade level (horizontally) and school-wide (vertically) in alignment with State Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	June -August
Provide ongoing Professional Development training and time for teachers to map curricula in alignment with State Frameworks.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
Align Gateway and Roundtable (demonstration of mastery for grade level	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July

Informing Practice with Data

- **Interim assessments aligned to state standards are conducted 4-6 times per year in ELA and mathematics.**
- **Assessment results are tracked and analyzed and used to inform curriculum, instruction, and individual interventions.**

Plans for Implementation	Responsibility	Timeframe
Train all staff in the development and use of formative assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of standards.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
Train all staff in the development and use of performance assessments (e.g. rubrics) to measure student progress.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
All teachers explicitly define what students are expected to learn and be able to do in each six-week course unit.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Every six weeks
Develop common assessment tools aligned to state standards to be utilized 4-6 times per academic year to measure student progress toward or beyond proficiency in English Language Arts and mathematics.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Subject Area Team leaders	August, October, December February
Administer common assessment tools aligned to state standards 4-6 times per academic year.	Teachers	September November January March
Collect, analyze and use student achievement data in administrative and faculty forums for the purpose of improving instructional practices.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
Train all staff in the collection, analysis and practical use of data that is considered essential to improving practice.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August September and ongoing
Identify a variety of tools including technology to collect and analyze data, including assessment data for reading, writing and mathematics skills.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July and ongoing
Ensure that multiple sources of data are collected and used to assess student performance.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July Ongoing
Engage entire staff in analyzing student achievement data.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
Facilitate the use of data to continually improve and revise the School Improvement Plan.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing

Instructional Leadership

- The school leader/principal has authority to select and assign staff without regard to seniority or other factors.
- The right personnel are on hand to do the needed work.
- School leader/principal periodically evaluates faculty, including direct evaluation of relevant content knowledge, observable practices and behaviors, and annual evaluation of performance tied in part to growth in student learning and commitment to the school's strategies

Plans for Implementation	Responsibility	Timeframe
Develop and implement a comprehensive performance appraisal system to evaluate teacher performance, including evaluation of content understanding, instructional practices, and commitment to the school's goals for improved academic achievement.	Executive Director Principal	August
Provide leadership development opportunities to team leaders.	Principal	Monthly
Develop and implement a performance appraisal process for team leaders that nurtures leadership development.	Executive Director Principal	August
Coordinate goal setting with all staff and the development and implementation of school-based Professional Development Plans.	Principal	September-October
Develop and implement a system of support for teachers new to the school with five or fewer years of teaching experience and those who have not attained professional teaching status to assist in their transition and to promote employment retention.	Executive Director Principal	August
Update orientation program.	Executive Director Principal	August
Design systems that further support the selection, hiring and retention of quality staff.	Executive Director Principal	Ongoing
Review Department of Education Certification and teacher's recertification plans to assure certification process is current and in compliance with NCLB.	Principal	August
Explore and create options to promote increased number of teachers and other staff of color.	Executive Director Principal NCCES SIP 12/7/2007	Ongoing Page 29
Conduct exit interviews to inform future practice.	Executive Director Principal	May-June 08

Governance

- Board of Trustees has conducted a self-analysis to determine if appropriate expertise is present and has pro-actively moved to add expertise as needed.
- Board of Trustees receives frequent information regarding progress on the school's Improvement Plan and Accountability Plan, including student achievement, and uses this information to set policy, make appropriate personnel decisions and allocate resources.
- School leadership is evaluated annually against established goals.
- Resources are allocated to serve the needs of students.

Plans for Implementation	Responsibility	Timeframe
Complete Board self-evaluation in May 2007 which identifies gaps in board training and expertise as well as helps to set goals for the following year. This self-evaluation will be completed and reported to the board at the July Meeting.	Governance Committee	June 2008
Develop a plan for board training and a plan for board recruitment to address the identified needs.	Governance Committee	July 2008
Review quarterly progress toward meeting goals of accountability plan and school improvement plan built into the board calendar. Take appropriate action based on those reviews	Chair	Ongoing
Evaluate Executive Director twice per year on progress toward achieving goals. Provide specific support and direction on areas needing improvement at each evaluation.	Chair	Ongoing

III. Report of Outcomes

In its Annual Report, NCCES will discuss progress made in meeting the goals set out in the Plan for School Improvement as well as progress in meeting the longer term goals identified in the Accountability Plan. A copy of the NCCES Accountability Plan for the 2007-2012 charter term appears below.

NCCES ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN 2007-2012		
	Goal	Measure
I. ACADEMIC SUCCESS	A. 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)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 100% of NCCES students pass ELA and Math MCAS by graduation. 2. NCCES makes Annual Yearly Progress each year. 3. 90% of students successfully meet eligibility requirements for promotion (Gateway) at the end of 8th and 10th grades. 4. 100% of NCCES graduates demonstrate mastery of higher order skills through successful completion of the Senior Project.
	B. NCCES curriculum is aligned with standards from the MA Curriculum Frameworks and is effectively implemented in the classroom.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 100% of NCCES courses are aligned with standards from the state frameworks as indicated by curriculum maps. 2. 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.
	C. NCCES students transition successfully from NCCES to a post-secondary program of study, employment and/or an organized service program.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 90% of NCCES graduates are accepted to at least one post-secondary educational program. 2. 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.
	D. 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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. 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.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY	Goal	Measure
	<p>A. NCCES attracts enrolls and retains students from its region.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. NCCES maintains a waitlist equal to or exceeding 10% of the school's population in grades 7 through 10.
	<p>B. NCCES fiscal management reflects sound practices that support fulfillment of its charter's essential commitments. (Common Principle #9)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCCES has sound financial practices as evidenced by yearly independent audits which include no significant negative findings. 2. The NCCES actual and proposed annual budget is balanced, showing income equal to or greater than expense. 3. The NCCES Board of Trustees annually approves a balanced budget that supports the academic success of students. 4. The NCCES Board of Trustees will secure a permanent home for NCCES.
<p>C. The NCCES Board of Trustees provides sound and effective governance to support and promote the school's mission.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. 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. 	
III. FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER	<p>A. NCCES students are known personally, challenged intellectually, and participate actively in their learning. (Common Principles #3, #4 & #5)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. 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. 3. 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. 4. NCCES demonstrates effective Essential School practices as evidenced by annual reviews by outside Critical Friends.

Goal	Measure
<p>B. NCCES is a diverse and inclusive community where every member's voice and perspective is valued and respected. (Common Principles #3 & #10)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCCES policies, procedures, practices, and indicators of success reflect commitment to diversity and inclusiveness as indicated by findings of external and internal reviews. 2. 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%. 3. 80% of NCCES students and parents agree or strongly agree that they personally feel safe in the NCCES learning environment as measured by the Annual Climate Survey. 4. 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. 5. The demographic composition of the student body reflects the diversity of the sending districts as measured by comparing NCCES with U.S. Census data.
<p>C. NCCES shares with the outside community replicable models of effective practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 5 NCCES staff shares some aspect of NCCES practices annually with educators and/or related professionals. 2. NCCES maintains on the school's website examples of replicable models of effective practices. 3. NCCES brings in at least 25 visitors annually to observe directly the work that is going on in the school.

Glossary of Important Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): A term from the No Child Left Behind federal legislation indicating whether a school is on a path towards all of its students being proficient in reading and math by 2013-2014.

Common Principles: A set of common philosophies and practices to which **Essential Schools** adhere. A detailed list of the principles is found on the NCCES (www.ncces.org) and Coalition of Essential School (www.essentialschools.org) websites.

Critical Friends: Essential Schools and learning centers across the U.S. use site visits form “critical friendships” following a protocol developed at Brown University to provide honest and supportive feedback to facilitate student achievement.

Essential School: Guided by the 10 Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, an Essential School aspires to those principles and finds particular practices and structures to make those ideas about teaching and learning real for a particular community.

Gateway: An assessment event that a student must complete satisfactorily in order to move on to the next level. NCCES has Gateways at the end of 8th grade, the end of 10th grade, and at Graduation.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Federal legislation passed in 2001 that lays out requirements for public schools K-12 around student achievement, teacher qualifications, state testing, and more. Such requirements in total convey that all students must be taught well, that schools must ensure there are highly qualified teachers in every classroom, and that parents have rights and responsibilities in their child's education.

Senior Project: A large scale individual, independent research project through which every senior demonstrates that they have the skills to move out into the world. This culminating project asks students to demonstrate skills and knowledge they've gained over their years in the school.

APPENDIX A – SIP TASKS BY MONTH

June 2007

G	Board is completing a self-evaluation in June 2007 which will identify gaps in board training and expertise as well help set goals for the following year. This self-evaluation will be completed and reported to the board at the July Meeting	Governance Committee	June
SBI	<p>Form and facilitate a task force to study and make decisions about the use of various technological tools to assist in the development of curriculum alignment, maps, assessments, and standards-based reports of student progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that task force includes at least one member of the ELA, mathematics and special education faculty. • Develop a task list and schedule for task force to complete identified goals. • Develop a matrix tool that identifies NCCES needs with regard to curriculum alignment, mapping, assessment and reporting; use to compare value of various technological tools. • Identify (technological) tool(s) to support teachers’ work in aligning curricula with State Frameworks, mapping curricula scope and sequence, developing and administering assessments, and reporting student progress. 	<p>Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p>	<p>June</p> <p>June</p> <p>June June</p> <p>June</p>
SBI	All teachers, in all grade levels and all content areas, identify “NCCES essential standards” from Massachusetts English Language Arts and Mathematics curriculum frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	June-August Ongoing
SBI	Develop job descriptions for subject area and grade level team leaders with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and post positions internally.	Principal	June
SBI	A full-time Director or Curriculum & Instruction will be employed, whose primary responsibilities will be to provide ongoing classroom observation, coaching, and feedback to every teacher; support alignment of curricula with state frameworks; evaluate teachers; and support development of subject area team leaders.	Principal to hire Director of Curriculum & Instruction	June Ongoing
SBI	Initiate use of (technological) tool(s) to support teachers work in mapping curricula across grade level (horizontally) and school-wide (vertically) in alignment with State Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	June-August

TFTS	Re-structure schedule in grades 7-9 to ensure provision of 90 minutes per day of instruction in English Language Arts (reading, writing) and/or Mathematics to students who are not yet proficient.	Principal	June - July
TFTS	Re-structure schedule in grades 7-9 to ensure provision of enrichment instruction in English Language Arts and/or Mathematics to extend the learning of students who are already proficient.	Principal	June
TFTS	Re-allocate resources to ensure provision of 90 minutes per day of instruction in English Language Arts (reading, writing) and/or Mathematics to students who are not yet proficient.	Principal	June
TFTS	Schedule common planning time for subject-area teachers at least one time per week (and preferably daily).	Principal	June
TFTS	Allocate one period daily for core Subject-Area Leaders to perform tasks related to strengthening academic program, including the provision of observation and feedback to subject-area teachers.	Principal	June

July 2007

G	.Governance Committee will develop a plan for board training and a plan for board recruitment to address the identified needs.	Governance Committee	July 2007
SBI	Conduct initial review of Gateway and Roundtable requirements to assess alignment with essential standards and State Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July
SBI	Conduct initial review of Gateway and Roundtable requirements to assess clarity of definition of grade-level performance criteria.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July
IPWD	Identify a variety of tools including technology to collect and analyze data, including assessment data for reading, writing and mathematics skills.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July ongoing
IPWD	Ensure that multiple sources of data are collected and used to assess student performance.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July Ongoing
IPWD	Formally assess and address mathematic skills of all students for diagnostic, placement and instructional purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform mathematics placement screenings of all incoming students. • Perform further diagnostic screening of students whose placement testing indicates need for further intervention. • Provide targeted assistance in mathematics to students in need of such services. 	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Director of Curriculum & Instruction Director of Curriculum & Instruction Director of Curriculum & Instruction	July-August Ongoing August September-October Ongoing
IPWD	Examine system of grading and reporting and implement changes that help organize and communicate clearly information regarding student academic achievement.	Executive Director Principal	July-August Ongoing
IL	Further develop mechanisms for effective school-wide communications (e.g., master calendar, Employee Handbook, etc.)	Principal	July-August Ongoing

August 2007

SBI	Develop Gateway and Roundtable requirements to ensure alignment with essential standards and State Frameworks and clarity of definition of grade-level performance criteria.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Core Subject-Area Team Leaders	August-December 07
SBI	Align Gateway and Roundtable requirements with grade-level curricula, assignments and assessments.	Core Subject-Area Team Leaders Teachers	August – January 08
SBI	Further train all staff in the understanding and utilization of current Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in core areas.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August, ongoing
SBI	Further develop a model of distributed academic leadership which ensures allocation of sufficient time and resources for core subject-area leaders to observe and provide feedback to each core subject-area teacher bi-weekly.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August-September
SBI	Increase all teachers' ability to construct and administer assessments that promote all students' progress toward proficiency in English Language Arts and Mathematics.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and Ongoing
IPWD	Train all staff in the development and use of formative assessments to measure student progress toward mastery of standards.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
IPWD	Train all staff in the development and use of performance assessments (e.g. rubrics) to measure student progress.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
IPWD	Develop common assessment tools aligned to state standards to be utilized 4-6 times per academic year to measure student progress toward or beyond proficiency in English Language Arts and mathematics.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Subject Area Team leaders	August, October, December February
IPWD	Collect, analyze and use student achievement data in administrative and faculty forums for the purpose of improving instructional practices.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August and ongoing
IPWD	Train all staff in the collection, analysis and practical use of data that is considered essential to improving practice.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August September and ongoing
IPWD	Formally assess and address reading skills of all students for diagnostic, placement and instructional purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform reading screenings of all incoming students. • Perform diagnostic assessments of students whose reading screening indicates need for further intervention. 	Principal Title I Coordinator Title I Coordinator	August September-October Ongoing Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify students in need of reading support or targeted assistance. Continue to support and develop the work of the NCCES Reading Leadership Team. Perform routine assessments of students receiving reading support to measure progress at least three times per year. 	Title I Coordinator Title I Coordinator Principal Title I Coordinator	November February May
IL	Review Department of Education Certification and teacher's recertification plans to assure certification process is current and in compliance with NCLB.	Principal	August
IL	Dedicate school-based time to annual policy review and trainings (e.g., Restraint Training, Sexual Harassment Training, Internet/e-mail Policy Training, School Law updates)	Principal	August Ongoing
SBI	All teachers identify and adopt (take ownership of, and responsibility for ensuring every student's mastery of) specific essential standards that align with their curricula and with State Frameworks.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	August Ongoing
SBI	Identify leaders for subject area and grade level teams and create an academic year schedule for collaborative work time.	Principal	August
IPWD	Develop a professional development program plan that supports faculty in the development of sound and meaningful assessment practices (e.g., rubrics, formative assessment, performance assessment, portfolios).	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	August
TFTS	Structure teacher schedules to ensure that teachers are available to provide tutoring and homework assistance before and after school for students who need supplemental instruction and focused skill development.	Principal	August
TFTS	Develop job descriptions for core Subject-Area Leaders and Grade Level Team Leaders, post positions, and appoint Leaders.	Principal	August
TFTS	Prepare annual Professional Development Plan in accordance with the goals of the School Improvement Plan.	Executive Director Principal	August Ongoing
IL	Develop and implement a comprehensive performance appraisal system to evaluate teacher performance, including evaluation of content understanding, instructional practices, and commitment to the school's goals for improved academic achievement.	Executive Director Principal	August
IL	Develop and implement a performance appraisal process for team leaders that nurtures leadership development.	Executive Director Principal	August
IL	Develop and implement a system of support for teachers new to the school with five or fewer years of teaching experience and those who have not attained professional teaching status to assist in their transition and to promote employment retention.	Executive Director Principal	August

September

ONGOING, Periodically, or Later

IPWD	Administer common assessment tools aligned to state standards 4-6 times per academic year.	Teachers	Sept. Nov. Jan. March
TFTS	Faculty provide tutoring and homework assistance 3-4 days per week before and after school for students who need supplemental instruction and focused skill development.	Teachers	September-June
TFTS	Schedule weekly meetings of the Academic Leadership Team (Subject-Area Leaders, Principal, and Director of Curriculum & Instruction) to discuss and problem-solve issues related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student achievement.	Principal	September
TFTS	Schedule adequate common planning time for grade level teaching teams.	Principal	September
TFTS	Prepare and distribute a Professional Development Plan that meets the needs of staff with a focus on building capacity for strengthening student achievement.	Executive Director Principal	September
TFTS	Create an academic year schedule for collaborative work time for both subject-area and grade-level teams.	Principal	September
TFTS	Ensure sharing of best practices through development of a peer review process and exposure to a variety of teaching methods and styles.	Principal	September
TFTS	Develop and implement a Critical Friends group for teachers new to NCCES or to the teaching profession and allocate adequate time for meetings.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	September Monthly
IL	Coordinate goal setting with all staff and the development and implementation of school-based Professional Development Plans.	Principal	September- October
IPWD	<p>Articulate and distribute a clearly defined system of interventions that responds to a student who is not learning well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refine the Student Support Team pre-referral process in collaboration with the Academic Leadership Team and others (e.g., Reading Leadership Team). • Clearly define the system of interventions and corresponding tools that assess and address student literacy needs. • Clearly define the system of interventions and corresponding tools that assess and address student needs in mathematics. • Train grade level teams to identify and implement strategies to improve student learning through facilitation of the KidTalk process. • Provide targeted assistance to students identified as in need of such intervention. 	<p>Principal Principle</p> <p>Principal, Title I Coordinator</p> <p>Principal, DCI</p> <p>Principal, Student Support Team</p> <p>Title I Coordinator, Teachers</p>	September- November

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete “Individual Success Plans” for students who receive a warning in math or language arts on 2007 MCAS tests to identify interventions and to track progress.	Advisors	
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IL	Conduct exit interviews to inform future practice.	Executive Director Principal	May–June 08
SBI	Provide ongoing Professional Development training and time for teachers to map curricula in alignment with State Frameworks.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
SBI	Provide leadership development opportunities to subject-area team leaders.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
SBI	All teachers explicitly define what students are expected to learn and be able to do in each six-week course unit.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Every six weeks
SBI	Seek additional resources to increase school’s capacity to provide full-time ELA and math subject area coaches.	Executive Director	Ongoing
IPW D	All teachers explicitly define what students are expected to learn and be able to do in each six-week course unit.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Every six weeks
IPW D	Engage entire staff in analyzing student achievement data.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
IPW D	Facilitate the use of data to continually improve and revise the School Improvement Plan.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
IPW D	Provide ongoing staff development on construction and implementation of assessments that promote all students’ progress toward proficiency in English Language Arts and Mathematics. .	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
IPW D	Create and utilize classroom-based assessments that measure student progress toward proficiency in English Language Arts, Mathematics and other core subjects.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Ongoing
IPW D	Develop rubrics that convey to students what they are expected to learn and be able to do.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Ongoing
IPW D	Conduct ongoing classroom assessment of student learning and use resultant data to inform instruction.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Teachers	Ongoing
IPW D	Monitor continual progress on meeting AYP for all targeted student groups on the MCAS.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Ongoing
IL	Provide leadership development opportunities to team leaders.	Principal	Monthly
TFTS	Provide ongoing professional development that supports and strengthens the use of diverse instructional strategies and assessment practices that support student learning.	Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction	Monthly
IL	Design systems that further support the selection, hiring and retention of quality staff.	Executive Director Principal	Ongoing
IL	Explore and create options to promote increased number of	Executive Director	Ongoing

