

North Central Charter Essential School

REPORT

to the

Massachusetts Department of Education

CONDITION #1 of NCCES Charter Renewal:

"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."

Submitted by: Tricia May, Principal, NCCES

Date: June 22, 2007

Statement of Authenticity of Contents

I, Peter Davies, attest to the authenticity and accuracy of references to involvement of *Class Measures* in this report of the process undertaken by North Central Charter Essential School to respond to Condition #1 of charter renewal.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Peter Davies
Lead Consultant in Accountability and Leadership, *Class Measures*

The following report consists of a chronology of most recent events regarding the process of the development of leadership at North Central Charter Essential School. Some significant events related to school leadership occurred prior to the conditional renewal of NCCES' charter in February, 2007; brief historical information is provided to lend context and clarity to the progression of NCCES' organizational structure and leadership.

CONSULTATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the spring of 2006, NCCES hired educational consultants from *Class Measures*, a specialist firm in school accountability and leadership, to review the school's administrative structure and processes. *Class Measures* conducted an Administrative Organization Review and a subsequent Academic Audit. *Class Measures* provided a summary of observations and conclusions regarding six areas of identified need at North Central Charter Essential School (Those in **bold** are most closely related to leadership structures and processes.):

- **Unified Leadership**
- **Clear Organizational Structures, Roles, and Reporting Relationships**
- Strong Curriculum and Assessment Programs
- Effective Internal Evaluation and Accountability Mechanisms
- Effective and Efficient Business Operations
- **Open and Transparent Communication and Decision-Making Processes**

The work done to improve NCCES in the summer and fall of 2006 was specifically organized in alignment with the above areas of identified need. In January, 2007, the newly appointed Acting Principal referred back to findings of *Class Measures*, and the most recent work to improve school structures and processes, including the search for effective leadership, which can be tracked to the areas of need originally identified by *Class Measures*.

NCCES LEADERSHIP, 2006-2007

The following excerpt from the 07-08 NCCES school improvement plan gives brief historical context regarding recent leadership at NCCES: "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 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."

Acting Principal Appointed

In January of 2007, NCCES appointed founding faculty member and then-Director of Student Services, Ms. Tricia May (this reporter), to the position of Acting Principal. Familiarity with the history and needs of the school allowed for expedient synthesis of previous recommendations and the following leadership-related tasks were initiated:

- Analyzed organizational processes and structures
- Identified most urgent school needs
- Assessed and (re)defined Leadership Teams, Roles and Responsibilities (including subject area and grade level leaders)
- Delegated leadership responsibilities to existing personnel
- Developed the School Improvement Plan
- Developed the school Accountability Plan
- Revised Leadership Job Descriptions
- Created Director of Curriculum and Instruction Job Description
- Appointed Leadership Personnel for the 07-08 year
- Restructured Middle School schedule (with creation of "High School Prep" period) and re-deployed resources to address most urgent student needs
- Re-deployed High School resources to address most urgent student needs
- Developed processes for improved communications
- Provided Professional Development/Training on Curriculum Development and Assessment practices
- Developed task force to examine tools to support Curriculum Mapping
- Developed and defined the process for clear and fair decision-making and initiated the NCCES Pathways Committee
- Collaborated extensively with Business Manager to develop budget according to school's most urgent needs for growth and improvement

Board of Trustees Acts

In November 2006, the NCCES Board of Trustees appointed an Executive Functions Committee to assess and make recommendations on the the leadership structure at NCCES in light of the anticipated June 2007 resignation of founding Executive Director, Peter Garbus. After receiving the committee's recommendations in January, the board appointed two committees to continue to conduct the work of developing the leadership structure at NCCES and search for viable candidates for identified leadership roles. These two committees were:

Executive Functions Committee - Board-appointed committee comprised of Trustees, faculty, students and community members *responsible for examining and defining a viable organizational structure.*

Leadership Search Committee - Board-appointed committee comprised of Trustees, faculty, parents, students, and community members *responsible for seeking, identifying, screening and recommending candidates for NCCES leadership roles.*

CHARTER RENEWAL, FEBRUARY, 2007

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.

CONDITION #1: LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE and HIRING PROCESS

On April 10, 2007, NCCES received approval from the Commissioner of the Department of Education to engage Peter Davies, of *Class Measures*, and/or Larry Myatt as consultants. (See Appendix) Mr. Davies was contacted immediately and agreed to provide services specifically related to NCCES Charter Renewal Condition #1.

By this time, the board-appointed committees had conducted months of deliberate and intensive work, and the NCCES Leadership Search Committee and the Executive Functions Committee decided to collaborate in the final revision of the school's organizational structure as it aligned with the school's present needs. The "Dual Committee" modified the organizational structure and received approval of this structure by the Board of Trustees while simultaneously pursuing candidates for identified leadership roles.

NCCES hired *Class Measures* and provided the consultant with copies of all documents related to the work of the Executive Functions Committee and the Leadership Search Committee including

- resumes & accompanying documents
- meeting minutes (see Appendix – *Minutes of Leadership Search Committee*)
- overviews of process, timelines and committee member responsibilities (see Appendix – *Leadership Search Process Overview*)
- interview questions (in *Leadership Search Process Overview*)

- interview rating sheets (in *Leadership Search Process Overview*)
- proposed organizational chart; (see Appendix for final version); and
- revised job descriptions (see Appendix).

In April, 2007, the *Class Measures* consultant met with NCCES school leaders to review the school's proposed organizational structure and the leadership hiring process. At this time, our *Class Measures* consultant found the leadership search process being conducted at NCCES to be thorough, thoughtful and sound. The consultant considered the work of both committees to be remarkable for depth and breadth and was impressed by the commitment of time and efforts of the representative groups of committee members. He expressed no fundamental concerns regarding the processes, procedures, decisions and actions of the Executive Functions Committee (in developing the leadership structure) and the Leadership Search Committee (in the search for and hiring of school leadership).

The consultant made recommendations for

- Clearer definition of systems of reporting and supervision for both the administrative and academic leadership teams;
- Consideration of “triumvirate” model of functional leadership (executive, organizational, instructional)
- Ongoing consultation to assess progress toward goals (suggested: 2 – 3 consultations in the academic year to provide appropriate, practical support to leadership team)

A follow-up meeting for consultation with the to-be-appointed leadership team was scheduled for June, 2007.

LEADERS IDENTIFIED

The Leadership Search Committee interviewed finalist candidates for the positions of Executive Director, Principal, and Director of Curriculum & Instruction. The Search Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees finalist candidate Ms. Stephanie Davolos Harden for the position of Executive Director. The Board of Trustees appointed Ms. Harden to the position of EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. (May, 2007) The then-current NCCES Executive Director, in consult with the named Executive Director, appointed committee-recommended finalist candidate Ms. Tricia May to the position of PRINCIPAL. (May, 2007) The Principal appointed committee-recommended finalist candidate Ms. Lawreen Garnett to the position of DIRECTOR of CURRICULUM and INSTRUCTION. (June, 2007)

CONSULTATION CONTINUES

In June of 2007, Class Measures continued its consultation with NCCES in a meeting with the consultant and the newly appointed Executive Director and Principal. At this meeting, the school's leadership structure was again reviewed in detail. The proposed organizational chart was endorsed by the consultant. The consultant made specific suggestions regarding the line management of administrative services, while assenting that revised job descriptions and systems

of reporting were clearly defined. In addition, the consultant expressed confidence in the skills, expertise and experiences of the new leaders to collaborate effectively in moving the school forward. At this time, the consultant made suggestions for the following:

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

In addition, the consultant recommended specific readings to both Executive Director and the Principal considered to be timely and highly practical.

NCCES intends to take action on all of the consultant’s suggestions for the 2007-2008 year. We will continue external support by hiring a consultant for the 2007-2008 year to provide services which will amount to (minimally) the equivalent of one half-day per month. The primary focus of the consultation will be to share observations and recommendations for continued improvements to the leadership structure at NCCES. The initial focus of consultation work will be on the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director. The 2007-2008 board approved budget included funds for this work.

NCCES has been highly responsive to each and every recommendation made by its DOE Commissioner-approved consultant, *Class Measures*. The familiarity that the consultant firm had with NCCES certainly expedited this process, as provision of historical context did not have to be labored through. The process was, at once, efficient, comprehensive and thorough.

The leadership team that arose from this process is highly qualified to do the work necessary to fully realize the schools goals to be an academic success, a viable organization, and true to its charter. Our leadership structure is highly organized and clearly articulated. The members of the NCCES leadership team are truly collaboration-oriented, and clearly defined systems of shared leadership are defined. A plan for continued work to grow and develop our strengths is in place. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Class Measures to support our school leadership’s continued growth and development, and we look forward to the work ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Tricia May
Principal
North Central Charter Essential School

Date