

Renewal Inspection Report

CITY ON A HILL CHARTER SCHOOL

BOSTON, MA



November 7-November 10, 2004

Table of Contents

	Page
About the renewal process	2
How to read this report	2
Team members	3
Setting	4
Findings	6
Appendix A: Schedule of the visit	20

About the renewal process and site visit report

Beginning in the spring of the third year of its charter (and ending August 1st following its fourth year), a school may apply for renewal of its charter for another five-year term. Following guidelines set forth in the *Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter*, an application for renewal should be an articulate, affirmative response, based on clear, credible evidence, to the questions that guide charter school accountability. It must also offer compelling answers to questions about the school's plans for the future. The application should be a sound, well-supported explanation of why the Board of Education should renew a school's charter.

Once this application has met a minimal review of its clarity and coherence, the Department of Education will appoint an evaluation team to conduct a 3-4 day visit of the school to corroborate and augment the school's application for renewal. This report is the result of one such evaluation.

The renewal site visit process and report provide a detailed and current portrait of a public charter school at the time of its application for renewal. While the renewal site visit report itself is a vital source of information within the renewal process, it is most effective when used in conjunction with the longitudinal school performance data available to the Department of Education. The combination of more general long-term data with the detailed information gathered by the renewal visit constitutes an evidence base rigorous enough to inform decisions about the future of public charter schools responsible for the education of students in the Commonwealth. In keeping with Massachusetts Board of Education's commitment to a public charter school accountability system that is based in robust and diverse performance data, the renewal site visit report does not make recommendations about whether or not a school should be renewed. It presents a detailed picture of the present state of the school as one of several key sources of information to be considered by the Board of Education in its renewal decision.

How to read this report

The first section of this report describes the school's setting. Included in this section are information on the origin and history of the charter, student demographics, staffing and the school's educational program. This is also an opportunity to include any organizational history, such as changes in the board and leadership or challenges the school has faced, and its response to those challenges.

The core of the report is the Renewal Inspection Team's findings. Findings are the team's assessment of the school's strengths and areas for improvement that, in their judgment, have the greatest bearing on the school's achievement of its defined goals. Findings are organized under each of the renewal questions: *Is the academic program a success? Is the school a viable organization? Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?* The team's comments on the fourth question, *If the school is renewed, what are its plans for the next five years?* reflect their judgment of the quality of the school's proposed new goals and their assessment of the school's capacity to fulfill those goals. Each finding is a bolded statement followed by explanatory paragraphs reporting the evidence supporting the team's judgments. Finally, **Appendix A** illustrates the team's schedule during the renewal visit.

RENEWAL INSPECTION TEAM

M. Barbara Zeno, Lead Inspector, is a Research Associate with RMC Research Corporation. Barbara has extensive experience in research, development and technical assistance. Her research and development work has centered on comprehensive school reform, standards and assessment, instructional practices and supervising learning. Barbara has directed several projects targeted to improve Middle Grades. Through her work with the New York Technical Assistance Center, M. Zeno currently provides technical assistance to the Department of School Improvement at the New York State Department of Education as they design and implement their strategy for supporting low performing schools in the State of New York. M. Zeno is part of a team that is working with the New York State Education Department to design a research plan that will evaluate the state's strategy to support low performing schools and she also coordinates the Supplemental Educational Services Contract awarded to RMC by the State of New York. M. Zeno has a Master Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Dr. Ryan Tyler is a Research Associate at RMC Research Corporation. Dr. Tyler has extensive experience in Education Policy, Non-traditional public schools (charter schools, small schools, and magnet schools), Program Evaluation, School-Based Reform and Race/Ethnic Relations. He has provided training for leadership teams from 40 Title I districts in New Jersey as well as training for principals and staff in 25 low-performing schools in New Jersey. Examples of Dr. Tyler's evaluation work include the Evaluation of the Chicago Public Schools' policy to end social promotion and the evaluation of Colonial School District's Consolidated Workplan for 1998-2002. He has managed projects such as the Charter School Initiative: The Chicago Urban League's effort to establish a charter school in Chicago.

Wendy Graham is a Senior Research Associate at RMC Research Corporation. She is a certified educator with over thirty years of experience. Ms. Graham has been a teacher and reading specialist. Her work at RMC has centered on evaluation, providing technical assistance and professional development. Ms. Graham has been on several Renewal Inspection teams on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Rosemary Jebari is an English teacher at Framingham High School, teaching ESL Proficiency and Sheltered English to students from many different cultures. She has 28 years designing and teaching ESL/EFL programs and 9 years teaching university level composition, literature, and listening/speaking skills. Ms. Jebari has a Masters Degree in English.

Carole Forbes is a consultant for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability. She has been on numerous Renewal Inspection teams on behalf of the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability. Over the course of thirteen years Ms. Forbes has had the position of Head of School including The Sommerville Charter School, in Sommerville Massachusetts. She is working on ED.D in Policy and Leadership.

Setting

City on a Hill Public Charter School (COAH) was founded by two visionary teachers passionate about the need for change in the purpose and delivery of urban public education. Guided by their own experiences as teachers, they envisioned that teachers at COAH would be the driving force at the school, participating fully in decision-making across the board. The school opened its doors to 65 ninth and tenth graders on September 5, 1995 with a mission that emphasizes academic achievement, citizenship, teacher leadership, and public accountability. At the core of the schools charter is the preparation of students for college and the development of citizenship. The students come from all over Boston; they are selected by lottery without regard to past performance in school. Forty four percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced school lunch. For 2004-2005, the school enrolls 251 students in grades 9-12.

The school is housed in the central branch of the YMCA at 320 Huntington Avenue on Boston's cultural corridor – between the Museum of Fine Arts and Symphony Hall, next-door to the New England Conservatory, down the block from the Huntington Theater, and a short walk from the Berklee School of Music, the Massachusetts College of Art, the Boston Center for the Arts, and the Boston Ballet. The school has a mission driven commitment for the school to be an integral part of the City of Boston. During the current 2004-2005 school year, the student population is 84 percent African American, 12 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian and 2 percent white. There were no identified limited English proficient students in the population. In 2004- 2005, 10 percent of the population was identified as having special needs.

In 2003-2004, 38 students (15%) withdrew for a variety of reasons including transfer to another school, moving and personal reasons. There are currently 405 students on the waiting list. Students are accepted at COAH only in the students ninth grade year.

In its fifth year COAH reexamined its 'teacher-driven' model and internal structures for effectiveness and efficiency. The school understood that clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities were needed and that significant effort was necessary to build the infrastructure that would support consistency in curriculum and its delivery. Between the fifth and ninth years, the school went through a series of significant changes. Two of those years were particularly tumultuous. The school went through a thoughtful process, involved all stakeholders and defined roles clearly. The current administrative structure – with a Principal focused on teaching and the classroom, and an Executive Director concentrating on operations and the external environment – achieve an equilibrium that COAH has been looking for. They have restored their commitment to teacher leadership by creating a configuration that taps into the energies and capabilities of the faculty for the school's students to succeed in college and to exercise their rights and responsibilities as American citizens.

The professional staff at COAH currently has twenty two classroom teachers, three teacher fellows, two paraprofessionals, two support staff (consisting of a guidance counselor and a therapist), and an administrative team comprised of an executive director in charge of all external affairs for the school, including fundraising, facilities management, public relations and day-to-day operations, a principal in charge of all academic affairs for the school, a vice-principal, a

director of Professional Development, a Director of Finance, a Director of Special Education and Title I, a Director of Community Engagement, two Deans of Citizenship and an Associate Director of Development.

The educational program includes a math sequence of Algebra, geometry, advanced Algebra, and Calculus. In English Language Arts, students gain proficiency in literary analysis, and written and spoken communication. They read contemporary fiction as well as classical literature. Students learn Civics in their first year and World History in the second year. In the third year they take an American History course where they work with primary documents, do research papers, and make oral and written arguments on historical topics. In Science, students study Unified Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physiology with labs at the Museum of Science. Students study three years of Spanish. Every student must complete a successful internship each winter, and a senior independent City Project for graduation. All students take the state mandated 10th grade MCAS tests. Proficiency exams in each subject area each quarter complement the MCAS as tools to monitor student progress.

A Board of Trustees, currently comprised of nine members, provides oversight for the school. Board members have extensive backgrounds in education, business, human resources, and management. The Board is currently organized into five committees: School Performance, Finance, Trustees, Development, and Real Estate. The majority of the school's operating budget (82%) is supported through state per pupil tuition; COAH received an additional \$194,160.00 in federal entitlement dollars. The Board is actively involved in fundraising activities to secure a facility in the next year.

COAH engages with community of Boston to provide facilities, time and other in-kind support that assist in maintaining and continually improving a sustainable high-quality education programs for students. Partners include, but are not limited to, the YMCA, the Museum of Science, Brigham and Woman's Hospital and Northeastern University.

FINDINGS

In order to gather sufficient evidence to write the following report, the Charter School Renewal Inspection Team (team) spent three and a half days at COAH. The team conducted 23 classroom observations across content areas and interviewed 23 staff members either individually or in focus groups. Specific focus groups for new teachers and lead teachers were also conducted. Focus group interviews also took place with school leaders, five trustees, parents and students.

Documentation examined by the team included curriculum documents and proficiencies for English, math, science, history, Spanish; course syllabi and lesson plans, the current and proposed accountability plans, student demographic data, student and family handbook, professional development documents, Board minutes and faculty and parent survey information.

RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

1. **After experiencing significant increases in the percentage of students who scored advanced or proficient on the MCAS ELA and Mathematics from 2001-2004, COAH now outperforms the Boston Public Schools in ELA and matches the Boston Public Schools in Mathematics.**

TABLE 1

**MCAS school, district, state comparison
City on a Hill Charter School MCAS Grade 10 (English/Language Arts)
Comparison of School with District and State Performance**

Year		N	AYP	A	P	NI	W
2000	School	53		0	11	53	36
	District	3202		4	18	22	49
	State	61401		7	29	30	31
2001	School	57		0	25	51	25
	District	3337		9	22	30	40
	State	64177		15	35	31	18
2002	School	46		0	33	54	13
	District	3622		10	25	31	35
	State	66119		19	40	27	14
2003	School	52	Yes	2	40	48	10
	District	4083	No	9	27	34	30
	State	69418	NA	20	41	28	12
2004	School	79	Yes	0	41	56	4
	District	3907	No	9	29	37	25
	State	67189	NA	19	43	27	11

In the categories of Advanced and Proficient combined, COAH outperformed Boston Public Schools – its sending district – two years in a row in ELA. For the 2003 administration, Advanced and Proficient scores in ELA for COAH were 42 percent compared to Boston’s 36 percent. In 2004, 41 percent of COAH students reached proficient and advanced in ELA compared with 38 percent of Boston students as a whole.

COAH has reduced the number of students scoring in the Warning category each year while increasing the number of students in the Proficient and Advanced categories of ELA.

TABLE 2

**MCAS school, district, state comparison
City on a Hill Charter School MCAS Grade 10 (Mathematics)
Comparison of School with District and State Performance**

Year		N	AYP	A	P	NI	W
2000	School	52		2	10	19	69
	District	3423		11	11	12	59
	State	62398		15	18	22	42
2001	School	57		0	22	48	30
	District	3580		13	15	25	47
	State	65350		18	27	30	25
2002	School	46		0	11	54	35
	District	3941		12	12	24	51
	State	67242		20	24	31	25
2003	School	53	No	2	11	53	34
	District	4176	No	19	17	27	37
	State	70070	NA	24	27	28	21
2004	School	79	Yes	3	39	38	20
	District	4008	No	21	21	31	27
	State	67801	NA	29	28	28	15

n = number of students tested; A = Advanced; P = Proficient; NI = Needs Improvement
W = Warning; Na = not applicable

The school experienced a significant decrease in Mathematics achievement in 2002 and 2003 before a dramatic increase in 2004 to 42 percent in the Proficient and Advanced category. COAH matched the Boston Public Schools in Advanced and Proficient scores in mathematics in 2004.

TABLE 3

**City on a Hill
2004 AYP Report**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS			
Student Group	Participation	Performance	AYP 2004
	N	CPI	
Aggregate	80	75.6	Yes
African American/Black	71	75.6	Yes
Free Lunch	43	76.6	–
MATH			
Student Group	Participation	Performance	AYP 2004
	N	CPI	
Aggregate	81	62.9	Yes
African American/Black	72	62.8	Yes
Free Lunch	43	62.5	–

MCAS AYP ANALYSIS

COAH made adequate yearly progress (AYP) as reported on the 2004 AYP Report. The student groups with statistically significant scores are African American/Black and students on Free/Reduced Lunch. African American students’ ELA proficiency index score is 75.6; math proficiency index score is 62.8. Students who qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch scored 76.6 in ELA and 62.5 in math. The school met their ELA and math improvement targets in both the aggregate and for African American students. COAH did not make AYP in the aggregate in ELA in 1999 and 2000 but has made AYP in the aggregate from 2001 to 2004. The school made AYP for subgroups in both 2003 and 2004. COAH did not make AYP in the aggregate for mathematics in school years 1999, 2000, and 2003 but has made AYP in the aggregate in school years 2002 and 2004. The school did not make AYP for subgroups in mathematics for school year 2003 but made AYP for subgroups in 2004.

2. **Students entering grade nine at COAH are challenged by rigorous academic standards as measured by the moderate percentage of students who pass the proficiency assessments; whereas, students in grades 10 – 12 meet the rigorous academic standards as measured by the high percentage of students who achieve 70% or above on the proficiency assessments.**

COAH is committed to a rigorous academic program that prepares students for college. The school uses an internal assessment system of competencies (now proficiencies) that is reviewed and revised annually to measure students' progress. Significant work is done each year to ensure alignment of proficiencies with the Massachusetts Frameworks. In 2003-2004 a few changes were made to the proficiency system to ensure that students value day-to-day instruction, and that students cannot move on to the next grade level without mastering content as well as demonstrating skills. The current proficiency system is a rigorous assessment system that measures the content and skills contained the teacher-designed curriculum. All of the curriculum documents are aligned with the Massachusetts Frameworks. The system is reviewed, calibrated and revised on an on-going basis. Students report that the proficiency tests are more difficult than the MCAS.

TABLE 4

2003-2004 COAH PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS PASSING PROFICIENCIES

English	English 1	English 2	English 3	English 4
Content Exam	65%	72%	81%	76%
Writing	72%	90%	88%	89%
Oral Presentation	77%	93%	88%	93%
Math	Algebra	Geometry	Advanced Algebra	Pre Calculus
Key Concepts Test	45%	80%	69%	82%
Open Response	68%	93%	85%	98%
Oral Presentation	83%	90%	93%	94%
Science	Unified Science	Biology	Chemistry	
Content Exam	56%	86%	96%	
Writing	51%	83%	79%	
Oral Presentation	74%	88%	79%	
History	History 1	History 2	History 3	
Research Paper	75%	81%	78%	
Document Based Questions	89%	89%	89%	
Oral Presentation	N/A	83%	75%	
Citizenship Test	82%	N/A	N/A	
Spanish	Spanish 1	Spanish 2	Spanish 3	
Grammar Exam	52%	76%	84%	
Writing	56%	84%	79%	
Oral Presentation	58%	81%	77%	

In 2003-2004 high percentages of COAH students are meeting the schools' standards on the proficiency assessments. Overall COAH 9th graders have lower percentages of passing the proficiencies than do students in the upper grades. The team looked at proficiency and competency scores going back 1998-1999 and although comparisons cannot be made between proficiencies and competencies, the overall trend of high percentages passing and 9th graders having lower percentages is the same.

Board members and students related to the team how the proficiencies were more difficult than the MCAS. Students view the proficiencies however as a positive vehicle to promote learning.

There are multiple proficiencies per course. Students can fail a single proficiency or the whole course if they do not pass three proficiencies in addition to homework, class work, projects, tests and quizzes. Passing is considered 70 percent or above. This is a difficult challenge for many students, particularly ninth graders just entering COAH. The school provides supports to all students throughout the year as well as offering a summer program where students have the opportunity to pass a single proficiency or several proficiencies in order to move on to the next level in a course.

The school is committed to academic rigor so that all students who graduate from COAH are prepared for college. This rigorous challenge for students results in all students graduating from COAH going on to college. This challenge also results in some students opting out of COAH rather than being held back a year. The school continues to work diligently to keep more students at COAH so that more will go on to college. One example of this is the Freshman Orientation where 9th grade students learn about the culture of the school and the habits of mind that will be critical to their success. Ninth graders build a connection to their advisory mentor who will stay with them for four years and baseline assessments are given to students so that teachers can decide which students will need opportunities to learn to in order to 'catch up'.

The team looked carefully for indicators of rigor in the Spanish proficiencies as this is the only assessment given for this course. Proficiency exams were found to be rigorous. Student scores were noted to be lower in the ninth grade year but increased each year. The Spanish program, like the other core programs, is aligned to standards and has rigorous assessments.

- 3. To ensure that students succeed, City on a Hill has structures in place that provide forums used by teachers to meet the challenges of aligning the curriculum, developing and calibrating proficiency assessments, and analyzing data; however, teachers still need additional support to meet the challenge of the varying instructional levels of their students.**

Through department days (one per week), faculty meetings (half a day a week) and faculty orientation (one week before school starts) teachers are acculturated, have an opportunity share practices, develop and align curriculum, make curricular decisions,

analyze data, adjust curriculum for pacing and have time for professional development. The Principal is in charge of all academic affairs for the school. The principal is supported by a cadre of lead teachers in each subject area. Lead teachers provide supervision to teachers, hear teacher concerns in informal settings, provide professional development, generate ideas and are a resource to teachers. The principal consults lead teachers during the formal evaluation process for teachers. The Principal meets with the lead teachers regularly discussing academic issues, asking for input on possible decisions and gathering information that is passed on to Board Members and the Director of Professional Development. Lead teachers consult with the Director of Professional Development if they need support for struggling teachers.

COAH developed Curriculum for English Language Arts, mathematics, science, history and Spanish using a curriculum alignment template. The curriculum documents and proficiency exams reviewed by the team show that curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers continue to review and analyze the curriculum and proficiencies to ensure that the curriculum is aligned vertically and horizontally. During a department meeting day the team observed the English department discussing the pacing of the curriculum and how some elements would be covered without losing the depth of knowledge students needed. Changes in the curriculum are decided by departments as teachers identify problems. Vertical planning takes place department by department as the need arises.

COAH gathers, reviews, and analyzes several different types of data. Departments receive photocopies of all raw and aggregated data from the Department of Education and analyze the item-by-item summaries. With this information they analyze the strength or weakness of curriculum and instruction toward MCAS preparation. Departments then craft curriculum and program improvements to build upon departmental strengths and to address departmental weaknesses including remediation strategies for students who have not passed. The Principal and Department Lead Teachers present their departments' findings to the faculty, Parent Council, and the Board of Trustees. The principal reviews and approves all curriculum and program changes to be implemented during the school year. An analysis of MCAS data revealed that students were not prepared in mathematics. Teachers and the school looked at the *Integrated Math Program* being used and found that the 'spiraled' sequence was not matched to MCAS (Geometry and Algebra) and changed to a new curriculum for closer alignment.

The school uses a parallel process for looking at internal assessment data. They analyze internal assessment data from the perspective of the individual student, grade-level aggregates, department-wide trends, and teacher specific trends. Analysis of internal data in June 2003 (70% of students were 'not yet' in at least one class/proficiency) resulted in the revision of curriculum, restructuring of summer school, increased focus on pedagogical professional development, development of 9th grade remediation courses to increase passing rates at 9th grade level, and development of skills units in freshman orientation.

Teachers, particularly new teachers, were articulate about how these structures support them in their work with students and how it gives them an authentic voice in decisions that get made at the school.

Team members used a common observation form when visiting classrooms that rates individual indicators of practice on a scale of one (little or no evidence) two (some evidence), and three (substantial evidence). Out of the 23 classrooms visits the team was able to use the classroom form in 22 (in one classroom a test was being given). The indicators for teaching are clustered into planning, methodology, classroom management, student/teacher relationship, and classroom assessment. There is a separate cluster for indicators relating to student attainment and improvement and another cluster of indicators for curriculum. An analysis of the classroom observation forms is presented in mean score, which omit the cases in which an area was not observed. The mean scores provide measures of the prevalence of the various indicators of practice in the 22 classrooms.

TABLE 5

Indicators Which Were Most Evident Based on Mean Scores

Indicators	Mean Score
Curriculum: Students had access to resources needed for lesson.	2.7368
Student/Teacher Relationship: Listened to students	2.7273
Curriculum: Curriculum was tied to school standards/academic program	2.7222
Planning: Learning objectives were clear	2.7222
Planning: Lesson was tied to school expectations for learning	2.7059

These results suggest that COAH classrooms offer clear objectives, standards and expectations for learning.

Indicators Which Were Least Evident Based on Mean Scores

Indicators	Mean Score
Classroom Assessment: Helped students to self-assess	1.9167
Student Attainment and Improvement: Students worked to solve problems/find solutions.	2.0625
Classroom Assessment: Used effective re-teaching strategies.	2.1250
Methodology: Asked questions that promoted learning.	2.1429
Classroom Assessment: Responded effectively to student abilities.	2.1765
Methodology: Adeptly used a variety of instructional strategies.	2.2353

These outcomes suggest that COAH could make improvements in teaching that would allow them to meet more of the needs of students at various instructional levels. Overall, however, 63% of the classrooms were rated at a 2.5 or above on a scale of 1 to 3 indicating that most of the classrooms were highly qualified.

Informal observations in classrooms support the suggestion that meeting the needs of students at various instructional levels could be improved. Observers noted that many classrooms had a

percentage of students who were struggling, a percentage of students who were disengaged and a percentage of students who looked bored but could answer questions when called upon. The analysis of classroom observations is supported in comments from students and teachers. Students talked about being bored in some classes and several students indicated that they expected it to be harder at COAH “I am not challenged here”. Some students indicated that it was hard at COAH and others said that difficulty varied from class to class. “Teachers having high standards for us, depend on the class you are in. Many classes are hard and in many you just do the homework and you can pass.” A few teachers discussed the challenge of meeting the varying needs in each classroom and one teacher stated, “It’s hard to push students who are advanced.”

COAH is aware of the need to support teachers in meeting the needs of students at various instructional levels within the classroom. The 2004-2005 Professional Development document set common goals for all teachers to achieve by the end of the school year. Two of these goals address some of the suggestions for improvement sited here. “By the end of 2004-2005, all teachers will be able to: Ask effective questions that build higher-order thinking according to Bloom’s taxonomy and provide a range of activities and opportunities to learn, within each unit, with smooth and cohesive transitions between these activities.”

RENEWAL QUESTION 2: IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

1. **Redefining the roles of key stakeholders at City on a Hill allowed teachers to focus on teaching and learning without giving up the vision of the “teacher-driven school”.**

COAH co-founder Sarah Kass states that her “moral outrage” as a frustrated teacher in the public schools started a vision that “ignited a revolution” but she soon discovered that “moral outrage and vision” did not “bring structures” that support leading that effort. From the beginning COAH struggled to “find the right balance of leadership” that could oversee the academic program and achievement of students as well as work on organizational viability. COAH began its first year with a teacher driven school, one of the pillars of its foundation. The two founders met daily with the founding teachers for Math, Science and History to make decisions about the school. They were supported by one secretary and one person in charge of finances and payroll. Between years 2 and 5, a principal role is created, teachers serve on standing committees, a director of development focuses on organizational viability, some teachers serve as directors and a Management Team is formed. By year 5 there are as many standing committees as there are teachers and so the internal structures and the ‘teacher driven’ model are reexamined for effectiveness and efficiency. Between the fifth and ninth years, the school went through a series of significant changes and challenges which led to the current administrative structure.

The Board of Trustees redefined roles so that the Principal focuses on teaching and the classroom and the Executive Director concentrates on operations and the external environment. The Principal and the Executive Director work as an equal team. The Principal and the Executive Director are evaluated by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees bases their evaluation on feedback (in the form of surveys and focus groups) from all constituencies involved in the school. Deans of Citizenship, Director of Professional Development and the Directors of Special Education and Title I all have clearly defined roles.

Lead teachers roles are clearly defined to oversee the individual departments, analyze data with their teams and make suggestions for programmatic changes. They play many other critical roles as mentioned earlier in this report. Teachers can concentrate on the classroom and still feel that they are an integral part of leading the school. All constituencies understand the various roles that each other play, the importance of their own role and how all the roles interact to address both academic and organizational viability. Teachers stated in interviews and focus groups that they feel they have a voice in the school, are clear about their roles and the roles of others and can concentrate on the important work in the classroom because they are supported.

2. City on a Hill has persevered for 10 years because of a collective determination to maintain the intent of the mission. The mission's clarity and focus has and will continue to sustain the institution through changes in leadership and/or faculty.

In years 2001-2003 as the school struggled to find the right balance of leadership the Board of Trustees announced its intention to change the structure of leadership at COAH and hired a President. The leadership structure had two different people with distinct roles; the President who was in charge of organizational viability; and a Principal who reported to the President and was responsible for coordinating and managing all matters pertaining to academic excellence. By the end of school year 2001-2002 teachers approached the Board of Trustees voicing concerns that they felt the role President was not collaborative and that the pendulum had swung from teachers having too much responsibility for running the school to having no say in decisions made in the school. They felt that teacher leadership as understood in the mission of the school was lost.

The Board, understanding that they needed to investigate whether or not teacher leadership as understood in the mission was in jeopardy, surveyed all teachers, analyzed the surveys, set up a task force and hired a consultant to study the situation. It was decided that the President was a mismatch for the school and the President resigned with mutual agreement from the Board of Trustees in July 2003. The school suffered from high turnover during those two years but emerged with its current structure and roles clearly defined.

During the Renewal Inspection Team visit all members of the school community were honest about the events that occurred and the thoughtful, albeit difficult, process that they went through. The school had been to the brink of losing the intent of teacher leadership in the mission and took careful steps to find its way back to the clarity and focus of the mission. The team was struck by the honesty of the school and how the school in being honest about their process, also demonstrated in a real way their commitment to the mission through public accountability.

The clarity and focus of the mission has been what attracts teachers, administrators and students to COAH. This was the most critical challenge to the intent of the mission but the determination to maintain that intent won out. COAH clearly has the collective determination to follow its mission through any changes it may face.

RENEWAL QUESTION 3: IS THE SCHOOL FAITHFUL TO THE TERMS OF THE CHARTER?

- 1. All the key elements of City on a Hill’s mission, academic achievement, teacher leadership, citizenship, and public accountability continue to be the driving force behind its success.**

Academic achievement is evidenced in the alignment of the curriculum to the Massachusetts Frameworks and the continuous reviewing and revising of the curriculum based on how students are performing. It is also demonstrated by the commitment of COAH to more clearly define competencies and make them proficiencies. The analyzing of data from multiple sources that informs changes in curriculum and the proficiencies is on-going and the school challenges itself collectively to continue to challenge students.

Citizenship at COAH is embedded into the structure of the school day and week. Daily Advisory Groups serve as support groups and create a culture of working together toward goals. Students complete community service projects in a wide variety of Boston organizations and 9th grade students must pass a citizenship test that is closely aligned with the test used by the federal government. The team saw evidence of citizenship concepts not only in the curriculum documents but also in classroom observations. Town meetings are a venue for students to exercise skills in public debate and civility. Team members talked with students and teachers about town meetings as well as looked at a video of a town meeting. The team was able to determine that this is a powerful structure for teaching citizenship. Town meeting engages students in the debate of local, national, and international topics. The first topic debated this year was: In an effort to aid the war on terrorism, City on a Hill supports allowing state and federal officials to randomly search individuals on public transportation and search cars and trucks at major bridge and tunnel entrances at any time without any probable cause. This first debate was moderated by staff, modeling the protocol. The student body voted to oppose this resolution. Letters were sent to the Mayor and Governor stating the result of this debate. The first of November the second debate was held and moderated entirely by students who demonstrated high levels of proficiency in moderation skills. The topic was: City on a Hill supports ending affirmative action policies at public institutions in order to establish more egalitarian hiring and admissions practices. –

- 2. City on a Hill has had varied success in meeting the student academic performance goals defined in its accountability plan.**

Goals in the school’s accountability plan are vague in some instances and many are not measurable. COAH uses the MCAS and the internal Proficiency exams to benchmark student progress internally overtime. The proficiencies exams are given four times a year to track student progress in all subject areas. The 8th grade MCAS exams are used as baseline for students entering the school and the 10th grade MCAS exams are used as benchmarks and compared to proficiencies to determine student growth as well as compare students to other students in the district and state. Both proficiency goals and

MCAS goals were met. Two other academic goals (tracking grades and making Honor Roll) were consecutively (1) too vague to determine and (2) not met.

3. City on a Hill is largely successful in meeting the school performance goals.

The Civic Mission is alive in the day to day work of the school. It is clear and meaningful to students, faculty, parents/guardians, community partners and Board members. The accountability plan is a living document for all of COAH constituents but because of its complexity and length the Board members found themselves prioritizing what they felt was essential rather than getting bogged down in the bulleted elements. Abstraction of many of the standards contained in the Accountability Plan made success in achieving the standards difficult to measure. COAH met the standard contained in the Accountability Plan dealing with student admissions and post-secondary achievement earning acceptance into college. The school is financially viable. COAH finished school year 2003-2004 with a surplus of over \$75,000.00 and also received over \$150,000.00 in private funds.

**QUESTION 4: IF THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER IS RENEWED,
WHAT ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?**

- 1. In City on a Hill's 2005-2010 Accountability Plan the objectives have been prioritized and focused to make them more measurable and realistic in order to continue promoting high academic standards for student achievement.**

The Board of Trustees realized that the old Accountability Plan was too broad and that many goals were not measurable. The Board met in retreat and narrowed the priorities to represent the elements of the core mission (Academic Program: COAH will prepare students to succeed in college; Faithfulness to Charter: COAH will prepare students to exercise their rights and responsibilities as American citizens; Organizational Viability: COAH teachers will demonstrate excellence and will shape the school's programs and policies, COAH will create substantial parental satisfaction with the school, COAH students will come to school daily and on time, and COAH will be soundly governed by an active and prudent Board of Trustees). Collapsing the bullets from the old Accountability Plan and not focusing on the sub-bullets makes the new Accountability Plan more manageable which will allow the Board and the Board subcommittees to discuss and evaluate progress toward goals on a regular basis. All of the goals are now specific and measurable. The 2005-2010 Accountability Plan objectives dealing with student achievement raise the expectation for student academic goals. All COAH students will receive Competency Determination for MCAS; 20% of COAH students will earn a proficient score on MCAS, at least 5% will score in the advanced category; Average scores on the SAT will rise above 1000 by 2010; All COAH graduates will be admitted to college; The number of students admitted to competitive colleges, as defined by US News and World Report, will increase each year.

- 2. There is strong evidence that City on a Hill's leadership structure will continue to support the mission and vision.**

The new leadership and governance structure at COAH provides the school with a variety of systems and programs for carrying out the purposes and objectives their accountability plan. The principal is responsible for teaching and the classroom. With the input of lead teachers she simultaneously holds teachers accountable to high standards for student achievement and supports them through professional development. Teachers, the Board of Trustees, administrators parents and students spoke highly of her effectiveness and enthusiasm. The executive director is responsible for managing the operational aspects of the school, including fundraising. They work as an effective team to ensure continued academic achievement for students and sustained viability of the school.

The board of trustees is organized into five committees: School Performance, Finance, Trustees, Development, and Real Estate. Each board member is on a committee, which increases and improves communication. Through the School

Performance Committee the Board intends to continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of academic performance at COAH by tracking the academic performance of its graduates who enter college. The Director of Professional Development plays important dual roles. He not only is responsible for Professional Development at the school but he also is the Director of the Community Teacher's Institute (CTI). COAH has a commitment to sustained systemic change in urban public education. To that end, COAH launched the CTI in 1999 to "sustain and train urban public high school teachers." Teacher-Fellows spend a full year at COAH, working with a mentor teacher, and completing a practicum. The institute has actively recruited candidates of color and has offered a Fellowship that covers tuition and expenses so students can give their full attention to learning to teach. Fellows typically go on to teach in other urban schools. A new configuration of the CTI is planned for 2004/05; COAH has applied to the Department of Education to be a site at which aspiring teachers can be certified, through a combination of coursework at Simmons College and work in the school. The partnership established with Simmons allows for a new level of opportunity in preparing highly qualified teachers for urban high schools. COAH also disseminates best practices as the Director of Professional Development makes presentation at conferences. The Director of Professional Development is responsible for the professional development of the school and ensuring that all teachers at COAH are highly qualified. He currently videotapes examples of best practice in teachers' classrooms at COAH which get shared with other staff members. He supports struggling teachers by providing coaching and professional development.

3. City on a Hill has the challenge of finding a new facility and is planning strategically to ensure that the school will move to a location within the city of Boston.

City on a Hill has been a tenant at the YMCA on Huntington Avenue in Boston for nine years. The school will open in a new facility by the fall of 2005. The current administrative structure was established, in part, to address the significant amount of effort this task will take. It is the Executive Director's job, working with the Board, the Board Real Estate Task Force and external consultants, to locate, secure, finance, and oversee renovation of the school's new home. The school has already looked at two possible sites that would place them in the city of Boston where the school has a commitment to educate students and continue to promote civic responsibility by using the resources of the city. A capital campaign is underway to raise 2,000,000 of the 12,000,000 needed to finance new home.

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT

City on a Hill Renewal Inspection Schedule

Team Schedule

November 7-10-2004

Sunday November 7th

Time	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member
12:00-2:00	Initial Team Meeting	Initial Team Meeting	Initial Team Meeting	Initial Team Meeting	Initial Team Meeting
3:00 – 4:00	School Presentation	School Presentation	School Presentation	School Presentation	School Presentation

City on a Hill Renewal Inspection

Team Schedule

November 7-10-2004

Monday November 8th

Time	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Lead
7:00-7:30					Daily Check-In Principals Office
7:30-8:30	Board Of Trustees Focus Group Roberts Room	Board Of Trustees Focus Group Roberts Room	Board Of Trustees Focus Group Roberts Room	Board Of Trustees Focus Group Roberts Room	Board Of Trustees Focus Group Roberts Room
8:30-9:00	Tour Of The School	Tour Of The School	Tour Of The School	Tour Of The School	Tour Of The School
9:10-10:00		Alumni Focus Group	Alumni Focus Group		
9:25-10:30	Teacher Interview Math			English Teacher Observation	Spanish Teacher Observation
10:35-11:40	Math Teacher Observation	Document Review	Math Teacher Observation	English Teacher Observation	Document Review
11:45-12:45	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief
12:45-1:50	Teacher Focus Group	Teacher Focus Group	Math Teacher Observation	Science Teacher Observation	Teacher Focus Group
2:00-3:00	Student Focus Group	College Prep Teacher Observation	Student Focus Group	Science Teacher Interview	Spanish Teacher Interview
3:00-4:00	Administrators Focus Group	History Lead Teacher Interview	Administrators Focus Group	Math Teacher Interview	Administrators Focus Group
4:00-4:45	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets
4:45-6:00	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations

City on a Hill Renewal Inspection

Team Schedule

November 7-10-2004

Tuesday November 9th

Time	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Lead
7:00-7:30					Daily Check-In Principals Office
8:00-9:00			Parent Focus Group	Parent Focus Group	
8:15-9:20	History Teacher Observation	History Teacher Observation			English Teacher Observation
9:25-10:30	Math Teacher Observation	Guidance Counselor Senior Seminar Observation	Math Teacher Interview	Document Review	English Teacher Interview
10:35-11:45	Math Teacher Observation	History Teacher Observation	Document Review	Math Teacher Interview	Science Teacher Observation
11:45-12:45	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief
12:45-1:50	Science Teacher Observation	Spanish Teacher Observation	Spanish Teacher Observation	English Teacher Observation	Document Review
1:50-3:00	Teacher Focus Group	Teacher Focus Group	Teacher Focus Group	Math PSAT Prep Teacher Observation	History Teacher Observation
3:00-4:00	Lead Teachers Focus Group	Lead Teachers Focus Group	Lead Teachers Focus Group	Lead Teachers Focus Group	Lead Teachers Focus Group
4:00-4:45	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets	Evidence Summary Sheets
4:45-6:00	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations

City on a Hill Renewal Inspection

Team Schedule

November 7-10-2004

Wednesday November 10th

Time	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Member	Team Lead
7:00-7:30					Daily Check-In Principals Office
8:15-9:20	Math Teacher Interview				
9:25-10:30			Science Teacher Observation		
10:30-11:45	Follow-up observations Team Discussions Document Review	Follow-up observations Team Discussions Document Review	Follow-up observations Team Discussions Document Review	Follow-up observations Team Discussions Document Review	Follow-up observations Team Discussions Document Review
11:45-12:45	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief	Lunch Team Debrief
12:45-5:00	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations	Team Deliberations
5:00-6:00	Oral Presentation of Findings	Oral Presentation of Findings	Oral Presentation of Findings	Oral Presentation of Findings	Oral Presentation of Findings