

Renewal Inspection Report

ABBY KELLEY FOSTER CHARTER SCHOOL
WORCESTER, MA

SchoolWorks

October 28-31, 2002

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About the renewal process and renewal inspection 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.

The renewal inspection process and report provide a detailed and current view of a public charter school during the renewal process. While the renewal inspection report itself is a vital source of information, it is most effective when used in conjunction with the longitudinal school performance data available to the Department of Education. The combination of 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 inspection 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 school an academic 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's charter 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

Janet Schulze is a Project Manager for SchoolWorks and a doctoral student in the Urban Superintendents Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. She was a middle school English teacher and high school Assistant Principal in El Paso, TX. .

Dr. Paula Brimhall has been in the education field for more than three decades as a teacher, principal and supervisor of principals in elementary and middle schools in Tempe, Arizona. She currently supervises student teachers for Northern Arizona University and consults for SchoolWorks.

Tom Buffett currently works with schools, districts, and support providers in developing ways to effectively create, manage, and use different sources of information related to student achievement. He has taught sixth grade as well as graduate level courses in Educational Leadership at UMass Boston and Classroom and School Inquiry at Lesley University.

Maxine Edmunds recently retired from Peabody Public Schools as an elementary school principal and has been involved in the field of education as a teacher or administrator for over thirty five years. She is currently an educational consultant for SchoolWorks and an instructor at Gordon College in Wenham, MA.

Nick Feldman is a retired principal who currently works as an educational consultant for SchoolWorks, serves as a mentor for new principals, and teaches as an adjunct faculty member at Lesley University.

Michael Ronin is the Chief Operating Officer at SchoolWorks. Prior to joining SchoolWorks, he served as the Chief Operating Officer for Chancellor Beacon Academies Inc. For sixteen years Michael also served as the Superintendent of Schools in Uxbridge Massachusetts where he began his education career as a middle school history teacher and later served as a Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Michael is a *summa cum laude* graduate of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and holds a Masters degree in School Administration from that school, as well as a Masters degree in Program Planning and Evaluation from the State University of New York at Albany.

Zita Samuels is a professional grant writer and evaluator and a consultant for SchoolWorks. She was an administrator in the public schools of Somerville, MA for many years supervising Title I, Adult Education and Reading Programs.

SETTING

Basic Information: Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) opened in September 1998 in a renovated mill building in the city of Worcester. The school, a regional charter school, opened with a K-5 program, and serves students from 30 sending towns. The school established an upper campus to provide housing for students in grades 6-9 this fall. As stated in the *2001-02 Annual Report*, the school's mission is to:

- “Attain the highest standards in teaching students to pursue the truth and to learn about the world; love the good by growing in good character and civic virtues; and cultivate what is beautiful in thought, word, action and sense.
- “Assist parents, who are the primary educators of their children.
- “Exercise stewardship by passing on to a new generation the treasures of knowledge and culture we have received from the past.”

Enrollment History: AKFCS has grown from its original population of 636 students in grades K-5 in 1998 to its current enrollment of 864 students in grades K-9. One new grade has been added annually since opening, and the school plans to eventually offer a comprehensive K-12 program. New students are accepted only in grades K-5.

Student Demographics: Representing approximately two-thirds of the school's population, the majority of students at AKFCS come from the city of Worcester. In 2001-2002, there were 420 boys (50%) boys and 409 girls (49%) girls. One hundred and eighty six students (22%) received free or reduced price lunch and 84 students (10%) received special education services. In the 1999-00 school year, 79.2 percent of AKFCS students were white, 9.4 percent Latino, 8.3 percent African-American and 3.1 percent either Asian or Native American. Current student demographics are: 72% white, 13% Latino, 11% African American, and 4% Asian.

Persistence and Interest: As of June, 2002, there were 178 students on the school's waiting list. In the spring of 2002, the school received 137 applications for the 120 kindergarten slots, along with another 178 for openings in grades 1-5. New students entering grades k-5 are selected by two lotteries, with an initial lottery held in February and a second taking place in the summer. Although most applications still come from the city of Worcester, 28% of the 2001-02 applicants were from neighboring cities. Student turnover has ranged between 13 and 17 percent over the past four years, and registers at 15% for the 2001-02 school year (127 students). The School Director and/or the Assistant Director for Instruction spoke to all parents to determine why they withdrew their child(ren), and provided the following table summarizing reasons for student withdrawal.

Reason	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Curriculum concerns	17	8	9	10
Discipline issues	6	1	7	16
Facilities	2	3	4	30
Family issues	6	3	0	6
Former school a better match	36	54	0	7
Moved from area	11	9	21	19
Special needs issue	1	2	2	2

Transportation	10	7	8	6
* After school care/extra curricular activities			5	6
* Other/unknown			66	25
TOTAL	89	87	122	127
* New category for the 2000-2001 school year	16%	13%	17%	15%

Staffing History: The professional staff at AKFCS has grown steadily as grades have been added each year. The school currently has 44 classroom teachers, 14 specialist teachers (music, band, etc.), 17 collaborative services personnel, including three counselors three Title 1 teachers and seven instructional assistants. Of the 58 classroom and specialist teachers with reported data, 33 are returning from last year and 26 are newcomers. Most of the new teachers were needed due to expansion or the reconfiguration of the classrooms. Last year all grade levels except kindergarten had 3 classes; this year there are 6 first grades and 4 of all the other grades and class size was reduced from an average of 30 to an average of 23. Nineteen of the 44 classroom teachers are new to AKFCS this year, and are among the 24 relatively new to teaching (in their first or second year); seven of the 14 specialist teachers with data are new to AKFCS and are among the ten who are new to teaching. Eight of 58 classroom and specialist teachers have earned Master's degrees; although only 59% (35) are currently certified in Massachusetts, the majority of the remaining teachers are either certified out of state, in the process of taking the state teaching exam, or awaiting scores from said exam. The school retains approximately 85% of its staff each year.

Educational Program: As repeatedly expressed by stakeholders, a key part of the school's mission is to provide students with a "classical liberal arts education." Consistent with this focus, students take foreign languages and music at AKFCS across the grades, along with art, physical education, and computer classes in selected grades. In kindergarten through second grade the school uses Direct Instruction (DI), a highly structured program where students are taught in proficiency groups for reading. Based on their review of test scores, the school determined that DI was ineffective above the second grade, that "older students needed a more expansive program for writing and inferential thinking" (*Renewal Application*, page 1). The school selected *Open Court* for reading and *Great Source* for writing in grades k-6, and has adopted *Saxon Mathematics* for students across all grades.

In grades K-2, students are assessed using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test every spring, although the school does not compile the results in a summary format. In addition, all AKFCS students take some battery of the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth edition (SAT 9), each spring; students new to the school take the SAT 9 in the fall of their first year. Individual teachers track student progress using "Lesson Progress Reports," which are turned in to Lead Teachers to monitor pacing and identify students in need of additional help. In addition the school regularly reports progress to families in quarterly report cards and conferences. Students who are not performing up to expectations receive mid-course warnings in between the quarterly reports.

Organizational History: One of the most important developments in the school's organizational history concerns the Board of Trustees' decision to terminate its management contract with

Advantage Schools, Inc. (ASI) in May, 2001. The Board reports that the decision to break with ASI was based on “philosophical differences” and that AKFCS was not receiving the kind of services and curricular flexibility it needed. Currently, the Board consists of seven members, although the school is awaiting state approval for an eighth member. As far as on-site leadership, AKFCS has had one School Director since its opening. The rest of the school’s administrative leadership has grown since the break from Advantage and with the school’s increasing enrollment. The current Director of Collaborative Services served as Assistant Director of Instruction last year, a position that is currently unfilled. The Music Director became the Assistant Director at the upper school after the first month of this school year.

Financial Stability: After the separation from ASI, AKFCS hired a Director of Business and Finance to monitor its financial health. Although the question of facilities remains a key concern (see “Challenges” below), the school’s financial situation appears to be satisfactory. The unaudited financial statements reported in the *2001-02 Annual Report* indicate a surplus in excess of \$3 million.

Parent Participation: A key component of the school’s mission is to assist parents in their role as the “primary educators” of their children. Parents are expected to read the Student Handbook and, by virtue of signing a “Parent/Student/School Compact,” pledge to maintain high expectations, demonstrate consistent interest in their child’s progress, support their child’s and the school’s best efforts, model the school’s character virtues, support and work with school staff, and support the school’s uniform policy.

Challenges: A major challenge for AKFCS is locating, financing, and renovating a permanent facility. The school is now located on two campuses, one for grades K-5, and the other for grades 6-9. The campuses are about 4 miles apart, a 10-15 minute drive between them. The original campus is located on Bond Street. With its good lighting, high ceilings and very spacious classrooms, this facility appears ideal for needs of a K-5 student population. .

The school has entered a two-year renewable lease with Temple Emanuel to house grades 6-10. The 25,000 square feet includes fairly small classrooms. The school installed reversible bulletin boards that are flipped by custodians in order to have one side to display student work and the other for the Hebrew classes conducted by the temple in the afternoon. During the visit, the team noted that work was displayed in only a few of the classrooms. The classrooms currently in use are small, most appeared to have no second exit door and they lack a functioning HVAC system. There is no outside play space for the middle school students and no fields adjacent to the school. Thus, although the school has both the option to renew the lease on the existing space, as well as first option on an additional 16 classrooms beginning in 2004, the school faces the challenge of fitting into the existing site or securing a new facility. In the 2003-2004 school year the school may face a space crunch, as the 10th grade will be added before additional classrooms become available.

EVIDENCE BASE

This report is based on the Renewal Inspection Team's three and a half day visit at the Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) from October 28-31, 2002. During that time the team observed 36 of the 43 classroom teachers and 14 of the 16 specialist teachers. The team also conducted focus group interviews with four members of the Board of Trustees, two focus groups with parents (representing a total of 10 parents), two with students (lower and upper school, totaling 21 students), five with teachers (38), and one focus group with collaborative services personnel (6). The team conducted individual interviews with the School Director, the upper school Assistant Director, the Operations Manager, the Director of Business and Finance, the Director of Collaborative Services, and the Administrative Assistant at the upper school.

The Renewal Inspection Team also examined a variety of documents. These included financial statements, test results (MCAS and Stanford 9), the school's *2001-02 Annual Report*, *Accountability Plan* and *Renewal Application*, the reports of the previous site visits, demographic and enrollment data, and a variety of other school documents (e.g., report cards, templates for curriculum guides, etc.). The Team also analyzed teacher qualifications and experience, and considered the school's plans for the future, including the new AKFCS Accountability Plan.

FINDINGS

RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

- 1. Overall, Stanford 9 scores indicate that students at AKFCS demonstrate improved achievement at all grade levels in mathematics, language arts and reading.**

Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) students have taken the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth edition (SAT 9) for the past four years. Since the school first administered the test in the fall of 1999, students' scores on the SAT 9 have increased at each grade level and in all subjects. Although mean percentile scores are not a reliable way of tracking student progress, the gains AKFCS has made are impressive. The tables below display the mean national percentiles for approximate cohorts of students.

Stanford 9 National Percentiles in Math, Reading, and Language, Fall 1999-Spring 2002 Approximate Cohort Groups*

Math	Grade in 02-03	Fall 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Improvement**
Class of 2006	9	41	45	52	60	19
Class of 2007	8	41	47	63	70	29
Class of 2008	7	32	48	46	54	22
Class of 2009	6	33	46	52	52	19
Class of 2010	5	33	40	39	48	15
Class of 2011	4	55	64	41	62	7
Class of 2012	3	50	49	53	45	(5)
Class of 2013	2			(47***) 49	62	15
Class of 2014	1				(51) 51	0

Reading	Grade in 02-03	Fall 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Improvement
Class of 2006	9	54	53	57	61	7
Class of 2007	8	60	60	65	66	6
Class of 2008	7	42	51	49	50	8
Class of 2009	6	45	50	55	55	10
Class of 2010	5			49	59	10
Class of 2011	4	Listening 60****	Listening 58	Listening 46	62	2
Class of 2012	3	Listening 46	Listening 56	Listening 58	Listening 45	(1)
Class of 2013	2			Listening (51) 66	Listening 63	12
Class of 2014	1				Listening (55) 55	0

Language	Grade in 02-03	Fall 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Improvement
Class of 2006	9	58	58	67	68	10
Class of 2007	8	59	64	67	69	10
Class of 2008	7	39	49	55	52	13
Class of 2009	6	41	48	62	62	21
Class of 2010	5	36		49	54	18
Class of 2011	4				65	NA

* Approximate cohort groups include any student currently in that class, regardless of year of enrollment.

** Improvement from the first administration to Spring 2002.

*** **(Bold)** scores indicate where students were tested in the fall of their kindergarten year.

**** Reading and Language scores begin in the third grade. K-2 student take Listening batteries.

Across cohorts, AKFCS students increased their mean national percentile in Math by range of -5 to +29 percentile ranks. The range in Reading (including Listening in grades K-2) is -1 to +10, and in Language groups of AKF students increased their national percentile scores across a range from 10 to 21 percentile ranks. Based on the last administration of the SAT 9, the average national percentile is at or above the 50th in all subjects for virtually every class at AKFCS (the only exceptions are the current third and fifth grade students whose mean national percentiles are 45 and 48 respectively).

2. With the exception of 2001-02 third graders, the majority of AKFCS students have not yet reached the proficient level in ELA and Math as measured by the MCAS.

Overall, Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) students have not yet reached proficient levels on the MCAS in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. However, the majority of 2001-02 third grade students scored in the Proficient category, and only 6% fell into the Warning category.

Comparison of Average Grade 3 Reading MCAS Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category

		N	Average Scaled Score	P	NI	W
2001	AKFCS	90	27	41	48	11
	Worcester	2017	27	43	42	14
	Auburn	202	31	67	28	4
	Millbury	152	29	61	32	7
	State	75,803	30	62	31	7
2002	AKFCS	88	30	66	28	6
	Worcester	2,048	28	50	41	9
	Auburn	185	31	72	26	2
	Millbury	165	31	72	27	1
	State	74,230	30	67	27	7

The chart above displays the results for third grade students in the 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years for AKFCS, the state, and the largest three sending districts. Last spring, 66% of AKFCS third grade students scored in the Proficient category in Reading, up from 41 percent the previous year. AKFCS students' average scaled score rose three points over this time period, to meet the state average. The 2001-02 scores are higher than those of Worcester, where the majority of AKFCS students reside.

Comparison of Average Grade 4 ELA MCAS Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category

		N	Average Scaled Score	Adv	P	NI	W
1999	AKFCS	89	227	0	10	69	21
	Worcester	1985	229	0	16	66	18
	Auburn	207	235	1	30	63	6
	Millbury	169	230	1	13	75	11
	State	79,029	231	0	21	67	12
2000	AKFCS	87	224	0	7	59	34
	Worcester	2036	228	0	11	68	21
	Auburn	197	234	2	29	61	8
	Millbury	161	230	0	14	76	10
	State	76,311	231	6	43	35	16
2001	AKFCS	93	228	0	26	46	28
	Worcester	1990	234	4	33	44	19
	Auburn	200	240	7	50	36	9
	Millbury	174	237	7	39	41	14
	State	75,665	239	7	44	38	11
2002	AKFCS	92	225	0	10	59	32
	Worcester	1,898	235	4	36	45	15
	Auburn	209	246	16	56	22	7
	Millbury	155	238	5	46	38	12
	State	75,094	239	8	46	37	10

The chart above displays the fourth grade MCAS scores in ELA over the past four years for AKFCS, the state, and the top three sending districts. A greater proportion of AKFCS students fell into the Warning category each year the school administered the exam. Further, the difference in the average scaled score between the school's and top sending districts has grown over the past four years, registering a full ten points below the largest sending district (Worcester) in the most recent year. AKFCS fourth grade students scored best in the 2000-01 school year, when 26% of students scored in the Proficient category and the average scaled score peaked at 228.

**Comparison of Average Grade 4 Math MCAS
Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category**

		N	Average Scaled Score	Adv	P	NI	W
1999	AKFCS	89	223	3	11	39	46
	Worcester	2029	231	9	19	46	26
	Auburn		240	15	32	43	10
	Millbury		237	11	27	54	8
	State	79,029	235	12	24	44	19
2000	AKFCS	88	222	1	13	42	44
	Worcester	2087	231	6	24	44	25
	Auburn		238	11	34	45	11
	Millbury		238	12	30	45	12
	State	77592	235	12	28	42	18
2001	AKFCS	93	223	0	10	45	45
	Worcester	2044	230	5	17	49	28
	Auburn	201	234	8	21	51	20
	Millbury	175	235	8	27	50	15
	State	76,770	235	10	24	46	19
2002	AKFCS	92	221	1	11	30	58
	Worcester	1958	232	8	21	46	25
	Auburn	208	237	11	32	42	15
	Millbury	158	236	8	33	46	13
	State	75094	236	12	27	42	19

The chart above displays the fourth grade MCAS scores in Math over the past four years for AKFCS, the state, and the largest three sending districts. Similar to ELA, the average scaled score of AKFCS students in Math falls below the largest sending districts' averages each year. Last year AKFCS students registered their lowest average scaled score and 58% of fourth grade students fell into the Warning category. The gap in average scaled scores between AKFCS, the state and the top three sending districts ranges from 9 to 17 points over the past four years.

Comparison of Average Grade 6 Math MCAS Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category

		N	Average Scaled Score	Adv	P	NI	W
2001	AKFCS	86	226	6	15	30	49
	Worcester	2039	226	4	15	33	48
	Auburn	220	236	14	28	36	22
	Millbury	174	234	9	27	40	24
	State	77,682	233	13	23	30	33
2002	AKFCS	78	226	3	22	21	55
	Worcester	2111	229	5	22	34	39
	Auburn	204	237	10	38	35	17
	Millbury	161	237	13	34	30	23
	State	78767	235	13	28	29	30

The chart above displays the sixth grade MCAS scores in Math over the past two years for AKFCS, the state, and the largest three sending districts. Although AKFCS sixth grade students' Math scores are comparable to the top sending district (Worcester), the number of students in the Warning category increased substantially last year (55%). The average scaled score remains well below state averages.

Comparison of Average Grade 7 ELA MCAS Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category

		N	Average Scaled Score	Adv	P	NI	W
2001	AKFCS	74	235	0	46	38	16
	Worcester	1604	230	3	29	39	29
	Auburn	197	239	4	52	30	14
	Millbury	154	240	3	60	32	6
	State	73,358	239	6	49	32	12
2002	AKFCS	81	237	1	48	37	14
	Worcester	1,831	232	3	34	40	23
	Auburn	206	245	8	65	24	3
	Millbury	161	246	11	66	18	4
	State	76913	242	9	55	28	9

In 2001-02, AKFCS seventh grade students' ELA average scaled score (237) is higher than the largest sending district (Worcester, 232); the percentage of students at the Proficient or Advanced levels is substantially higher as well. However, a greater proportion of AKFCS seventh grade students scored in the Needs Improvement and Warning categories than the next two highest sending districts and the state.

Comparison of Average Grade 8 Math MCAS Scaled Scores and Percent of Students in Each Category

		N	Average Scaled Score	Adv	P	NI	W
2002	AKFCS	64	229	9	14	42	34
	Worcester	1,821	222	2	11	29	56
	Auburn	189	232	5	30	41	24
	Millbury	156	233	12	21	38	30
	State	75362	232	11	23	33	33

Last spring, AKFCS eighth grade students scored substantially better on the mathematics MCAS than students in Worcester, averaging a higher scaled score (229 to 222) and placing more students in the Advanced or Proficient category. AKFCS' average scaled score is just below Auburn, Millbury, and state averages.

3. Above the second grade, much of the instruction lacks rigor and challenge. Across the school, teachers often do not utilize effective instructional strategies, ask higher order questions, or maximize use of instructional time.

The K-2 classrooms use Direct Instruction for reading. In one kindergarten class three different groups of students were engaged in three different activities. One group was reading with the teacher, using Direct Instruction techniques to learn pronunciations of various words. Another group was listening to the aide read a story. The third group was working on a worksheet practicing their letters and coloring a scene. All students knew the routines of the classroom, quickly switching stations at the teacher's request. In another kindergarten class, students classified blocks by shape, color and size. All students in the class were initially participating with the activity. As the teacher and aide became aware of the students who were having difficulty with the activity, the class was broken into two groups with one getting additional assistance with understanding the identification of attributes and the other moving to another activity. Finally, in a story-based lesson on character education, a first grade teacher posed thoughtful questions, requiring that students express their opinion, make judgments, offer predictions and provide explanations for their answers.

While the Renewal Inspection Team did observe some examples of good teaching throughout the school, instruction above the second grade, in general, lacked rigor and was insufficiently challenging. Instruction often involved fact-based conversations where teachers asked students closed-ended questions and seldom took advantage of opportunities to extend discussions beyond the "right" answers for which teachers waited. Students typically completed discrete tasks while teachers provided few opportunities to extend the learning or otherwise make the activity more meaningful.

Above the second grade teachers frequently did not provide either the context for learning or state the objectives for the lessons observed. Students completed activities without teachers explaining the importance of the lesson, how it built on previous learning and/or prior

knowledge, or how it connected to other parts of the curriculum. In addition, the team observed very few examples where teachers checked for students' understanding of either the purpose of the task or what they were expected to do.

In the classrooms observed by the team, teachers' use of instructional time was uneven, and often did not engage students in learning for extended periods of time. The team observed numerous examples of lessons where students spent a significant amount of time either copying text from the board, reviewing homework, completing basic worksheets, or waiting for classmates to complete an assignment before the whole class could move to the next task. For example, students spent an hour-long math class completing a facts worksheet, correcting it, and reviewing the previous night's homework (students who completed the worksheet with ease or who understood the homework were clearly bored—there was nothing for them to do other than wait). The team observed other examples of poor use of instructional time across grade levels and subject areas. While the team did observe a few instances of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 being challenged by ability or cooperative group instruction in reading and math, for the most part classes were less engaging. In a middle school foreign language class, most of the period was spent translating one paragraph; students were bored and inattentive, holding many side conversations unrelated to the lesson. Some did not have the paragraph in front of them. Finally, in an upper grade history class, the teacher either lectured or students read from the text. Students were not asked to do anything other than listen or, occasionally, read out loud.

4. A comprehensive K-12 curriculum, containing benchmarks and expected student outcomes in all subject areas, does not yet exist in a unified document.

Although the school provided the team with several draft documents that contained parts of a curriculum for different subjects at different grade levels, AKFCS has not yet articulated a clear scope and sequence in a written document. Some teachers reported making curriculum guides last year but also said that they were not using them this year. Teachers reported a great deal of flexibility regarding the school curriculum; however, it did not appear to the team that a concerted curriculum planning process had been instituted.

The Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) curriculum is in transition. Under the auspices of Advantage Schools, Inc (ASI, the former management company) teachers reportedly were required to use the company's curriculum. Since the school ended its relationship with ASI in May, 2001, teachers reportedly play a more prominent role in adopting textbooks and developing curriculum. Lead teachers at the elementary school and department heads at the upper grades are responsible for making sure that subject matter curricula do not overlap from one year to the next.

Teachers reported that instruction is planned in accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and that the school selected teaching materials (i.e., textbooks) that are compatible with the Frameworks. The team noted some lesson plans where teachers clearly identified specific learning standards. However, such practices were not widespread. Instead, the textbooks have become the de facto curriculum—when the team asked teachers how they went about instructional planning, most referenced the textbooks as their guide or simply said, “the Frameworks.”

RENEWAL QUESTION II: IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

- 1. An accessible, responsive and supportive administration encourages a professional climate of teamwork and collegiality at all levels. The school climate at AKFCS is characterized by a sense of commitment, community, and enthusiasm among all stakeholders. In general, adult-student relationships are based on respect and positive reinforcement of student behavior.**

The Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) engages parents to promote student success. Although a few parents wish that the school did a better job of communicating with them around policy issues (e.g., changing the school calendar), the parents interviewed by the team expressed an enthusiastic commitment to the school. They also expressed both confidence in and gratitude for its administration. These parents indicated that they were well informed about their children's progress, and clearly appreciated the efforts made by teachers and the School Director to keep them up to date. Several parents reported that the sense of individuality and personal attention provided by AKFCS teachers and administrators was one of the greatest strengths of the school. In addition to quarterly progress reports (and mid-course warnings as necessary), the school sends home the "Monday Letter" that include upcoming events, after school opportunities, etc. Parents interviewed by the team reported that teachers contact them when their child is succeeding or struggling. (Teachers reported that they are expected to contact all parents approximately once a month.) These parents expressed appreciation for the school's discipline code, the music program, the extended school day, values education, the curriculum, and the individual attention their children receive. In the Caregivers' Questionnaire included in the 2000 Site Visit Report, 92% of responding parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I receive good information about my child's progress." Although parents felt that the teachers and school administration were accessible, some of the parents interviewed by the team did not feel the same way about the accessibility of the Board of Trustees.

AKFCS teachers also described their experience at the school with enthusiasm. Teacher focus groups revealed that teachers felt supported by the administration and their colleagues. Teachers reported frequent class visits from the administration and colleagues, and expressed a genuine commitment to AKFCS and a sense of responsibility and excitement for the opportunities it provides. One teacher, for example, spoke of the "ownership" he felt over the curriculum, a result of the latitude he and his colleagues have in developing curriculum. Another teacher reported his excitement with the task of creating traditions—establishing new programs and ways of doing things that may exist long into the future. Finally, several teachers expressed how much they appreciated that "nothing in the curriculum is set in stone" and that they have the opportunity to "challenge the status quo."

Teachers also felt professionally supported through intensive professional development before the start of school, from opportunities to attend conferences, by a schedule that provides for common planning time among teachers, and through formal and informal classroom visits from administration and colleagues. In two weeks of professional development at the end of the summer, teachers attended sessions on a host of topics (classroom management, student

assessment, communication with parents, etc.). The whole staff attended some sessions while others were designed for smaller groups. For example, thirty teachers are in the process of completing the *Skillful Teacher*, a 36-hour workshop offered to all upper school teachers and all grade 3-6 new teachers at the lower grades. In addition, teachers reported that most of their requests to attend conferences were granted, and that the School Director often alerts them to relevant professional opportunities.

The AKFCS schedule is conducive to a healthy professional climate. Each day, teachers who either teach the same grades (in grades K-5) or share the same students (grades 6-9) have the opportunity to meet. Although teachers formally meet once a week (where the Team Leader sets the agenda), many reported meeting on a much more frequent basis—some meet daily. During these grade level or team meetings, teachers discuss everything from curriculum to individual student progress. When teachers have concerns related to school policy, Lead Teachers convey them to the School Leadership Team, which meets twice a month.

The team observed highly respectful interactions between adults and students during the renewal visit. Teachers frequently praised students' efforts, and often attempted to correct off-task behavior in highly respectful ways (e.g., by praising neighboring students' on-task behavior or by moving closer to the student without saying anything). Teachers at the lower school reward students for "green days" (when students do not do anything wrong), and the school celebrates when an entire class remains "green." At the upper school, teachers reportedly reward well-behaved students with "bear paws" that can be exchanged for various treats or privileges; teachers assign demerits to students who behave poorly. During the renewal visit, however, the team did not observe any instances where students received either a bear paw or a demerit (although the team observed teachers changing students' colors at the lower school).

The Team observed different levels of student safety at the two campuses. The cramped quarters and tenant constraints posed some challenges to the learning environment at the upper school — classrooms are small and it was difficult for team members to get in and out of the classrooms easily due to the tight spaces. At the lower school, in contrast, the team noted a safe and orderly learning environment—classrooms were large and for the most displayed a good deal of student work. On both campuses, student-to-student interactions were generally characterized by mutual respect. The school's clear process for accommodating students with disabilities does not appear to isolate students in need of additional support. One parent remarked on the high degree of peer acceptance and respect her son, who has a facial deformity, enjoys at AKFCS.

- 2. There are several components of the school's educational program in place. The school makes curricular and programmatic decisions on the basis of external standardized testing and ongoing professional dialogue. However, there is no comprehensive, well-articulated plan or systematic process in place to further develop the school's educational program. This includes a K-12 curriculum, the school wide use of internal assessments, and clearly written roles and responsibilities for school leaders.**

The Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) has put in place several components of their educational program: a solid communication structure; an orderly environment conducive to learning (as described in Finding II.1 above); and clear hiring processes, induction strategies, and supports for teachers. Teachers and administrators at AKFCS engage in ongoing professional dialogue about their school. Academic teachers have common planning time with colleagues who teach at the same grade and either teach the same subjects (K-5), share the same students (6-9) or both (as some subjects are leveled in the lower school). Although teachers are only required to meet together once a week, they reported meeting together more frequently, on an “as needed” basis (often daily). Each team has a Lead Teacher who serves as a liaison with the School Leadership Team (SLT) and each teaching team. Teachers reported that communication between themselves and school administrators is ongoing, effective, formal through the SLT and informal “all the time.” In addition to the meetings described above, the SLT and the entire faculty each meet twice a month. Many teachers expressed great appreciation for the professional community at AKFCS.

The communication between AKFCS staff and parents appears to be of a high caliber. Parents reported that teachers communicate with them often about their child’s progress, and also felt that, in general, the school is responsive to their concerns (only 9% of the respondents to the Caregivers’ Questionnaire disagreed with the statement, “The school is responsive to my concerns”). The AKFCS administration sends home weekly “Monday Letters,” and parents also receive quarterly grade reports, mid quarter warnings as necessary, and a monthly letter from administration. Teachers are expected to contact each child’s caretaker at least once a month, either by phone, email, or in person. All teachers at the lower school have both a computer and telephone in their classrooms.

AKFCS has established clear hiring, induction and support systems for teachers. Teachers were hired through a structured, collaborative process that included an initial screening through resume review and in-person interviews with existing faculty and administration. Selected teachers were invited to teach a demonstration lesson before hiring decisions were made. New teacher orientation occurs during the two weeks before school begins in the fall, where teachers have the opportunity to learn about “the school’s philosophy and culture, classroom management, the school’s *Code of Conduct* and discipline procedures, the curriculum, student assessment, lesson format and delivery, communication with parents and the school’s technology system” (*Annual Report*, p. 24). New teachers also receive specific support—for example, some new teachers in the upper school at AKFCS are taking a 36-hour *Skillful Teacher* course. New teachers in grades k, 1, and 2 attended direct instruction workshops. Finally, AKFCS teachers are professionally supported in a variety of ways, which include frequent meetings with colleagues, formal and informal administrator observations, and opportunities to attend conferences and other professional development activities.

AKFCS uses annual test score information and on-going professional dialogue to make curricular and programmatic decisions. Based on MCAS results indicating that AKFCS students were not performing well on open-ended questions, the school decided to adopt the *John Collins Writing Method* (in which 26 teachers were trained), and the *Great Source* writing program in grades K-8. Responses from student focus groups indicated an increased emphasis on writing since the school adopted these programs. Some AKFCS faculty reported that MCAS trends

partially motivated the decision to end the school's relationship with Advantage Schools, Inc. (ASI). According to several AKFCS teachers and administrators, the highly structured ASI curriculum included very little writing and literature, key components of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers felt constrained by ASI's expectations. For example, one teacher reported that ASI instructed them not to use manipulatives during math lessons. Another teacher recounted that she was told not to deviate from the prescribed social studies curriculum, even though the contested 2000 presidential election provided a host of teachable moments.

The school uses ongoing internal and external professional dialogue to make important curricular decisions. Teachers participating in focus groups conducted by the team reportedly engage in regular conversations about curricular issues as well as individual student needs. Teachers reported that they make most curricular decisions in team meetings, be they choices about scope and sequence or assessments of potential curricula. Teachers indicated that they examined annual test scores to determine weaknesses in the prior year's curriculum. The School Director and teachers serving on various curriculum committees then identified other Massachusetts charter and public schools that performed well in AKFCS' areas of weakness. At this point they either contacted or visited the schools to find out what curricular materials they use.

Despite its use of annual test score information and regular professional conversations, AKFCS does not have a well-articulated plan or systematic processes in place for developing the school's educational programs. The school has not identified benchmarks for student learning, the means for assessing program effectiveness or consistent criteria upon which to base student grades. AKFCS staff reported goals for student learning in general terms, but did not delineate specific student learning objectives. Although AKFCS faculty meets regularly to discuss curricular issues, there is not a comprehensive strategy that specifies the means through which progress will be tracked, performance assessed or new materials evaluated. The school's current *Accountability Plan* is outdated and lacks specificity (see Renewal Question III below).

As noted earlier, the AKFCS curriculum is in transition. Since the school ended its relationship with ASI, teachers reportedly play a more prominent role in adopting textbooks and developing curriculum. Although the school provided the team with several draft documents that contained parts of a curriculum for different subjects at different grade levels, AKFCS has not yet articulated a clear scope and sequence in a written document (see Finding I.4 above).

Although the school does have regular means for reporting student progress, teachers do not yet use internal assessments on a school wide basis. Teachers turn in "Lesson Progress Reports" to Lead Teachers each week—according to school documents, teachers identify students who are not achieving mastery and discuss support strategies at team meetings. However, without a clearly articulated curriculum or common measures of student performance, the basis for what constitutes mastery varies among teachers (including those who teach the same subjects at the same grade level). Thus, while the School Director reviews quarterly report cards to make sure that the distribution of grades is within an acceptable range and the school frequently reports student progress to parents, the school has not developed clearly articulated learning goals or criteria for assessing student progress.

The school does not systematically analyze available data. Although AKFCS teachers engage in formal and informal assessment activities (completing the Lesson Progress Reports, the use of John Collins' Focus Correction Areas, quarterly report cards, etc.), the school does not yet aggregate results from any information about student performance or systematically track student performance from one year to the next. It is important to note that the information streams do exist; the school pretests incoming students in the fall using the Stanford 9, teachers reported using the various assessments included in textbooks that serve as the school's curriculum, student performance is measured as part of the Lesson Progress Reports, etc. However, the school does not clearly specify the basis for student grades (instead leaving it up to individual teachers) nor systematically analyze available information by tracking individual student performance over time, aggregating the results across the school, comparing information sources, etc.

Since AKFCS ended its relationship with ASI, the school has not developed written descriptions for the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. This has put undue strain on current administrators, and left the School Director with some conflict over providing classroom support on the one hand while managing the school on the other. While the position for the Assistant Director of the lower school has been vacant since the end of last year, there was no written description of this person's role and/or responsibilities. Further, given that the school exists on two campuses, there is not a certified administrator on both sites. The School Director travels between the two sites, spending time at each site on most days. Consequences of the current administrative arrangement include ambiguity regarding how curriculum development and implementation is supported and monitored, and there is no master schedule making it difficult to locate students and teachers.

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

Please note that findings in this section address the progress against its own goals as described in the school's Accountability Plan and other official documentation. Many of these goals have to do with academic success and organizational viability. Therefore, some of the findings about faithfulness to charter may refer to findings in previous sections on academic success and viability in order to avoid redundancy.

- 1. The mission statement, as written, is too ambiguous for comment by the team. However, during the visit, stakeholders consistently expressed the mission as follows: to provide a "classical liberal arts education" that includes foreign language, music and academics; to develop well-behaved, respectful students; and to acknowledge and engage parents as their children's primary educators. The school is faithful to the mission verbally expressed by the stakeholders as they work toward implementation.**

Although the school has reworded the mission of its charter, the new mission statement does not lend itself to clear interpretation (see “Setting” above). As written in the *2001-02 Annual Report*:

The mission of the Abby Kelley Foster Regional Charter School is to attain the highest standards in teaching students to pursue the truth and to learn about the world; to love the good by growing in good character and civic virtues; and to cultivate what is beautiful in thought, word, action and sense. In this mission the school assists parents, who are the primary educators of their children; and it exercises stewardship by passing on to a new generation the treasures of knowledge and culture we have received from the past.

(Annual Report, page 2)

The team felt the words used in the mission statement are subject to a variety of interpretation and it was impossible to ascertain the intended meaning of the statement as it was written. However, stakeholders consistently referred to the same three elements when the team asked about the school’s mission—to provide a classical liberal arts education, to develop respectful, well-behaved students, and to assist parents as their child’s primary educator. The emphasis on classical liberal arts is clear throughout the school. For example, students take a broad range of music classes—team members observed lessons where students played instruments, sang, read music and were encouraged to write their own songs. Students at all grade levels have vocal music twice a week and the school supports a student choir at both campuses (*Renewal Application*, pg. 2).

The school’s commitment to liberal arts is also reflected in the foreign language program. Students at the lower school take French, beginning initial exposure in kindergarten and having 30-minute lessons twice a week beginning in the second grade. Latin instruction begins in grade 6. When students reach the upper school, they have the choice between taking Spanish or continuing in French. Finally, in addition to music and foreign languages, the school’s focus on liberal arts is also signaled in the movement classes and values education.

The school has also done a commendable job of shaping a “well-behaved, respectful” student body, and involving parents in what occurs at school. In general, the team observed a safe and orderly environment where students interacted with each other and adults with courtesy and esteem. Parents also reported that their children felt safe at AKFCS, and appreciated the many efforts that the school makes to keep them up to date (see Finding II.1 above).

- 2. Student academic goals are measurable; however, the team is unable to determine whether they have been met. In some cases relevant tests have not been administered while in others the school has not disaggregated or monitored the information as articulated in their Accountability Plan. Non-academic goals are not measurable as stated.**

In their School Accountability Plan, Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) identifies four academic student performance goals:

1. *To educate students such that students enrolled in the school since the beginning of the kindergarten reached the 70th percentile or higher on national standardized tests (such as ITBS, SAT 9, or Woodcock Reading Mastery Test) in reading, math, and language (listening) not later than four years after entering the program;*
2. *To educate students such that 90% of students enrolled in since the beginning of the kindergarten perform at or above the NAEP's "Basic" level in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and at least 35% performing at or above the NEAP's [NAEP] "Proficient" level;*
3. *To educate students such that students entering in later grades improve their national percentile rank by the following minimum amounts not later than four years after entering program: 25 percentile points if entering between 1-20%; 15 percentile points if entering between 21-40%; and five percentile points if entering between 41-60%; and,*
4. *To educate students such that students enrolled since the beginning of kindergarten average school scores significantly above the Massachusetts's average on statewide assessments measuring student performance, including the MCAS.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 1)

While all of these goals are measurable, the school has not collected, organized nor analyzed data in such a way that makes determination of whether the goals have been met possible. The school no longer administers the test (ITBS), does not track individual student progress (SAT 9), or does not aggregate results for school wide or grade level analysis.. Whereas the method of assessment the school identifies for two of goals is the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the school does not administer this test. Because the school does not track individual student progress, it is unable to determine whether students beginning school at AKFCS perform better than those who join in later grades. It is important to note that the school states ASI wrote the accountability plan and it was ASI who did not follow through on a number of the measurements, such as the NAEP. However, the team felt the school had sufficient time away from ASI to develop a more thorough way of measuring student progress.

The school established three non-academic student performance goals:

1. *To engage students in activities designed to perfect their coordination, increase their strength and stamina, and help them become team players and good sports;*
2. *To cultivate within the school's student body the habits that characterize a successful school and a civil society, and to provide students with the skills necessary to reason, communicate, and live with dignity in a civil society; and,*
3. *To provide students opportunities to participate in and benefit from a number of extracurricular activities.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 4)

The non-academic student performance goals are not measurable as written, nor does the school have a sound strategy to develop tools for measuring progress toward them.

3. The Abby Kelley Foster Charter School has met the majority of its measurable school performance goals. Other school performance goals are either not measurable or the school has not established a clear method of assessment.

Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) established school performance goals in five areas: fiscal management, student enrollment and student daily attendance, school governance and management, staff competency and development, and other goals related to organizational viability. The school set four goals related to fiscal management:

4. *To report to the Department of Education, providing information on the school's financial status;*
5. *To submit regular budgets variance[s] concerning the school to the Board of Trustees for review and approval;*
6. *To conduct a comprehensive audit of the school's revenues and expenditures within 90 days of the end of each fiscal year in accordance with GAAP principles by a certified public accounting firm approved by the school's Board of Trustees, and forward the results of each annual audit to the Department of Education and other interested oversight agencies and outside observers; and,*
7. *To operate and manage the school in a fiscally responsible manner that ensures the school's stability and success.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 6)

With the separation from Advantage Schools, Inc., the school hired a certified public accountant to handle the school's financial affairs. Although the audited financial statements from the past fiscal year were unavailable at the time of the renewal visit, school documents, including unaudited financial statements and minutes from Board of Trustee meetings, indicate that the first three school performance goals have been met. The school has submitted appropriate financial documents to the Department of Education, the Board has regularly reviewed the school budget, and comprehensive audits using sound accounting principles have been conducted each year. The last fiscal management goal, to operate the school in a way that *ensures* the school's stability and success, is not measurable as stated.

The school set four goals related to student enrollment and daily attendance:

1. *To enroll 636 students in grades kindergarten through six in the school's 1999-2000 school year;*
2. *To be open to all children, on a space available basis and without discrimination on the basis of sex, ability, national origin, race, religion, creed, or any other basis prohibited by law;*
3. *To underscore the importance of attending school each day by taking attendance each morning in an orderly manner; and,*
4. *To report enrollment and attendance figures on a regular basis as required by the Department of Education.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 7)

The school holds two lotteries each year for admission, one in late winter and one in the summer, and has had a waitlist of over 150 students in each of the past three years (*Renewal Application*, p. 10). The school has increased its enrollment each year, and retains approximately 85% of their students each year. Based on the team's review of school documents, it appears that the school has met all four student enrollment goals.

The school set three goals related to school governance and management:

1. *To operate a well-managed organization;*
2. *To contract out in their entirety the business operations and the academic program of the school to Advantage Schools, Inc. (ASI), a national education management provider, as long as the provider can effectively and successfully manage the school; and,*
3. *To hire a School Director of the highest caliber, who leads the school in an effective manner.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 8)

Although the school is completing each of the activities it lists as assessment methods, they do not define "well-managed" in goal 1 or "highest caliber" in goal 3; goals 1 and 3, therefore, are not measurable as written. Although the second goal also contains ambiguous undefined terms ("effectively and successfully manage"), AKFCS hired and subsequently fired ASI.

The school set four goals related to staff competency and development:

1. *To hire individuals for teaching positions who have outstanding records of achievement and are highly motivated to attain student achievement for all students;*
2. *To shape an exceptional teaching staff;*
3. *To provide an environment where teaching skills are continuously honed through ongoing professional development; and,*
4. *To hire key members of the leadership team: a Professional Development Coordinator and Site coordinator, in addition to the School Director, who will ensure the success of the school's educational program and teaching methods.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 9)

Although the school has established a clear hiring process (see Finding II.2 above) and the staff is highly motivated (Finding II.1), the school does not define "outstanding records of achievement" and thus goal 1 is not measurable as written (further, the team noted that the school's staff, many of whom are relatively new to teaching, does not have enough experience to amass such records). The term "exceptional" is not defined in a clear way and hence goal 2 is not measurable as written (although the team noted the highly professional climate at AKFCS, Finding II.1).

The school has met the third goal under staff competency and development. As noted under Finding II.1 above, the school has successfully created a work environment where teachers are professionally supported in a variety of ways. Key components of the school's professional development program include the two weeks of professional development before the school year

begins; opportunities to attend workshops, classes, and conferences; and a schedule conducive to collaboration among teachers.

Finally, although the team noted that the meaning of “ensuring” the success of the school’s educational programs and teaching methods is unclear and not clearly operationalized in the *Accountability Plan*, the school has successfully hired key personnel. However, the spot for an Assistant Director at the lower school, a critical position in terms of supporting classroom teachers and developing the school’s curriculum, has remained unfilled for several months. Nonetheless, the school *had* filled this position (previously called the Professional Development Coordinator), and thus met goal 4.

The school set three goals pertaining to organizational viability:

1. *To forge a vital and distinctive community;*
2. *To implement a school uniform policy; and,*
3. *To welcome and require parent involvement in their child’s education.*

(AKFCS Accountability Plan, p. 11)

Although the first goal is not measurable as written, in the opinion of the team, the school has met it—AKFCS is comprised of a group of highly talented individuals who appear committed to the success of their students. The school has met the second goal, to implement a uniform policy. During the renewal visit, the team observed near complete adherence to the uniform policy, including at the upper school. Although the third goal—to “welcome and require parent involvement”—is difficult to measure, the school clearly makes substantial efforts to engage parents. The school has established a Parent-Teacher Organization, regularly sends home newsletters and academic progress reports, holds parent conferences, and otherwise makes concerted efforts to keep parents informed.

4. The school collaborates with other charter schools and actively attempts to engage surrounding districts.

Although school leaders report that their efforts have not been particularly effective, the school continues its efforts to engage districts that send students to Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS). The School Director attends monthly principal meetings sponsored by the Alliance for Education (although she reports that she is generally not warmly received by the Worcester superintendent). The superintendents of all of AKFCS’ sending districts have been invited to the school, although to date none have accepted.

The school engages other schools in the development of its educational program. Teachers and the School Director analyzed MCAS results, identified charter and public schools where students were performing well in AKFCS’ areas of weakness and contacted these schools to gather information about curriculum. Further, when the school ended its relationship with ASI, the School Director, who is a member of the Massachusetts Charter Association, reached out to other charter schools to gather information on everything from bus policies to personnel evaluation.

AKFCS recently hosted a job fair aimed at recruiting prospective teachers for Massachusetts charter schools.

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

- 1. The new accountability plan is a list of objectives but does not contain benchmarks or methods of assessment. The plan does not reflect the need for a systematic approach to improving student and school performance.**

The Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) lists several student and school performance objectives in the newest *Accountability Plan* included in its *Renewal Application*. However, as written, the *Accountability Plan* lacks specificity. The school lists four school performance objectives:

- 1. AKFCS will purchase and/or renovate a school facility designed to accommodate a comprehensive K-12 academic program;*
- 2. AKFCS will implement an effective professional development program;*
- 3. AKFCS will continue to develop a comprehensive K-12 curriculum that meets the needs of all students; and,*
- 4. AKFCS will work to promote parent and community involvement.*

(Renewal Application, Appendix H)

The school also includes three student performance objectives:

- 1. AKFCS students will make measurable yearly progress on all standardized assessments;*
- 2. AKFCS students will have the opportunity to participate in a musical or dramatic performance; and,*
- 3. AKFCS will have a more structured Character Education Program.*

(Renewal Application, Appendix H)

For each of these goals, the school lists several strategies and further elaborations of the objectives. However, in most cases the school does not identify the parties who will be responsible for ensuring that the strategies are developed and put into practice. In addition, there are no implementation timelines or means for assessing progress. While each of the goals listed above has merit, it is the opinion of the Renewal Team that the *Accountability Plan* does not reflect a systematic approach for improving student performance or developing the school's educational programs.

- 2. The school has sufficient financial and human resources, as well as the needed commitment, to achieve the mission articulated by the stakeholders.**

Abby Kelley Foster Charter School (AKFCS) has sufficient financial and human resources to realize the vision articulated by its stakeholders: to provide a “classical liberal arts education,” to develop well-behaved, respectful students, and to acknowledge and engage parents as their children’s primary educators. Despite the lack of specificity reflected in the *Accountability Plan* and the ambiguity of the mission statement included in its *Renewal Application*, the school has been faithful to its vision for the school articulated by its stakeholders. Most important, the AKFCS faculty and staff have the commitment necessary to achieve this vision.

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT**Abby Kelley Foster Schedule for the On-Site Renewal Visit: New Bond Campus**

Day 1: Monday 10/28	Day 2: Tuesday 10/29	Day 3: Wednesday 10/30	Day 4: Thursday 10/31
	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: 4 to Middle/Upper/ 3 to New Bond	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: 3 to Middle/Upper and 4 to New Bond	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: All go to New Bond Campus
	8:00: Feedback to School Leaders	8:00 Feedback to School Leaders	8:00 Feedback to School Leaders
	8:00-12:00 Classroom Observations, interviews and Focus group 8:00-9:00 Parent Focus Group	8:00-12:30 Classroom Observations, interviews 8:00-9:00: Student Focus Group	8:00-12:00 Team Moderation/ Follow-up interviews or obsv. as needed
12:00 Hotel Check In: Meet in Lobby at 12:30	12:00- 1:00: Lunch	12:30- 1:30 Lunch	12:00- 1:00 Lunch
1:00-3:30 Initial Team Meeting at School (New Bond)	1:00-2:45 Classroom Observations	1:30-2:45 Classroom Observations	1:00-4:30 Team Moderation
3:30-5:00 Team meets with School Administration/ Tour of building (New Bond)	3:00-4:00 2 Teacher Focus Groups: k-2, 3-5	3:00-4:00 2 Teacher Focus Groups: Specials, Collaborative Services	4:30-5:30 Final report to school
5:00-6:00 Team Meets with the Board (New Bond)	4:00-6:30 Team Moderation: New Bond Campus	4:00-6:30 Team Moderation: New Bond Campus	5:30-6:00 Team debrief/evaluations/departure
6:00 Team Dinner	6:30 Team Dinner	6:30 Team Dinner	

Abby Kelley Foster Schedule for the On-Site Renewal Visit: Middle/ Upper Campus

Day 1: Monday 10/28	Day 2: Tuesday 10/29	Day 3: Wednesday 10/30	Day 4: Thursday 10/31
	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: 4 to Middle/Upper/ 3 to New Bond	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: 3 to Middle/Upper and 4 to New Bond	7:30 Team meets in hotel lobby: All go to New Bond Campus
	8:00-12:00: Classroom Observations, interviews and focus groups:	8:00-12:00 Classroom Observations, interviews and Focus groups:	8:00 Feedback to School Leaders
	8:00-8:45: Parent Focus Group 8:00-8:45: teacher focus group 10:30-11:15: focus group	8:50-9:35: teacher focus group 10:30-11:15 Student focus group	8:00-12:00 Team Moderation/ Follow-up interviews or obsv. as needed
12:00 Hotel Check In: Meet in Lobby at 12:30	12:00-1:00 Lunch	12:00-1:00 Lunch	12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00-3:30 Initial Team Meeting at School (New Bond)	1:00-2:40 Classroom Observations 2:40: return to New Bond campus	1:00-2:40 Classroom Observations 2:40: return to New Bond campus	1:00-4:30 Team Moderation
3:30-5:00 Team meets with School Administration/ Tour of building	3:00-4:00 2 Teacher Focus Groups: k-2, 3-5 (New Bond)	3:00-4:00 2 Teacher Focus Groups: Specials, Collaborative Services (New Bond)	4:30-5:30 Final report to school
5:00-6:00 Team Meets with the Board	4:00-6:30 Team Moderation: New Bond Campus	4:00-6:30 Team Moderation: New Bond Campus	5:30-6:00 Team debrief/evaluations/departure
6:00 Team Dinner	6:30 Team Dinner	6:30 Team Dinner	