

Renewal Inspection Report

Marblehead Community Charter Public School
Marblehead, MA

SchoolWorks

November 15-18, 2004

Table of Contents

	Page
About the renewal process	2
How to read this report	2
Team members	3
Setting	4
Findings	5-20
Appendix A: Schedule of the visit	21

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 inspection 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 inspection 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 inspection 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 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'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 inspection.

RENEWAL INSPECTION TEAM

Aretha Miller - Project Manager, SchoolWorks. Aretha is an eight-year veteran special education teacher in the Boston Public Schools, where she developed and supported implementation of programs for at-risk students through traditional and alternative settings.

Helen Apostolides - Associate Field Examiner, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability. Helen has more than 34 years of experience as both a teacher and administrator in public education. In 2003, Helen received the Pride of Peabody award and was a semi-finalist in Massachusetts in NASA's Teacher in Space Program.

Leslie Beaulieu - Consultant, SchoolWorks. During the past 22 years, Leslie has taught science in grades pre-K through 12 in five schools while participating in extensive curriculum planning and program development.

Ledyard McFadden - Founder and President of SchoolWorks. Ledyard taught English as a second language in Costa Rica and later at Chelsea High School in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Ledyard was a founder of the Bridge School in Chelsea, Massachusetts, and the Director of Finance and Operations for City on the Hill Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts. Ledyard also served as a regional manager for Beacon Education Management. He holds a BA in English from Pomona College and a Masters degree in Education from Harvard University.

SETTING

Marblehead Community Charter Public School (MCCPS) opened in 1995 with students in grades 5 through 7, and added an eighth grade in 1996. In 2003, school leaders were awarded a charter amendment that allowed them to admit students in grade 4. This change was made in response to the grade level reconfiguration that occurred within the Marblehead Public School District. As a result, MCCPS started the 2004-2005 academic year with 220 students enrolled in grades 4 through 8. The mission at Marblehead Community Charter is “Recognizing that students learn best in the context of community, our mission is to create partnerships among community members that help students reach their highest intellectual, social and physical potential.”

Marblehead Community Charter recruits students from the following communities: Marblehead, Salem, Swampscott, Lynn and Peabody. Marblehead and Salem are the two largest sending districts, with each making up 80 percent and 16 percent, respectively, of the current student population. Ninety six percent of students enrolled at Marblehead Community Charter Public School are White, with the remaining four percent representing students from different racial and ethnic groups. The school uses a full inclusion model to provide services to the 51 students who have been identified with special needs. There are currently 91 students on the school’s waiting list.

The academic program at MCCPS is based on an integrated standards-based curriculum and assessment system. The school’s curriculum is “centered on global themes framed by essential questions and understanding goals,” with teachers developing integrated units of study that are linked to learning benchmarks. MCCPS also offers classes in French, art, computer literacy, community service learning and music.

Marblehead Community Charter Public School currently employs 27 teachers, five of whom are inclusion specialists. The six-member administrative team at MCCPS includes the Head of School, Student Services Coordinator, Special Education Coordinator, Business Manager, nurse and assistant to the Head of School. Every teacher at MCCPS meets the highly qualified teacher requirements as outlined by the No Child Left Behind legislation.

MCCPS has received positive independent audit reports each year since its last charter renewal. The school’s business manager works with the Head of School and Trustees to plan and manage the school’s budget. The school also has a Foundation that helps it raise funds to cover the cost of its academic programs.

MCCPS is currently governed by an 11-member Board of Trustees that is responsible for fiduciary oversight and works with the Head of School to set policies about the future direction of the school.

FINDINGS

In preparing this report, the Charter School Inspection Team conducted a three-and-a-half-day visit to MCCPS from November 15-18, 2004. During the visit, team members observed 25 classes, interviewed 14 teachers, six parents, 11 members of the Board of Trustees, 5 school administrators and 16 students.

Team members examined a variety of school documents that included, but were not limited to, MCAS and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) results, enrollment data for students and staff, curriculum binders and individual teacher lesson plans. Team members also reviewed the minutes from Board meetings, student work, faculty handbook, student and parent handbook, teacher and parent survey and the school’s newsletter, *The Magna Charter*. In preparation for the visit to Marblehead Community Charter Public School, members of the Charter School Inspection Team also read the seventh- and eighth-year site visit reports, 2003-2004 annual report, renewal application and accountability plan.

RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

1. Marblehead Community Charter Public School has consistently made Adequate Yearly Progress by scoring above state-wide targets as defined by No Child Left Behind.

Since the majority of students enrolled at MCCPS are from Marblehead (80 percent) and Salem (16 percent), comparison with these two districts will be made to demonstrate the progress of students at MCCPS in English language arts and mathematics.

Fifth Grade Results

In 2003 and 2004, students at MCCPS outperformed their peers in the state on the MCAS science assessment. In 2003, 82 percent of MCCPS students achieved proficiency; that is, students scoring in both the Advanced and/or Proficient categories, compared to 51 percent of students statewide. In 2004, 77 percent of students at MCCPS performed in the top two categories, compared to 55 percent of students statewide.

The percentage of students performing at the Advanced and Proficient levels declined in 2004 compared to 2003; that is, 77 percent achieved Proficiency in 2004, compared to 82 percent in 2003.

MCAS Marblehead Community Charter Public School, Grade 5 MCAS Comparison of School with State Performance

N = number of students tested
A = Advanced P = Proficient NI = Needs Improvement W = Warning

Grade 5		N	A%	P%	NI%	W%
Sci. & Tech.						
2003	School	44	27	55	18	0
	State		18	33	34	15
2004	School	44	34	43	20	2
	State		20	35	33	13

Sixth Grade Results

In 2004, 57 percent of students at Marblehead Community Charter Public School scored in the Advanced and Proficient categories on the sixth grade MCAS mathematics assessment. This was a significant improvement over previous years in which fewer than 50 percent of students performed in the top two levels – 45 percent in 2001, 41 percent in 2002 and 31 percent in 2003. Students at MCCPS outperformed their peers statewide during the four years of testing.

**MCAS
Marblehead Community Charter Public School, Grade 6 MCAS
Comparison of School with State Performance**

N = number of students tested

A = Advanced P = Proficient NI = Needs Improvement W = Warning

Grade 6		N	A	P	NI	W
Math						
2001	School	44	18	27	41	14
	State		13	23	30	33
2002	School	44	0	41	45	14
	State		13	28	29	29
2003	School	43	5	26	51	19
	State		16	26	32	26
2004	School	45	24	33	38	4
	State		17	25	32	25

Sixth graders at MCCPS outperformed their peers in the Salem Public School district with 57 percent achieving proficiency, compared to 31 percent of sixth graders in Salem. They, however, were outperformed by Marblehead Public School district that had 66 percent of its sixth graders scoring in the Advanced and Proficient categories.

**Comparison of Marblehead Community Charter Public School
with Largest Sending Districts in 2004**

2004	Math			
	A	P	NI	F
MCCPS	24	33	38	4
Marblehead	38	28	24	10
Salem	11	20	38	31

Seventh Grade Results

Seventh graders at Marblehead Community Charter Public School consistently outperformed their peers statewide on the MCAS English language arts assessment. MCCPS was able to steadily increase the number of students performing in the top two categories on the English language arts assessment over the four years of testing.

**MCAS
Marblehead Community Charter Public School, Grade 7 MCAS
Comparison of School with State Performance**

N = number of students tested

A = Advanced P = Proficient NI = Needs Improvement W = Warning

Grade		N	A	P	NI	W
ELA						
2001	School	41	5	63	27	5
	State		6	49	32	12
2002	School	43	28	60	12	0
	State		9	55	28	8
2003	School	43	0	79	19	2
	State		8	57	28	7
2004	School	44	5	89	7	0
	State		9	59	25	7

In 2004, seventh graders at MCCPS outperformed their peers in both the Marblehead and Salem public schools on the MCAS English language arts assessment with 94 percent of students scoring in the Advanced and Proficient categories, compared to 87 percent for Marblehead and 54 percent for Salem.

**Comparison of Marblehead Community Charter Public School
with Largest Sending Districts in 2004**

2004	English Language Arts			
	A	P	NI	F
MCCPS	5	89	7	0
Marblehead	24	63	10	3
Salem	2	52	38	8

Eight Grade Results

The performance of eighth graders is similar to that of students in grade 7, in that a larger percentage of them score in the Advanced and Proficient categories than their peers statewide. For example, the percentage of students statewide who score in the top two categories ranges from 34 and 39 percent, while the percentage for students at MCCPS achieving proficiency ranges from 52 to 66 percent.

At MCCPS, there was a decrease in the number of students achieving proficiency between 2000 and 2001; that is, from 66 percent to 52 percent, respectively. MCCPS was not able to

significantly increase the number of students performing in the Advanced and Proficient categories during the five years of testing.

MCAS
Marblehead Community Charter Public School, Grade 8 MCAS
Comparison of School with State Performance

N = number of students tested

A = Advanced P = Proficient NI = Needs Improvement W = Warning

Grade		N	A	P	NI	W
Math						
2000	School	43	33	33	28	7
	State		10	24	27	40
2001	School	44	25	27	43	5
	State		11	23	34	31
2002	School	43	19	37	37	7
	State		11	23	33	33
2003	School	44	14	32	32	23
	State		12	25	30	33
2004	School	42	14	40	33	12
	State		13	26	32	29

In 2004, the performance of eighth graders at Marblehead Community Charter on the MCAS mathematics assessment is comparable to that of students in Marblehead Public Schools, with 54 percent and 51 percent achieving proficiency, respectively. Only 25 percent of eighth graders in Salem achieved proficiency on the mathematics assessment, which is significantly lower than that of students at MCCPS.

Comparison of Marblehead Community Charter Public School
with Largest Sending Districts in 2004

2004	Math			
	A	P	NI	F
MCCPS	14	40	33	12
Marblehead	16	35	34	15
Salem	5	20	37	38

Despite its success in having students perform better than students statewide on the MCAS science and technology assessment, MCCPS has not been successful in getting its eighth graders to perform at a level that is comparable to its baseline results in 2000. In 2000, 72 percent of students performed in the Advanced and Proficient categories, compared to 55 percent in 2003 and 57 percent in 2004. Nevertheless, the school was successful in having no student score in the Warning category in 2004.

**MCAS
Marblehead Community Charter Public School, Grade 8 MCAS
Comparison of School with State Performance**

Grade 8		N	A	P	NI	W
Sci. & Tech.						
2000	School	43	12	60	23	5
	State		6	29	27	37
2003	School	44	14	41	41	5
	State		4	28	38	30
2004	School	42	5	52	43	0
	State		5	28	35	31

Adequate Yearly Progress

Marblehead Community Charter Public School made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for both English language arts and mathematics for Cycle III. MCCPS made AYP for English language arts by meeting its performance targets for students in the aggregate. White students make up the only statistically significant subgroup in the school.

At the end of Cycle III, the school had a composite performance index (CPI) of 95.4 for students in the aggregate for English language arts. This significantly exceeded the state target of 75.6 CPI. MCCPS, therefore, received a Cycle III performance rating of “Very High.” In terms of mathematics, MCCPS had a CPI of 75, which exceeded the state target of 60.8. The school, therefore, received a performance rating of “Moderate.”

Marblehead Community Charter made AYP for both mathematics and English language arts each year of its second charter. The performance of students at MCCPS clearly demonstrates that the school is helping students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to meet statewide achievement targets.

**MCAS
Marblehead Community Charter Public School
Cycle III 2003 & 2004 AYP Report**

English Language Arts													
Student Group	2004				Cycle III combined data for 2003 and 2004					2004			AYP 2004
	Participation				Performance			Improvement		Attendance			
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target	N	CPI	Met Target	CPI Change	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Aggregate	44	44	100	Yes	87	95.4	Yes	-1.4	Yes	96.5	1.2	Yes	Yes
White	40	40	100	Yes	81	95.1	Yes	-1.6	Yes	96.5	1.3	Yes	Yes

Mathematics													
Student Group	2004				Cycle III combined data for 2003 and 2004					2004			AYP 2004
	Participation				Performance			Improvement		Attendance			
	Enrolled	Assessed	%	Met Target	N	CPI	Met Target	CPI Change	Met Target	%	Change	Met Target	
Aggregate	87	87	100	Yes	174	75.0	Yes	-2.0	Yes	96.5	1.2	Yes	Yes
White	83	83	100	Yes	167	75.7	Yes	-1.3	Yes	96.5	1.3	Yes	Yes

2. The Head of School reported that the school began administering the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) to monitor student progress in reading and mathematics. The use of these two assessments will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

Teachers at Marblehead Community Charter began administering the SRI in 2003 as a way of tracking students’ progress in reading. The results in the tables below show that the majority of students at each grade level at MCCPS are performing in the advanced and proficient categories on the Scholastic Reading Inventory. In addition, there was an increase in the percentage of students within each grade level cohort that scored in the top two categories on the 2004 administration of the SRI.

**Scholastic Reading Inventory
Grade level & Cohort results (2003 & 2004)**

	Grade 5 (2004)
Advanced	52
Proficient	25
Basic	18
At Risk	5

	Grade 5 (2003)	Grade 6 (2004)
Advanced	33	53
Proficient	53	40
Basic	12	7
At Risk	2	0

	Grade 6 (2003)	Grade 7 (2004)
Advanced	32	61
Proficient	46	23
Basic	17	14
At Risk	5	2

	Grade 7 (2003)	Grade 8 (2004)
Advanced	37	60
Proficient	28	24
Basic	30	16
At Risk	5	0

	Grade 8 (2003)
Advanced	55
Proficient	26
Basic	19
At Risk	0

School leaders reported that they are unable to record whole class progress on ALEKS because the software is designed to track individual student performance only. They are working with the makers of the software, however, to produce reports that will track whole group progress over time.

3. The school has developed and articulated an integrated standards-based curriculum and approach to assessment across the grade levels.

As stipulated in the school’s charter, teachers at Marblehead Community Charter Public School use an integrated standards-based curriculum to deliver instruction. The school’s integrated standards-based curriculum is clearly linked to student outcomes as evidenced by the fact that it has well-articulated benchmarks that reflect the skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire at each grade level. A thorough review of curriculum documents at MCCPS reveals that the grade level benchmarks are aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The standards-based curriculum designed by teachers at MCCPS is organized around global themes, such as Character and Identity, Work and Wellness, and Time and Space. Administrators and teachers informed team members that all teachers are required to select a common theme that they would focus on each trimester. Teachers then work in grade-level teams to develop integrated units and lessons that are linked to grade-level benchmarks, as well as reflect the overarching theme. At the time of the charter renewal visit, the overarching theme at the school was Character and Identity, with each grade working on different projects related to the theme. Fourth grade students, for example, worked on the *Bridges Make Connection* project, while eighth graders worked on their *Building Utopia 2004* project.

According to teachers, the use of integrated units helps to deepen students’ understanding of the concepts that are being covered in the classroom. This was confirmed by students who reported that the school’s integrated approach to instruction helps them to understand better the materials that are being taught in the classroom, because it enables them to see how they are applied in the real world. For example, students in grade four learned how to use their basic math skills to stay

within their budget for the *Bridges Make Connection* project. They also learned the importance of accuracy in measurement because it was instrumental in helping them construct the bridges for their group projects. In other words, the students learned that accurate measurements are essential to ensuring the structural integrity of the bridges that are built. Seventh graders developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for colonial life after completing a project that required them to conduct research and keep a daily journal for the colonial characters whose identity they assumed for the course of the trimester.

While teachers at MCCPS use a variety of strategies (e.g., tests, quizzes and research papers) to assess student progress, they use projects and exhibitions primarily to monitor students' acquisition of key skills and concepts. It appears that the use of projects helps students to extend their learning beyond rote memorization and gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Exhibitions are usually the venues used to get students at MCCPS to "show what they know." Teachers developed rubrics that are aligned to key content area benchmarks to evaluate student work.

In order to reinforce standards-based assessment at MCCPS, school personnel worked with the technology coordinator to develop a database that would facilitate its use across the school. School leaders explained that the *Communicating Understanding through Evidence* (CUE) database, as it is known, is designed to help teachers create a more accurate picture of student progress towards grade level benchmarks. To make this happen, the school will no longer use standard letter grades for students, as well as represent their grades as an average of their overall academic performance. Instead, they will have report cards that reflect the benchmarks that students worked on each trimester. Students will receive a score for each benchmark, as defined by a four-point rubric used by teachers. School leaders also plan to separate the grade for effort from the one that represents students' academic progress. The school plans to implement this new reporting system during the 2004-2005 academic year. In interviews with team members, both parents and students say that they are excited about the new grading system because it will help them to have a more complete picture of the skills and knowledge, as well as the level of mastery, that students have acquired during their time at MCCPS.

From classroom observations and conversations with students, teachers and parents, team members concluded that there are distinct advantages to Marblehead Community Charter Public School having a standards-based curriculum. First, the school's emphasis on standards-based instruction requires teachers to clearly identify the learning outcomes that they have for students. Consequently, planning and instruction is intentional at the school. Second, the use of rubrics helps students to understand teacher expectations. This was confirmed by students who told team members that by paying attention to the rubrics that are used to evaluate their projects, they know exactly what to do to get a good grade. They reported that they are each given a copy of the assessment rubric and could clearly explain the elements they needed to have in their work in order to earn the highest possible score on the rubrics. (The rubrics at MCCPS reflect the five levels of understanding—Advanced, Proficient, Developing, Emerging, and Not Yet Demonstrated—that are used to record students' progress towards grade level benchmarks.)

Finally, by requiring students to engage in exhibitions, teachers and school leaders at MCCPS make it possible for students to become engaged in some kind of authentic assessment. In other

words, they give students the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge to real-world contexts, which makes it possible for them to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

Despite this, it was clear to team members that some teachers have not been able to successfully prioritize the learning outcomes that they have for students. This is evident in the fact that, in some instances, they identified more than 60 benchmarks that they would like students to work towards in a unit during a trimester. The Head of School and Student Service Coordinator stated that they are aware of this and that it is an area they are planning to address throughout the year.

4. The school successfully provides ample opportunities for all students to acquire, integrate and apply knowledge to everyday life through collaboration and individual work.

School leaders and teachers at Marblehead Community Charter Public School use a variety of strategies to address the learning needs of all students in the school. First, the school's emphasis on community service learning (CSL) makes it possible for students to extend their knowledge beyond their classrooms and in service of their communities. According to the CSL Coordinator, students in every grade are expected to complete a community service learning project each year. Fifth graders, for example, collect aluminum tabs that are donated to the Shriners Hospital. The money received from the recycled tabs is used to purchase medical and other supplies for the Shriners Hospital for Children. Sixth graders participate in a recycling project as a part of their participation in the International Coastal Clean Up.

The CSL Coordinator reported that in order to make the service learning experience meaningful for students, they are required to work solely on projects that are clearly linked to a need in the school or surrounding communities. Therefore, before they start a project, students have to identify and research a need in the community. Then they create an action plan that details the steps they plan to take to address the need. This makes it possible for students see the real-life application of the things they learned while enrolled at MCCPS. While students have to work in teams to complete their projects, they are responsible for completing individual assignments, such as their journal reflections, as a way of building their writing skills.

Second, teachers use small-group, whole-group, and one-on-one instruction as strategies to help students understand the materials that are being covered in their classes. During a conversation with a team member, a group of eighth graders stated that they like to work in small groups because they use their individual strengths to help each other successfully complete their assignments and projects. According to one student, by working in small groups they are able to benefit from each other's strengths while addressing the deficits in their individual learning. The students used the example of some students being more technologically inclined and, as such, are able to help them use the computer to complete projects and other assignments. They also mentioned that they enjoy working on projects because it gives them a chance to participate in hands-on activities that make it possible for them to apply what they are learning in the school.

Third, school leaders assign an inclusion specialist and an aide to each grade level. By assigning an inclusion specialist to each grade level, MCCPS ensures that all students, regardless of special needs, have access to the general curriculum. As a result, the inclusion specialists and aides are

actively involved in the planning and delivery of instruction in the school. The aides and inclusion specialists were observed providing instructional support to every student in the classrooms visited by team members. It is, therefore, difficult for observers to identify those students who receive special education services. One teacher informed team members that she enjoys having the inclusion specialist in her classroom because she recognizes the fact that every student can benefit from the modifications that are made to support students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The Special Education Coordinator reported that students with IEPs receive additional academic support during morning recess and enrichment period. This was confirmed by students in interviews with team members.

Fourth, the school's use of the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS – a web-based math tutorial) allows teachers to monitor students' acquisition of basic skills at regular intervals. The 2004-2005 school year is the second year that MCCPS is using ALEKS, and while it is not being consistently used by every teacher, those who use it with their students see a lot of value in it. They informed members of the renewal inspection team that it gives them immediate feedback about students' progress in math. According to these teachers, they use student performance data from ALEKS to make the necessary adjustments to their classroom instruction to further support student learning. They also made similar statements about their use of the SRI, an electronic reading software. Teachers reported that they use student results on the SRI to create flexible groupings in their classrooms. By doing this, they are able to more effectively address the reading skills of individual students in their classrooms. In interviews with team members, some parents and students stated that by assigning ALEKS as homework, students are able to build their math skills through regular practice.

Finally, MCCPS uses the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to help students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for academic success. Teachers, students and parents all reported that students and their parents meet with teachers two times each year to review student progress towards their ILP goals, as well as to identify new ones. Students can set goals that will enhance their academic and/or social-emotional growth. One student informed a team member that his ILP goal was to get more organized because he is always forgetting his homework assignment. Another student's goal was to read more challenging books as a way of building his reading comprehension skills. The ILP has clear objectives for the student, parent and teachers. In other words, the objectives are the action steps that each participant will take to ensure that students accomplish the goals in the ILP. Both students and parents reported that they see many benefits to this process. Students reported that the ILP helps them to become better learners and parents believe that it reinforces the message that students are accountable for their learning. For teachers and school administrators, the use of the ILPs is another tool for helping students reach their "highest intellectual, social, and physical potential," as stated in their mission.

The impact of the strategies listed above on student learning was evident to team members during the renewal visit. In conversations with team members, students described clearly the benchmarks that they needed to meet in order to achieve success on their projects. One fifth grader defined benchmarks as "the level of understanding you need to reach." Students at MCCPS also understood teachers' expectations for their academic and behavioral performance and seem to make to every effort to meet them. It was clear to team members that the teachers

and administrators at MCCPS are student-centered and are committed to doing whatever is necessary to enhance students' learning experience at the school.

RENEWAL QUESTION 2: IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

1. The MCCPS effectively creates a respectful and vibrant professional environment for all community members.

In its effort to meet the school's mission to "create partnership among community members that help students reach their highest intellectual, social, and physical potential," school leaders at MCCPS have worked hard to create an atmosphere that fosters positive working relationships among the various stakeholders. In interviews, both teachers and school administrators speak enthusiastically about the strong sense of collegiality that exists at the school. They believe that the school's approach to teaching and learning makes it possible for this to happen. For example, teachers work in grade level teams in which they actively participate in common planning time to develop integrated units and lessons. Also, by instituting content area and whole school faculty meetings, school leaders create more chances for the staff to engage in conversations about their work with each other. This makes it difficult for teachers to work in isolation at MCCPS.

By participating in grade-level, content-area, and whole-school faculty meetings, teachers new to MCCPS are able to develop a clear understanding of the expectations that school leaders have for teachers. School leaders indicate that mentors are assigned to new teachers to help them successfully make the transition into the school. This was confirmed by teachers who are new to the school. They stated that by working with their mentors and participating in the various meetings at the school, they are able to better meet the professional expectations at the school. One teacher stated, "My peers are my best resource."

Teachers – both veterans and novices – reported that they get regular feedback as to how they can improve their practice from the Head of School and the Student Service Coordinator, who is responsible for providing curriculum oversight. According to them, this makes it possible for them to get better at their craft and provide more meaningful experiences for students in their classes. They also pointed to this as a sign of the school's commitment to become a community of learners.

School administrators and teachers reported that the MCCPS uses a shared approach to decision-making. Teachers work with administrators to design and revise the curriculum each year, are members of the Board of Trustees, and have input into key decisions in the school, such as the addition of the fourth grade. According to them, these are some of the factors that make working at Marblehead Community Charter Public School attractive to the staff. This has caused the school to have a stable staff that has a vested interest in the success of the school.

Members of the Board of Trustees spoke openly about their positive working relationship with the Head of School. They attributed this to the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between themselves and school administrators. They stated that their primary responsibilities include providing fiscal oversight and working with the Head of School to set policies to guide

the future direction of the school. This was confirmed by the Head of School, who sees his role as managing the daily operations of the school and collaborating with the Board on long- and short-term planning. Both the Head of School and Board Chair reported that this is a significantly better relationship than that which existed in the past. According to them, the Board no longer tries to get involved in the day-to-day management of the school and is diligent about referring complaints from parents about the school to the Head of School so that he can work to resolve them. This has served to ensure that there are clear lines of communication between the school and parents, as well as between the Board and school administrators.

The positive relationship that exists between the Trustees and school administrators is evident in the collaborative way in which they are working to finalize the school's expansion plan. According to them, the school was successful in acquiring an additional 10,000 square feet of adjoining space to give them a total of 25,000 square feet. The new space will be used for art, music, drama, and physical education, as well as house classrooms for the additional 44 students who are currently enrolled in the school. The Trustees stated that they worked with the Head of School to obtain the necessary building permits, and they actively participate in fundraising efforts designed to cover the cost of the expansion. To date, they have raised more than \$150,000 in private funds to pay for the expansion.

The school-wide morning meetings provide staff at MCCPS with a venue in which they can reinforce the culture and positive environment of the school. During morning meetings, teachers were observed honoring and recognizing students for a variety of things. For example, students were recognized for celebrating a birthday, inviting their parents to breakfast, doing well in their classes, and engaging in behaviors that reflect the community spirit of the school. Teachers and the Head of School also use this time to recognize the parents who are in the building. The morning meetings set a positive tone of expectations, as well as let parents and students know that they are members of a community that values them.

2. MCCPS has demonstrated effective use of media and technology to enrich children's learning, foster good communication and manage the curriculum.

Technology is an integral part of teaching and learning at Marblehead Community Charter Public School. Both teachers and students use it regularly in their daily experience at the school. For example, teachers use the school's database to catalog their curriculum and lesson plans. Because the school uses the same global themes, technology allows for continuity in the curriculum due to the fact that teachers are able to use lessons and units that were taught in the past. The database, in essence, is a valuable resource library for teachers in the school. As mentioned earlier in this report, the school is also using technology—in the form of CUE—to support its implementation of standards-based assessment across the school. Through the use of CUE, teachers will be able to create a more accurate picture of students' academic progress by tracking their progress towards grade level benchmarks.

School leaders at MCCPS invested a lot in technology as a way of helping students become technologically proficient. For example, the school has a wireless lab with 25 computers that are used by students and teachers across the school. In addition, each classroom is equipped with at

least two desktops. Students, therefore, have easy access to computers in the school. This is important since they are required to conduct research on the Internet and use Microsoft Word when writing papers associated with their projects. During the renewal visit, students at each grade level were observed using Excel to put together the budgets for their projects.

The use of ALEKS is another way in which the school uses technology to bolster student learning. Since ALEKS is web-based, students can access it from wherever they are and, as such, have ample opportunity to practice their math skills. A key component of ALEKS is its capacity to allow teachers to monitor students' work. As a result, they are able to make modifications to the assignments in ALEKS so that they are better designed to address students' learning needs.

Teachers and school administrators communicate regularly with parents via email. The school also uses Zoomerang, an online survey software, to get parents and students to participate in the evaluation of the Head of School and teachers.

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

1. While the school's accountability plan goals do not have clear targets for student outcomes, a review of the MCAS scores and student work indicates that the school is making progress toward its student achievement goals.

A review of Marblehead Community Charter Public School's accountability plan reveals that it has made significant progress towards achieving its three student performance goals.

“Acquire and integrate knowledge, apply concepts to everyday life, and use knowledge meaningfully.”

The consistent strong performance of students at MCCPS on the MCAS indicates that the school has been effective in helping them acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to meet state standards. This has caused the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) because its students have met and exceeded statewide performance targets. In addition, a review of student work samples and conversations with students show that they have made significant progress in meeting schoolwide benchmarks. Team members arrived at this conclusion because students could clearly explain the real-life application of their projects, as well as the content area skills and knowledge they had to develop in order to successfully complete their projects. In other words, students at MCCPS did not learn isolated skills, but learned them within a meaningful context that made it possible for them to apply it to their own lives.

“Gain competence as self-directed learners.”

Conversations with students, parents and school personnel indicate that the ILP is consistently developed and used across the school as a way of helping students take more responsibility for their learning. Information gathered from parents and students indicates that the ILP is an effective tool for improving students' academic and social skills so that they can attain success during their time at MCCPS.

There is clear evidence that students at MCCPS are using their assignment notebooks as a way of keeping themselves organized. Students informed team members that they use the assignment notebook primarily to record their homework. This was confirmed during classroom observations, when students were seen writing down their homework assignments in the notebooks.

“Develop responsible citizenship”

Students at MCCPS are polite and respectful to each other and the adults in the building. This is significant because it makes students feel safe in the school. One student stated that, unlike traditional public schools, there is no bullying at MCCPS. This is particularly true for students in the lower grades who say they have positive relationships with students in the seventh and eighth grades.

Students take responsibility for maintaining the cleanliness of the school building. They are diligent about putting waste in the trash basket, especially in the cafeteria. This behavior is so well exhibited that the school manages to operate without a janitorial staff. With very little guidance from teachers, students assemble and disassemble the space that is used for morning meetings, which helps to make the process go smoothly each day.

2. Parents and other community members actively engage in the educational process and provide valuable resources for the school.

There is ample evidence that school leaders create a variety of opportunities to get parents and community partners involved in the life of the school. For example, parents are invited to have breakfast and lunch with their children during the school day and many take advantage of the open invitation. School leaders use morning meetings as a way to acknowledge parents who are in the building. MCCPS views parents as educational partners, as evidenced by the high level of parental involvement in the development of the ILPs and their frequent communication with teachers and administrators. By doing this, that staff at MCCPS seems to reinforce the message that parents are valued and welcomed in the school. This was confirmed by a parent who said, “[MCCPS] is a refreshing change from the public school where we were literally made to feel we checked our kids at the door.”

Parents and community members have many opportunities to volunteer in the school. Some of them volunteer as helpers in the school’s cafeteria and as instructors for enrichment classes. Others, like the fathers who help students in the seventh grade build blanket chests for their colonial projects, volunteer in classrooms to help students complete their projects.

3. The mission of supporting learning through a strong community is clearly evident in the daily life at the school.

Marblehead Community Charter Public School has been successful in making its mission to “*create partnerships among community members that help students reach their highest intellectual, social, and physical potential*” real throughout the school. Teachers, parents and administrators all say that they are part of a community that actively supports student learning. For parents, the fact that the school extends a standing invitation and creates many opportunities

for them to get involved in the life of the school is evidence that MCCPS values their role in the education of their children. As a result, they are able to build strong relationships with teachers and administrators, serving to reinforce the sense of community throughout the school.

For teachers, administrators and Board members, the constant professional dialogue, the ongoing support from each other, the active role in the decision-making process and the strong partnership with parents and other community members are the key ingredients that make up the culture and group identity at Marblehead Community Charter Public School. For them, teaching and learning is a shared experience that serves to enhance student learning in the school.

The fact that students can talk easily about the ways in which the school supports their learning is testament that MCCPS has achieved its mission. For example, they can explain that standards-based assessment and instruction is designed to help them develop a true picture of their growth and development as learners and as individuals. They can describe the level of mastery they need to demonstrate in order to meet grade level benchmarks. Students also know that the partnership that exists between their parents and teachers is designed to help them become better learners. From conversations with students, team members further surmised that students also understand that they play an important role in their education. They talked about the importance of completing their assignments on time, asking for extra help from teachers, and supporting each other in the classroom – all of which are key elements that are included in the goals in the school's accountability plan.

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

- 1. The school has not submitted a proposed accountability plan with specific goals and benchmarks for 2005/2010 charter. The renewal application provides a framework for a new accountability plan and the school states that it is waiting for approval of this framework by the Charter School Office.**

The Head of School informed team members that the school used a grant it received from the Charter School Office in 2000 to create the framework that would be the basis for its 2005-2010 accountability plan. According to him, the school is waiting for feedback from the Charter School Office as to how they can include goals and benchmarks that reflect the qualitative assessments that are being used at the school. The Head of School made the case that due to the standards-based nature of the curriculum and assessment system at MCCPS, school leaders will not always be able to provide quantitative data on student progress towards school-wide benchmarks. As a result, school leaders would like to have a section in the new accountability plan in which they can document the qualitative results that demonstrate student progress towards school-wide academic goals and benchmarks.

2. Leadership at MCCPS demonstrates effective and participatory decision making and has the capacity to guide the school in a new charter term.

The leadership at Marblehead Community Charter is very strong. Both the administrators and members of the Board of Trustees have worked very hard during the term of the charter to put systems in place that support teaching and learning at the school. The positive working relationship that exists among the various stakeholders in the school makes it possible for them to take a shared approach to problem solving. This is evident in the fact that they were able to work successfully together to make changes to the school's structure that allowed for the admittance of fourth graders to the school; actively participate in fundraising efforts to help cover the cost of the academic program as well as the school's expansion plans; and raise the MCAS mathematics scores of sixth graders in the school. As a result, team members believe that the school leaders have the expertise to guide the future direction of the school.

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT

Marblehead Community Charter Public School Renewal			
DAY 1 Nov. 15		DAY 4 Nov. 18	
		7:30 – 8:15	Feedback to leadership
		8:15 – 12:00	Follow-up class visits and interviews
12:30	Team meets at the school	12:00 – 4:00	Team meeting
1:00 – 3:00	Meeting among team members		
3:00 – 4:30	Meeting team and school leadership team		
4:30 – 6:00	Meeting among team members	4:30	Approximate time for final feedback

DAY 2 Nov. 16					DAY 3 Nov. 17			
Time	Team Member				Team Member			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
7:30 – 8:00	Feedback to leadership	at 7:45 Com. Mtng	at 7:45 Com. Mtng	Feedback to leadership	Board Int.			Board Int.
8:00 – 8:30		5- Adv CO		7- Adv CO	Board Int.	4-5 Stud. Int	4-5 Stud. Int	Board Int.
8:30 – 9:15	TI-Sped Coord.	5th G.L.	4 - CO	TI- SSC 4-5	Feedback to leadership	5-TI	7th G.L	8 – Math CO
9:15 – 10:00	8-CO Humanities	5-TI	5- Inclusion Specialist	8- TI Tech Coord./Math 1 hour		4-TI	6 - CO	8- CO Math
10:00 – 10:30	8-TI				6-7 Stud Int	8 Stud Int	8 Stud Int	6-7 Stud Int
10:30 – 11:15	8-TI	5- CO	6- CO	6- CO	TI - CSL	6th G.L.	6-TI	7 CO
11:15 – 12:00	7- CO	Music (Gr 8) CO	4-TI	7- CO	7- CO	4- CO	6-TI	Art (Gr 4) CO
12:00 – 1:00	Team Meeting/Lunch				Team Meeting/Lunch			
1:00 – 1:45	7-TI	5- CO	4- CO	7- TI	8- CO Science			TI - Art
1:45 – 2:30	4- CO	TI - Music	8- TI	7- French CO		5 - CO	6- CO	
2:30 – 3:15					5 - CO	Parents		Parents

Abbreviations: Prin int/Principal interview. TI/teacher interview. SI/student interview. TG teacher group interview. AI administrative interview. SSC/Student services coordinator. CO/classroom observation.