

# Renewal Inspection Report

**MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER HIGH  
SCHOOL (MATCH)  
BOSTON, MA**

SchoolWorks

April 13-16, 2004

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>About the renewal process</b>	3
<b>How to read this report</b>	3
<b>Team members</b>	4
<b>Setting</b>	5
<b>Findings</b>	7
<b>Appendix A: Schedule of the visit</b>	22

### **About the renewal process and site visit report**

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

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

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

### **How to read this report**

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

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

## RENEWAL INSPECTION TEAM

**Bill Wibel:** Project Manager, SchoolWorks. Bill is a former middle and elementary school principal in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He most recently was a Visiting Practitioner at the Harvard Principals' Center. He taught at the middle level and elementary level for 10 years. He is a founding Board member of the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School. Bill has worked as a consultant for SchoolWorks, conducting Charter School Inspections in Massachusetts and New York, providing technical assistance to Charter Schools, as well as conducting DOE reviews of underperforming schools.

**Emilys Pena:** Emilys worked for Boston Public Schools for 10 years. She taught Bilingual Special Needs students K-6 and became a Literacy Specialist at the middle school level before moving to the high school level as Assistant Headmaster in charge of Teaching and Learning. Mrs. Peña has been involved as a teacher and principal of numerous summer programs targeting students who wish to gain entrance into Boston Exam Schools. She has worked as a consultant for SchoolWorks for over 3 years, conducting Charter School Inspections in Massachusetts and New York, as well as DOE reviews of underperforming and exemplary schools.

**David Lockwood:** Examiner/Field Program Coordinator, Office of Educational Quality & Accountability. David has over seven years of experience as a teacher and department chair in public education. For the past two years, Mr. Lockwood has been an examiner for the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality & Accountability. He is a member of the National Science Teachers Association and has been published in the *Advances In Physiology Education*.

**Dominique Astier,** Consultant, SchoolWorks. Dominique taught French and Spanish and served various administrative roles at the middle and high school level for 14 years. She now works as a consultant, conducting Charter School inspections and DOE reviews of underperforming and exemplary schools in Massachusetts and New York, as well as developing and guiding the execution of new curricula and programs.

## Setting

The Media and Technology Charter High School (MATCH) opened in August 2000 with a mission to provide its first 80 students an opportunity to succeed in an academic environment of high expectations, consistent rules and consequences, and strong adult supports. The students come from the urban Boston neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury Mattapan, Hyde Park and Allston-Brighton. Seventy five percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced school lunch. For 2003-2004, the school enrolls 169 students in grades 9–12. The majority come from homes where they will be the first to apply and enroll in college.

Following its first year housed in a temple on Beacon Street, the school purchased a building on Commonwealth Avenue for a permanent facility in the Allston-Brighton area of Boston. During the current 2003-2004 school year, the student population is 64 percent African American, 28 percent Hispanic and 5 percent white. There were no identified limited English proficient students in the population. In 2003-2004, 9 percent of the population was identified as having special needs.

Parent participation and satisfaction are key to accomplishing the school's mission and vision. Parent opinions are sought through the Annual Parent Satisfaction Index. In a recent parent satisfaction poll, parents gave MATCH school an overall mean rating of 8.9 points out of a possible 10. Parent perception of teaching received a rating of 9.2 points on a scale of 1–10, identical to the previous year. Parents work with the MATCH School Parent Advisory Council to provide input to the administration around programs supporting the mission of the school.

In 2002-2003, 15 students (8%) withdrew for a variety of reasons, including moving, continued misconduct, repeated academic failure, and personal reasons. There are currently 400 students on the waiting list. Students chosen from a lottery are accepted at MATCH School only through December of a student's 9<sup>th</sup> grade year.

The professional staff at MATCH School has grown as grades have been added to the school to arrive at the current complement of twelve (FTE) classroom teachers, five (part time), three and a half academic support staff (consisting of counselors and special educators), and an administrative team comprised of a CEO, Business Manager, Executive Director and principal. Of the seven original founding teachers, five are still employed at the school.

The educational program includes a math sequence of algebra, geometry, statistics, and trigonometry with calculus for some students. In English/ Language Arts, students explore English literature, language, and composition in many media, and American and world history in social studies. Spanish is taught to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade Media and Technology classes focus on the development of skills to aid students in their ability to use technology effectively to present their research and writing in other academic courses. The MATCH School uses the Degree of Reading Power test to all students every year to assess reading proficiency and administers the state mandated MCAS tests. Assorted teacher-developed assessments and end of unit projects complement the standardized assessments as tools to monitor student progress.

The mission of MATCH School – to prepare students for success in college and beyond-- is embedded in school documents and posted throughout the school. A Board of Trustees, currently comprised of ten members, provides oversight for the school. The Board includes former and current educators as well as community members, all of whom bring experience and expertise to the Board. Three of the ten current Board members are among the school's founders. The majority of the school's operating budget (64%) is supported through state per pupil tuition; MATCH received an additional \$425,000 in federal entitlement dollars. The Board participates actively in a number of fundraising activities to augment the school's anticipated revenue.

MATCH engages with community and business partners to provide equipment, time and other in-kind support that assist in maintaining and continually improving a sustainable high-quality education program for students. Partners include Boston University, Boston College and MIT, Sun Microsystems, Akamai Technologies, Merrill Lynch and the Nellie Mae Foundation.

## FINDINGS

In order to gather sufficient evidence to write the following report, the Charter School Renewal Inspection Team (team) spent three and a half days at MATCH. The team conducted 18 classroom observations across content areas and individually interviewed 22 staff members. Focus group interviews also took place with school leaders, three trustees, parents and students.

Documentation examined by the team included scope & sequence materials for English, math, science and history, the current and proposed accountability plans, student demographic data, student progress reports, parent satisfaction surveys, code of conduct handbook, and student work samples.

### RENEWAL QUESTION 1: IS THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

1. **MATCH students have exceeded the performance of the sending district in reaching proficiency for two consecutive years in the ELA and Math MCAS.**

#### MCAS MATCH School, Grade 10 Comparison of School with District and State Performance

GRADE 10		n	(SS) PI- 2003	A	P	NI	W
<b>ELA</b>							
2002	School	50	240	6	48	40	6
	District	3,658	231	9	25	30	36
	State		242	19	40	27	13
2003	School	37	79.7	5	51	38	5
	District	4,031	66.7	9	27	34	30
	State			20	41	28	12
<b>MATH</b>							
2002	School	50	233	8	26	48	18
	District	3,954	227	12	12	24	52
	State		237	20	20	31	25
2003	School	37	85.5	38	35	16	11
	District	4,128	52.7	20	17	27	36
	State			24	27	28	21

N = number of students tested SS = Average scaled score PI = Proficiency Index  
A = Advanced P = Proficient NI = Needs Improvement W = Warning

### MCAS GRADE 10 ANALYSES

In the categories of Advanced and Proficient combined, MATCH outperformed Boston Public Schools—its sending district—two years in a row in both ELA and math. For the 2002 administration, Advanced and Proficient scores in ELA for MATCH were 54 percent compared

to Boston’s 34 percent. In 2003, 56 percent of MATCH students reached the highest categories in ELA compared with 36 percent of Boston students as a whole.

A significantly greater percentage of MATCH students reached the highest performance levels in 2003 compared with 2002. In 2003, 73 percent attained the Advanced and Proficient categories compared with 34 percent in 2002. District scores in the same categories were 24 percent (2002) and 37 percent (2003).

The school outperformed the state in 2003 with 63 percent scoring Advanced and Proficient as compared to 51 percent statewide.

MATCH has reduced the number of students scoring in the Warning and Needs Improvement categories each year in both ELA and math.

**MCAS  
MATCH School  
2003 Mid-Cycle AYP Report**

<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>				
Student Group	Participation	Performance	Attendance	AYP 2003
	N	CPI	%	
Aggregate	37	79.7	94.9	Yes
Afr Amer /Black	23	81.5	95.3	Yes
Free Lunch	30	75.8	94.5	Yes
<b>MATH</b>				
Student Group	Participation	Performance	Attendance	AYP 2003
	N	CPI	%	
Aggregate	37	85.8	94.9	Yes
Afr Amer /Black	23	82.6	95.3	Yes
Free Lunch	30	85.0	94.5	Yes

**MCAS AYP ANALYSIS**

MATCH made adequate yearly progress (AYP) as reported on the 2003 Mid-Cycle Report. The student groups with statistically significant scores are African American and students on Free/Reduced Lunch. African American students’ ELA proficiency index score is 81.5; math proficiency index score is 82.6. Students who qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch scored 75.8 in ELA and 85.0 in math.

- 2. Students reading scores based on the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment have increased over time when looking at aggregate gain; however, a**

**closer look at individual student scores reveal that not all students are meeting the goal of 1.5 gains per year.**

While the students at MATCH have met the school's defined target based on the average across the entire population, it is important to recognize that individual student performance does not always meet the target gains. The school's target is demanding since students entering the school fall below ninth grade performance levels.

**Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)  
MATCH School  
June 2000-June 2003  
Class scores and Year to year Gain**

Cohorts by class	6/2000	6/2001	Aggregate Gain	6/2002	Aggregate Gain	6/2003	Aggregate Gain	Overall Aggregate Gain
Class of 2004	53.4	57.7	4.3	63.8	6.1	65.1	1.3	11.7
Class of 2003		49.8		56.3	6.4	61.6	4.9	11.4
Class of 2002				51.1		57.3	6.2	6.2

The Degrees of Reading Power Tests are holistic measures of how well students understand the meaning of text. Test results are reported on a reliability scale – the same scale used to measure reading difficulty of printed material. The DRP Grade Equivalency Scores are as follows:

DRP Grade Equivalents	DRP Scores
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	42-44
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45-49
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	50-53
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	54-56
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	56.5-58.5
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	59-60.5
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	61-61.5
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	62-63

MATCH students are expected to increase their reading scores the equivalent of a year and a half each year over the course of four years. In comparing students' aggregate post to post scores, students are making targeted gains. The class of 2004 scored 53.4 in June 2000, which is a 7<sup>th</sup> grade equivalent. The same class scored 57.7 in June 2001, which is a grade equivalent of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. A 4.3 gain is interpreted as students increasing their reading scores from a 7<sup>th</sup> grade to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade over the course of a year, which meets the year and a half gain set by the school's accountability plan.

### **3. Through cluster, department, new faculty and staff meetings, teachers create and revise the components of the academic program to meet current student needs.**

MATCH has developed a scope and sequence for all grades covering English, mathematics and science, which is mapped to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). There are curriculum materials for each subject that lay out the content that should be covered and monthly benchmarks defining objectives for student skills and knowledge. Through a variety of assessments, teachers diagnose academic strengths and weaknesses and then collaborate to revise the curriculum to meet current student needs. This collaboration takes place in cluster, department, and general staff meetings intended to give teachers a place to discuss teaching and learning. Lesson plans, scope and sequence, syllabi, midterms and finals can be stored on the shareable computer drive so that they are accessible to all teachers.

The creation of the curriculum was founded on the school's mission to have all students succeed in college. A team of faculty members examined typical freshman courses at various universities and aligned senior exit standards to them. This backward mapping continued through grades 11 through 9 so that MATCH students are exposed to the skills and knowledge expected in university courses. Three professors and two college interns volunteer their time and expertise to help guide teachers in helping students acquire the tools necessary to succeed in higher education.

Results on various assessments have driven the faculty to review and adjust the curriculum to address student weaknesses. MATCH chose to use the Degree of Reading Power (DRP), because they needed a test that covers all levels from elementary to college and that is also aligned with the MCAS. It is administered to all grades and provides some diagnostic information. The Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), which is promoted by the Department of Education, is now also being used thanks to a literacy grant. Since the average incoming ninth grade student arrives at MATCH with sixth grade reading comprehension skills, as measured by the DRP exams, it is the objective of the school to focus on reading. To this end, several programs have been put in place. First, English and history were merged into Humanities whose emphasis is writing and literature. The history component of the course has been sacrificed in an effort to spend more time on literacy. To help instill a love for reading, the school buys each student one book per month of his/her choice at Barnes & Noble; during their four years at MATCH, students will accumulate 40 books. Third, all 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders spend four hours per week, distributed over the five days, reading in Sustained Silent Reading periods. These and other literacy strategies are intended to target the school's three principal reading challenges: 1) to move students who struggle at decoding words to basic fluency; 2) to move students with basic fluency to basic comprehension; and 3) to move students with basic comprehension to college-level comprehension. To date, the administration acknowledges that they have done well with the second challenge but need to improve the other two. To do this, teachers spend time discussing the level of challenge of assigned reading, how much students actually attempt to read and how much they comprehend. Answers to these questions are explored through the principal reviewing assigned reading and teachers using quizzes for every reading assignment.

The accountability plan states that only 20 percent of MATCH students arrive having passed their 8<sup>th</sup> grade math MCAS in their former middle schools. In its quest to equip them with the math skills necessary for college, the school has created a math proficiency test that is administered, in different versions, three times during ninth grade to test fundamental skills. Along with the final exam, students must pass this proficiency test to proceed to 10<sup>th</sup>-grade. At MATCH, a 70 percent grade is required for passing (D is not passing). Each student receives one-on-one tutoring from college students, retired teachers, or trained mid-career volunteers in math and English to supplement class instruction and to address individual needs. This component, which is a significant aspect of the MATCH experience, will be discussed later in this report.

On a daily basis, teachers use “Do Now” and “Ticket to Leave” assessments to determine the level of student understanding. “Do Now” is a five-minute quiz or activity given at the beginning of class that tests material learned the previous day. “Ticket to Leave” is a quiz or activity given at the end of class that tests the material presented that day. In almost all class observations, Team members witnessed these quick checks used by teachers to assess student achievement and to indicate potential need for revisions to the instruction or to the curriculum.

Keeping the goal of preparing students for success in college in the forefront, teachers and the administration collaborate to find ways to close gaps in learning. This collaboration occurs in a number of venues. Some occurs one-on-one between individual teachers and department heads or the principal; some occurs in groups, including clusters by subject and grades, departments, and with groups of new teachers. Prior to the first day of school, the principal sits down with each teacher to review his/her syllabus, personal goals and any new ideas that are to be implemented, such as weekly written lesson plans due each week. Throughout the year, the principal continues to meet weekly with teachers to discuss their classes, students, progress on their goals, concerns, etc. The Spanish teacher, for example, consulted with the principal to ensure the new language program she had researched met state requirements. She also sought his opinion on adding cultural issues and a Latin American history component to her classes through films.

Typically, teachers meet with their department for 2-3 hours each week and for 1-2 hours in cluster meetings. Fridays are half-days for students and provide the opportunity for teachers to come together. Mandatory regular staff meetings take place every Friday from 3-4 p.m. Cluster and department leaders schedule their own meetings, create agendas and ensure minutes are taken. A Board member who volunteers frequently at the school serves as the school wide coordinator for all cluster and subject department meetings, answering questions, reviewing notes and agendas and attending as many meetings as possible. The primary focus of department and cluster meetings is curriculum and student progress, but a number of issues ranging from data analysis to the code of conduct are typically presented for discussion by both faculty and administration members. Common themes among classes arise as a result of teachers’ conversations. One example is the Spanish and English teachers realizing that students’ difficulty understanding the difference between adjectives and adverbs in Spanish was related in part to their not understanding the difference between them in English. This drove the Humanities department to form a language lab to assist students with sentence structure. A second example of collaboration between teachers is a multimedia project using HTML. In their

technology class, students used advanced HTML skills to create a web site and a 2-minute presentation that features one of their Humanities essays.

The principal conducts meetings for new teachers twice a month for one hour. During these sessions, teachers have the opportunity to address issues specific to them and discuss strategies to manage them. They also receive homework, such as articles about classroom management, teaching disadvantaged children and special education students.

As a result of much research and conversations with colleagues, MATCH leaders have concluded that it is more beneficial to have a multi-text approach and avoid the limitations of single textbooks. Some courses, such as science and U.S. History do use primary textbooks supplemented by other resources, but most use teacher-selected and/or teacher-created materials driven by the school's scope and sequence. The Internet, media and other supports are also used to enhance instruction. While teachers acknowledged in interviews that developing their own materials creates a lot of work for them, they uniformly agreed that they appreciated the freedom to bring in their own expertise and ideas to the classroom rather than be bound by a sole textbook.

## **RENEWAL QUESTION 2: IS THE SCHOOL A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?**

- 1. As a result of a strong and dedicated administrative team, the school's mission permeates all aspects of the culture of MATCH. Their mission of students succeeding in college and beyond is enabled by effective leadership in the areas of clear priorities, financial decisions, community support, communication, and staff commitment to high academic expectations.**

The MATCH administrative team consists of a principal, a CEO and an executive director. The principal, a former Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, oversees all day-to-day academic affairs, including teacher guidance and support, curriculum and student/parent relations. The CEO, who wrote the school's charter, focuses on new initiatives and strategic change, while the executive director, a former Massachusetts deputy commissioner for administration and policy, oversees all day-to-day organizational affairs, including fundraising, after-hours tutoring, university and DOE relationships, and business management. Their combined expertise and genuine passion for their work generate a leadership that is effective and respected. Board members, teachers and parents interviewed by the team expressed their appreciation for and faith in these three individuals. In all meetings with the administration, the team saw the mutual admiration and respect the principal, CEO and executive director have for one another, and these radiate throughout the school, giving it a strong foundation.

When asked by team members to articulate the school's mission, all stakeholders could do so without hesitation. All that occurs at MATCH is grounded in the goal of preparing students to enter and succeed in college. The administration, in collaboration with the staff, Board and parents, have set forth clear priorities that facilitate the realization of their mission. Three values pervade the culture of the school: courage, perseverance, and discipline. They are considered the pillars that sustain the MATCH mission. Students are given a list of "non-negotiables" at the beginning of the year that serve to instill these values in their thinking and behavior. These

“non-negotiables” include attending school daily and on time; respecting all community members and property; being focused on learning; and doing all assigned work. School rules are collected in a Code of Conduct handbook that was developed by faculty, parents and students. Rules and consequences are continuously being reviewed and revised as necessary, but the “non-negotiables” remain constant.

Students are greeted each morning by the principal or dean of students with a handshake and asked why they are there; they are expected to answer, “to learn.” They are then asked how they will do that and answer “through courage, discipline and perseverance.” At the end of the day, upon exiting the school, they are addressed individually, once again, and asked what they learned. Team members heard several of these interactions that also included personal comments that reflected knowledge of each student’s situation and corresponding care and support.

The administration surveys the staff annually on their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This data is then used to set priorities for the next year and create action plans. In reviewing these plans, team members saw the mission reflected in all concerns and ensuing strategies. It is also clear in these plans and in interviews that leaders not only seek faculty input in decision-making but respect views different from their own, all while holding teachers accountable for keeping the mission central.

The principal, CEO and executive director have put together a Board of Trustees that supports the aims and mission of the school. The MATCH school has 11 members on its Board who represent backgrounds in business, law and school reform. They serve indefinite terms and have remained constant with the exception of two trustees who left due to time pressures. In their focus group interview, they told the team that their long-term goal is to ensure that all is in place so that students can be successful in higher education. They intend to interview students next year, after they have been in college for a semester, and learn about their experience. There are several sub-committees that help enable the mission and these include finance, development (grants, fund-raising, facilities), CEO evaluation, and college success initiative. The Board receives information about the school’s academic program through weekly e-mails, phone calls, discussions with leaders, and examination of testing data. While they told the team that they rely on the administration to run the school, they stay abreast of all developments, offer suggestions and provide a network of people who can support the school.

In the area of finances, the budget is by design a document to support the operation of the facility, teaching and learning. The school is very focused on the grant monies that support the mission, and all financial decisions, as presented to the team in budget documents and in interviews are made to preserve the MATCH core goal of providing students with the necessary skills and attitudes to pursue advanced degrees. The Board, as well as the business manager and CEO, carefully monitor the expenditures of the school so that they are able to provide adequate resources without incurring an unreasonable level of debt. The school has a student-run Sprint store on its premises in which students can elect to participate. The money they raise goes directly to college tuition funds and most students have been able to save about \$2,000 in two years. When faced with the same 11.6 percent funding cut that affected all public schools, charter and district, in Boston, MATCH chose to cut or reduce enrichment programs and

technology integration so as to maintain small class sizes, focus on literacy, and continue after-hours academic support.

Two programs mentioned above, the Barnes & Noble book gifts and the Sustained Silent Reading periods are good examples of how MATCH makes budgetary decisions with the mission in mind. When the school determined, as a result of low DRP and MCAS reading scores, that their primary focus had to be literacy, they budgeted and established these programs to increase the amount of time students spend reading and to foster in them a love for books.

MATCH partners with several community affiliates to help them achieve their goals. Colleges, such as Emerson and Boston University provide tutors at a very low cost; M.I.T. and the Nellie Mae Foundation sponsor a summer academy that pairs university tutors with at-risk students; The Home for Little Wanderers has provided a full time social worker for the past four years; and Metro Lacrosse provides a turnkey lacrosse program that includes uniforms and equipment.

Throughout the team's visit, members heard about and witnessed open communication among all stakeholders. Formal and informal conversations and written communication take place across all levels: the Board and administration, the administration and staff, administration and parents, staff and parents, staff and students. The mission is reflected, sometimes more vividly than other times, in all interactions. "Our mission is better viewed than read," said one administrator, and that statement became evident as the team walked around the school.

Posted on walls in classrooms and in the hallways are quotes about courage, perseverance and discipline, college acceptances, honor roll, the mission statement, and photographs of students interacting with teachers. The mission is communicated at each Friday assembly, on the school's answering machine, at orientation, in the Code of Conduct and as an answer to students' question, "why do we have to do this?" Teachers told the Team that the mission was made very clear to them when they were hired; expectations were also clear, as was the fact, said one teacher, that they "would be supported and would not be left alone on a raft."

In their focus group, the four parents present told the team that they feel welcome at MATCH and that they have a two-way dialogue with teachers. They also said the administration is very accessible and encourages them to voice their opinions and concerns. "The school really wants parents on the team," said one mother. Parents are kept informed through a variety of means, including regular Parent Night Meetings, the Parent Advisory Council, which meets monthly with the principal, student progress reports eight times per year and frequent phone calls. It is stated in the school's application for renewal of their charter that parents receive an average of 2.9 phone calls per month from the principal and 2.3 phone calls per month from teachers. In a 2003 telephone survey of 52 parents, overall satisfaction with the school was measured at 8.9 on a scale of 1-10. Most criticism concerns the school's strict rules and grading system; however, parents in the focus group told the team that they feel the school is merely setting the foundation on which to develop successful college-bound students.

All faculty members interviewed by the team said they feel they have a voice at the school. They give their input in decisions and are consulted before change is made. They are committed to holding students to high expectations and feel supported by the administration, especially by

the principal, in this endeavor. One teacher said in an interview: “I realize that I am looking in a mirror. I did not expect to be challenged personally.” The principal is perceived as a role model, and the teachers appreciate and respect his feedback. Rather than do one formal observation per year, he goes into each class several times a week for 5-10 minutes. Teachers told the team that the comments and suggestions he gives via e-mail or meetings after these visits are extremely useful and guide them to improve their instruction. New teachers are visited more often and receive additional support as necessary. In addition, the principal sends a memo via e-mail to each faculty member with the week’s schedule, general notes about his class observations and conversations with teachers, and an article about teaching. A constant reminder to teachers to visit one another’s classes is also listed, and the principal offers to substitute so that this can happen.

- 2. In their quest to provide students with the tools necessary to succeed in high school, college and beyond, MATCH provides an extensive system of supports tailored to individual needs. These supports include one-on-one tutoring, teacher tutorials, homework labs, summer programs, and a dedicated staff in the areas of special education, college counseling, and guidance.**

It was evident to the team in the review of curricula, class observations and interviews that MATCH teachers have high expectations for all their students. For those students needing some extra help, “we offer the necessary support to enable them to access the intended curriculum rather than water down content,” stated a teacher. When asked for whom she thought the school was most successful, one veteran teacher said she thought it was “for students who have never been challenged but want to be, as well as for those lazy students who, for the first time, are being forced to step up to the challenge. These students really shine.” The staff and administration have established a variety of services that support all students both in and out of class.

One-on-one tutoring is mandatory for all students. After researching the benefits of individual tutoring based on its experience early in its charter term, MATCH increased the amount of tutoring ninth and tenth-graders receive per year. Ninth and tenth graders receive a mandatory eight hours of tutoring a week for 25 weeks, which amounts to 200 hours per year. A core of work-study students from local universities, volunteer professionals and staff members serve as tutors. They receive individual curriculum guides for each student that include skills-building in math, reading and writing. Tenth graders also work on preparing for MCAS success. Eleventh graders have 50 hours of SAT preparation, and twelfth graders have about 100 hours of college tutoring. Tutors evaluate student performance at each session and keep a journal where they answer questions about the quality of the lesson they gave, concerns they have about student progress and ways in which they believe they can improve. Tutees also evaluate their tutors after each session on a form that asks for strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, comments about the tutor, and goals for the session. These sheets are reviewed by the directors of the after-school program who are responsible for coordinating the schedule, recruiting tutors, performing background checks, leading orientation and training, communicating with parents, and addressing any issues that arise in this program.

To ensure that students have the necessary knowledge and skills to progress to subsequent courses, teachers hold them to high standards. Students must earn a 70 percent or higher to pass an exam or a course. They are consistently held to this standard and must attend Homework Lab after school if they fail a test or are in danger of failing a course. There, students complete homework, read, study and catch up on missed work. Teachers also offer tutorials once or twice a week. Students who demonstrate weak understanding on “Do Now” activities, quizzes or tests are required to attend, but any student is welcome. Rather than be reactive, the school chooses to be proactive in preventing student failure.

Through M.I.T., MATCH has a summer program in July and August that generally serves 75 students per year. In addition to all new ninth graders, students in any grade who fail only one class must attend this summer school and pass an exam at the end of the term to advance to the next grade. Students who fail two or more classes during the year must attend summer school and also repeat the grade. Ninth grade students who must repeat the grade have the option to apply for a 9Y program that enables them to repeat only those subjects they failed. The application for this program has strict criteria that include completing a written pre-admission essay and passing all classes in the first term.

The faculty is comprised of dedicated subject area teachers, SPED instructors, a social worker, a senior year coordinator, and a college counselor. Together, this group works to provide students with ample opportunities to obtain the knowledge, guidance and the confidence necessary to achieve the mission. Teachers emit confidence in students’ abilities in their conversations with them and about them, in comments written on assignments and progress reports and in the manner in which they teach new material. In classroom observations, team members heard positive reinforcement, a respectful tone, encouraging feedback and non-wavering high expectations. In their focus group, students said they feel very supported by their teachers who “keep on top of the work and don’t give up on us.” Teachers give out their home phone numbers and e-mail addresses and encourage students to contact them.

Most instruction observed by the team was teacher-centered and at a challenging pace that, nonetheless, allowed for student questions, clarification and checks for understanding. In no class did the team see students allowed to be invisible; everyone was engaged to varying degrees of interest. Those students who tended to sit quietly and be uninvolved were brought into the discussion by the teacher who called on them for answers. All classes have similar structures in place: “Do Nows” at the beginning of class; goals/aims written on the board; consistent application of consequences for not doing assigned work or for breaking a non-negotiable rule; and “Tickets to Leave” at the end of class.

Roughly 10 percent of the student population at MATCH is considered to have special needs and is given pull-out and inclusion services. All teachers participate in professional development that provides guidance on how to teach diverse learners. The SPED department devises accommodations for mainstream students and gives teachers strategies to help all students access the same curriculum. An example of such an accommodation was a quiz in a Humanities class. The teacher gave alternate forms of a vocabulary test where students had to fill in the blank with the correct word. One test had complete blanks while the other had the first two letters of the word as a hint. Another example occurred during a math pull-out class observation. A team

member attended a lesson on finding the perpendicular distance between the vertex and the base of a pyramid. The teacher presented step-by-step explanations and probed students with questions that allowed the students to discover the answer. As evidence that all students have access to the same curriculum, another team member observed a regular geometry class where the same concept was being taught.

All SPED students at MATCH have passed the grade 10 MCAS, required for graduation, and all except one have passed the MCAS at the proficient level. In their focus group, parents expressed great satisfaction with the school's approach to special education. They told the team that the SPED department takes the time to discover what each individual student needs and provides whatever supports he/she requires to succeed. They also said they appreciate the regular communication they receive from the school about their children and the "culture of support and acceptance" that exists.

In their continued quest to enable the mission, MATCH hired a college counselor and a senior-year director. The college counselor is responsible for the entire college search and acceptance process. She organizes college visits, takes students to college fairs, helps them with applications, works closely with parents and holds college information nights for families. She said in her interview that she makes it clear to students that "college is a match to be made and not a prize to be won." She also collaborates with the senior-year director whose role is to coordinate senior schedules and courses taken at universities, establish relationships with local professors, and provide weekly lectures about university life where Boston University professors often come to talk about their classes. Due to the school's stability and strong academic performance, as well as to the relationships built with the senior director, professors accept MATCH students in their courses for no tuition and even offer extended office hours to help them. The senior director also teaches a class called "great minds" that serves as an umbrella for college skills, such as note-taking, capturing the main points in a lecture, etc.

Along with the college counselor and senior year director, MATCH has a full-time social worker to support students as they prepare to realize the mission of the school. She is contracted through The Home for Little Wanderers and works with students and teachers on behavior management; speaks and listens to students about personal circumstances affecting their lives; and is sought at times by the administration for advice on how to deal with certain issues.

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

- 1. Although there are multiple versions of the mission, there is a common understanding among all stakeholders that its core is to have students succeed in college and beyond.**

The wording of the MATCH mission varies somewhat in school documents; however, its essence, stated as follows in the 2001-2005 accountability plan, is constant: “The Media and Technology Charter High (MATCH) School prepares Boston students to succeed in college and beyond, including and especially those students who have not been led to expect a university education. The college graduation rate among inner-city students nationally (and in Boston) is below 10%. Our mission is to reverse that underachievement.”

All aspects of the school are designed to fulfill this mission: a 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum that is mapped backward from college prerequisites; a capable staff dedicated to student success; and a system of supports that is proactive in preventing failure. Through interviews, observations and document reviews, the team saw clear evidence that MATCH is adhering to its mission.

- 2. Match has had varied success in meeting the academic performance goals defined in its accountability plan.**

The school uses two independent assessments as a primary measure of performance to benchmark student progress both internally over time and against students outside of the school. The Degree of Reading Power (DRP) test is administered yearly to all students and tracks their progress toward grade level reading skills. The MCAS exam is used primarily to measure student progress compared with the rest of the state. One of the MATCH School’s academic performance goals is that “all students will read at or above grade level by the end of their senior year.” Since the average incoming 9<sup>th</sup>-grader arrives at MATCH with 6<sup>th</sup>-grade reading skills, each student must gain an average of 1.5 grade levels per year over 4 years on the DRP exam. The school-wide results of the DRP, as stated in the annual report, indicate that students are achieving this goal; however, a closer look at the data indicates that not every student met that goal.

MATCH has set two performance objectives for students at the end of tenth grade. First, that they “master algebra and geometry, as well as master basic math skills missed in middle school;” and second, that they “be able to write a cohesive 5-paragraph essay with a clear thesis, 3 developing paragraphs, and a strong conclusion, with solid control of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage.” One of their measures for both of these objectives is the MCAS exam on which they want to “boost all students by at least 10 points from their 8<sup>th</sup> grade math [ELA] MCAS baseline to their 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS.” This measurement was exceeded in both cases; however, a more specific measure, such as the writing portion of the MCAS for the essay quality goal, would allow for a better gauge of the attainment of the objectives.

**3. Match has met or is close to meeting its organizational viability goals of eradicating social promotion, providing information to parents, and creating a positive learning environment.**

The school's first organizational viability objective is to "stop social promotion (where students are routinely promoted from grade to grade even without having necessary academic skills for that grade level)." Twenty-eight percent of students were retained in 2001-2002, and 20 percent were retained in 2002-2003. This higher pass rate may indicate better remediation or an increase in grade inflation; to ensure that it is the latter, MATCH has mapped clearer exit standards for each grade for the 2003-2004 school year. Ninth graders must pass the ELA and math MCAS, and they must pass at least three of their four core classes with a C to go into the next grade.

The second organizational viability goal is to "provide specific, useful, timely information to parents about their children's academic improvement, strengths, and weaknesses." To measure this, parents were surveyed about their satisfaction with the school on a 1-10 scale. In 2002-2003, parents rated MATCH as 8.9. In 2001-2002, the school earned an overall mean rating of 9.3 points on a parent survey created with the identical methodology. The most recent mean score represents a decline in satisfaction of 0.4 points, which is not statistically significant. In their focus group, parents highly praised the school's communication efforts. Parents receive information through Parent Night meetings four times per year, regular phone calls from teachers and the principal, regular written progress reports and the Parent Handbook.

The third organizational viability objective is to "create an ideal environment for learning. This would include: five or fewer fights all year; no weapons, drugs, vandalism; 95% daily attendance." The school met this goal both in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, partly due to the Code of Conduct, which has explicit rules and consequences. Students, parents and faculty members told the team they feel the school is very safe and the environment is conducive to learning.

To "remain viable as measured by parent demand" is the fourth organizational viability objective. Parent demand for students to attend MATCH has remained high as indicated from the number of applications received. The 2004-2005 year waiting list currently has 400 students and continues to grow.

The school's objective that "all MATCH school students will not only attend college but also succeed there" cannot be measured yet. However, the Board is discussing ways to track students once they go to college, such as through phone calls, e-mails, visits, and care packages. At the time of the site visit, 20 of the 23 students in the class of 2004 have been accepted to four-year colleges such as Brown, Emerson, Pine Manor, Boston College and Northeastern University.

**4. MATCH is in the process of documenting and presenting practices that may be replicable in similar schools.**

MATCH school presented extensively at the March 2002 Charter School Association Conference on facilities finance; at several meetings for the Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center; and has consulted with several Massachusetts charter schools. In addition, MATCH was one of 40 schools and districts selected to present at the 2003 National Title I

Conference in New Orleans, at which the school presented information about its tutoring program. The CEO now serves on the Mass Development Advisory Committee for charter school finance. Nearly every week, the school hosts visitors from the government or other charter schools interested in learning about MATCH. The school has also been featured in both the local and national press, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and the Boston Globe. Further, MATCH school was recently awarded a dissemination grant from the Department of Education for “Creating, Structuring, and Evaluating Cost-Effective Tutoring Programs to Bolster Math and English Skills.” MATCH will also disseminate best practices through the web, the garnering of publicity and in a handbook developed by teachers on effective tutoring and curricula for math, science, reading and writing.

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

- 1. Most of the 2005-2010 accountability plan objectives raise the expectations for student academic performance. However, some of the measures listed do not adequately represent the success of the goals.**

As a result of the administration, Board and faculty closely examining student performance and school programs, MATCH has revised the 2005-2010 accountability plan to meet identified needs. Three of the objectives in the first plan, one on social promotion, one on parent demand, and one on project portfolios, have been omitted because the school feels it has attained them and is able to sustain them. Several objectives represent growth in the school’s aims. The performance objective on reading achievement has been revised to state that students must gain an average of 2 grade levels per year, as measured by the DRP exam, as opposed to 1.5 grade levels stated in the 2001-2005 accountability plan. There are now two objectives rather than one regarding college success: 1) “All students will graduate academically and socially prepared for college,” and 2) “100% of MATCH students will attend college and succeed there.” Measures for the first include students now having to pass at least one AP exam or college course and having the average combined verbal and math SAT score rise from 900, in the first term of the charter, to 1050 in the second. To measure the second, the Board is considering ways for the school to track its graduating seniors throughout their entire college careers.

The first performance objective in the revised accountability plan is almost identical to that in the previous plan: “By the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, all students will be able to write a cohesive 5-paragraph essay with solid control of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage, and clear thesis, 3 developing paragraphs and a strong conclusion.” However, the measure used for attainment, that “MATCH students will outperform their peers in all 22 non-selective public schools serving grades 9-12 in Boston [and] 75% will score at least proficient” does not adequately provide a measure of student achievement of this objective. This same measure is used for the math achievement objective that students will master algebra and geometry. Quantifiable measures more specific to the goals would be more accurate.

**2. The strong leadership, committed staff, financial stability and new facility provide MATCH with the capacity to achieve their accountability goals. Furthermore, the mission is so embedded in the organization that the programs could endure changes.**

The governance and administrative structure at MATCH has provided the school with a variety of systems and programs for carrying out the purposes and objectives of their accountability plan. The principal serves as a leader in instruction and curriculum and holds teachers accountable for high standards and adherence to the Code of Conduct. Members of the school community spoke highly of his effectiveness in working with families, giving informative feedback to teachers and gently but firmly demanding that students and faculty strive to improve constantly. The executive director is responsible for managing the operational aspects of the school, including fundraising, after-school programming and working with the Department of Education. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that the school live up to the terms of its charter, which includes analysis of student assessment data. The separate yet flexible roles of the leaders are a valuable asset in dealing with the challenges of growth and rapid program expansion.

The teaching staff is energetic and committed to the school's mission. Twelve of 14 teachers have undergraduate degrees in an appropriate field and 10 have Master's degrees, certification in their subject area or both. Teachers are active in taking steps to grow professionally and have taken advantage of the many available professional development opportunities offered. These include conferences, workshops, visiting other schools, graduate classes, and Discourse software training in Seattle and Houston.

In each year of operation, MATCH has finished the year with a small surplus in its budget. The financial solvency and stability of the school are evident in net assets and positive cash flow in each of the fiscal years since FY01. In 2002, MATCH purchased and renovated a permanent facility that offers large, bright classrooms, wide hallways and space dedicated to whole-school events.

The mission of the school to prepare students to succeed in college and beyond resonates throughout the building. It is visible in quotes, college information, pictures and student achievement notes posted on the walls; it is explicit in school documents about curriculum, student behavior and faculty expectations; and it is heard in communication between all stakeholders. This mission is enabled by holding high academic and behavioral standards for all students. MATCH leaders understand that these expectations lead some students to leave during their career at the school; however, rather than lower its standards for promotion and relax its stringent consequences for misbehavior, the school intends to follow another path. It plans to continue to make expectations very clear to incoming students and families; and to continue offering extraordinary supports to students so that reaching the standards and achieving the mission is within their reach.

**APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE RENEWAL INSPECTION VISIT****Tuesday April 13, 2004**

	TEAM MEMBER A BILL	TEAM MEMBER B EMILYS	TEAM MEMBER C DAVID	TEAM MEMBER D DOMINIQUE
12:00	Check In			
12:30 – 3:30	Team Meeting Holiday Inn - Brookline			
3:45-4:45	Meet with School Leaders at School MATCH 1001 Commonwealth Ave Boston, MA			
5:00 – 6:00	Initial Team Meeting Team Workroom			
6:00	Team Dinner			

**Wednesday, April 14, 2004**

	TEAM MEMBER A BILL	TEAM MEMBER B EMILYS	TEAM MEMBER C DAVID	TEAM MEMBER D DOMINIQUE
7:45-8:30	Feedback with School Leadership		Meeting with Parents ( <i>Confirmed</i> )	
8:30-9:26	Observe Humanities (Gr. 11 - History) Rm. # 214 – Bob Hill	Observe Spanish (Grade 12) Paola Ferrer Big Hall	Observe Math (Gr. 10 - Geometry) Rm. # 201 Katherine Richard	Observe Humanities (Gr. 9 - English) Rm. # 101 Sara Bettencourt
9:30 – 10:26	Visit & Interview Principal Principal's Office	Interview Paola Ferrer Work Room	Document review	Observe Science (Grade 9 – Integrated) Rm. # 205 Ann Chang
10:30 – 11:26	Humanities Department Mtg Rm. # 101	Observe SPED (Pullout) Rm. # 204 Craig Sweeney	Interview Katherine Richard Rm. # 201	Humanities Department Mtg Rm. # 101
11:26 -12:04	Check in with administration to clarify any questions – Team Lunch			
12:04-1:00	Math Department Mtg in the Faculty Lounge			
1:04 – 2:00	Observe Math (Grade 9 – Math Lab) Rm. # 104 Christopher Jones	Observe English (Grade 10) Bob Hill Rm. # 214	Interview Jorge Miranda Math teacher Rm. # 218	Observe Science (Grade 10 – Biology) Rm. # 217 Glenn Liebeck
2:04 – 3:00	Observe Math (Grade 11 – Pre/Calc Advanced) Rm. # 201 Katherine Richard	Observe Grade 12 Chemistry Lab Ann Chang Room 205	Observe Math (Grade 10 – Algebra) Rm. # 102 Jorge Miranda	Document review  Observe Dismissal & End of Day Activities
3:00-3:30	Note writing; evidence sorting, Team Work Room			
3:30 – 6:00	Team Moderation Session			

**Thursday, April 15, 2004**

	TEAM MEMBER A	TEAM MEMBER B	TEAM MEMBER C	TEAM MEMBER D
7:15-7:45		Phone Interview with Bill Miller Special Ed Administrator		
7:45-8:30	Interview Board Members ( <i>Confirmed</i> )Rm#117			
8:30-9:26	Feedback to School Leaders	Observe Humanities (Grade 9 – Reading) Mark Destler Rm. # 218	Visit & Interview Financial Officer Office	Feedback to School Leaders
9:30 – 10:26	Document Review	Interview Mark Destler Room #218	Interview Media & Technology Teacher Jenica Dover Rm #202	Visit classroom of Choice
10:30-11:26	Focus Group Students with Dominique, Room 117 ( <i>Confirmed</i> )	Interview with Bob Hill Room 214	Document Review	With Bill Wibel
11:20 – 12:00	Working lunch in team room Check in with administration to clarify any questions			
12:04 – 1:00	Interview Math Teacher Christopher Jones Rm. # 104	Interview Science Teacher Ann Chang Rm. # 211	Observe Media & Technology (Grade 9) Computer Lab Jenica Dover	Document Review
1:04 – 2:00	Interview Robyn Brody Kaplan and Meredith Ing Rm. #203	Document review	Observe Math (Grade 12 – Pre Calc) Mara DeGeorge Rm. # 101	Observe Humanities (Grade 10) Bob Hill Rm #214
2:04 – 3:00	Observe Humanities (Grade 10 – English) Robyn Brody Kaplan & Meredith Ing Rm. # 203	Interview Craig Sweeney SPED Rm. # 204	Document Review	Interview Sarah Bettencourt Rm. # 103
3:00-3:30	Note writing; evidence sorting, Team Work Room			
3:30-6:00	Team Moderation Session			

**Friday, April 16, 2004**

	TEAM MEMBER A	TEAM MEMBER B	TEAM MEMBER C	TEAM MEMBER D
7:45-8:30	Feedback to School Leaders	Interview with Peter Hamel Room #211	Interview Math Teacher Mara DeGeorge Rm. # 101	Interview Science Teacher Glenn Liebeck Rm. # 217
8:30 – 9:00	Attend All School Assembly Great Hall			
9:04 – 9:44	Interview Dawn Hayes and Kimberly Burch, Tutoring Program , Tutoring Office	Interview Mini Jaikumar, Development and Amanda Griffin, Senior Year Director Room #105	Interview with Betty Brown, College Counselor, and Thais Williams, School Therapist Room #117	9:30-10:00 Observe College Tutoring (Grade 12) Room 211
9:48—10:28				TBD
11:16 – 1:00	Working lunch in team room			
1:04 – 3:00	Team Moderation			
3:00-3:30	Note writing; evidence sorting, Team Work Room			
3:30-6:00	Team Moderation Session Report Out			