

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School

Summary of Review

January 2010

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Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School

67 Middle Street

Lowell, MA 01852

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## I. Sources of Evidence for this Document

The charter school regulations state that “[t]he decision by the Board [of Elementary and Secondary Education] to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school’s academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter” 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) evaluation of the school’s performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school’s absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter. Performance is evaluated against both the [Massachusetts Charter School Common School Performance Criteria](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=criteria) and the school’s accountability plan. The evaluation of the school has included a review of the following sources of evidence, all of which are available from the Charter School Office:

* the application for renewal submitted by the school,
* the school’s annual reports for the term of the charter,
* site visit reports generated by the Charter School Office in the second and third years of the school’s charter,
* independent financial audits,
* Coordinated Program Review reports,
* the year five Renewal Inspection Report and Federal Programs Renewal Inspection Report, and
* other documentation, including amendments to the school’s charter.

The following sections present a summary from all of these sources regarding the “school’s progress and success in raising student achievement, establishing a viable organization, and fulfilling the terms of its charter” (603 CMR 1.05).

## II. Summary of Review Findings

Listed below are the findings contained in the review of the school’s performance in the three areas of accountability. Further evidence to support each finding can be found in the body of the report.

**A. Faithfulness to Charter Findings**

The school operates in a manner consistent with its mission and vision. The school has effectively implemented the social-emotional and career focused aspects of its mission.

In years past, the school focused on establishing a safe and consistent environment by providing social-emotional services to students and establishing a school-wide culture. The executive director reports that the school has begun to focus on the academic achievement portion of the mission.

LMACS has maintained a contractual relationship with Middlesex Community College (MCC) for management and financial services, as outlined in the school’s charter.

**B. Academic Program Findings**

Student MCAS performance has improved over the term of the charter. However, caution should be used when interpreting these results due to the school’s small class size.

In 2009, LMACS has no accountability status in ELA or mathematics. Given the school’s small class size, it has only received AYP determinations in two of the last four years.

During this charter term, the school has developed a set of internal standards for student learning.

The school has not been consistent in its administration of, or use of data from, external assessments. The school has recently instituted a new set of assessments to track students’ progress in reading. These assessments will be tied to school promotion standards.

Teachers create the school’s curriculum. The school’s documented curriculum addresses state standards and outlines student skill and knowledge expectations.

LMACS special education program does not offer adequate services to students with diverse needs.

The school does not employ a reliable procedure through which lesson plans are shared with the special educator. Therefore, there is limited capacity for needed curricular modifications to be made by the special education teacher in advance of the presentation of the material.

ELL program deficiencies identified in the 2007-08 CSO site visit report have been partially addressed. Policies, procedures, and qualified staff are in place to identify, assess, and serve students who require screening as potentially limited English proficient (LEP), but staff training on implementing sheltered English immersion has not been completed.

The renewal team observed that, in some cases, the documented lesson plans did not align with the instruction as implemented.

The school informally reviews the effectiveness of curriculum.

LMACS depends on qualitative information to informally review the academic program and guide instructional planning and practice. The school does not have a systematic method of using quantitative data to guide planning and practice.

LMACS has created a calm and orderly environment. Interactions between all community members are respectful. Students have internalized and reflect the behavioral norms of the school.

The discipline system is designed to meet the emotional needs of the student population.

LMACS teachers employ a variety of instructional practices. Site visitors observed a range in teacher’s abilities to deliver effective instruction. Student engagement was observed to be strong.

The quantity of feedback given to teachers, and the methods by which it is delivered, has varied during the charter term.

**C. Organizational Viability Findings**

The school received unqualified audit opinions for each year of the current charter term.

LMACS’ board of trustees and the school’s administration have implemented systems and structures that allow responsible fiscal oversight of the school. LMACS has implemented a system of internal controls based on MCC’s internal control plan.

The school has well-established budget process.

The board’s oversight of the school’s academic performance is limited. The board of trustees delegates the day-to-day management of the school to the executive director.

The board has not conducted an annual evaluation of the executive director.

School leadership has encouraged staff to participate in professional development opportunities and supports the new practice of instructional rounds.

The school works to address the challenges of enrollment and student retention.

The school would like to, but has not yet been successful in creating a formal program for tracking alumni.

Families report strong satisfaction with the school.

LMACS has created an environment that is both physically safe and free from harassment and discrimination.

The school is currently in the process of purchasing the building it occupies.

LMACS is in compliance with the requirements of the Coordinated Program Review (CPR).

Eighty-six percent of the teaching staff are highly qualified.

LMACS continues to disseminate its best practices through its work with the Project for School Innovation.

**D. Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures**

LMACS has met five of the six measures relating to faithfulness to charter in its accountability plan.

LMACS has met one of six measures in its accountability plan related to academic achievement.

## LMACS has met two out of three measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.III. School Profile

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS)* | | | |
| Type of Charter | Commonwealth | Location | Lowell |
| Regional/Non-Regional | Non-Regional | Districts in Region | NA |
| Year Opened | 1995 | Years Renewed | 2000, 2005 |
| Maximum Enrollment | 150 | Current Enrollment[[1]](#footnote-1) | 119 |
| Students on Waitlist[[2]](#footnote-2) | 19 | Grades Served | 9-12 |

### Mission Statement

“The mission of Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS) is to enable its students to achieve academic, social, and career success. This supportive school community identifies, encourages and develops interests and abilities, while acknowledging and respecting each student’s personal and cultural identity.”

### Major Amendments

The school has submitted no major amendments during this charter term.

### Demographics

The following table compares demographic data of the charter school to the Lowell and Dracut from which its draws most of its students, and to the state. The comparison includes 2 schools in the district with grade levels that overlap with the charter school.

* Comparison Minimum refers to the school(s) among the 2 schools with the lowest percentage of students in a given category.
* Comparison Median refers to the school(s) among the 2 schools with the middle percentage of students in a given category.
* Comparison Maximum refers to the school(s) among the 2 schools with the highest percentage of students in a given category.
* The Percentage of Total represents the percentage of the total number of students in a given category in all 2 schools combined.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Race/Ethnicity (%)** | African American | | Asian | | Hispanic | | White | | Native American | | Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander | | Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic |
|  | Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School | 6.3 | | 9.9 | | 27.0 | | 55.0 | | 0.0 | | 0.0 | | 1.8 |
| (2 Schools) | Comparison Minimum | 2.3 | | 4.2 | | 3.4 | | 39.1 | | 0.1 | | 0.1 | | 0.3 |
| Comparison Median | 5.5 | | 17.2 | | 12.5 | | 63.8 | | 0.1 | | 0.1 | | 0.9 |
| Comparison Maximum | 8.6 | | 30.2 | | 21.6 | | 88.5 | | 0.1 | | 0.1 | | 1.4 |
| Percentage of Total | 7.0 | | 23.5 | | 16.9 | | 51.9 | | 0.1 | | 0.1 | | 0.6 |
|  | State | 8.2 | | 5.1 | | 14.3 | | 69.9 | | 0.3 | | 0.1 | | 2.0 |
|  | **Other Demographics (%)** | | Males | | Females | | First Language Not English | | Limited English Proficient | | Special Education | | Low-Income | | |
|  | Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School | | 49.5 | | 50.5 | | 18.9 | | 0.9 | | 23.4 | | 61.3 | | |
| (2 Schools) | Comparison Minimum | | 50.3 | | 49.0 | | 2.0 | | 0.8 | | 9.2 | | 8.5 | | |
| Comparison Median | | 50.7 | | 49.4 | | 25.4 | | 13.0 | | 10.5 | | 34.3 | | |
| Comparison Maximum | | 51.0 | | 49.7 | | 48.8 | | 25.1 | | 11.7 | | 60.0 | | |
| Percentage of Total | | 50.8 | | 49.2 | | 36.7 | | 18.8 | | 11.0 | | 46.7 | | |
|  | State | | 51.4 | | 48.6 | | 15.4 | | 5.9 | | 17.1 | | 30.7 | | |

## IV. Areas of Accountability

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### A. Faithfulness to Charter

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Consistency of school operations with the school’s charter and approved charter amendments**

**The school operates in a manner consistent with the mission, vision, educational philosophy and governance and leadership structure outlined in the school’s charter and approved charter amendments.**

*Finding: The school operates in a manner consistent with its mission and vision. The school has effectively implemented the social-emotional and career focused aspects of its mission.*

Throughout the charter term, LMACS has worked towards its mission: to enable at risk students who would have otherwise dropped out of school to achieve academic, social, and career success. LMACS enrolls students ranging in age from 16 to 21 who have left their district high schools prior to graduation. LMACS aims to meet the needs of students who have accumulated very few high school credits, those who face ongoing obstacles to regular school attendance, and those who confront personal challenges.

Site visitors and the renewal inspection team observed, and administrative staff members reported, that the school has successfully established a culture in which students’ emotional needs are validated and addressed in a way that allows them to engage in academic learning. Site visit teams found that the school makes efforts to meet the varied needs of its student population by employing full time social workers and counselors, providing students with social-emotional classes as part of the curriculum, training teachers to address students’ emotional needs, having teachers serve as advisors, frequent communication with families, and by creating a family-like atmosphere. All these factors led the year thirteen site visit team to conclude that the school had achieved success “with students who frequently have had negative experience in previous, often very large, schools” (Year Thirteen Site Visit Report, p. 2). The school program is designed to provide social and emotional guidance for students. In addition to the core academic courses (English, history, mathematics, life sciences), LMACS offers classes that address the social and developmental needs of their students. Students are required to take the following classes as part of graduation requirements: Life Skills, Non-violent Conflict Resolution, Senior Seminar, and Men’s or Women’s Group. These classes teach students communication skills and coping strategies.

A second aspect of the mission identified as important by all stakeholders is LMACS’ commitment to career success. Teachers, administrators, students, and board members all pointed to career-focused required classes, the required completion of a 50 hour internship, the school’s annual career discovery day, counseling services provided to students, and various trips to career awareness events in Lowell as ways the school upholds its commitment to student career success.

*Finding: In years past, the school focused on establishing a safe and consistent environment by providing social-emotional services to students and establishing a school-wide culture. The executive director reports that the school has begun to focus on the academic achievement portion of the mission.*

LMACS’ mission includes preparing students for academic success. A majority of students who enroll at LMACS enter the school with few high school credits. The school has defined a full course of high school study and tracks each student’s progress towards completing those credits. In order to earn credit for an LMACS class, students must earn at least a 70 percent.

While there is no systematic plan in place, the executive director reported that she would like to programmatically redesign the school to emphasize academics and possibly admit younger students (aged 14 and 15). This would be possible with the additional space that will be available when the school purchases its facility. At the year thirteen site visit, the executive director reported that the school needed to raise academic standards. The school’s application for renewal also states that the school would like to “raise academic expectations in all content areas through review of curriculum” (Application for Renewal, p. 43). The executive director reported that the current curriculum is not rigorous enough. Last year, she initiated staff discussions about fostering intellectual curiosity in the students. The executive director reported that she wanted to build academics to the same level as the social and emotional services provided to students, which she feels are well established. However, she also reported that academic initiatives are often eclipsed by the hard work and energies put into providing students with social and emotional success.

*Finding: LMACS has maintained a contractual relationship with Middlesex Community College (MCC) for management and financial services, as outlined in the school’s charter.*

The idea for LMACS was created by Lowell High School teachers and the staff of MCC as a dropout recovery program. Since the school’s founding in1995, the school has maintained a contractual relationship with MCC. The charter application states that the school’s internal management team will include staff from MCC. Currently, the school’s executive director, associate director, registrar, and administrative assistant are employees of MCC. Each year of the charter term, the school has renewed its contract with MCC to provide an administrative and operations team who are responsible for “management, oversight, supervision, and administration of LMACS’ regular business activities as well as preparation and filing or required local, state, and federal reports.” A separate contract for financial services states that “MCC shall serve as the fiscal agent for LMACS and provide all the necessary financial services required as well as payroll, purchasing, and human resources services.” This contract has also been renewed each year of the charter term.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the faithfulness to charter objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: LMACS has met five of the six measures relating to faithfulness to charter in its accountability plan.*

A charter school creates an accountability plan to set objectives in each of the three areas of charter school accountability for the charter term and to show growth through time. LMACS has reported against an accountability plan that was approved in 2005. LMACS’ accountability plan contains four objectives related to faithfulness to charter. The first objective states that the school will report school performance to the public, which it does with an annual report. The school is in the process of meeting the second objective requiring the school to maintain its accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), having undergone a ten-year review in November 2009. The school has produced a 111-page self-study document as a part of the reaccreditation process. The third objective calls for the school to receive positive feedback from parents. Due to the small sample size of data gathered by the school, it is impossible to conclusively state that the school is meeting this objective. Throughout the charter term, the school has shown a commitment to meeting the final objective concerning dissemination of best practices regarding at risk high school students. The school has contributed to studies published by the Project for School Innovation, staff members have presented at conferences, and LMACS has identified grant opportunities to support their dissemination efforts. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VI of this report.

### B. Academic Program

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: MCAS performance**

**Students at the school demonstrate Proficiency, or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Accountability System (MCAS) exams in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes.**

*Finding: Student MCAS performance has improved over the term of the charter. However, caution should be used when interpreting these results due to the school’s small class size.*

During this charter term, LMACS students annually completed the grade ten English language arts (ELA) assessments, the grade ten mathematics assessments, and the grades nine and ten biology assessment. The following analyses present MCAS performance data on the tests in ELA and mathematics utilized by the Department for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability purposes. Also, the composite performance index (CPI) was not calculated in 2008 in mathematics because fewer than 10 students took the tenth grade MCAS exam.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Key:** N = # of students tested; CPI = Composite Performance Index | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Warning/Failing % |  | Needs Improvement % |  | Proficient % |  | Advanced/Above Prof. % |
|  | | | | | | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2006 2007 2008 2009 %  Advanced 0 0 20 25 %  Proficient 50 25 30 45 %  Needs Improv 50 68 40 25 %  Failing   0 7 10 5 N                 22 28 10 20 CPI                81.8 72.3 82.5 86.3 | 2006 2007 2008 2009 %  Advanced          18 19 NA 33 %  Proficient        14 29 NA 24 %  Needs Improv 36 48 NA 29 %  Failing           32 5 NA 14 N                 22 21 8 21 CPI                 63.6 78.6 NA 76.2 |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | | % Advanced | 0 | 0 | 20 | 25 | | % Proficient | 50 | 25 | 30 | 45 | | % Needs Improvement | 50 | 68 | 40 | 25 | | % Failing | 0 | 7 | 10 | 5 | | N | 22 | 28 | 10 | 20 | | CPI | 81.8 | 72.3 | 82.5 | 86.3 | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | | % Advanced | 18 | 19 | NA | 33 | | % Proficient | 14 | 29 | NA | 24 | | % Needs Improvement | 36 | 48 | NA | 29 | | % Failing | 32 | 5 | NA | 14 | | N | 22 | 21 | 8 | 21 | | CPI | 63.6 | 78.6 | NA | 76.2 | |

Please note: It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about LMACS students' performance on MCAS tests because of the small cohort group and the at-risk profile of the students attending the school.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Adequate Yearly Progress**

**The school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant sub-groups. The school is not identified for accountability purposes (not designated as in Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring).**

*Finding: In 2009, LMACS has no accountability status in ELA or mathematics. Given the school’s small class size, it has only received AYP determinations in two of the last four years.*

* The school has no status under NCLB.
* In 2009, the school’s ELA performance rating was *High* and its mathematics rating was *Moderate*.
* In 2009, LMACS’ ELA improvement rating was *On Target*; there was no improvement rating given for mathematics.
* In 2006 and 2008 the school was not given an AYP determination because less than twenty students took the tenth grade MCAS exam.
* In 2009 and 2007 the school did not make AYP in the aggregate due to a number of factors:
  + In 2009, LMACS did not meet performance targets in ELA or mathematics. The school did meet its ELA improvement target that year. Additionally, 91 percent of LMACS’ students participated in the MCAS tests and the school’s graduation rate for that year was 21.5 percent. Both are below state targets.
  + In 2007, LMACS did not meet its performance or improvement target in ELA, but did make both performance and improvement targets in mathematics. Additionally, 93 percent of LMACS’ students took the ELA test and the school’s graduation rate for that year was 12.8 percent. Both are below state targets.
  + It should be noted that the low graduation rates are due to the fact that LMACS serves a school population ranging in age from 16 to 21 who are considered at risk of dropping out, or who have previously dropped out of high school.

Please note: The AYP History chart below has several years in which the school did not receive a determination in the aggregate. This is due to the fact that fewer than 20 students took that exam in those years.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Adequate Yearly Progress History** | | | | | | | | | | | **NCLB Accountability Status** |
|  | | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** |
| **ELA** | **Aggregate** | - | - | Yes | - | - | - | No | - | No | No Status |
| **All Subgroups** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **MATH** | **Aggregate** | - | - | Yes | - | - | - | No | - | No | No Status |
| **All Subgroups** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Meeting state targets LMACS’ performance on ELA exams between 2006 and 2009 were below state CPI performance targets each year, except for 2006.  *Meeting school improvement targets*  LMACS met its own improvement targets for ELA in 2006, 2008, and 2009. The school fell below its own improvement target in 2007. | Year        State ELA  LMACS    LMACS                Targets    ELA         ELA                                 Annual   Gain Targets                                 CPI 2004 75.6 78.6  2005 80.5 85.0 81.4 2006 80.5 81.8 82.9 2007 85.4 72.3 84.1 2008 85.4 82.5 76.3 2009 90.2 86.3 86.2 2010 90.2  89.0 2011 95.1  91.7 2012 95.1  94.5 2013 100.0  97.2 2014 100.0  100.0 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Meeting state targets LMACS’ performance on mathematics exams between 2006 and 2009 did not meet state CPI performance targets in any year except 2007.  *Meeting school improvement targets*  LMACS did not meet its own improvement targets in mathematics in 2006. The school did meet its own improvement target in 2007.  Please note: CPI was not calculated in 2008 in mathematics because fewer than 10 students took the tenth grade MCAS exam. The school was not assigned a gain target for 2009 for this reason. | Year State       LMACS    LMACS                 Math        Annual    Math                 Perf.        Math       Gain                                 CPI         Targets 2004 60.8 60.7  2005 68.7 77.5 66.0 2006 68.7 63.6 68.6 2007 76.5 78.6 68.2 2008 76.5  81.7 2009 84.3 76.2 #N/A 2010 84.3  #N/A 2011 92.2  #N/A 2012 92.2  #N/A 2013 100.0  #N/A 2014 100.0  #N/A |

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Internal measures of student achievement**

**Students demonstrate progress on internal measurements linked with the school’s promotion or exit standards.**

*Finding: During this charter term, the school has developed a set of internal standards for student learning.*

During the 2004-05 school year, LMACS established Learner Expectations, a set of six, school-wide academic and civic benchmarks. Each Learner Expectation has a set of Learner Outcomes which break down the larger expectations into a subset of academic or civic objectives. School administers reported that Learner Expectations and Learner Outcomes outline the academic benchmarks to be accomplished by graduation. Learner Expectations and related Learner Outcomes are displayed throughout the facility and used to assess students in the areas of reading, communication (both written and oral), problem solving, technology use, awareness of rights and responsibilities as a community member, and knowledge of career or educational options after LMACS. During the 2007-08 school year, Learner Expectations were assigned to specific disciplines and the following year student report cards began to include an assessment of student progress towards achieving Learner Expectations and Outcomes. School leaders reported that student’s final grades include an assessment of the subject specific Learner Expectations

*Finding: The school has not been consistent in its administration of, or use of data from, external assessments. The school has recently instituted a new set of assessments to track students’ progress in reading. These assessments will be tied to school promotion standards.*

In 2008-09, LMACS administered Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and Group Mathematics Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GMADE). Renewal team members heard inconsistent reports of the school’s future use of the GMADE test, but all constituents reported that the school had discontinued use of the GRADE test due to the implementation of a new reading program.

Each year of the charter term, LMACS has administered the Accuplacer, a test used at community colleges for placement purposes. LMACS uses the criterion-referenced Accuplacer tests to assess arithmetic, algebra, and reading comprehension for all incoming students. According to the application for renewal, the school’s accountability plan, and as reported by teachers, students are meant to take these exams approximately twice a year, as a way to benchmark a student’s skills when they enter LMACS and then to demonstrate progress. However, the data provided to site visitors showed that the school was not able to complete biannual testing of most students. School administrators reported that LMACS offers the test twice annually, but due to student absences the school has been unable to collect the data as needed. Furthermore, the school has inconsistently analyzed Accuplacer data throughout the charter term, as more fully explained in Section VI of this report.

In 2008, LMACS purchased TeenBiz3000, a web-based, individualized reading and writing program to address lower reading levels of incoming students. Renewal team members observed a TeenBiz3000 class, which all students take on Friday. The program tracks student reading comprehension progress. The school provided data to the renewal inspection team that displayed student scores for September 2008, June 2009, and September 2009. Out of the forty students who have been enrolled at the school for enough time to be tested at least twice, 70 percent increased their reading levels. The school’s NEASC self-study document states that “beginning with the 2009-10 academic year, progress in this program will account for 10% of a student’s English grade” (p. 20).

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Skills and knowledge expectations**

**The school’s curriculum, as implemented in the classroom, consistently addresses the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.**

*Finding: Teachers create the school’s curriculum. The school’s documented curriculum addresses state standards and outlines student skill and knowledge expectations.*

Site visitors throughout the charter term noted that teachers had the freedom to develop courses and choose resources in order to create a curriculum aligned with student interests and skill level. Site visitors in all years found that curriculum is developed by teachers at the end of each school year. School administrators and teachers reported to renewal inspection members that MCAS analyses have led to the creation of remedial mathematics and English classes as well as an advanced English class. Site visitors and the renewal inspection team also noted that LMACS encourages teachers to revise curricular materials throughout the school year in order to meet the interests and specific needs of students in their classes.

The renewal inspection team learned that teachers are expected to create a syllabus and a course overview, and to develop lesson plans using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) format for each class they teach. Teachers have used the SIOP model throughout the charter term. The SIOP model was developed to teach English language learners, but is the template that LMACS provides to teachers for use in all classrooms. The SIOP lesson plan format contains a section that lists Massachusetts curricular frameworks (MCF) content, language standards and lesson objectives. The executive director has asked teachers to use the SIOP lesson plan model but, they are not required to do so and lessons are not reviewed on a regular basis. Teachers and administrators report that developing daily lesson plans in this detailed format is not a priority for teachers. Renewal inspection team members examined curricular documents and determined that the level of documentation varied; some course binders contained all curriculum elements and some courses lacked a course overview. Additionally, the level of detail of the lesson plans varied from subject to subject.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Diverse learners**

**The school’s curriculum supports opportunities for all students to master established skills and concepts. The school establishes and implements an accommodation plan that addresses the needs of diverse learners.**

*Finding: LMACS special education program does not offer adequate services to students with diverse needs.*

The federal program renewal inspection team found that LMACS’ special education program does not assess students properly, nor does it have the number of staff to adequately deliver student services as needed*.* The team found that special education assessments are not individualized based on the potential disability of the student, and do not examine students in all areas of suspected disability. Interviews with administrators indicated that all students are assessed using an educational status summary and a psycho-educational assessment. Students do not receive individualized assessments designed to evaluate all areas of potential disability as required, and it is unclear that IEPs developed pursuant to those assessments address all areas of student needs.

In the 2009-10 school year, all students with disabilities receive their entire educational program within a full inclusion general education setting with no resource room presently operating. This is a change from the 2007-08 school year, when federal programs site visit team members found that the school provided both inclusion and pull-out instruction to special education students. Interviews and classroom observations during the renewal inspection indicated that special education instructional services currently consist of the special educator providing individual support in the general education classroom. However, the special education program has a very high student to staff ratio. Twenty-eight students with disabilities are enrolled at LMACS, all of whom receive services from one part-time special educator, who serves as both the special education teacher and the program coordinator. Due to the high ratio of students with disabilities to one part-time special education teacher, the school is limited in the types of special education services it can provide. The school’s 2008-09 self-evaluation report states that the school had considered the establishment of a resource room, but it did not exist at the time of the renewal inspection.

*Finding: The school does not employ a reliable procedure through which lesson plans are shared with the special educator. Therefore, there is limited capacity for needed curricular modifications to be made by the special education teacher in advance of the presentation of the material.*

The school’s primary system for collaboration and information sharing is a lunch meeting held two times each week which is attended by all staff and administrators. According to the focus group and administrator interviews, the lunch meetings serve both as the school’s child study team and as instructional planning meetings. A system is not in place, however, so that general education teachers who have special education students in their classes routinely submit their lesson plans to the special education teacher in advance of the lesson’s presentation. Also, because lesson plans are not routinely provided in advance, the special educator has limited opportunity to review them to develop curricular modifications prior to the classroom presentation.

*Finding: ELL program deficiencies identified in the Year Three Site Visit Report have been partially addressed. Policies, procedures, and qualified staff are in place to identify, assess, and serve students who require screening as potentially limited English proficient (LEP), but staff training on implementing sheltered English immersion has not been completed.*

Interviews with staff and administrators and documentation provided by the school indicate that policies and procedures are now in place to identify and assess students who may be LEP. Qualified staff persons are also available to conduct both the oral and written language assessments required for initial identification of LEP students, and an instructor is on staff who is qualified to provide English language development instruction. Interviews with administrators and staff indicate that training has been completed on Category II: Sheltering Content Instruction, but that Category I, III and IV training has not yet been completed. The school reports that there are no LEP students presently enrolled.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Implementation of the curriculum**

**The school’s curriculum is documented, and teachers plan and deliver lessons directed by the school’s curriculum guidelines.**

*Finding: The renewal team observed that, in some cases, the documented lesson plans did not align with the instruction as implemented.*

The school’s application for renewal states that all teachers at LMACS use a common blackboard configuration which includes a do now, an aim, a classroom activity, and homework. The application goes on to explain that the aim “states the objective or learning standard that the lesson will address” (Application for Renewal, p. 28). During the renewal inspection visit, the executive director stated that all lesson plans provided to observers should include a class aim. Renewal team members observed four classes, out of twenty-four, that had a clear, defined aim listed on the daily lesson plan and posted in the classroom that matched the activities conducted in the classroom. However, in the majority of classes observed, aims were not always aligned with instruction, were not articulated, or were not clear to visitors.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Program evaluation and planning**

**The school has systems and structures in place to regularly and systematically review the quality and effectiveness of the academic program. Teachers and school leaders use qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform and guide instructional planning and practice**.

*Finding: The school informally reviews the effectiveness of curriculum*

As stated above, LMACS staff members review and create curriculum at the end of the school year. Site visitors throughout the charter term found that this process is largely teacher-driven. Teachers reported the use of student surveys, internal assessments, and standardized tests to evaluate the effectiveness of their courses in order to make changes to the curriculum. Teachers and administrators reported to renewal inspection team members that curriculum revision also occurs informally throughout the year as teachers gauge their students’ abilities and interests each trimester.

In 2008, as part of a reaccreditation process with NEASC, LMACS produced a self-study document that outlined school findings in seven areas (mission, curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership and organization, school resources, and community resources). Teachers reported to the renewal inspection team that for the past year, committees made up of staff members used time at some Friday afternoon staff meetings to review the curriculum in preparation for the reaccreditation process. However, LMACS’ self-study document states that “there is no formal review process in place to evaluate, revise, and develop new curricula” (p. 29). Likewise, the study states that “no formal process exists for coordination of curriculum” (p. 32). Rather, “professional staff are involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum based upon individual assessment of student performance” (p. 33).

*Finding: LMACS depends on qualitative information to informally review the academic program and guide instructional planning and practice. The school does not have a systematic method of using quantitative data to guide planning and practice.*

Teachers and administrators see the school as serving individual students, each with unique needs. This outlook guides the way staff approach planning curriculum, classes, teaching methodologies, and discipline practices. Teachers tailor their curricular pacing to the needs, abilities, and interests of students in their classes each trimester. Classes are added to the course offerings, such as geometry and biology, based on test data. Two of three weekly staff meetings are convened for the purpose of discussing individual student progress or concerns. The third is a more traditional staff meeting to discuss schoolwide issues. Teachers and administrators reported that quite often, informal discussion or coordination of curriculum takes place at these meetings about such topics as effective teaching methods and areas for improvement in instruction. Beyond these weekly meetings, teachers report that the small size of the school and staff lends itself to frequent, informal discussions about the effectiveness of classroom practices. Additionally, teachers reported that some discussion of the academic program occurs at the week-long staff meeting that precede and conclude the school year.

Teachers stated to the renewal inspection team that as a staff, they assess the effectiveness of the academic program based on anecdotal observational evidence. In terms of teaching methodologies, teachers reported that they informally share strategies that work well with particular students. The board of trustees reported that the executive director will give them school updates that include reports on individual student issues and that the board will give advice on those issues, or offer support. While the school was involved in creating a survey tool to gather information about assessing the impact of the career and social aspects of the academic program, the school’s NEASC self-study document states that “the school does not have a formal program for assessing the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations and …needs to develop a plan and methods for assessing data and to establish goals for measuring student progress” (p. 49). In terms of data use, the self-study document states that “the school wants to improve upon its use of Accuplacer, MCAS, GMADE, and TeenBiz3000 data to identify weak/strong areas and act upon them” (p. 54). School administrators reported to the renewal inspection team that over the past five years, the school has made changes in the academic program based on MCAS scores, but beyond this effort the school has not demonstrated that it uses quantitative data to guide instructional planning or practice.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Classroom and school environment**

**The classroom and school environment is orderly and supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills and is consistent with the school’s mission.**

*Finding: LMACS has created a calm and orderly environment. Interactions between all community members are respectful. Students have internalized and reflect the behavioral norms of the school.*

Throughout the charter term, site visitors have noted that LMACS has established classroom environments that are quiet and well managed by teachers. Additionally, the year thirteen site visit team noted that a “sense of organization and calm continued in the hallways. Students were orderly during transitions between classes and when on their own” (Year Thirteen Site Visit Report. p. 5). Students reported, and site visitors observed, that respect is the overarching tone and tenor of the school. Additionally, students reported to the renewal inspection team that they are able to monitor their own behavior and that of their peers. Site visitors observed respectful interactions taking place between students and their peers, and between students and adults in the building. Year thirteen site visitors found that LMACS adults were nurturing and had formed close relationships with students. Students reported to renewal inspection team members that they felt close to at least one adult on the staff and could speak to them about issues, either academic or personal, and get help for both. Site visitors found that this closeness helped motivate students to attend school and increased their desire to succeed.

Site visitors observed that LMACS has created a clear set of behavioral expectations and orients all students to those expectations. The student handbook includes policies related to attendance, discipline procedures, student rights, behavior expectations, and dress code. The school places a clear and consistent focus on ten ethical values by posting them throughout the school and by addressing each one in more depth at student run assemblies during the school year. Before the beginning of the school year, LMACS has a week-long orientation to introduce the school’s learning expectations, the ten ethical values, and the school’s discipline policy to new students and to review with returning students.

*Finding: The discipline system is designed to meet the emotional needs of the student population.*

All school community members reported that a significant number of LMACS students arrive at the school with some social and emotional issues that may interfere with their learning in the classroom. The school has created a discipline system that takes into account these needs while maintaining an environment that supports student learning. Year thirteen site visitors noted that staff were all trained to use a consistent approach to discipline called Therapeutic Crisis Intervention which is designed to “focus on problem solving as opposed to simply emphasizing obedience” (Year Thirteen Site Visit Report, p. 12). Subsequent site visitors found that students, teachers, and administrators all reported a consistent system of discipline that is founded on respect and is understood by all. The discipline system is clearly explained and outlined in the student handbook.

Two of the three weekly staff meetings enable teachers to identify and discuss student issues. If a student is identified as having a behavior issue, he or she meets with a teacher, administrator, or social worker and parents are notified of the behavior. Consequences, such as an out-of-school suspension may be assessed. If the behavior persists, the school convenes a “staffing meeting” at which teachers, the student’s parents, and administrators meet with the student to discuss the issue of concern. As a last tier in the system, an ethical review serves as an expulsion hearing and usually is the result of a violation of one of the school’s two non-negotiable rules against violence and drug possession.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Instruction**

**School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design and student learning objectives, is consistently and effectively delivered, and conveys clear expectations to students. Teachers are purposeful in their lessons and students are engaged in meaningful learning.**

*Finding: LMACS teachers employ a variety of instructional practices. Site visitors observed a range in teacher’s abilities to deliver effective instruction. Student engagement was observed to be strong.*

Site visitors in years twelve and thirteen found that teachers employed a variety of instructional strategies, with the exception of mathematics which was taught in a more traditional manner with a reliance on textbook activities. Throughout the charter term, site visitors observed a variety of methods including: hands-on activities, lectures, interactive discussions, computer assisted instruction, and kinesthetic activities. Renewal team members observed a variety of instructional methods, but found a greater predominance of whole class instruction and independent practice.

While past site visitors found that LMACS teachers used a variety of questioning techniques to check for understanding and achieve concept attainment, the renewal inspection team found that LMACS teachers did not consistently or effectively check for understanding. Additionally, renewal site visitors noted that instruction was not always delivered clearly, and did not always serve to deepen understanding or strengthen student skills.

Previous site visitors and the renewal inspection team found high levels of student engagement in classes. Throughout the charter term, site visitors noted that the strong levels of engagement were due to a delivery of lessons that were relevant to student lives and had real world applications. Renewal inspection team members noted that a majority of LMACS students participated in classroom activities.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Instructional leadership**

**School leaders provide teachers with feedback and guidance that leads to improved instructional practice and student achievement.**

*Finding: The quantity of feedback given to teachers, and the methods by which it is delivered, has varied during the charter term.*

In year twelve (2006-07), site visitors were informed that teachers had not received a formal evaluation of their teaching within the past year. Instead the executive director provided them with frequent informal feedback. In year thirteen (2007-08), the site visit team found that school leadership was more involved in the oversight of classroom instruction. During the 2007-08 school year, teachers reported that they were expected to submit weekly lesson plans after they were taught and a reflection on the efficacy of the lessons. It was reported that the executive director responded to those lesson plans and also continued her frequent informal walk-throughs of classrooms. Additionally, in year thirteen, the site visit team found that teachers received formal, written evaluations and the executive director used a school-created evaluation tool to communicate her observations of classes.

The renewal inspection team found that the executive director continues to conduct formal observations of teachers once a year. The executive director also continues to do informal walk-throughs of classes, but lesson plans are no longer submitted for feedback. The executive director explained to the renewal inspection team that she has identified areas for improvement in teacher preparedness, such as better documentation of the curriculum and the incorporation of more varied teaching strategies but has not yet implemented a system for requiring that teachers meet those expectations.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the academic achievement objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: LMACS has met one of six measures in its accountability plan related to academic achievement.*

LMACS’ accountability plan includes six objectives related to academic success. The school did not meet its first measure to make AYP in either 2007 or 2009. In 2006 and 2008, the school’s test taking cohort was so small that LMACS did not receive an AYP determination. It is not possible to assess the achievement of LMACS’ next four objectives that relate to students achieving English language and mathematics success because the school was not consistent in their analysis of external assessment data. The school has met its sixth objective regarding student ability to write a five paragraph essay. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VI of this report.

### C. Organizational Viability

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Financial management**

**The school demonstrates financial solvency, stability, internal controls and oversight.**

*Finding:**The school received unqualified audit opinions for each year of the current charter term.*

From FY05 through FY09, the school received unqualified audit opinions. Though the school's net assets have declined slightly in one of the past four years, the school had an unrestricted net assets balance of $744,322 on June 30, 2009. The school’s FY09 audit indicates that LMACS had an increase of net assets of $277,395 in FY09. According to LMACS’ 2008-09 annual report, the school proposes a balanced budget with a small surplus in FY10 (p. 27). The school is currently in the process of securing finances for the planned purchase of its facility.

*Finding: LMACS’ board of trustees and the school’s administration have implemented systems and structures that allow responsible fiscal oversight of the school. LMACS has implemented a system of internal controls based on MCC’s internal control plan.*

LMACS contracts with MCC to provide financial services to the school, including payroll, accounts payable and receivable, and human resources. Board members and administrators reported that LMACS benefits from the services provided by MCC in that they allow LMACS employees to focus on helping students. LMACS’ treasurer of the board is the vice president of administration and finance at MCC. The school’s board has a finance subcommittee that meets four times a year and reports to the full board at meetings. This subcommittee works with the executive director on the budget. LMACS implements financial internal control policies and procedures created by MCC that enumerate steps for systems to follow for revenues, expenditures, and fixed assets. The board treasurer gave examples of purchasing and drafting of the school’s budget that show that documented policies and procedures are followed and that the LMACS executive director works with MCC employees on the financial aspects of the school.

*Finding: The school has well-established budget process.*

LMACS has a process for creating the annual budget that is well known by the board, administrators, and the members of MCC’s staff who are involved in the process. The executive director of LMACS constructs the school’s budget each year, with input from MCC’s finance department and the board’s finance subcommittee. The board approves the final budget. The board treasurer reported that LMACS has historically budgeted conservatively for student enrollment. An examination of board meeting minutes from the past two years shows that the board discusses budgetary issues and at each meeting the board treasurer gives updates on cash flow, projected spending plans, financial statements, audits, or actual budgets. The changing enrollment during the school year sometimes causes the planned budget to vary from the actual. The school’s budget has been supported by enrollment in all years of the charter term except FY08. In FY08 the school did not receive as much revenue as expected due to changing and decreased enrollment.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Board governance**

**The members of the board understand their responsibilities and are engaged in oversight of the school’s academic progress and financial condition.**

*Finding: The board’s oversight of the school’s academic performance is limited. The board of trustees delegates the day-to-day management of the school to the executive director.*

LMACS board of trustees reported to the renewal inspection team that they see themselves as a policy advisory board. In order to inform themselves of school performance, board members read annual reports and receive updates from the executive director about student progress in terms of enrollment numbers, MCAS, and internal assessment results. The board meets four times a year and a review of board minutes from the prior two years revealed that the executive director’s verbal reports to the board provide little to no information about the school’s academic performance. Mainly, the executive director’s reports focused on LMACS’ enrollment numbers, updates about school events, and student recruitment efforts. Board members also spoke about monitoring school progress in terms of qualitative measures, such as the stories read at graduation, and the number of LMACS students they see on MCC campus. The school’s application for renewal states that the “Board does not have a strategic plan in place” (p. 38). This year, the board has directed its efforts towards securing a permanent facility for the school and working towards rechartering and reaccrediting the school.

During the renewal inspection visit, the board of trustees expressed full confidence in the abilities of the executive director to manage the school each day, develop yearly goals for the school, and communicate the needs of the school to the board. LMACS’s self-study for NEASC states that “the trustees look to the [executive] director for leadership in all decisions regarding policy and procedure at the school” and that the “school leader has autonomy and decision-making authority for all educational and program decisions related to LMACS” (p. 60). Board members, particularly those who are also employees of MCC, stated that they frequently communicate with the executive director.

*Finding: The board has not conducted an annual evaluation of the executive director.*

Site visitors in year thirteen found that the “board reviews the performance of the director solely through informal means” (Year Thirteen Site Visit Report, p. 9). During the 2007-08 school year the board lacked a formal evaluation tool and process for assessing the executive director, and reported that they evaluated her on an ongoing basis based on her monthly reports to the board about the school. While the school’s application for renewal states that the board of trustees is “responsible for hiring and evaluating the executive director” (Application for Renewal, p. 37), the executive director reported that she has been evaluated once in her five years at the school. The board evaluated the executive director during the 2008-09 school year with a tool used to evaluate all professional level MCC staff. The board clerk, who is the dean of the Lowell MCC campus, filled out the form and reviewed it with the executive director.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: School leadership**

**School leader(s) are effective and have created an appropriate professional climate, resulting in a purposeful learning environment, reasonable rates of retention for effective school leadership, staff and teachers and manageable levels of overall staff turnover.**

*Finding: School leadership has encouraged staff to participate in professional development opportunities and supports the new practice of instructional rounds.*

School administrators stated that teachers are encouraged to take paid time off to attend professional development sessions, either content area specific training, or for teacher training. However, both teachers and administrators note that it is difficult for teachers to take advantage of this opportunity because teachers need to cover each other’s classes in the event of an absence. Teachers reported to renewal inspection team members that Friday afternoon teacher meetings often cover a variety of professional development topics, often having to deal with the social and emotional needs of LMACS students such as collaborative problem solving and dealing with trauma. However, the executive director reported to the renewal team that much of this professional development time had been used to prepare the NEASC self-study document for the past two years. The NEASC self-study document states that “there is no school-wide professional development program” (p. 33).

This year, the school is in the process of implementing a formal, peer observation program called instructional rounds. The program is based upon the book, Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning, which the teachers are using as a guide for observations. According to the school’s NEASC self-study document, “a small group of teachers will make regular visits to selected classrooms for the sole purpose of observing, in a non-evaluative way, what goes on, and then meeting as a team to discuss what was observed” (p. 41). The program is still in its formative stages: five staff members are involved and the program is led by the school’s former assistant director. Teachers are beginning to define a “problem of practice” that they would like to examine further and reported that they hope to have a clearly defined area of focus by January. A renewal inspection team member shadowed teachers as they participated in instructional rounds and observed that one group (consisting of one teacher and the school’s former assistant director) observed classes, described what they saw, analyzed data from three prior observations and made predictions about the outcomes of the instruction that they observed.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Program planning**

**The school has realistic plans for program improvement, possible future expansion, and adequate facilities based on evaluation and analysis of data.**

*Finding: The school works to address the challenges of enrollment and student retention.*

The year thirteen site visit team found that enrollment and student retention continued to present challenges for LMACS. The school experiences a high amount of turnover within the school year due to the population of students served by the program. Due to the instability in the lives of LMACS’ student population “a significant number of students who enroll at LMACS frequently leave for reasons beyond the influence and control of the school” (Year Thirteen Site Visit Report, p. 10). The school addresses the issue of fluctuating enrollment by admitting students three times within the academic calendar year. Additionally, the executive director maintains contact with Lowell High School’s guidance counselors, local probation officers, and the Boys and Girls Club; these groups often refer students to LMACS. The board also reported that they helped to address lower then expected enrollment by using their community connections to spread word about the school. It should be noted that once a student leaves LMACS, the school helps them gain their General Educational Development (GED) test through MCC, or finds them a placement in Youthbuild or Job Corps.

*Finding: The school would like to, but has not yet been successful in creating a formal program for tracking alumni.*

The school’s application for renewal and board members stated that one of the board’s ongoing goals is tracking LMACS graduates to ensure that the school is adequately preparing students for life after high school. However, the school has not been able to formally track alumni. Board members stated that they assess the success of LMACS based on what happens to students later in life, however they also noted that they have not collected data on graduates. The executive director stated it has been difficult to sustain formal contact with former students. In the past, the school has hired an LMACS graduate to be the alumni coordinator and tried to hold monthly meetings, but these efforts were unsuccessful. Informally, the school maintains contact with a number of students who now attend MCC, and has an informal policy of working with any former student if they need assistance.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Family satisfaction**

**The school demonstrates that families are satisfied with the school’s program.**

*Finding: Families report strong satisfaction with the school.*

Throughout the charter term, site visitors found that the family members interviewed reported high levels of satisfaction with the school. In year twelve, parents reported that LMACS was an important alternative to a large, district high school. In year thirteen, parents reported appreciation for the school’s efforts to meet the particular needs of students who are dealing with personal challenges. They also spoke about seeing positive changes in their children as a result of attending LMACS. Additionally, parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the frequent communication from the school. Families and students interviewed by the renewal team expressed satisfaction with the school’s mission and all characterized LMACS as a school of second chances. Many students stated that previously they had disliked school, but the program at LMACS would make it possible for them to graduate high school. Families and students stated that the school offers ample support services. Families were also pleased with the varied and frequent communication they receive from the school.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: School safety**

**The school’s environment is physically safe and free from harassment and discrimination.**

*Finding: LMACS has created an environment that is both physically safe and free from harassment and discrimination.*

Throughout the charter term, school community members have reported that LMACS provides a very safe environment, both physically and emotionally. During each site visit, students reported that the school feels like a family and that they support and look after one another. Many school constituents, such as students and the executive director, stated that safety was the top priority of the school. The school’s NEASC self-study states that LMACS “strives, above all else, to provide a safe and nurturing environment for its students” (p. 73). Parents interviewed during the focus group reported that the school was both emotionally and physically safe for their children. As stated previously, LMACS provides counseling services or referrals to social service providers for students in need. Additionally, all constituents noted that disrespectful behavior was not tolerated. It was clear to site visitors that the school had created an emotionally safe environment.

In terms of physical safety, the school clearly communicates to students and families that any instance of violence or drug-use will not be tolerated and will result in expulsion. Parents stated that the school calls home immediately if a child is absent, even if that absence is detected after lunch. Parents interviewed at the time of the renewal inspection visit expressed appreciation that LMACS takes attendance seriously, particularly given that their students are often prone to truancy. The student handbook clearly outlines student behavior expectations and consequences for violation of such expectations.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: School facilities**

**The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements, are suited to its programs, and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs.**

*Finding: The school is currently in the process of purchasing the building it occupies.*

LMACS currently occupies two floors of an office building in downtown Lowell. The facility is non-traditional, but serves the needs of the program. Classrooms are of adequate size for the number of students in each class, and each subject area has its own designated room. While the school does not have a gymnasium or cafeteria, free lunch is provided to students at MCC’s campus and LMACS students have access to the college’s athletic facilities, libraries, and computer labs. The current space can serve 120 students. The planned purchase of the school’s current building will allow the addition of more classroom space, enabling the school to support an enrollment of 150 students.

The board treasurer reported that LMACS has been interested in purchasing a permanent facility for years and the college had conducted a study to determine the needs of the school. Board members reported that once LMACS buys the building, it will rent space back to MCC and perhaps other tenants. However, board members stated that the school will have priority for use of the building. The board treasurer stated that once LMACS owns the building, it can apply for grants to further renovate the physical space to better suit the school’s needs.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Compliance**

**The school is in compliance with the requirements of the Coordinated Program Review (CPR). Staff employed by the school meet all applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.**

*Finding: LMACS is in compliance with the requirements of the Coordinated Program Review (CPR).*

The last full CPR activity at LMACS was conducted in November 2006. The CPR covered the school’s operation of programs in the areas of special education, civil rights and English language learner education. The final report was published in July 2007. In response to the findings contained in the report, the school developed a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) which was reviewed and approved by the Department. Subsequent to approval of the CAP the school was required to document its progress in addressing areas of non-compliance through the submission of a progress report submitted in May 2008. Upon review of the progress report, the Department determined that all issues identified in the original report had been fully addressed by the school, and the CPR cycle was closed.

*Finding: Eighty-six percent of the teaching staff are highly qualified.*

According to data submitted to the Department, 86.4 percent of LMACS teachers of core academic classes are highly qualified.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Dissemination**

**The school has provided models for replication and best practices.**

*Finding: LMACS continues to disseminate its best practices through its work with the Project for School Innovation.*

During the charter term, LMACS has continued its working relationship with the Project for School Innovation (PSI) in efforts to disseminate information about serving students who have not been previously successful in high school. Over the last four years, LMACS has collaborated with PSI on two publications. The first was “Building Supportive High Schools: Modeled on Four Successful Horace Mann and Commonwealth Charter Schools in Massachusetts” in 2005. The second publication involved PSI and the Harvard Graduate School of Education included LMACS in a two year study (2005-2007) of charter schools called “Counting What Counts” focusing on what kinds of information to include on a survey for “at-risk” students. The resulting survey tool allows schools to assess students' attitudes, behaviors and accomplishments, and how they have been impacted by school service and environment. LMACS staff has also shown a commitment to presenting information at state, local, and national conferences. Please see Section VI of this report that outlines the school’s progress towards its accountability plan in the faithfulness to charter section.

**ESE Charter School Performance Criteria: Accountability plan objectives and measures**

**The school meets, or shows progress towards meeting the organizational viability objectives and measures set forth in its accountability plan.**

*Finding: LMACS has met two out of three measures in its accountability plan related to organizational viability.*

LMACS’ accountability plan includes three objectives related to organizational viability. The school met its first objective of reaching a withdrawal rate of 30 percent in the 2008-09 school year. The school has met it second objective, which states that the school will reach an average yearly enrollment of 100 students. The school did not meet its third objective which states that the school will increase its attendance rate by two percent each year. A summary of the school’s success in meeting the objectives and measures contained in its accountability plan can be found in Section VI of this report

## V. Adequate Yearly Progress Data

Performance and improvement ratings for Massachusetts public schools are based on aggregate student performance on MCAS tests. Performance is measured using the Composite Performance Index (CPI), a measure of the distribution of student performance relative to attaining proficiency. Ratings are used to track schools’ progress toward meeting the goal of all students achieving proficiency in English language arts and mathematics by 2014. LMACS’ most recent AYP Data is presented below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NCLB Accountability Status** | **Performance Rating** | **Improvement Rating** |
| **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS** | No Status | High | On Target |
| **MATHEMATICS** | No Status | Moderate | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **English Language Arts** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Student Group** | **(A) Participation** | | | | **(B) Performance** | | | **(C) Improvement** | | | | **(D) Grad Rate** | | | **AYP 2009** |
| Enrolled | Assessed | % | Met Target (95%) | N | 2009 CPI | Met Target (90.2) | 2008 CPI Baseline | Gain Target | On Target Range | Met Target | % | Change | Met Target |
|
|
| Aggregate | 22 | 20 | 91 | No | 20 | 86.3 | No | 82.5 | 2.9 | 82.5-89.9 | Yes | 21.5 | 36.6 | No | No |
| Lim. English Prof. | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Special Education | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Low Income | 16 | 14 | - | - | 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Afr. Amer./Black | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Asian or Pacif. Isl. | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hispanic | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Native American |  | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| White | 16 | 14 | - | - | 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Mathematics** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Student Group** | **(A) Participation** | | | | **(B) Performance** | | | **(C) Improvement** | | | | **(D) Grad Rate** | | | **AYP 2009** |
| Enrolled | Assessed | % | Met Target (95%) | N | 2009 CPI | Met Target (84.3) | 2008 CPI Baseline | Gain Target | On Target Range | Met Target | % | Change | Met Target |
|
|
| Aggregate | 23 | 21 | 91 | No | 21 | 76.2 | No | - | 4.2 | .0-8.7 | - | 21.5 | 36.6 | No | No |
| Lim. English Prof. | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Special Education | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Low Income | 17 | 16 | - | - | 16 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Afr. Amer./Black | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Asian or Pacif. Isl. | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hispanic | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Native American |  | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| White | 17 | 15 | - | - | 15 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Adequate Yearly Progress History** | | | | | | | | | | | **NCLB Accountability Status** |
|  | | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** |
| **ELA** | **Aggregate** | - | - | Yes | - | - | - | No | - | No | No Status |
| **All Subgroups** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **MATH** | **Aggregate** | - | - | Yes | - | - | - | No | - | No | No Status |
| **All Subgroups** | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

## VI. Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A. Faithfulness to Charter** | **2008-09 Performance** | **Notes** |
| **Objective:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will report school performance to the Department of Education and to the public-at-large. | | |
| **Measure:** LMACS will publish and distribute an Annual Report. | Met | * LMACS publishes and distributes an annual report each year. |
| **Objective:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will maintain its accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. | | |
| **Measure:** LMACS will report program and operation status. | Met | * LMACS is currently undergoing a reaccreditation process with NEASC. * LMACS created a 111-page self-study documents that reports on the school’s program and operation status. |
| **Objective:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will request and receive positive feedback from parents | | |
| **Measure:** Parents will report overall satisfaction with the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School through annual surveys | Cannot Assess | * The sample size of parent surveys is too small to make meaningful conclusions about parent satisfaction. * LMACS provided parent survey data from two school years (07-08 and 08-09) and only 16 parents responded to the survey each year. |
| **Objective:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will add to the body of knowledge for best practice for high school students at risk. | | |
| **Measure:** Continue dissemination activities with the Project for School Innovation | Met | * In 2006, LMACS, PSI, and three other Massachusetts charter schools published a book, Building Supportive High Schools. * In 2007, LMACS staff presented workshops about school best practices at PSI’s Learning Exchange conference. * In 2008, LMACS, collaborated with PSI on publications about at-risk students. The school also developed a survey tool to measure strength and risk factors for students. |
| **Measure:** Present at state, local, and national conferences | Met | * LMACS staff have presented at state, local, and national conferences. |
| **Measure:** Identify grants opportunities appropriate to support dissemination efforts. | Met | * LMACS has identified and applied for grants that supported dissemination efforts each year of the charter term. |
| **B. Academic Program** |  |  |
| **Objective:**LMACS will be designated as making Adequate Yearly Progress on its annual report card issued by the Massachusetts Department of Education when adequate data (i.e. number of students taking MCAS) is available to make such a determination. | | |
|  | Met | * Over the term of the charter, LMACS did not make AYP in the aggregate in 2007 and 2009. The other years the school did not receive an AYP determination due to the small cohort size of the tenth grade class. |
| **Objective:** Graduates of the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School who are planning to enter postsecondary institutions will be able to place into a college-level English course at Middlesex Community College. | | |
| **Measure:** LMACS students will receive a reading comprehension score of 68 or greater as measured by the ACCUPLACER test. | Cannot Assess | * Over the term of the charter, LMACS has reported data for Accuplacer scores inconsistently, making this measure impossible to assess. |
| **Objective:** Graduates of the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School who are planning to enter postsecondary institutions will be able to place into a college-level mathematics course at Middlesex Community College | | |
| **Measure:** LMACS students will receive an elementary algebra score of 55 or greater as measured by the ACCUPLACER test. | Cannot Assess | * Due to inconsistent data analysis, the measure is not assessable. As stated above, LMACS did not report on the measure in a way that makes it assessable. |
| **Objective:** Students at Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will improve reading skills during their first three semesters at LMACS. | | |
| **Measure:** Demonstrate a 10% gain in their reading comprehension ACCUPLACER score during their first three semesters at LMACS. | Cannot Assess | * The school does not track data in a way to make this measure assessable. |
| **Objective:** Students at Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will improve math skills during their first three semesters at LMACS. | | |
| **Measure:** Demonstrate a 40% gain in their elementary algebra ACCUPLACER score during their first three semesters at LMACS. | Cannot Assess | * The data provided by the school in its annual reports was not corroborated by the presentation of Accuplacer data during the renewal inspection visit. School leaders reported that inconsistent student attendance led to difficulty in administering the test regularly. |
| **Objective:** Students at Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will demonstrate the ability to write coherent 5-paragraph essays in all humanities and social science courses. | | |
| **Measure:** LMACS has developed a comprehensive, school-wide rubric (approved by NEASC during the 2003 visit) to assess the overall effectiveness of the school to meet the needs of its at-risk high school population. Using the rubric developed by LMACS faculty as an assessment tool, students will present a clear thesis, provide supporting evidence, use a proper format, articulate a strong conclusion, and apply appropriate mechanics. | Met | * School has created rubric. * Teachers reported that students must complete a five paragraph essay in social studies and humanities classes. |
| **C. Organizational Viability** |  |  |
| **Objective:**Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will have a withdrawal rate comparable to the 30% average for urban districts with high-risk populations similar to Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School. | | |
| **Measure:** Comparison data to be gleaned from the Massachusetts Department of Education documents that use a nationally accepted rate. | Met | * In the 2006-07 school year LMACS reported a 41% withdrawal rate. * In 2007-08, the school reported a 33% withdrawal rate. * In the 2008-09 school year LMACS met its goal of a 30% withdrawal rate. |
| **Objective:** Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School will maintain a waiting list to ensure an average yearly enrollment of 100 students | | |
|  | Met | * The school has met the yearly enrollment goal of 100 students in three of the four past years. |
| **Measure:** Establish and institutionalize the successful processes and procedures currently being explored with community, school, court, and law enforcement groups. | Partially Met | * The school did not report any information about this measure in their 2006-07 and the 2008-09 school annual reports. * During the renewal inspection visit, the executive director stated that the school had obtained a Shannon Grant from the Lowell Police Department, that the school used to create their website, deliver trauma training to staff, and fund home visits to student residences. |
| **Objective:** Improve graduation/completion rates through improved student attendance at Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School. | | |
| **Measure:** After two full terms at Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, students will increase their attendance rates 2% each year as compared to the previous year, with the permanent goal of 90% attendance rate. | Not Met | * Attendance has fluctuated during the charter term, from a high of 86% in 2005-06 attendance and a low of 83.4% during the 2008-09 school year. * The school did not increase their attendance rate by 2% in any successive years. |

1. As reported by the school at the time of the renewal inspection visit [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As reported by the school at the time of the renewal inspection visit [↑](#footnote-ref-2)